

A MONTHLY JOURNAL ON NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL POLITICS & OTHERS

Interaction

ISSUE-8

VOLUME-13

MC-1326

Rs.150/-

March 2019

140

ABC CERTIFIED



Saudi Crown Prince announces \$20 billion to Pakistan



Suicide attack kills 42 of Indian security forces in Occupied Kashmir



Pakistan Navy's blue water ambitions



Iraq no more safe Haven for USA



Motivations for Pakistan to go Nuclear



Pakistan will retaliate if attacked by India: PM Imran Khan



India will see surprise if attacked : Pak Army



PAKISTAN'S ECONOMIC & SECURITY CHALLENGES & WAY OUT (SEMINAR)

- Pakistan took right direction in acquiring nuclear powers: (CJCS) Gen. Zubair Mahmood
- UK rejects India's request to cancel Kashmir caucus
- 40+ people killed in suicide attack on Revolutionary Guards in Iran's South
- Pakistan : The global pivot state
- The geopolitics of Pulwama
- Taliban and Daesh have diverse interest

www.monthlyinteraction.com

<https://www.facebook.com/MonthlyInteraction>

<https://twitter.com/Mthinteraction>

Pulwama false flag attack: Pakistan has had enough Editorial

Summarized News & Articles

Pakistan Navy Exercise AMAN - 2019

Five day Naval Exercise

Why America's Afghanistan Pullout is Bad News

Pakistan Navy's blue water ambitions

The wrongdoer must meet its fate Interaction Report

Motivations for Pakistan to go nuclear Nidaa Shahid

Once spoiler, Pakistan starts behind scenes Phil Stewart

Pakistan - The Global Pivot State Andrew Korybko

End the war in Afghanistan Tyler Hicks

Taliban say Moscow talks with Afghan politicians

Great Game in Kabul, Redux Shyam Saran

Taliban & Daesh have diverse interest Nusrat Mirza

The all-new great game C. Christian Fair

Pakistan's Economic and Security Challenges Seminar Report

ISIS Presence in Afghanistan and threat to Asia Interaction Desk

The new Beijing - Moscow Axis Yaroslav Trofimov

Is China about to abandon its 'no first use' M Chan & K Huang

The uncertain future of warfare L Schmertzing

Heading towards strategic instability Happymon Jacob

Freed Saudis resurface billions poorer Devon Pendleton

Iraq seeks US presence but rejects occupation

Iraq no more safe Haven for USA Nusrat Mirza

Attack Israel and 'it will be the last anniversary Toi Staff

Russia's new missile lowers bar for the nuclear arms David Reid

The real purpose of Russia's 100-megaton Alex Lockie

America is at it again M K Bhadrakumar

A new phase in the great game

'America First' means nuclear superiority

The real reason America is scared of Huawei Will Knight

US intelligence damns BJP's Hindutva

ISI, Maoists, urban naxals Why the 2019 LS poll Vicky Nanjappa

Chill in the Valley Maj Gen A K Mehta

Making the best of a bad situation

Significance of trump's state of the union address Mahvish Malik

India and Pakistan Rattle Their Nuclear Sabres Eric S. Morgolis

Predators at work Venezuela - Is war on the Horizon? Andrew Korybko

My views on reviews Shafique A Shafique

Editorial

Pulwama false flag attack: Pakistan has had enough

India under the leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi has become the perfect example of a rogue extremist state. Indian government has taken a leaf out of Israel's book by curbing freedom struggle in most brutal and inhumane way. India has copied much like Israel which has occupied Palestine and indulges in the killing of innocent men, women and children in order to stop them from protesting against the illegal Jewish Occupants. Similarly, India puts humanity to shame when dealing with innocent people of Kashmir and looks to silence their righteous struggle for peace with brute force. Also, to make the job easy India looks to silence Pakistan on the matter by isolating it in the global arena, forgetting Pakistan key geographical location and the importance it has in the region. India from time and time again has sponsored terrorism in Pakistan and stage false flag attacks to malign Pakistan's image and build justification to wage war with Pakistan. It seems that the theatrics portrayed in Indian movies have gotten to Indian governments head, as no one but a mad man would think about waging a war with a nuclear power on false pretence.

One such false attack took place in Pulwama on February 14, 2019 when an Indian paramilitary convoy was attacked in Pulwama and 44 Indian soldiers lost their lives and India without considering the matter for an instant started blaming Pakistan and made threats of war. Meanwhile, just a few days after Pulwama attacks Indian Military Commander Lt Gen D.S. Hooda claimed that the quantity of explosives used in the attack was so large that it was impossible to have been brought by infiltrating the border further its curious that every time Indian elections are near, India starts some negative propaganda against Pakistan either by staging a false flag attack inside its own territory or by another other means available to them. Fact of the matter remains that Pakistan is a peace loving

country and our countless contributions and sacrifices to overcome terrorism is proof of that.

Pakistan firmly stands behind their Kashmiri brothers, however, in a non-violent way. Secondly, at that time, an attack on Indian forces would not have benefitted Pakistan instead it may prove to be in the interest of India the Crown Prince of Saudia Arabia was on his official tour at that time. India needs to understand that the people of Kashmir are being denied basic human rights by the occupant Indian forces and a freedom struggle cannot be overcome by brute. Indian's isolation in this matter is proof enough that nobody is interested in India's false narrative and that the world can see right through Indian propaganda. This isolation might bring India to its senses or perhaps it already has. PM Modi has recently dialled down the war hysteria by reminding Prime Minister Imran Khan promised to Mr. Modi that their war was to be against poverty and illiteracy.

This shows that someone has talked some sense into Mr. Modi and made him realize that a war with Pakistan would not be in India's benefit. Pakistan is a ware hardened nation and its armed forces are more than capable of handling any threat which poses danger to the country. India needs to understand that Pakistan's Air Force, Navy and Army are much advanced in terms of combat and technology. We have state of the art nuclear arsenal and we are making our own tactical nukes. Furthermore, our missile technology is considered as one of the best in the world. Our forces are on high alert and are fully capable of responding in a befitting manner. India should understand that Pakistan can no longer bullied as we are a strong military might and misadventures by could trigger a serious response from Pakistan.

Summarized News & Articles

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman two-day visit to Pakistan

Saudi Crown Prince announces \$20 billion to Pakistan and health centre project

CONSIDER ME IN SAUDI ARABIA THE AMBASSADOR OF PAKISTAN

WE CANNOT SAY NO TO PAKISTAN. WHATEVER WE CAN DO WE WILL DELIVER

Islamabad : 17-18 February 2019

The visit laid the foundation for a new chapter in Pakistan-Saudi relationship, marked by high level institutional framework to guide future direction of political, diplomatic, economic, investment, trade, people-to-people, defense, security and cultural aspects.

The establishment of Supreme Coordination Council, its subsidiary mechanism and the Council's inaugural session in Islamabad were one of the key steps in shaping the new trajectory in the bilateral relationship.

Investment and trade relations received high priority during the visit as demonstrated by the Saudi announcement of investments \$ 20 billion. The two sides signed a range of Agreements and MoUs in several areas.

The historic arrival of the Saudi Crown Prince in Pakistan is expected to be fruitful for both countries in terms of bilateral relationships and economic ties. "Pakistan's GDP growth during last year 2018 was by 5 per cent. So, we believe that Pakistan will be a very prosperous country in the future and we want to make sure that we are part of that boom," said Crown Prince Mohammed. In December 2018, Pakistan received a \$3 billion boost from Saudi Arabia to ease its financial woes.

We believe in Pakistan's Future and that it has a huge opportunity. In 2030 Pakistan will be next to two huge economies. One, China will be the largest economy in 2030, and two, India will be the Third-Large economy, so Pakistan will definitely benefit from these neighbours, "We believe in our region and therefore we invest in it and we are sure that we will have one day a great Middle East," said the prince.

The agreements include the establishment of an oil refinery at Gwadar Port funded by Saudi Arabia.

The two countries have also pushed to deepen their military alliance. Saudi troops regularly train in Pakistan and, in 2018, Pakistan sent troops to Saudi Arabia to train and advise. Today, there are already about 750-800 Pakistani non-combat servicemen in Saudi Arabia, in part to guard Islamic holy sites.

From topnotch preparations to welcome the royal guest to a one-to-one meeting between the Saudi Prince and PM Imran Khan, every moment and movement from this historic arrival is making headlines!

1. An Air Show To Escort The Saudi Crown Prince

Pakistan Air Force Fighters JF-17 & F-16s accompanied the VVIP aircraft of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad bin Salman upon entering Pakistani airspace.

2. A Warm Reception At The PAF Base Nur Khan By PM Imran Khan

The royal guest received a warm welcome by PM Imran Khan and Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa on his arrival at the PAF Base Nur Khan with cabinet members.

3. PM Imran Khan Himself Driving The Saudi Crown Prince To The PM House.

The premier himself drove the Saudi Crown Prince to the Prime Minister House, putting forward an excellent example of hospitality and fraternity.

4. A Red Carpet Reception And Guard Of Honor At The PM House

At the PM House, HRH Mohammad Bin Salman, who is visiting Pakistan for the first time after rising to the status of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2018, received the guard of honor by Pakistan Armed Forces.

5. Major Developments Between Saudi Arabia And Pakistan

During the one-to-one meeting between PM Imran Khan and the Saudi Crown Prince, a total of 8 agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of \$20 Billion were signed between the two countries in diverse sectors. The delegates from both countries were present during the ceremony.

PM Khan thanked the royal guest for visiting Pakistan and for the reception during his visit to Saudi Arabia.

6. Saudi Crown Prince Planting A Tree At The PM House In Islamabad Alongside Imran Khan.

7. Pakistani Prisoners : As a sequel to Prime Minister Imran Khan's request, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of KSA Mohammad Bin Salman has ordered the immediate release of 2107 Pakistani prisoners Saudi Jails.

8. \$21 Billion Investment In 3 Phases : Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman will invest a whopping \$21 billion in different across Pakistan which will be divided into different sectors i.e agriculture, in 3 phases.

9. Establishment Of \$11 Billion State-Of-The-Art Oil Refinery And Petrochemical Complex

A State-of-the-Art Oil Refinery and Petrochemical Complex is to be set up in Gwadar with an investment of \$11 billion to open new energy vistas in Pakistan to improve the economic conditions of the country. An MOU was signed between the Minister for Petroleum Ghulam Sarwar Khan and his Saudi counterpart for setting up an oil refinery (\$10 billion), a petrochemical complex (\$1 billion), installation of two Re-gasified Liquefied Petroleum Gas (RLNG) plants with an estimated cost of \$4 billion and another \$2 billion investment in mineral development sector according to APP.

10. Establishment Of Healthcare Center After Martyr Farman Ali Khan: Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman has issued directives to establish a healthcare center after Jeddah floods hero Farman Ali Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (his home town). This directive was given out before the prince left for India after completing his historic visit. Farman Ali Khan became a hero in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia after he saved 14 lives in Jeddah's devastating floods in November 2009.

Saudi Arabia Scholarships for Pakistani Students 2019: 583 Scholarships Being Offered : Saudi Arabia Scholarships for Pakistani Students 2019: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is offering fully funded scholarships to Pakistani students for the year 2019 in collaboration with Higher Education Commission (HEC). With aims to further enhance bi-lateral educational ties between the two countries, KSA will provide 583 scholarships to talented and motivated individuals from Pakistan/AJK.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia issued a joint statement which is being issued separately.

The joint statement, while reaffirming the historic relationship between the two brotherly countries, applauds the growing momentum in bilateral ties in all areas. The Saudi side praised Prime Minister Imran Khan's dialogue offer to India including the initiative on opening of Kartarpur corridor. Both sides stressed that dialogue is the only way to ensure peace and stability in the region and to resolve the outstanding issues. Both sides strongly condemned the atrocities and human rights violations committed against Muslims around the world.

The Prime Minister briefed the Crown Prince on the grave human rights violations in IOK and the need for resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and wishes of the Kashmiri people.

The statement also articulates the common positions of the two countries on a range of regional peace and security and international issues including inter alia challenges faced by the Islamic Ummah, interfaith harmony, counter terrorism, among others.

Pakistan will retaliate if there is an attack from the Indian side: PM Imran Khan

Islamabad: 19 Feb. 2019 | Pakistan will not think about retaliating if it comes under attack, it will most definitely retaliate, said Prime Minister Imran Khan in a state address on Tuesday (19 Feb. 2019) afternoon. Mr Khan said that he delayed issuing a statement on the attack because of the Saudi crown prince's visit.

"It was a very important visit and so I decided to not to respond to Indian accusations because I didn't want the visit to lose its importance," he said.

Over 40 Indian soldiers were killed in an attack in Indian-Administered Kashmir on February 14 after a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into their convoy. The Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility. He said that the Indian government had "accused Pakistan without any evidence or thought". If Pakistan were holding such an important visit, then why would it need to carry out any terror attack, he asked. "Why will Pakistan engage in terrorism? What purpose will this serve? What advantage does it have for us? Pakistan has suffered the most in the war against terror."

The Indian government is stuck in the past. "It is using the same old rhetoric of blaming Pakistan for everything. You need to move ahead," he said.

"I have said time and again that this is the new Pakistan," he said. "It is not in our interest for our soil to be used for terrorism."

"If you have intelligence reports that Pakistan was involved in the attack, then share it with us," he said while addressing the Indian authorities. "We will take an action against the person involved."

He remarked that India needed a new mindset. It needed to think about why young people in Kashmir were not afraid of dying. "They need to think if this one-sided oppression is going to work." The PM said that a military solution never solved anything as was evident in the case of Afghanistan. "Shouldn't India think on similar lines?"

Many Indian politicians and its media have said that Pakistan should be taught a lesson. "What law allows one party to become judge, jury and execution in any case?"

Pakistan is ready to hold dialogue but it is not afraid of retaliation, he said at the end. "I hope better sense prevails."

Indian media and government officials were quick to assign blame to Pakistan for what they said was supporting the Maulana Masood Azhar-led group, the JeM. Pakistan refuted allegations that its government was linked to the Pulwama attack.

Pakistan requested UN Secretary-General António Guterres to take notice of what it said were the "irresponsible" tactics by the Indian government which were aggravating geopolitical relations. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi wrote a letter to him, raising concerns over the "negative tactics" of the Narendra Modi government ahead of the elections in India.

Army chief warns India against 'misadventure'

ISLAMABAD: Army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa, during a visit to the Line of Control (LoC) on Friday, warned India against aggression, saying any misadventure would receive resolute response from his troops.

Gen Bajwa visited the LoC to review the state of preparedness and morale of the troops, a day after the National Security Committee authorised the armed forces to respond to any Indian aggression with full force. The top commander's visit signalled the highest level of preparedness to the adversary.

War hysteria in India in the aftermath of last week's attack on Indian security forces in occupied Kash-mir's Pulwama area has led to fears that India may undertake military action to deflect public attention from internal problems.

Speaking to the troops on the frontlines in Chirikot and Bagsar sectors, Gen Bajwa said: "Pakistan is a peace-loving country but we will not be intimidated or coerced. Any aggression or misadventure shall be paid back in same coin".

DG ISPR reiterates 'talks, not war' proposal to India, distances Pakistan from Pulwama

Director General Inter-Services Public Relations Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor addresses a press conference.

Pakistan Army warns India of surprise response if war imposed.

RAWALPINDI (February 22, 2019) : Major General Asif Ghafoor, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), said Pakistan was capable of giving a response which would surprise India if any war is imposed . Speaking to the media to discuss the situation that has emerged after Pulwama attack, the military spokesman said India blamed Pakistan after a man in Occupied Kashmir killed Indian soldiers in Pulwama.

He said Pakistan took sometime to respond and the prime minister issued his statement after seeing shortsightedness of India. Major Gen Asif Ghafoor shed light on the past events that led to war between the two countries. He said Pakistan creation in 1947 was a reality that India has not accepted so far. The ISPR DG said Pakistan had nothing to gain from Pulwama attack. He said Indian government should seek explanation from its security forces before blaming cross border elements for attacks in Occupied Kashmir or on its own territory .

He said how can such elements cross the border in the presence of strict security arrangements on the Line Of Control (LoC).

The ISPR chief said why would Pakistan want to stage a militant attack in Occupied Kashmir when eight important events were due in the month of February and March including Saudi Crown Prince visit, UNSC discussion on terrorism, Afghan political reconciliation process, EU meeting on Kashmir, Kulbhushan Jhadav hearing at the ICJ, key FATF meet in Paris, Kartarpur Border meeting between Indian and Pakistan and the PSL 2019.

He said the attacker was a resident of Occupied Kashmir and the brutality of Indian military compelled the suicide bomber to react violently. "Pakistan is

changing, we have suffered a lot in the war on terror. We helped international forces inside Afghanistan," Major General Asif Ghafoor said.

Talking about Indian threats, Ghafoor said: "You (India) shall not be able to surprise us. We will surprise you," the DG ISPR said while referring to reports that India was preparing for a war. He said Pakistan invites India to hold dialogue to resolve issues including Kashmir. "You are the biggest democracy, two democracies do not fight. You are a secular country. Why should such circumstances be created where minorities are not safe," he said. Answering a question, he said "We are not preparing for war, but we have to be prepared to respond".

Iran

Asked about Iranian allegations, he said the western neighbor was brotherly, friendly country and Pakistan was also talking to Iran for border fencing so that no third party is able to exploit the situation.

Asad Durrani

He said Former former DG ISI Asad Durrani has been found guilty of violating military code conduct, a reference to former spymaster's book which he co-authored with ex-chief of India's RAW. The ISPR DG also confirmed that two Military officers are under arrest for espionage and the Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa has ordered court martial against them.

Pakistan took right direction in acquiring nuclear prowess: Gen. Zubair Mahmood

Feb. 11, 2019| Addressing a seminar, "Understanding Strategic Coercion in the Realm of Hybrid Gray Conflict: Implications for Pakistan", Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat said, "Beginning as early as the partition, coercive statecraft and hostility from our neighbour is not new."

"However, with the accession of hyper-Pakistan had taken the right direction and strengthened its defense. We continue to build our Minimum Credible Deterrence. A Nuclear power of 200 million cannot be coerced," he said.

He said with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the evolving dynamics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Pakistan was set to play an important role. "We succeeded in the past, we'll succeed in the future," he added. In the prevailing international environment, the subject of the seminar, organised by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, was of great relevance and interests to Pakistan because "it was enduring a subtle and, at times, not so subtle strategic coercion," he said. "In fact, it was not just Pakistan but the entire region was subjected to the strategic coercion and even the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had become a hostage to this phenomenon," said Gen Hayat.

Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Baloch nationalist and the arrest of Indian national Kalbhushan Yadav, are all manifestation of this evolving challenge," he said.

The General said that the strategic coercion was undermining the regional strategic calculus and negatively affecting the internal politics as well, and to ward off the spectre of strategic coercion in the realm of hybrid warfare, new methods and modalities were required. "We have taken the direction and come a long way in establishing and strengthening our defense. We fought off the scourge of terrorism, not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well," he said.

Apart from Gen Hayat, Leonid Savin from geopolitical analyst, Russia; Ikram Sehgal, defense and security analyst; and Lt. Gen. (Retd) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, former defense secretary.

Savin said that the concept of gray hybrid conflict was a western construct and the rest of the world should come up with its own narrative.

"Before 2014, hybrid warfare was discussed mostly in military affairs but, after the Ukraine crisis, it has expanded to the political domain as well," he said.

Sehgal described hybrid warfare as a mix of all the linear and non-linear, kinetic and non-kinetic warfare whose all components were inter-connected, applied

simultaneously and adopted likewise in time and space. "Propaganda, social implosion and cyber warfare are some of its expressions," he said.

Lt. Gen. Lodhi said that hybrid warfare was an acme of strategy to win a battle without fighting. He said that it was unleashed to impact worldviews, politics, culture, social bonds and economy.

Brief News International

Suicide attack kills 42 of Indian security forces in Occupied Kashmir

SRINAGAR (14 Feb. 2019) : At least 42 Indian soldiers were killed and multiple were left injured after a bomb exploded at Indian-occupied Kashmir's Pulwama district. According to reports 42 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed while several others were left critically wounded and were moved to Indian army's 92 base hospital at Srinagar's Badami Bagh. The attack saw explosives packed inside a van rip through buses in a convoy of 78 vehicles carrying some 2,500 members of the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Two blue buses carrying around 35 people each bore the brunt of the massive blast, heard miles away, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the city of Srinagar on the main highway to Jammu. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since independence. Rebels have been fighting for an independent Kashmir, or a merger with Pakistan, for 30 years.

Last year was the deadliest in a decade, with rights monitors saying almost 600 Kashmiri people died, most of them civilians. Thousands more have been maimed in recent years by pellet-firing shotguns used by Indian forces. As per reports by authorities the death toll is expected to increase. Senior police officer talking to AFP revealed: "An IED went off as a CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) convoy passed by."

It was further revealed by CRPF spokesperson Sanjay Kumar that the explosives were attached inside a car that was driven into the convoy. "It was a powerful explosion. The explosive was car-borne," he stated.

PAKISTAN REJECTS INDIAN ALLEGATIONS

Pakistan strongly rejected insinuation by elements in the Indian government and media circles that seek to link the attack to the State of Pakistan without investigations. "The attack in Pulwama in the Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir is a matter of grave concern," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in a press release. "We have always condemned heightened acts of violence in the Valley."

Kashmir suicide bomber radicalized after beating by troops, parents say

SRINAGAR (Reuters) - A suicide bomber who killed 42 paramilitary policemen in Indian-controlled Kashmir joined a militant group after having been beaten by troops three years ago, his parents told Reuters. Adil Ahmad Dar, 20, from the village of Lethipora in Indian Kashmir, rammed a car full of explosives into the convoy, escalating tension between the nuclear-armed neighbors, which both claim the rugged Himalayan region. A video released by the militant group after the attack showed his son, dressed in military fatigues and carrying an automatic rifle, detailing his plan to carry out the bombing. "He was beaten by Indian troops a few years back when he was returning from school," she said. "This led to anger in him against Indian troops."

Both parents said they were unaware of their son's plan to attack the convoy. Dar did not return home from his work as a laborer on March 19 last year, Fahmeeda added. "We searched for him for three months," she said.

Nine killed in Kashmir gun battle days after deadly attack

by Rifat Fareed | 18 Feb 2019

Srinagar, Indian-Occupied Kashmir - At least nine people, including three armed rebels, four Indian army soldiers and a police constable, have been killed in a gun battle in India-Occupied Kashmir. The gun battle in Pinglan village of Pulwama district comes days after 42 Indian security personnel were killed in a suicide blast - the worst such attack in 30 years of Kashmir conflict, which has raised fears of confrontation with archenemy Pakistan.

A senior Indian army official told Al Jazeera that the operation against the rebels was launched early following intelligence inputs about their presence in a house in Pinglan village. It ended in the evening. A police official told Al Jazeera that a deputy inspector general of police, Amit Kumar, was hit by a bullet in his leg. "An army brigadier was also wounded in the fighting" the official added.

Local residents in Pinglan village said that three houses and a cowshed were blown up by the armed forces and one of the house owners, Mushtaq Ahmad, 30, who ran a poultry shop in the village, was also killed. "His house was among the one which was blown up, he is survived by two children, aged four and three. He was dragged out of his house early in the morning by the army and killed. Another boy was also hit by a bullet in his leg," Ghulam Nabi, a resident, told Al Jazeera.

Indian born foreign journalist 'Ashok Swain' prediction

NEW DELHI India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned Pakistan that it "is on a path to its own destruction".

On Thursday 14 Feb., a suicide bomber crashed an explosives-packed SUV into a Central Reserve Police Force bus in Pulwama district of held-Kashmir. The bus was transporting some 40 reservists in a convoy of 78 other vehicles. While New Delhi is blaming Islamabad for the deadly blast without any concrete evidence and thorough investigation, people from inside the South Asian country believe the politics on Pulwama attack looks more of a pre-election stunt by the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party's leadership to boost its voters.

Ashok Swain, a professor of peace and conflict research at the Department of Peace and Conflict in Sweden, has said India shouldn't and must not get into Modi's manipulated pre-election war frenzy. "The desire for revenge makes people blind and leads to self-destructive actions. An armed confrontation, even if it fails to lead to nuclear holocaust, it will end India's democracy forever!" Swain posted on social media. The Indian-born academic, who has since now received multiple death threats by radical groups in India, had in December last year predicted a "major border confrontation" with Pakistan which would benefit PM Modi before the upcoming general elections.

“Mark my word In the next 5 months, Modi will smile more in public and will cry more in public. India should be also prepared for a major riot and/or a major border confrontation with Pakistan before the 2019 election,” he had said in a tweet. Mr. Swain, following the Pulwama attack , took to Twitter to highlight that “Under Modi, not only terror attacks but also the death of Indian security forces has increased dramatically in Kashmir. The number of security persons killed in Kashmir 47 in 2014, 39 in 2015, 82 in 2016, 80 in 2017 and 91 in 2018”.

India has lost Kashmir : Confession of former BJP Senior Leader Yashwant Sinha

The intensity of anti-India protests in IOK has escalated to such levels, that an article in BBC questioned that “Is India losing Kashmir?” Washington Post also pointed that “Teen girls with stones are the new threat in India's Kashmir conflict”. New York Times editorial “Cruelty and Cowardice in Kashmir” also has the same shade commenting on an incident on the current situation in the valley. The Atlantic observed that a new cycle of protests and violent crackdowns had begun in Kashmir, as have responses to those crackdowns leaving dozens dead and more injured. Former chief of R&AW A. S. Dulat felt that unarmed uprising has worsened under the current government in terms of atmospherics as due to alienation and the anger of youth, young Kashmiri minds have gone out of control. “There is a sense of hopelessness. They aren't afraid to die. Villagers, students and even girls are coming out on the streets. This has never happened in the past,” he said. An Indian journalist Santosh Bhartiya in an open letter to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi published on 'Rising Kashmir' claimed that although “the land of Kashmir is with us, the people of Kashmir are not with us.” He had pointed out that on every tree, on every mobile tower, Pakistani flag swirls in Kashmir.

Calling New Delhi's policy towards Kashmir a 'bundle of confusion', former BJP senior leader Yashwant Sinha insisted that “India has lost people of the valley emotionally. “We have lost the people emotionally. You just have to visit the valley to realize that they have lost faith in us” Sinha acknowledged. He also candidly admitted that Modi and India believe in “doctrine of State” or brutality to suppress Kashmiri people.

UK rejects India's request to cancel Kashmir caucus

The United Kingdom categorically refused India's request to cancel an event highlighting human rights violations in occupied Kashmir. The event is scheduled to be held at the British Parliament. According to India Today, Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said New Delhi had taken up the matter with the British government. "We have taken it up with the UK very strongly. We hope that they will understand our objections to the proposed conference and take appropriate action," said Kumar. "As a friendly country and as a strategic partner, we hope that the government of the United Kingdom will address our concerns which we have explained to them on the proposed conference."

Blaming Pakistan for 'duplicity', the Indian official said, on one hand, Islamabad talked about peace but it was "working together with forces which are pushing or fermenting anti-India sentiments".

The event is expected to be attended by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who is scheduled to travel to the British capital on those days. Thrashing the hopes of the Indian government, the British government asserted that it will not interfere in the matter. "The United Kingdom Members of the Parliament are independent of government," said the British High Commission spokesperson in New Delhi. "It is for the individual members to decide who they meet and for what purpose."

The meeting is being organised at the House of Commons by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Pakistan (APPG-Pakistan) that comprises MPs from the Conservative and Labour Party. It will be followed by an exhibition in London. The APPG-Pakistan's event aims to "highlight the centrality of Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the grave human rights violations against the Kashmiri people, by India, which are being widely condemned and need to be immediately stopped," said a Foreign Office press release.

Bangladesh proposes safe zone in Myanmar for Rohingya refugees

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has called on Russia, China and India to help the country tackle the Rohingya refugee crisis. In an interview with Anadolu news agency, Momen said his government has proposed to establish a safe zone in Rakhine state in Myanmar from where the refugees fled state persecution in late 2017. "If a safe zone is created under the vigilance of China, Russia and India along with the ASEAN states, Rohingya people will be encouraged to return to their own land," he said. ASEAN stands for Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a regional bloc of 10 countries in Asia.

Momen added that guaranteeing the refugees who return Myanmar's citizenship will be a precondition of the proposal, which he said has been appreciated by India.

He hoped other countries would follow suit. Since August 2017, more than 750,000 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, have fled Myanmar and crossed into Bangladesh after Myanmar forces launched a crackdown on the Muslim-majority Rohingya community.

The United Nations has also documented mass gang rapes, killings - including of infants and young children - brutal beatings and disappearances committed by Myanmar state forces.

Myanmar authorities treat Rohingya as unlawful citizens or illegal Bengalis based on a controversial 1982 Citizenship Law. Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal in November 2017 with a two-year time frame to return the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. The repatriation has been postponed due to global concerns about the safety of Rohingya in their home country.

A refugee Name 'Momen' said the main goal is to "repatriate them to their country of origin with due dignity and safety", asking help from international actors. "There are 1.2 million Rohingya now staying in Bangladesh. Although we are not a rich country, we are one of the most densely populated countries in the world," Momen said, praising Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her "benevolence" in giving the refuge. He offered to send some refugees to friendly countries of

Myanmar so that the living conditions of the refugees improve and together these states can put pressure on Myanmar to take back the refugees.

Genocide

The top diplomat termed Bangladesh's policy on Rohingya "a role model for humanity", calling their persecution "the biggest genocide since World War II". At least 43,000 Rohingya are missing and presumed dead, according to a March 2018 report (PDF) by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Parliamentarians for Human Rights. A UN fact-finding mission last year said Myanmar military's campaign, which refugees say included mass killings and rape, was orchestrated with a "genocidal intent". Last month, Yanghee Lee, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, said the military chief should be prosecuted for "genocide".

40+ people killed in suicide attack on Revolutionary Guards in Iran's South

(13 Feb, 2019) A suicide attack in the Chanali area of Southeastern Iran has killed at least 41 personnel from Iran's elite revolutionary guards and civilians on Wednesday, according to FARS news agency. 10 Iranian guards were injured in the attack which reportedly targeted a bus carrying security forces. The attack happened on a road between the cities of Zahedan and Khash, close to the Pakistan border where militant groups and drug smugglers readily operate. The attack comes on the day a US-led conference takes place in Warsaw that included talks on what the Americans describe as Iran's malign influence across the Middle East.

Iran unveils, successfully tests new long-range cruise (Hoveyzeh) missile

2 Feb, 2019 | Tehran has showcased a new, long-range cruise missile, capable of covering over 1,350 kilometers. The munition has been already successfully tested, according to the country's military. The missile, dubbed Hoveyzeh, was shown to the general public for the very first time in Tehran on Saturday, amid celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution. "This cruise missile needs a very short time for its preparedness and can fly at a low altitude,"

Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said while unveiling the munition.

Aside from being revealed to the public at the presentation, a Hoveyzeh-type missile has already been successfully tested, flying some 1,200km (745 miles) and accurately hitting a dummy target, the minister said. The missile has a range of over 1,350 kilometers, the official revealed, yet the exact maximum range of the brand new munition remains a mystery.

Iran's unveils cruise missile-equipped Fateh submarine

(17-2-2019) Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has unveiled a "state-of-the-art" domestically produced submarine, which the defence ministry said is capable of firing cruise missiles. Rouhani is in the southern province of Hormozgan on Sunday to introduce the latest addition of the naval fleet. Dubbed the Fateh, or Conqueror, it is the country's first semi-heavy submarine, according to Mehr news agency.

Mehr news reported that the 600-tonne submarine launched is equipped with torpedoes and naval mines, and can operate more than 200m below sea level for up to five weeks. Tasnim news agency added that the Fateh is also outfitted with a guided-missile system capable of launching submarine-launched cruise missiles and an advanced sonic radar system that can identify enemy vessels.

"The Fateh is entirely a homegrown submarine that is designed and developed by experts of the defence ministry and is equipped with the world's modern technologies," Brigadier General Amir Hatami, the defence minister, was quoted by Tasnim on Saturday as saying. The Fateh is the latest addition to Iran's fleet of submarines, which was first launched about 20 years ago.

Hossein Dalirian, a defence reporter for Tasnim news agency, noted in a social media post that the latest submarine is one of the most important projects Iran's military have undertaken in the last 40 years. Another Tehran-based security analyst, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the topic, noted that the submarine's vertical launching system.

Fifteen Egyptian troops killed or wounded in North Sinai: military

CAIRO (Reuters) - Fifteen Egyptian military personnel were killed or wounded in a clash on Saturday in North Sinai in which seven militants were also killed, the Egyptian military said. The breakdown of military casualties was not immediately clear. However, two security sources told Reuters that some of the injuries were serious. The Islamic State later claimed responsibility for the attack on its news agency AMAQ. It said it killed at least 15 Egyptian troops, revising an earlier figure of 20 killed south of the provincial capital of Arish after clashes with "various kinds of weapons."

Islamic State claims North Sinai attack, says 20 Egyptian troops killed.

At least 70 dead in Bangladesh building fire

Wed. 20 Feb. 2019: Building where blaze started housed a plastics warehouse, according to firefighters. The fire started in a four-storey building on Wednesday night and spread to nearby buildings in the Chawkbazar area of Old Dhaka, which dates back to the Mughal period more than 300 years ago. "So far, 70 bodies have been recovered. The number could rise further as the search is continuing," said Julfikar Rahman, a director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

About 200 firefighters fought for more than five hours to bring the blaze under control. They said the building where the fire began had housed a plastics warehouse and contained flammable material. 'Flames were everywhere' : Dhaka deputy police commissioner Ibrahim Khan said at least two cars and 10 cycle rickshaws were burnt in the fire. Hundreds of people rushed to the hospital looking for missing relatives. However, most of the bodies of the dead were charred beyond recognition.

From critic to convert: Former anti-Muslim Dutch politician embraces Islam

Feb 5 , 2019 |

A former Dutch politician from Geert Wilders' right-wing Freedom Party (PVV) has announced his unexpected conversion to Islam. Joram Van Klaveren's 'Road to Mecca' moment occurred while researching a book critical of the faith.

Van Klaveren had been a staunch critic of Islam and was elected to Parliament in 2010, as part of the groundswell of support for Wilder's anti-Muslim rhetoric which saw the PVV become the third-largest party in the Netherlands. During his stint in politics, Van Klaveren became known for his inflammatory anti-Islam statements. He had previously called Islam "a lie," its holy book the Koran "poison" and the prophet Muhammad "a crook."

He quit the PVV in 2014 after disagreeing with Wilders asking supporters at a campaign rally if they wanted "fewer" or "more" Moroccans in the country (they answered "fewer!"). Van Klaveren failed to get re-elected in 2017 after setting up his own conservative party.

Without politicking to occupy his time, the firebrand turned towards writing a critical book on Islam. However, while in the middle of his research Van Klaveren had to reassess and rewrite the book, eventually converting to the faith in October and announcing the news.

"During that writing I encountered more and more things that shook my vision of Islam," he told a Dutch radio program.

Beijing Accuses US of Illegally Crossing Its Sovereign Borders in S. China Sea

ASIA & PACIFIC | 11.02.2019 | China protests and expresses dissatisfaction with US vessels entering the waters near the Spratly Islands, an archipelago in the South China Sea that Beijing continues to regard as its "indisputable sovereignty," without authorization, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said. "The actions of the US vessels constitute a brusque violation of China's sovereignty, undermine peace, security and order in the relevant waters.

The Chinese party expresses extreme dissatisfaction and a strong protest," Hua told a briefing. She stressed that China had "indisputable sovereignty" over the islands and respected the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea but would not tolerate the use of this freedom as pretext for undermining the country's sovereignty and security.

"We strongly call on the US party to immediately stop these provocative actions.

The Chinese party will take all necessary measures to resolutely defend its sovereignty and security as well as the stability in the South China Sea," the spokeswoman underlined. According to Beijing, two US Navy destroyers sailed near the Spratly Islands, which China calls Nansha Islands, earlier on Monday without permission from the Chinese government. Chinese vessels issued a warning for the warships and demanded that they immediately leave the area.

More Brexit embarrassment for May as parliament defeats her again

Elizabeth Piper, Kylie MacLellan, William James

LONDON (Reuters) - Prime Minister Theresa May suffered a defeat on her Brexit strategy that undermined her pledge to European Union leaders to get her divorce deal approved if they grant her concessions. In a show of muscle, hardline Brexit supporters in her Conservative Party decided to abstain, handing her an embarrassing, albeit symbolic, defeat as she tries to renegotiate her deal with the EU. While it will not deter May from trying to secure changes on the most contentious issue of the deal - the Irish "backstop" - the vote does show that her pro-Brexit lawmakers are a major obstacle to passing any agreement. May was absent from the House of Commons for the debate and the outcome of the vote, which deepened the sense of political crisis over Britain's departure, more than two years after voters opted to leave the bloc by a margin of 52 percent to 48.

NATO Has No Plans to Deploy New Ground-Based Systems With Nukes in EU

Russia issued a mirror-like response to the US decision to suspend the INF Treaty in order to officially exit it in 6 months later. However, Moscow assured that it would not deploy weapons violating the historic accord even if developed them until such US-made weapons appear in Europe and other regions.

According to Deputy Secretary General of NATO, the alliance has no plans to deploy new ground-based systems with nuclear weapons in Europe even after the termination of the INF Treaty. The statement comes shortly after NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg stated that the alliance was preparing steps in case the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty ended, adding, however, that it doesn't want a new arms race.

On 1 February, Pompeo justified the US decision to suspend its obligations under the historic Cold War-era INF Treaty, triggering the six month withdrawal process, by yet again accusing Russia of violating the treaty. Moscow has strongly denied the claims.

A day later, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow was suspending its obligations under the INF Treaty in a "mirror-like response" to Washington's move, however, emphasising that Moscow would not be dragged into a new arms race. In addition to this, Putin stated that the use of target rockets and the deployment of Mk 41 launchers in Europe since 2014 by the United States is a direct violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Nevertheless, Moscow assured that it would not deploy weapons violating the Cold War-era treaty even if Russia developed them "until such US-made weapons appear in Europe and other regions."

Moscow and Washington have been repeatedly accusing each other of violating the NF Treaty, signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987, which bans all ground-launched ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres (310 and 3,400 miles).

Putin to U.S.: I'm ready for another Cuban Missile-style crisis if you want one

Andrew Osborn (Reuter)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin has said if the United States wanted one, and that his country currently has the edge when it comes to a first nuclear strike. The Cuban Missile Crisis erupted in 1962 when Moscow responded to a U.S. missile deployment in Turkey by sending ballistic missiles to Cuba, sparking a standoff that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

More than five decades on, tensions are rising again over Russian fears that the United States might deploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe, as a landmark Cold War-era arms-control treaty unravels. Putin's comments, made to Russian media late on Wednesday, follow his warning that Moscow will match any U.S. move to deploy new missiles closer to Russia by stationing its own missiles closer to the United States or by deploying faster missiles or both.

Putin fleshed out his warning in detail for the first time, saying Russia could deploy hypersonic missiles on ships and submarines which could lurk outside U.S. territorial waters if Washington now moved to deploy intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. “(We're talking about) naval delivery vehicles: submarines or surface ships. And we can put them, given the speed and range (of our missiles)... in neutral waters. Plus they are not stationary, they move and they will have to find them,” Putin said, according to a Kremlin transcript. “You work it out. Mach nine (the speed of the missiles) and over 1,000 km (their range).”

U.N. chief wants INF nuclear treaty saved, concrete steps in Hanoi

GENEVA (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the United States and Russia on Monday FEBRUARY 25, 2019, to preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and to extend the New START Treaty before it expires in 2021.

To lose the INF would make the world a more insecure and unstable place, he told the Conference on Disarmament at the United Nations in Geneva. Washington announced on Feb. 1 that it will withdraw from the treaty in six months unless Moscow ends its alleged violations.

“We simply cannot afford to return to the unrestrained nuclear competition of the darkest days of the Cold War. I call on the parties to the INF Treaty to use the time remaining to engage in sincere dialogue on the various issues that have been raised. It is very important that this treaty is preserved.”

He said New START was the only international legal instrument limiting the size of the world's two largest nuclear arsenals, and its inspection provisions benefited the entire world, noting that global stockpiles of nuclear weapons were one-sixth of what they had been in 1985.

“I urge Russia and the United States to use the time provided by an extension to the treaty to consider further reductions in their strategic nuclear arsenals. I dream of the day when these bilateral arrangements become multilateral.”

He also said he hoped a U.S.-North Korean nuclear summit this week would produce real progress.

“At their summit in Hanoi later this week, I hope that the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States agree to concrete steps for sustainable, peaceful and complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula”. Reporting by Tom Miles; Editing by Kevin Liffey

Donald Trump demands Europe take hundreds of ISIL fighters

US president says Britain, France, Germany and other allies must prosecute more than 800 ISIL prisoners in custody. Europe must take in hundreds of ISIL fighters captured in Syria or else the United States may be forced to release them, US President Donald Trump warned. He made the comments in a series of tweets on Saturday demanding that Britain, France, Germany and other European allies put more than 800 detained cadres from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, ISIS) with their citizenship on trial. The president issued the warning as a US-backed militia battles the last remaining ISIL combatants in a tiny sliver of territory in eastern Syria. "The caliphate is ready to fall. The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them," Trump said of the war prisoners.

Trump caused widespread concern among US allies in December when he suddenly announced the US would withdraw about 2,000 troops from Syria and that ISIL had already been defeated. Critics warned the armed group remains a threat and a pullout could lead to its resurgence, with US allies in the region not equipped to handle it alone.

'In Basra, people avoid doctors. They might find they've cancer'

by Marta Bellingreri & Alessio Mamo

Basra, Iraq - With its beautiful canals and centuries-old buildings, Basra was once renowned as the "Venice of the Middle East". But the southern Iraqi city is now facing one of the region's worst environmental crises, with its rivers turned into open-air dumping sites. In recent months, some 118,000 people have been

hospitalised as a result of water-related illnesses, including high fever, nausea and diarrhoea, according to Choukri al-Hassan, an air and water pollution expert at the University of Basra. The situation has prompted thousands of young people and environmental activists to take to the streets to protest against the lack of drinkable water and the government's failure to fix the crisis. Formed by a confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, Shatt al-Arab River runs through the centre of Basra. It is polluted with germs, chemicals and toxic algae, while its high levels of salinity - close to that of seawater - is believed to have reached its peak last year. "The water in Basra is so polluted that you can't even wash your face," al-Hassan said. "Fish, turtles and crabs die. The ecosystem is changing, it's a catastrophe."

Meet Rosie Gabrielle, a Canadian exploring Pakistan on her bike

By Entertainment Desk (Source Express Tribune) | A Canadian youngster by the name of Rosie Gabrielle has been exploring the world alone on her bike. Her journey has brought her to Pakistan, where she is currently enjoying local cuisine and hospitality, so much so that she has labelled it "amazing and safe country."

The motorcyclist, who quit her job two years ago to live her dream of riding solo, has been documenting her visit on her social media pages. Just a couple of days ago, Gabrielle took to Instagram to share her experiences here. "Everyone told me it was too dangerous to come to Pakistan as a single female, let alone ride a motorcycle across the country. Now 1,500kms into my tour, I can tell you firsthand what it's like to travel Pakistan as a solo female and what I've experienced so far," she began.

"Countless smiles and cheers of joy as I pass people and they realise it's a female riding. Numerous offers to stay in local homes wherever I stop. Families are always inviting me to stay with them. When I stop for chai or snacks at a store, most often someone will buy it for me, or the owner will not let me pay, saying I'm a guest in their country and they would love to gift this to me."

Gabrielle continued, "Food, food and more food! Wherever I go, I'm offered to eat wonderful home-cooked food or offered gifts of food from street vendors as I

pass by. Everyone wants to say hello and ask where I'm from and are curious what I think about Pakistan.”

According to the traveller, a lot of people have been teaching her about religion as well. “They want me to know that Islam is [about] peace and love and that I am accepted just the way I am. I've been gifted many things now by the people and families I stay with and been given the highest attention and hospitality, even if they don't have much to give. They make sure I'm happy,” shared Gabrielle. “And they give with their whole hearts. So many beautiful connections and heartfelt moments... I have truly fallen in love with the people here. This is Pakistan. This is the country of peace and love. And this is my unedited experience so far, as a solo female traveling by motorcycle.”

The Canadian added, “Pakistan has suffered greatly in past years due to the continuous negative image the media portrays. Since many years now, they aren't used to seeing tourists. So they're overjoyed to see a foreigner, not because I'm anyone special but because it gives them hope. Hope that Pakistan will once again be recognised for the beautiful country it is and the true heart of the people will be seen.”

Gabrielle concluded her post saying, “People have labelled Pakistan as dangerous or said its people aren't good. And I've seen how that personally affects them here. It brings them to tears to have such accusations and it breaks my heart to know what is said and how they're treated abroad.”

Pakistan Navy Exercise AMAN – 2019

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi visited ships of foreign navies participating in Multinational Exercise AMAN-19. Upon his arrival onboard foreign visiting ships, the Naval Chief was warmly welcomed by Senior Officers / Commanding Officers of respective ships and was presented the guard of honour by smartly dressed out contingents.

The Naval Chief visited participating ships of Australia (HMAS BALLARAT), China (PLA(N) KUNLUNSHAN), Italy (ITS MARGOTTINI), Malaysia (RMK KD MAHAWANGSA), Oman (RNOV AL-RAHMANI), Sri Lanka (SLNS SAYURALA), Turkey (TCG GOKCEADA) and U.K (HMS DRAGON) where he held interactions with Senior Officers/Commanding Officers.

The Naval Chief was given briefings onboard ships. During discussions, the Naval Chief highlighted that Pakistan Navy has always been a forerunner in quest for collaborative security in this region of immense strategic importance and AMAN series of exercises are anchored on this concept.

The Admiral further expressed that camaraderie generated herein will grow in future and shall bring us closer to the mutual goal of regional peace and prosperity. He also appreciated their participation in AMAN Exercise to fulfill common resolve of “Together for Peace”. Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi interacted with foreign media reps during his visit and responded to their questions.

The Senior Officers/Commanding Officers of the respective ships, highly acknowledged the strenuous efforts of Pakistan Navy by bringing together global navies towards shared commitment of maritime peace, stability and lawful order at sea. Chief of the Naval Staff had interaction with the crew of visiting ships and appreciated their professionalism and morale. During the other activities of the day, Lt General Edzai Absalom Tafadzwa Chanyuka Chimonyo Commander Zimbabwe National Army laid floral wreath at Mazar-e-Quaid followed by visit to Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre, Pakistan Naval Academy and Pakistan Navy Ship SHAMSHEER.

Vice Admiral Alexandru Mirsu Ph.D Chief of Romanian Naval Forces visited Pakistan Navy Ship SAIF and also called on Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi.

Maritime security challenges and opportunities remained in focus on the second day of 8th International Maritime Conference 2019. 1st and 2nd sessions were graced by Vice Admiral Kaleem Shaukat Vice Chief of Naval Staff and Dr. Masuma Hasan, Chairman Pakistan Institute of International Affairs as Chief Guests respectively.

Whereas, Lt General Afgan Taghiyev Veli Chief of Coast Guard State Border Service Azerbaijan and Vice Admiral Alexandru Mirsu Ph.D Chief of Romanian Naval Forces attended as Guests of Honour. Friendly sports matches between officers and men of participating countries and Pakistan Navy were also held during the day.

In order to provide an opportunity to witness diverse cultures of participating countries, an International Food Gala and Cultural Show was also organized for officers and sailors showcasing food stalls and cultural items. Syed Murad Ali Shah Chief Minister Sindh graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

A large number of personnel from participating navies, observers, foreign diplomats and senior officials of Pakistan Armed Forces attended the event.

Five day Naval Exercise - draws 46 participates countries

February 8 - 12, 2019

Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN 19 formally commenced on Friday at Pakistan Navy Dockyard with a colorful flag hoisting ceremony. Ships of the participating navies, observers, foreign diplomats and a large number of Pakistan Navy personnel attended the event, said a press release issued here.

Chief Guest on the occasion was Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi whereas Chief of Romanian Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Alexandru Mirsu and Commander Zimbabwe National Army, Lt. General Edzai Absolom Chanyuka Chimonyo attended the ceremony as guests of honour.

During the ceremony, the message of Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi was also read out. In his message the Naval Chief welcoming the participants of Exercise AMAN-19, the 6th episode of the AMAN initiative highlighted that today threats to maritime security increasingly emanate from contemporary asymmetric challenges that have deeply impacted the maritime environment.

There is strong realization that given the vast expanse of oceans and an array of maritime threats, preserving maritime order in the global commons, necessitates collaborative efforts as a matter of compulsion rather than choice. "I look forward to successful and rewarding Exercise and thank all the participants who have

travelled great distances to be our worthy guests and invaluable partners in pursuit of peace” the Naval Chief stated in his message.

Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi welcoming the participating nations for a common resolve “Together for Peace” emphasized that we can work together, keeping our differences aside, to defeat our common adversaries. These adversaries pose threats like piracy, terrorism, drug-trafficking, gun-running and human smuggling; and greater adversary is the climate change which calls for a growing need to respond to it collectively.

Commander Pakistan Fleet added that despite having a turbulent phase of its contemporary history, Pakistan remained steadfast in fighting the forces of terror and tyranny. Pakistan continues to be a responsible state, cognizant of its role and significance in the international system. Vice Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi highlighted that Pakistan has been a proactive member of maritime security initiatives launched as part of the war against terror.

Pakistan Navy has always been a consistent Security contributor in Indian Ocean Region. Task Force 88 and Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) have been institutionalized to ensure maritime security of Gwadar and adjacent sea lanes and maintain robust security posture in critical sea areas and choke points in Indian Ocean for protection of national and international shipping.

A flag hoisting ceremony of participating Special Operations Forces was also held separately at Pakistan Navy Unit PNS IQBAL, Chief Guest on the occasion was Commander Coast, Vice Admiral Muhammad Fayyaz Gilani. AMAN-19 is a multinational Naval Exercise conducted biennially by Pakistan Navy since 2007. The exercise is based on Pakistan Navy led initiative to bring in world navies under one umbrella for collaborative peace and security in the maritime domain.

The current exercise, 6th in the series has a growing number of participants. This year 45 nations are participating through Ships, Aircraft, Special Operating Forces, Observers and Speakers. One of the key events of AMAN-19 other than sea

exercises, is 'International Maritime Conference' spanned over three days, being organized by National Centre for Maritime Policy Research (NCMPR).

Why America's Afghanistan Pullout Is Bad News for Indians

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could allow Pakistan-based terror groups to once again focus primarily on India. In public rallies, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi often boasts of his success in quelling cross-border terrorism comparing the relative calm of his tenure with the trauma of the Mumbai terror attacks carried out by Pakistani militants during a Congress government a decade ago.

At the heart of Modi's political mythmaking lies his government's much-trumpeted 2016 "surgical strike" a raid into Pakistani-held territory by a small team of elite troops who destroyed a clutch of Pakistani "forward positions" in retaliation for the deaths of 19 Indian soldiers in a militant attack on an Indian army base. The raids have been celebrated in public functions and dramatized in a recent crowd-pleasing, big-budget Bollywood action film, which Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata party has urged voters to watch before India's upcoming parliamentary elections.

But last week's devastating suicide bombing in Kashmir which killed 44 paramilitary police officers returning to duty in the restive Muslim-majority region has come as a jarring reminder that the threat to India from cross-border terrorism has been more dormant than vanquished.

Now, with U.S. President Donald Trump eager to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan, many analysts warn India is likely to see a renewed upsurge of terrorist violence, as Pakistan's military intelligence turns its attention back to India's troubled Kashmir region, the site of a long-running separatist insurgency. "There is this unfinished business in the eyes of the Pakistan army, which is Kashmir," says Paul Staniland, a political science professor at the University of Chicago. "They still view it as a disputed territory and unresolved issue." They [terror groups] don't have to fight in Afghanistan as much any more, so they can move their guys ... back to the Kashmir front.

Alyssa Ayres, former U.S. diplomat

Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan, has recently been engaged in frenetic negotiations to give Washington a face-saving exit from the 18-year-old Afghan war, a process likely to see Taliban militants incorporated in some new governing arrangement. With the winding up of the conflict, analysts say Pakistan's military intelligence which has long provided covert support to the Taliban can redeploy fighters who had been battling U.S.-backed Afghan forces to reinforce insurgents in Kashmir. Such a phenomenon would echo the events of the early 1990s, when foreign fighters who had cut their teeth fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan moved on to battling Indian forces in Kashmir after the Soviet withdrawal.

"They don't have to fight in Afghanistan as much anymore, so they can move their guys away from the focus on the northwest and repurpose them back to the Kashmir front," says Alyssa Ayres, a South Asia expert at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, and former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for South Asia.

Pakistan-based militant groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which has claimed responsibility for last week's car bombing in Kashmir, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which carried out the 2008 Mumbai attacks, have long been active both in India and Afghanistan, where they often focus on attacking Indian targets.

Rudra Chaudhuri, director of Carnegie India, says the winding up of the conflict in Afghanistan would certainly have a “fallout” for India over the next two years. “At the moment, JeM fights on two fronts. LeT fights on two fronts,” he says. “After the drawdown, you will see a lot of that firepower focused on Jammu and Kashmir.”

A picturesque Himalayan region, Kashmir has been divided since the late 1940s between India and Pakistan, nuclear-armed neighbors who have fought four wars one undeclared over territory that each claims as its own. India has also struggled for decades to subdue a separatist insurgency that erupted in the late 1980s and has simmered with varying degrees of material support from Pakistan ever since.

But tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad have surged since last week's suicide bombing of the military convoy.

JeM promptly claimed responsibility for the attack, releasing a video of a 22-year-old Kashmiri former sawmill worker who carried it out. India promptly accused Islamabad of responsibility for the carnage, accusing it of providing “full freedom” for JeM to plan terror attacks charges that Islamabad called a “knee-jerk” reaction and vigorously denied. Under pressure to reinforce his strongman image ahead of the upcoming elections, Modi has vowed retribution against Pakistan, saying he had given “full freedom” to India's security forces to decide the timing and precise nature of a military response.

Pakistan Navy's blue water ambitions

Pakistan Navy is the guardian of Pakistan's maritime boundaries. An ever-increasing threat of terrorism at sea, piracy and fast-changing geo-security dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) have encouraged Pakistan Navy to embark on an ambitious modernization plan to commission new warfare assets to develop new capabilities which would enable the Navy to operate in blue waters by 2030. The list of assets being acquired or developed by them includes the following.

1: Type-54A/P Frigate

The advance Type-54A/P is a highly potent naval frigate which is currently the backbone of the Chinese naval fleet. This cutting-edge vessel has a displacement of over 4000 tons. It is equipped with an advanced radar and sensor suite, integrated mast assembly.

The main weapon of this frigate is a 32x cell vertical launch system armed with HQ-16 Surface to Air Missiles along with anti-ship cruise missiles and a sophisticated self-protection system. Pakistan is acquiring 4 such vessels from China to replace its obsolete Amazon-class frigates, delivery is expected to start by 2021 and all are expected by 2025. When it joins service, it will be the most powerful warship in Pakistan Navy's inventory enabling the force to operate in blue waters.

2: Hangor Class Submarine

Pakistan Navy's submarine force is more than 50 years old. Pakistan was the first operator of submarines in South Asia. Currently Pakistan Navy fields French made Agosta class submarines, some of which the Agosta 70s are reaching towards the end of their useful life.

Therefore, Pakistan Navy has embarked upon a replacement and modernization program to overhaul the Agosta-90B submarines in Turkey to modern standards and acquire 8 new built Hangor class submarines from China, four of which will be built in Pakistan. They are expected to be delivered between 2021-28. Not much is known about these submarines but they are believed to be highly advanced variant of mainstay Chinese diesel-electric submarines of unspecified class.

3: Jinnah Class Corvette

Pakistan Navy is acquiring 4 newly built Ada Class Corvettes from Turkey to boost its littoral defence capabilities. These are stealthy warships displacing 2400 tons each and are specifically designed for maintaining area sea denial. Delivery is expected by 2025.

It is believed that Pakistan will seek to arm them with its domestically developed Harba anti-ship Cruise Missile system. According to details, two of these ships will be built in Pakistan and when they join service, they will be named the Jinnah Class in the honour of Pakistan's founding father. In addition to Jinnah Class, the Navy is also planning to put its existing fleet of F-22P Frigates through a Mid Life Upgrade program to extend their life and capabilities.

4: Maritime Air Wing

In order to protect coastal installations and to attack enemy assets at sea, the Navy has started an ambitious program to develop state of the art maritime attack capability. This includes the induction of JF-17 Thunder fighters with anti-ship capabilities into the Minhas squadron based in Karachi. Another squadron with identical capabilities will also be coming up soon. The Navy has recently inducted an ATR aircraft which was specifically upgraded in Germany for maritime

strike role. The Navy is also looking for a replacement for its P3C Orion maritime attack aircraft and to induct unmanned aircraft with similar capabilities.

5: Offshore Patrol Vessel

An order has been placed for 2 OPV-1800 vessels from Netherlands based firm, Damen first of which is under construction in Romania, with expected delivery in 2022. The OPV displaces at 1900 tons each and as per the MoDP, the multi-mission OPV “is especially suited for anti-surface & anti-air operations, maritime security operations, day [and] night helicopter operations, combat search and rescue, and surveillance and intelligence gathering operations.”

6: Coastal Defense System

In a bid to boost its coastal defense capabilities, the Pakistan Navy has inducted the Zarb Coastal Defense System which is based on the Chinese C-602 anti-ship cruise missile system. Pakistan Navy is also believed to be interested in acquiring an anti-ship Ballistic Missile system to add more capability to its coastal defenses in the future, specifically to target the aircraft carriers being acquired by the Indian Navy.

7: Second Strike Capability

Ever since the induction of the Naval Strategic Forces Command and the successful tests of the Babur-III Submarine Launched Cruise Missile System, the Navy has been working to develop Pakistan's second strike capability.

It is believed that in addition to the induction of Nuclear armed Babur-III missile, there is keen interest in the indigenous development of a nuclear-armed, nuclear-propelled submarine to consolidate Pakistan's long term Second Strike options.

8: Intelligence Assets

Intelligence gathering is an indispensable part of modern warfare, thus Pakistan navy has been actively working to induct intelligence gathering assets including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), a 3000-ton survey ship and by leveraging Air Borne Early Warning (AWACS) assets of the Pakistan Air Force, as well as ground-based sensors.

9: Logistical Assets

Pakistan Navy requires advance logistical facilities to augment its acquisition of new warships, therefore the Navy recently commissioned a 17000 ton Fleet Tanker which was built in Karachi with help from Turkey to supply fuel, water and ammunition to Pakistan Navy's combat and auxiliary units. It is also equipped with state-of-the-art medical facilities to support the Pakistan Navy during war and disaster relief missions.

10: Gwadar Base

With an expansion in assets and capabilities, the Navy requires a large new base to accommodate these assets in a safer location, far from the reach of the Indian Navy. Gwadar is where the biggest ever naval base of the country, aptly named 'Jinnah Naval Base' is being constructed.

This base will also be augmented by support facilities and a new ship manufacturing and servicing facility. This base will be capable of berthing most of Pakistan's surface warships, submarines and aircraft in the future.

The wrongdoer must meet its fate

Interaction Report

Despite the fact that the Govt or the Army had no linkage with the Supreme Court decision (Asia Bibi case), interestingly, TLP (Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan) actions were found to be well orchestrated as if their strings were being pulled from somewhere else. The narrative of TLP this time precisely matched with the well-known narrative of PML (N) that is to malign Army, censure Judiciary and target the current Govt.

Hence, it is not far from possible that the Cleric had fallen prey to the dirty politics of the corrupt convicted political leadership of the country, in addition to his own destructive philosophy. What else an individual like Khadim Rizvi deserves if he openly starts to incite hatred among the general public against the State, the Govt. and its institutions and most seriously, provoking mutiny amongst the Armed Forces against its leadership?

Apprehension of TLP leadership

The apprehension of TLP leadership was taken very positively by the people from all walks of life as they understand that Maulana Rizvi was not only troubling the common citizens through his uncalled for agitation, but was also challenging the writ of the state which is not tolerable.

Outside influence

Sedition and treason imprint created by him by passing provocative remarks against the govt and the state institutions indicate that he is a victim of an outside influence in addition to his own activities. This portrays him as becoming tool in the hands of anti-Pak forces which is even more horrifying. These forces could be both local and global who can use segment at the time and place of their choosing in future.

Authority of the State

The authority of the state is prime and no individual or organization can be permitted to create disorder as was done by Rizvi and his associates. His apprehension along with his accomplish is a step in the right direction strictly according to the constitution of this country. Perpetrators to be awarded exemplary re-tributions through a legal course of action so that such incidents are not repeated in future by this group or any other such group in the country.

TLP be banned as a political party and its bank accounts and properties be seized. CNIC and passport of its leaders be also cancelled. The election commission may review its policy on allowing such parties to contest election. Moreover, scrutiny of source of funding of both TLP and TLYRA be carried out and actions should be taken to stop illegal / anti-state funding.

A crack down should also be executed by the Govt to seize and punish those who incite hatred, sedition and mutiny on the social media. All the twitter and other social media accounts and websites that are involved in such activities be blocked instantly through PTA. A policy paper may also be finalized after necessary legislation by the parliament to cease such negatives endeavors by individuals and groups and be implemented through PTA and FIA.

All the Madrassas operated by the TLP must be shut down and their students absorbed in regular schools. Though, everyone has the right of freedom of speech but no one has the authority to spread abhorrence and intolerance. More so, challenging the writ of the state by organizing sit ins and causing damage to life and property of general public is totally unacceptable and unpardonable. The fate

of such scamps should be nothing but total disbandment and retributions for their deeds.

2. Amrullah Saleh said: The PPP today also said “NO” to any further extension in tenure of military courts. Addressing Party's CEC, Chairman Bilawal said four years of the negation of judicial norms for fighting militancy more than enough. No more travesty of justice. (Social Media) Bilawal objects to another extension for military courts. Military courts are not taking any corruption charges, rather they are dealing with terrorism-related cases. To divert attention from the corruption by their leaders, PPP is raising the issue of military courts. In this case, following needs to be highlighted that:

Speedy trials in military courts are a backup to military operations. Military courts have proved to be best option to handle the cases as 94.5 percent of the accused were sentenced on the basis of confessions.

Since the establishment of the military courts, the terrorism has reduced and the security situation has improved in Pakistan.

During the PML-N corruption trials, Mr Zardari opposed Nawaz Sharif, but now to hide his own corruption charges; PPP is against the national interests by criticizing military courts. This shows the worth of our politicians, that in order to save themselves of their wrong deeds, they would go to the extent of hindering the processes of our national interest.

Mainstreaming the estranged Baloch leaders

An important meeting was held between Balochistan's Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Dr Jumma Khan Marri in Moscow during the first week of Dec 2018. Important highlights of the meeting are as under:-

Dr Marri suggested Pakistan government to put forward the issue and demand UK to stop providing the safe haven for BLA's commander Hyrbyar Marri and also emphasized for preparations to be made to raise the issue in UN.

The meeting between CM Balochistan and Dr Marri is the step in the right direction. Pakistan needs to accelerate its efforts to bring other drifted Baloch leaders in the main stream and use them for its advantage.

Sincere Baloch leaders from inside and from abroad have started expressing their concerns about Indian sponsored insurgency in Balochistan. Dr Jumma Khan Marri, is one such example who parted ways from Brahamgagh Bugti, Hyrbyar Marri and Mehran Marri, accusing them of being completely controlled by Indian intelligence agency RAW.

Safe havens of BLA, BRA, TTP, JA, LJ-A in Afghanistan is also a cause of concern for Balochistan. If these safe havens continue to operate from Afghan soil, with the support of NDS and RAW, law and order situation in the province cannot improve.

Some hundreds of individuals were misguided by propaganda and fell in the trap of foreign hostile intelligence agencies, who exploited the existing grievances of the local population. However, the overwhelming majority of people residing in the province remained loyal to Pakistan, and disowned any group who resorted to violent means against the state.

Those still playing in the hands of RAW, whose core is largely decimated in Balochistan, need to throw down their weapons and pick up the stance of unity like Dr Jumma Khan. The State of Pakistan needs to play a special role in this regard.

Motivations for Pakistan to go nuclear

By Nidaa Shahid

Introduction

There are different motivations which drive a country towards acquiring any weapons capability. Pakistan's quest for a nuclear weapons program stems primarily from their value as a deterrent against India. During the 1970-80's Pakistan and India both were in the process of acquiring nuclear weapons capability in order to deter their perceived threats. For India this quest started much earlier than Pakistan, as they conducted a so called Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) in 1974.

Two major motivations which are thought to have had an influence over Pakistan's quest for this capability in the 1980's are a) security against the developing Indian nuclear weapons capability and b) prestige that is associated with having a capability which only a select few countries in the world were able to acquire.

There are compelling arguments which can be made regarding which motivation weighed more heavily in Pakistan's decision. Some of these arguments will be discussed subsequently to ascertain the actual drivers of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

Arguments for prestige

The weapons for prestige argument stems from several statements and actions of Pakistani leaders in the early years of Pakistan quest for developing nuclear weapons capability. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who first served as a federal minister and later as the Prime Minister, was always inclined towards acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Even before he came to power he was pressing President Ayub Khan to consider a nuclear weapons development program, a desire which was only intensified once he was in power.

While he understood the strategic importance of having nuclear weapons as a security guarantee against India, Bhutto also associated the weapons with being a status symbol for Pakistan. This is evident from what he writes in his book *If I Am Assassinated*: “We know that Israel and South Africa have full nuclear capability. The Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilizations have this capability. The communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization was without it, but that position was about to change.”

Thus, one prestige related argument is that Pakistan wanted to bolster its status and influence among the Islamic states which led it towards a nuclear weapons capability. This argument is driven further home with the above mentioned statement by Bhutto. However, the fact remains that Pakistan never considered nuclear option till 1971 once it realized that its survival against conventionally strong India can't be guaranteed without a nuclear deterrent.

Another related argument which is made is that by acquiring this technology Pakistan was seeking to become a supplier state of these technologies to Middle Eastern countries. However, both these arguments are voided by the fact that none of these eventualities have come to pass; even after Pakistan acquired a full-fledged nuclear weapons capability.

Although, reports of Saudi Arabia buying Pakistani nuclear weapons emerge from time to time, however, Pakistan has on all occasions addressed these reports accordingly and there is no evidence that such transactions exist or have ever existed. Likewise, Pakistan has not gained any special leverage among the Islamic

countries because of its nuclear weapons. Thus, both these arguments augmenting prestige do not carry much weight.

Similarly, other argument made about Pakistan in CIA declassified documents of the time are that Pakistan desired great power status and sought regional dominance which led it towards acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. This argument too is flawed as Pakistan has never aspired to become a regional hegemon and has time and again reiterated that its nuclear weapons capability is purely to deter against the Indian threats.

Even the nuclear capabilities which Pakistan has acquired over the years are limited in scope, such that these only cover Indian Territory. Thus, although the prestige argument is made time and again, it is over shadowed by other arguments which present a far more compelling reason for Pakistan going nuclear.

Arguments for security

That Pakistan made these weapons because of security considerations is another argument which is dominant in the literature on Pakistan's nuclear program. Pakistan has perceived a threat from India ever since its inception which only intensified following the 1971 war resulting in separation of East Pakistan as well as the Indian PNE in 1974.

The test further hardened the resolve of Pakistani leaders to acquire a nuclear capability to offset the Indian developments in this regard. Thus security became a major reason behind Pakistan's acquisition of these weapon systems in the early 1980's.

According to Mark Fitzpatrick, "Pakistani moves to develop a nuclear weapons capability are a direct response to the perceived threat from India's growing nuclear explosives and space programs. The motivations behind Pakistan's policy are entirely India-specific. Every aspect of Pakistan's nuclear posture has been conceived with that potential aggressor in mind."

Another scholar has put Pakistan's concerns in the following words, "Bhutto had been concerned with India's pursuit of the "nuclear option" for several years... A key motivation for Pakistan's program was concern over India's well known progress toward having its own nuclear option, and the public declarations by key leaders in India that they must acquire nuclear arms.

This argument is further substantiated not only by literature from Pakistani and western scholars but also by different U.S. government memos which have been declassified in recent years. For example, one memo states that, "Pakistan is strongly motivated to develop at least a potential nuclear capability, in part for prestige purposes but more strongly because it genuinely believes that its national security could ultimately be threatened by India."

The argument that the rationale behind Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons was prestige is not convincing enough. The empirical evidences and statements by both Pakistani and non-Pakistani leaders proves it to be security driven. A CIA memo has also substantiated this argument in following words, "Pakistan's nuclear program is motivated in large part by fear of India and we U.S. are unwilling to provide a security guarantee against India.

Thus, another motivation for Pakistan was the lack of external security guarantors towards which led it towards a nuclear weapons program of its own against an Indian nuclear armament program. This is not to say that Pakistan did not try other means of deterring an Indian threat.

Nuclear weapons were not the first conclusion which Pakistan reached, when it perceived a threat from India. Pakistan also tried other military and non-military means of deflecting an Indian threat, which were recognized by the U.S. government as well. A CIA memo in this regard acknowledges Pakistan's efforts in the following words;

"A nuclear explosives program is not the only possibility for countering an India that has exploded a nuclear device. Pakistani's have considered alternatives ranging from major changes in their conventional forces to international guarantees.

None of these alternatives appear very promising, however. Pakistan has drawn up extensive shopping lists for conventional military materials, but even if it were able to obtain most of these items, they would be insufficient to alter the military balance in Pakistan's favor. Whatever gains Pakistan is able to make are likely to be offset by the ongoing improvements of India's military forces...Non-military alternatives to a nuclear weapons capability have also been considered. In 1974 Pakistan introduced a plan in the UNGA for a South Asia NWFZ.”

Conclusion

As is evident Pakistan was not eagerly awaiting an opportunity to start developing its nuclear weapons program, which would have been the case if prestige was the dominant reason for going towards a nuclear weapons program. Pakistan was a rather reluctant entrant in the nuclear domain, only embarking towards a nuclear program after trying all other diplomatic and institutional remedies.

Pakistan had legitimate security concerns which were further augmented by a lack of external security guarantors and India's growing regional and global great power plans as well as their expanding nuclear weapons capability in the 1980s. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that the predominant factor in Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons was and has remained security and not prestige.

Once spoiler, Pakistan starts behind - scenes aid to US-Taliban talks

By Phil Stewart, Idrees Ali & Jibran Ahmad

Pakistan, long at odds with the United States over the war in Afghanistan, has begun to play a behind-the-scenes but central role in supporting U.S. peace talks with the Afghan Taliban, including by facilitating travel to negotiations, U.S. officials and Taliban sources tell Reuters. The Pakistani assistance, which has not been reported in such detail before, also includes exerting pressure on Taliban leaders who fail to cooperate, including by detaining members of the militants' families, the insurgents say. The Pakistani role in the peace negotiations is a delicate one, with Islamabad seeking to avoid demonstrating the kind of broad influence over the Taliban that Washington has long accused it of having. Sources caution its help could be temporary. The Taliban also do not want to appear beholden to Islamabad, which has long denied U.S. accusations that it provides safe haven and assistance to insurgents as a way to preserve influence in neighboring Afghanistan throughout its more than 17-year-old war.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly signaled his intention to wind down America's longest conflict, declaring this week in his State of the Union address that "great nations do not fight endless wars." One senior U.S. official, who declined to be identified, said of Pakistan's role in the talks: "We know it just wouldn't be possible without their support." "They've facilitated some movement and travel to the discussions in Doha," the official said. Trump's administration has accelerated talks for a political settlement in Afghanistan. U.S. peace envoy

Zalmay Khalilzad held six days of talks perhaps the most productive to date with the Taliban in Doha last month and is due to meet Taliban representatives again on Feb. 25. Taliban sources said Pakistan's role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table was instrumental. In one instance, Islamabad sent a message to the militants through religious leaders that they had to talk to the United States or risk a cut-off in ties.

They detained Taliban members' families as a way to pressure them, a Taliban leader told Reuters. "I haven't seen Pakistan so serious before," the senior Taliban leader said. The Taliban leader, who declined to be named, said Pakistan had kept "unprecedented pressure" on the militants and their close relatives over the past few months. "They made it clear to us that we (Taliban) have to talk to the U.S. and Afghan government," the Taliban leader said. U.S. General Joseph Votel, who leads the U.S. military's Central Command, hinted at some kind of Pakistani assistance in a Senate hearing this week, saying Islamabad had "played a more helpful role."

To be sure, current and former U.S. officials still are highly skeptical of Islamabad and do not see any steps by Pakistan that could not be easily reversed. Washington appears for now to be sticking to a total freeze in U.S. assistance to Islamabad imposed over a year ago over its alleged support to the Taliban. Trump at the time accused Islamabad of rewarding past U.S. aid with "nothing but lies & deceit." "There's some self-interest obviously involved here ... I would be wary of taking that and extrapolating off that and saying they're now on board with the peace process," said Jason Campbell, who was the Pentagon's Afghanistan country director until last year.

Pullout pressure

Pakistani sources suggest that the driver behind their country's support for the talks is not U.S. aid but growing concerns over the regional economic shockwaves that could follow an abrupt U.S. pullout from Afghanistan. Those concerns have been strengthened by Trump's surprise decision in December to withdraw completely from Syria, despite objections from the Pentagon. There are only about 14,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan at the moment, but their presence

ensures a continuous flow of U.S. financial assistance to Afghanistan. Islamabad, running short of foreign exchange reserves and in talks with the International Monetary Fund over what would be its 13th bailout since the 1980s, says it cannot afford to see Afghanistan slide into chaos just as Pakistan is trying to attract foreign investors to shore up its own economy.

“That is our main worry in all of this,” said a senior official who is closely involved in cross-border relations. “We have enough economic issues of our own to deal with already.” One of the most notable public signs of Pakistan's willingness to aid the negotiations was the release of Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Now the newly appointed chief negotiator, Baradar is expected to fly from Pakistan to attend the next round of negotiations in Doha on Feb. 25. Dan Feldman, a former U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said he believed Washington was still hesitant to become too hopeful about Pakistan's change in posture. “There is cautious appreciation for the fact that Pakistan has seemingly done more than before to be helpful,” Feldman said, before adding that it did not “suggest a sea change in Pakistan's position.”

Reporting by Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali in Washington and Jibran Ahmad in Peshawar, Pakistan; additional reporting by James Mackenzie in Islamabad and Jonathan Landay in Washington; editing by James Dalgleish.

Pakistan The Global Pivot State

By Andrew Korybko

Pakistan's promising economic potential, international connectivity capabilities, and unparalleled geo-strategic location combine with its world-class military and proven diplomatic finesse over the decades to turn the South Asian country into the global pivot state of the 21st century. As astounding as it may sound to most observers, the global pivot state of the 21st century isn't China, the US, nor Russia, but Pakistan. The South Asian state regrettably has a terrible international reputation as a result of the joint Indo-American info war that's been waged against it over the past few decades, but an objective look at the country's geo-strategic and domestic capabilities reveals that it's in a prime position to influentially shape the contours of the coming century.

It therefore shouldn't be surprising that China had the foresight to partner with it decades before anyone else did, but other Great Powers like Russia are finally awakening to its importance, and this is in turn making Pakistan the most strategically sought-after country in the world. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is Beijing's flagship project of its world-changing Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) because it crucially enables the People's Republic to avoid the South China Sea and Strait of Malacca hotspots and obtain reliable access to the Mideast and Africa, which provide China with energy resources for its economy and growing consumer markets for its products, respectively.

BRI is redirecting global trade routes from West to East and literally building the basis for the emerging Multipolar World Order, so considering Pakistan's irreplaceably important role in this process by virtue of CPEC, China's South Asian partner can be reconceptualized as the cornerstone of Beijing's future world vision. This in and of itself makes Pakistan pivotal, but there's actually much more to it than just that. CPEC isn't just a "highway" from Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea but a series of mega projects through which Pakistan can transform itself from being a passive object of International Relations to a leading subject of the rapidly changing global order if it creatively expands this central corridor throughout the rest of the super continent in order to become the Zipper of Eurasia.

The country's domestic economic potential is extremely promising when remembering that it's a nation of over 200 million people uniquely positioned at the crossroads of China's future trade route with the rest of the "Global South". With this in mind, Prime Minister Khan recently told the world at the UAE's World Government Summit not to "miss the boat" and lose out on their chance to capitalize off of his country's expected growth.

It's little wonder then that major investment players such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are jumping at the opportunity to take part in this before any of their competitors can, wanting to get ahead of the race by establishing a premier presence in Pakistan as it becomes the shortest trade route between their economies and China's. That's not all there is to it, however, since Pakistan is capable of expanding CPEC in the Northern, Western, and Southern directions via the CPEC+ branch corridors to connect itself with Central Asia and Russia, the rest of West Asia (Iran, Turkey), and Africa, which could altogether make it the Convergence of Civilizations and the antidote to Huntington's poisonous attempt to divide and rule the Eastern Hemisphere through his "Clash of Civilizations" thesis.

Building off of its CPEC civilizational-geostrategic connectivity prospects, Pakistan can institutionalize its role as the Zipper of Eurasia by bringing together the two incipient multilateral strategic partnerships that it's a part of the Multipolar CENTO with Iran and Turkey, and the Multipolar Trilateral with China and Russia

to form the Golden Ring of Multipolar Great Powers smack dab in the center of Eurasia, greatly aided as it would be by the instrumental role that Islamabad will naturally play in the post-American multipolar blueprint for Afghanistan. Pakistan can pull this off because it has a proven track record of diplomatic success in balancing between various powers, be it the US and China or Saudi Arabia and Iran, and its world-class nuclear-armed military is an impressive partner for all.

Simply put, Pakistan is the pivot state upon which all of China's future plans depend, therefore recasting it as the kingmaker of the New Cold War and the world-changing multipolar processes of the 21st century. That said, Pakistan is also a pivot state in its own right, one that's capable of zipping together the various forces of Eurasia and becoming the convergence point of the Eastern Hemisphere's many diverse civilizations, which can be institutionalized through the Golden Ring framework that it's the key component of. Prophetically, Pakistani founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah predicted all of this when he famously proclaimed in 1948 that "Pakistan is the pivot of the world, placed on the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves", and each passing day proves that he was right.

The author writes for this publication in a private capacity which is unrepresentative of anyone or any organization except for his own personal views. Nothing written by the author should ever be conflated with the editorial views or official positions of any other media outlet or institution.

End the war in Afghanistan

It is time to bring American soldiers back home

By Tyler Hicks

On Sept. 14, 2001, Congress wrote what would prove to be one of the largest blank checks in the country's history. The Authorization for Use of Military Force against terrorists gave President George W. Bush authority to attack the Taliban, the Sunni fundamentalist force then dominating Afghanistan that refused to turn over the mastermind of the attacks perpetrated three days earlier, Osama bin Laden.

In the House of Representatives and the Senate combined, there was only one vote in opposition: Barbara Lee, a Democratic representative from California, who warned of another Vietnam. "We must be careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target," she said. "We cannot repeat past mistakes." Days later, Mr. Bush told a joint session of Congress just how broadly he planned to use his new war powers. "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there," Mr. Bush declared. "It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

More than 17 years later, the United States military is engaged in counter terrorism missions in 80 nations on six continents. The price tag, which includes the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and increased spending on veterans' care, will reach \$5.9 trillion by the end of fiscal year 2019, according to the Costs of War

project at Brown University. Since nearly all of that money has been borrowed, the total cost with interest will be substantially higher. The war on terror has been called the “forever war,” the “long war,” a “crusade gone wrong.” It has claimed an estimated half a million lives around the globe.

It is long past time for a reappraisal

More than 2.7 million Americans have fought in the war since 2001. Nearly 7,000 service members and nearly 8,000 private contractors have been killed. More than 53,700 people returned home bearing physical wounds, and numberless more carry psychological injuries. More than one million Americans who served in a theater of the war on terror receive some level of disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The blood was spilled and the money was spent based on the idea that war abroad could prevent bloodshed at home. As Mr. Bush explained in 2004: “We are fighting these terrorists with our military in Afghanistan and Iraq and beyond so we do not have to face them in the streets of our own cities.”

But hatred is borderless. It is true that since 9/11, no foreign terrorist group has conducted a deadly attack inside the United States. But there have been more than 200 deadly terrorist attacks during that period, most often at the hands of Americans radicalized by ideologies that such groups spread. Half of those attacks were motivated by radical Islam, while 86 came at the hands of far-right extremists.

When Donald Trump ran for the White House, one of his central promises was to rein in overseas military adventurism and focus the country's limited resources on its core strategic priorities. While Mr. Trump's foreign policy has been unwise if not self-defeating in many areas, he is right, as was Barack Obama, to want to scale back a global conflict that appears to have no outer bound.

That retrenchment needs to start where it all began: Afghanistan, which has remained for more than 17 years an open-ended war without an exit strategy or a focused target. At the peak of NATO involvement in 2011, around the time Bin Laden was killed in Pakistan, there were more than 130,000 soldiers from 50

nations fighting the Taliban and building up the Afghan national army, so it could stand on its own.

There are now 16,000 soldiers from 39 countries in the NATO force. More than 14,000 of them are American. Their mission now includes less combat and more training. But the result remains the same: The intelligence community's 42-page "Worldwide Threat Assessment," released last week, devotes only a single paragraph to the war in Afghanistan, labeling it a "stalemate."

This page has been supportive of the war in Afghanistan since it began. We criticized NATO countries in Europe for not sending enough soldiers. And we were critical of the Bush administration for its lack of postwar planning and for diverting resources to the war in Iraq. Events have shown us to have been overly optimistic regarding the elected Afghan government, though we were rightly critical of its deep dysfunction. We have raised concerns about military tactics that cost civilians their lives and been skeptical of the Pentagon's relentlessly rosy assessments of the progress made and the likelihood of success.

Watch Oscar-nominated short documentaries from around the world made for you. We were supportive of Mr. Obama when he promised to end the war, we called for the faster withdrawal of forces and were disappointed when he fell victim to the sunk cost fallacy and sent in more troops late in his presidency. "It's unlikely that keeping a few thousand American troops in Afghanistan for an extra year will do anything other than delay the start of that nation's post-American era," we wrote in 2015.

Mr. Trump repeatedly called for ending the war in Afghanistan. In 2012, for instance, he said the conflict there was not in the national interest. Once in office, however, he was persuaded by his military advisers in 2017 to increase the American presence in pursuit of a new "plan for victory." The plan, Mr. Trump said, would defeat the Taliban and other terrorists "handily."

The rules on airstrikes were relaxed, and their number skyrocketed. The Pentagon sent in 4,000 more troops, to augment the 10,000 that Mr. Obama left behind. The plan is failing. More bombs and boots haven't brought victory any closer.

Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed, maimed and traumatized. Millions of people are internally displaced or are refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

Poppy cultivation is up four times over 2002. Despite years of economic and military aid, Afghanistan remains one of the least developed countries in the world. Afghan security forces, which were supposed to take over from NATO troops, have lost a staggering 45,000 soldiers in battle since 2014 and can't fill their recruitment targets. Mr. Trump's administration which announced it would withdraw 7,000 troops but has yet to do so is now negotiating with the Taliban, talks that are scheduled to continue this month. That's a promising sign of a much-needed acknowledgment of reality.

It is time to face the cruel truth that at best, the war is deadlocked, and at worst, it is hopeless. The initial American objective bringing Bin Laden to justice has been achieved. And subsequent objectives, to build an Afghan government that can stand on its own, protect the population and fight off its enemies, may not be achievable, and certainly aren't achievable without resources the United States is unwilling to invest.

Walking away from a war is not a strategy. But an orderly withdrawal of NATO forces can be organized and executed before the year is out and more lives are lost to a lost cause. Two Americans have been killed in combat already in 2019. No American soldiers should be fighting and dying in Afghanistan in 2020.

Recent talks between the United States and the Taliban appear to have made encouraging progress. Those talks might be most accurately described as a negotiated capitulation by the international forces. The Afghan government hasn't been party to the discussions because the Taliban doesn't consider it a legitimate entity just a puppet of the United States. In any case, once NATO forces leave, any treaty with the Taliban would be difficult to enforce.

But as part of any withdrawal discussions, it should be made clear to the Taliban, the Afghan government and neighboring nations that if the country is allowed to again become a base for international terrorism, the United States will return to eradicate that threat. The Taliban have paid a very high price for harboring Bin

Laden and whatever their role in the future of the country are unlikely to trigger a return of American forces by making a similar mistake in the future.

The eventual withdrawal of American forces might be the only thing that all the parties to the conflict want to see happen. A majority of Americans want an end to the war. If Mr. Trump doesn't end the war by the end of the year, Congress can repeal the 2001 authorization of military force. Congress needs, in any event, to reconsider its blank check. Congress should also make it easier for Afghans who worked with NATO forces and want to immigrate to the United States to do so. Many have already been waiting for years. No one can pretend that a withdrawal, even with an agreement, is likely to make life better for the Afghan people in the short term. That's an agonizing consequence that anyone who supports withdrawal must acknowledge.

Some experts predict an even fiercer civil war as the Kabul government and its army weaken and warlords gain new power. That could mean more deaths, new refugee flows and cuts in international aid that could cripple the Afghan military. The plight of women and girls in Afghanistan has been perilous in wartime, and it could become far bleaker if the Taliban topple the current government and reimpose their barbaric pre-2001 regime.

Yet it's also possible that a decision to withdraw could prompt the Afghans, the Taliban and regional players like Pakistan, Russia, Iran, India and China to work together on a cooperative solution to stabilize Afghanistan and deny terrorists a regional base. Such a solution that preserves some of the civil society gains that the Afghans have made, while keeping the country free of international terrorists, is in the interests of all those parties.

The failure of American leaders—civilians and generals through three administrations, from the Pentagon to the State Department to Congress and the White House—to develop and pursue a strategy to end the war ought to be studied for generations. Likewise, all Americans—the news media included—need to be prepared to examine the national credulity or passivity that's led to the longest conflict in modern American history.

The military has given honorable service. It is not the soldiers' fault that their country sent them on a mission that was not achievable and failed to change course when that fact became apparent. Any reckoning with the longest war in this country's history must also grapple with one of its gravest miscalculations. We need to recognize that foreign war is not a vaccine against global terrorism. In fact, the number of Islamist-inspired terrorist groups has grown worldwide since 2001, often in response to American military intervention.

Nearly two decades of terrorist attacks here and abroad by attackers both foreign and domestic have shown the obvious: that terrorism is a tactic, not an enemy force that can be defeated, and it knows no borders. It can be thwarted in certain instances, but it cannot be ended outright. If efforts to deal with international terrorism are to be sustainable indefinitely, they need to rely principally on intelligence and interdiction, diplomacy and development not war without aim or end.

The troops have fought bravely in Afghanistan. It's time to bring them home.

“Courtesy The New York Times’.

Taliban say Moscow talks with Afghan politicians "very successful"

The extraordinary two-day gathering in Moscow saw Taliban leaders stand shoulder-to-shoulder with former president Hamid Karzai, who called the insurgents his "brothers" as both sides agreed to seek lasting peace. The Taliban on Wednesday hailed unprecedented talks with Afghan politicians as "very successful", despite disagreements over women's rights and the group's demand for an Islamic constitution in the war-torn country.

The extraordinary two-day gathering in Moscow saw Taliban leaders stand shoulder-to-shoulder with former president Hamid Karzai, who called the insurgents his "brothers" as both sides agreed to seek lasting peace. No government official was invited to the roundtable, which saw heavyweight Afghan politicians and other sworn enemies of the Taliban praying and dining with the militants.

It was the second time President Ashraf Ghani was frozen out of such talks in recent weeks, after the US held entirely separate discussions with the insurgents in Doha without Kabul. Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, who headed the Taliban delegation, made a rare appearance in front of international media besides a smiling Karzai.

"This meeting was very successful," the black-turbaned Taliban official told reporters, flanked by the former president who was appointed after US-led forces routed the Taliban in 2001. "We agreed on many points and I am hopeful that in future, we can succeed further, and finally we can reach a solution. We can find a complete peace in Afghanistan." All parties agreed to support the Doha peace

talks with American negotiators that President Donald Trump described on Tuesday as "constructive".

The nine-point statement issued on behalf of all parties also agreed on the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. A timetable for that exit was "not fixed so far... but we are negotiating this", Stanikzai said. Earlier Wednesday, a senior Taliban official told reporters the US had agreed to withdraw half its ground troops by the end of April -- a claim refuted by NATO and the US State Department.

Thaw with Kabul

Delegates at the Moscow meet also crucially opened the door for the government to attend future talks -- despite the Taliban's steadfast refusal to engage with Kabul. "The process should be all inclusive, which means the government can also be invited, and would be part of this," said Mohammad Hanif Atmar, one of Ghani's chief rivals, who was present in Moscow.

The Taliban consider the Kabul administration a US puppet but Ghani's allies in Washington insist Afghans should lead the peace process. The months-long push by the US to engage the Taliban has ostensibly been aimed at convincing them to negotiate with Kabul. "Ultimately, we need to get to a Taliban - Afghanistan discussion," General Joseph Votel, the head of US Central Command, told US lawmakers.

"Only they will be able to resolve the key issues involved in the dispute." Ghani said he had spoken late on Tuesday with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who had stressed the importance of "ensuring the centrality of the Afghan government in the peace process". The Afghan president -- who has vented frustration as his friends and enemies have negotiated the future of his country -- describing the Moscow talks as "nothing more than fantasy".

Striking scenes

Karzai, who was president from 2001 to 2014, said he was "happy" to sit down with his former foes. "We always wanted to speak to our brothers, the Taliban,"

he said. He said delegates agreed on "almost" everything -- but consensus was not reached over the Taliban's demand for an Islamic constitution, and the group's views on women.

Fawzia Koofi, one of two female delegates among the dozens of men at the table, questioned the militants' insistence that women's rights be upheld "in accordance with Islamic values". "I... (Lived) in Afghanistan during (the) Taliban time, and I know their interpretation of Islamic rights of (a) woman is different," Koofi, head of Afghanistan's parliamentary Committee on Women and Human Rights, told reporters.

She voted against the joint statement -- but said delegates had promised her concerns would be taken up at future negotiations. Under their rule, the Taliban severely curtailed women's liberties, barring them from work and school, and confined women to their homes -- only allowing them outside with a male escort and hidden beneath a burqa.

In the Russian capital, in scenes unthinkable under their regime, the Taliban sat and listened as women defended their hard-earned freedoms in a modern Afghanistan. The Moscow conference was the Taliban's most significant engagement with Afghan leaders in years. But it was also striking because the Taliban -- who banned television, cinemas and photography when they ruled Afghanistan -- are rarely so visible.

Their leadership is seldom seen in public and scenes of Taliban officials outlining their manifesto for live television is virtually unheard of. Speaking to the Afghan envoys, they promised not to seek a monopoly on power but an "inclusive Islamic system" of governance for Afghanistan.

Great Game in Kabul, Redux

India should try and prevent a complete Taliban takeover in Kabul, but it may have to tolerate a government with Taliban elements in it

By Shyam Saran

The US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been negotiating face to face with the Taliban over these past few weeks, has announced that a basic framework for an Afghan peace settlement has been reached. The Taliban have agreed to provide verifiable assurances that Al Qaeda and Islamic State elements will not be permitted to use Afghan territory to undertake hostile activity against the US.

In return, the US agrees to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan within a specified time frame. The US has also demanded that there be a ceasefire between Taliban and Afghan security forces and talks held with the Afghan government concerning a political settlement. These additional conditions are still under consideration within the Taliban leadership.

The Taliban may agree to these conditions for two reasons. One, the proposed ceasefire will freeze the current domination of a large number of districts by the Taliban. The Afghan government controls only the main cities and arterial highways, but even these are under constant threat. Two, there is no longer an American insistence that the Taliban agree to participate in governance under the Afghan constitution and take part in elections like any other political party.

Khalilzad has said that how the Taliban will become part of the ruling dispensation will be determined in the government-Taliban talks. Given its control over large

chunks of territory, the Taliban will demand and probably obtain control over key ministries and provinces as the price for a peace settlement.

Given its military strength and support from Pakistan, the Taliban will inevitably use the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops to extend their power and eventually sideline other political forces. Having withdrawn its troops, the US is unlikely to return even if the Taliban violates the terms of a peace agreement.

For India, this is déjà vu. Once again, we have the prospect of a Pakistan-dominated fundamentalist government in Kabul that will threaten Indian interests. This is a real possibility and Delhi needs to decide on its counter moves.

It has been argued that India should open its own channel of communications with the Taliban and that the Taliban being Afghan nationalists, will not necessarily follow Pakistan in carrying out hostile activities targeting India. This optimistic scenario is unlikely since Pakistan's nurturing of the Taliban through thick and thin has been driven by the India "threat". Having enabled the Taliban to come to power, Pakistan will pursue its agenda of diminishing the Indian presence in Afghanistan and using Afghan territory for terrorist operations against India.

The US will not be overly concerned as long as its territory is safe. The Chinese and Russians will rely on Pakistani goodwill to safeguard their respective interests. The Iranians may be concerned over a fundamentalist Sunni regime entrenched next door. And so may other Central Asian countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan. Is there room for India to consult with such potentially like-minded countries on a countervailing strategy?

Over the past decade-and-a-half, India has not only become a major economic partner for Afghanistan but has also earned a lot of popular goodwill thanks to several community-oriented and social welfare projects. It also has a network of political contacts among the erstwhile non-Pashtun Northern Alliance partners and also among influential Pashtun political figures. They are unlikely to be enthused by the prospect of a return to Taliban rule that will marginalise them.

Could India help them coalesce into a more united and coherent political force to prevent a Taliban takeover?

India faces difficult and uncomfortable choices as another Great Game unfolds in Afghanistan. Sending boots on the ground to support Afghan government forces may not be wise, but military support short of that should certainly be expanded significantly. The bottom line is preventing a complete Taliban takeover in Kabul though a government including Taliban elements may have to be tolerated.

Shyam Saran is a former foreign secretary and currently senior fellow, Centre for Policy Research.

Taliban & Daesh have diverse interest

By Nusrat Mirza

It is beyond doubt that ISIL or ISIS or Daesh has been created by USA and its allies just to further check Russia. Iran and Russia have defeated ISIL in Syria and last base of ISIS in Syria near boarder city Ramada Iraq is under Siege. The Syrian forces have gathered around DIR ZUR desert town beside of Ramada in Iraq where USA planned to get them shifted to Iraq for their safety.

This plan has been checked by newly elected Iraqi government with Adil Mahdi being Prime Minister. Earlier General Usman Alghanimi, Army Chief of Iraq has given assurance to United States of America that its stay in Iraq will be safe. Immediately after this assurance, USA president announced withdrawal from Syria and USA started negotiation with Taliban to pull out from Afghanistan where ISIL has gathered by facilitation of USA through unnamed and unmarked aero planes in thousands.

It has been said there are about ten thousand of ISIL personnel in Afghanistan. A few of them, as has been said have spilled over in to Pakistan, and are being hunted vigorously by Pakistan's security forces. In the light of Iraq situation, there is a possibility, though may be remote, that USA may change its plan to shift from Afghanistan to Iraq and Syria away from Taliban and HizbuAllah. Thus save itself from Pakistan, Iran and Russia but act against these countries from safe heavens in Iraq. It seems that Iraq may not be such safe as USA considered in December 2018. It needs to be seen, if it changes its policy in new scenario.

Afghan Taliban are die hard nationalist and ISIL are Arabs, American, European or African under Zionist influence. Both have clash of interest. One is fighting for the freedom of their homeland while the others are mercenaries. It is America's plan bring the Taliban out of their hideouts, make them part of the Afghan government and then have the ISIL terrorists take them out like sitting ducks.

Talibans, nevertheless, claimed that they can wipe out ISIL in days considering that they could be identified by appearance, habits, ideology and language and Afghan society cannot give protection to them as per tradition or if some tries to do he or they will be checked and may be eliminated.

In case of civil war which will be disastrous to Afghan people, ISIL could play USA game. But if Afghans maintain harmony, there is no chance for the survival of ISIL. Further, there no chance for ISIL and Taliban to join hands as they don't have any link and aim and objects of both clash with each other. Relations between the two armed groups were hostile from the start and their fighters have clashed repeatedly. Among the reasons for the hostility is the ISKP's poaching of Taliban fighters; it recruited from among disgruntled Taliban commanders and fighters. This did not go down well with the Taliban leadership and in June 2015, in an open letter Taliban deputy leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor wrote to ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, warning ISIS to keep out of Afghanistan and stop "creating a parallel jihadist front."

The "jihad against the Americans and their allies," the Taliban said, "must be conducted under one flag and one leadership" its own. A week later, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani issued a statement wherein he specifically mentioned the group's opponents in Khorasan, Libya and Syria and ordered ISIS fighters to "have no mercy or compassion" in dealing with those who did not "repent" and "join the Caliphate."

The Taliban and the ISIL are Sunni insurgent groups. They have a medieval outlook and both use barbaric methods such as beheading to deal with their enemies. However, they also have serious differences. The ISKP has a global jihadi agenda the "Caliphate" it seeks to establish spreads across North Africa; West, Central and Southeast Asia as well as parts of Europe that were under Muslim rule in the

past. By contrast, the Taliban's ambitions are local and aim to set up a “pure and clean Islamic state in Afghanistan.”

Although the Hazaras have been persecuted historically in Afghanistan, this has been in the context of ethnic strife rather than sectarian conflict. In contrast, ISIS views Shiites as heretics worthy of death and its strategy in Afghanistan, as in Iraq, is to divide the population along sectarian lines.

So, it seems that there is no meeting point between Afghan and ISIL and there can be no cooperation between these warring groups. That means Afghanistan has to see more blood and USA sitting in Iraq shall use its strings and help Daesh against Taliban, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China and Central Asian countries. America is after its agenda to reduce Middle Eastern countries including Iran and Pakistan which will be resisted by concerned countries and America will face another shameful defeat in its design.

The all-new great game

By C. Christian Fair

Piles of second-hand motorcycles headed to the bowels of Afghanistan, serpentine queues of brightly painted trucks, petrol-filled jerrycans piled up by the roadside: there's nothing to show that this is among the world's most dangerous roads. But, the India-built Delaram-Zaranj highway in Afghanistan has the potential to change the strategic map of the region and the fight to develop it is at the heart of a geo-strategic struggle for influence between India and Pakistan.

The 215km-road, also known as Route 606, links Zaranj, the capital of Afghanistan's Nimruz province that borders Iran, to Delaram, a transport hub that connects to the Kandahar Herat Highway. I recently visited Zaranj and travelled the road built by India. I wanted to assess the infrastructural capacity and traffic through this border crossing. The border town integral to the highway's success already strains from the shipments coming from the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas. While Chabahar, a deep-sea port India is building in southeast Iran, offers the prospect to transform Zaranj, there is much work to be done.

On route 606

What I found in Zaranj surprised my interlocutors in Kabul, many of whom were under the impression that the crossing is under-utilised. Far from it. This dusty town was a busy hub and at full capacity even though little traffic is coming in from Chabahar -- most of the vehicles are from Bandar Abbas. If India hopes the

road to be an alternative to Pakistan's warm water routes, New Delhi should consider helping Afghanistan augment the infrastructure. For one thing, the bridge that links the two countries is too narrow for two-way traffic. It takes interminably long for a single truck to make the crossing. Trucks are stacked up along the Zaranj-Delaram highway, making it difficult for regular traffic. Trucks may have to queue up for up to two months, clogging the narrow road.

The customs and border facilities struggle with the operational tempo as do the counter-narcotics forces. Large amounts of precursor materials that convert opium to lucrative narcotics such as heroin pass through Zaranj but police lack detection devices. As I spent two days in Zaranj speaking to drivers, businessmen and an array of officials, I could not imagine how this crossing could bear more traffic. Once in Iran, Afghan truckers report a bevy of woes, beginning with usurious visa charges, extortion, and inadequate quotas of petrol to make the journey. Truckers told me that they feel as if they have no advocates. Everyone said they wish the border could be open all day, every day. They, however, claim the Iranians demure for various reasons. Truckers entering Afghanistan must countenance the Taliban as well as corrupt police officials.

The big picture

In 2003, India and Iran signed the so-called "Road Map to Strategic Cooperation". The centrepiece was the collaboration on the Chabahar port. India is also a stakeholder in the so-called North-South Corridor on which goods will move from India to Chabahar, pass through Iran via rail or road then onward to the Caspian and northern Europe. Because Pakistan has denied India access to its soil, for New Delhi, Chabahar is a needed byway to Iran, Afghanistan and beyond. Moreover, it is 171km from Gwadar, the port China is building on Pakistan's Makran coast as a part of the so-called "China Pakistan Economic Corridor". In 2005, India also began work on the ambitious Route 606. Built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at a cost of Rs 600 crore, it was a constant irritant for Pakistan for various reasons.

First, is the nature of BRO itself, whose website explains it is "committed to meeting the strategic need of (India's) armed forces". Second, Islamabad

understood that the route would reduce Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for access to warm waters. Islamabad has used Kabul's reliance on Pakistan as a tool of economic arbitrage and to preclude India from having ground access to Afghanistan. Third, Nimruz borders Balochistan, where Pakistan accuses India of interfering in collusion with Afghanistan. Fourth, it is yet another visible symbol of India's presence in a country that Pakistan seeks to render into a vassal of Rawalpindi, the home of Pakistan's opprobrious army.

Given Pakistan's control over the Taliban and other murderous organisations such as the Haqqani network, the road came under constant attack during construction and after it was handed over to Afghans in January 2009, by which time six Indians, including a BRO driver and four Indo-Tibetan Border Police men, and 129 Afghans were murdered. This road was to be the shortest route to move products between Afghanistan and Iranian ports. India retrenched from the project after the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Iran in 2006, ceding space to China. In 2015, under President Barack Obama, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the US along with the European Union forged a historic deal with Tehran to limit its ability to develop nuclear weapons, bringing Iran back into the comity of nations. The so-called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) cleared the path for India to re-engage in Chabahar. India resumed work on the port with alacrity.

The shadow of Trump

Late 2018, the fate of Zaranj and Chabahar was in a limbo again, contingent upon the whims of the maladroit US President Donald Trump. When he assumed the presidency in January 2017, he began eviscerating the accomplishments of Obama. In May 2018, Trump withdrew from JCPOA and threatened sanctions against anyone dealing with Iran. This disquieted India for several reasons. First, India imports more than 80% of its crude, of which about 10% comes from Iran. Indian refiners prefer Iranian crude due to better pricing and terms.

Second, Chabahar, where India is developing three berths, would also have come under the sanctions. India is also building a rail link from Chabahar to the Afghan border. Not only would the snap-back sanctions restrained India's strategic goals,

they would have also undermined the viability of the port. Under the US law, Washington could exempt sanctions for activities that “provide reconstruction assistance for or further the economic development of Afghanistan”. Many analysts, including this author, strenuously argued that India should stand its ground and push for relief. India prevailed. The Trump administration offered New Delhi a waiver on both oil imports and Chabahar, including the planned rail link. It was a huge relief not only for India but also for Afghanistan. If Afghanistan is to get the most from this border crossing, it will have to dedicate more resources to clean up corruption, enhance security and work with Iran to make life easier for the truckers.

While the twin problems of corruption and insecurity perdure throughout Afghanistan, Kabul should prioritise the Zaranj crossing, which has the potential to transform this dusty little outpost with few opportunities other than trucking and hocking smuggled fuel. India, which enjoys good relations with Iran and Afghanistan, is well positioned to help. In doing so, India will advance its strategic interests in the region while continuing to provide the value-added projects that have endeared Indians to Afghans.

A new way forward?

In September 2018, the Trump administration foisted upon the region yet another special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, with the hope that he could secure a negotiated settlement with the Taliban and conclude the 17-year war in Afghanistan. Scholars of South Asia were sceptical: few people are as loathed and distrusted by all sides as Khalilzad, who was in India as part of a two-week tour of the region early January 2019. Khalilzad's mission seemed pointless given Trump's announcement in December that he would withdraw troops from Afghanistan. Why would the Taliban negotiate an end when they need not defeat the Americans and their Afghan allies? The Taliban only need to keep fighting to demonstrate that the Americans and Afghans cannot defeat them. This is the definition of an insurgent's victory. Why would Pakistan allow the Taliban to sue for peace unless that peace means Afghanistan's capitulation to Pakistan? Would

Afghans who loathe Pakistan for the decades of devastation it has wrought ever agree to such peace terms?

And, why would the Taliban or their backers in Rawalpindi care about Khalilzad's efforts when Trump is talking withdrawal? Whether or not the American Tweet State and Deep State agree on Afghanistan, it should be clear to all that Afghanistan needs a new way forward and I contend Chabahar and Indian investment therein is central to this new future. Contemporary Afghanistan is not the Afghanistan of 2001. Today, Afghanistan is connected to railheads with Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. These rail heads are key to helping Afghanistan get its valuable resources out of the ground and to the markets. Afghanistan was once dependent on Pakistan, it no longer is. Between 2012 and 2016, Afghan imports from Iran totalled \$1.3 billion against \$1.2 billion from Pakistan and \$1.1 billion from China. During the period, Pakistan was the largest destination for Afghan exports with \$283 million of goods, India was right behind with \$230 million, a figure that is expected to rise as Chabahar comes online.

Over the last year, India has shipped about 110,000 metric tons of wheat and 2,000 tons of pulses to Afghanistan through Chabahar. If Afghanistan can improve political and trade ties with its neighbours, it can cut down dependence on Pakistan. Once independent of its murderous neighbour, Afghanistan will be in a greater position to extract political concessions. This does not mean that Afghanistan will be peaceful. Far from it. Pakistan will work assiduously to undermine these efforts. But it does allow Afghanistan to move forward, while strategically isolating Pakistan that is not terribly dissimilar from the decisions that India has made. New Delhi has understood that Pakistan will continue to kill Indians. However, every Indian leader since the 1999 Kargil war has known that the country has much to gain by avoiding a war with Pakistan. The strategic restraint has paid off: India's economic growth has enabled it to invest in defence modernisation, to diminish the immiseration of its masses, and diversify its portfolio of strategic alliances.

This has not been cost free: every year, Pakistan's proxies murder dozens of Indians. In contrast, three Indians die every 10 minutes in road accidents. In 2017

alone, 147,913 persons died, many times more than the lives lost in all of India's wars with Pakistan, including Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir. Even in Afghanistan, a war zone, 5,000 civilians were killed in road accidents in 2017 against 3,438 left dead by anti-government forces or in friendly fire. My intention is not to trivialise either kind of death rather to put them into perspective and to argue that progress can continue on some fronts even though Pakistan remains committed to murdering citizens of both countries.

Seminar on “Pakistan's Economic and Security Challenges and Way Out”

13 February 2019 at Hotel Regent Plaza, Karachi

Interaction Report

Gen. (R) Ehsan-Ul-Haq, Nusrat Mirza Chairman, Air Comd. (R) Jamal Husain, Prof. Dr. Tanveer Khalid, Prof. Dr. Uzma Shujaat, Prof. Dr. Shahida wizarat, Prof. Dr. Shaeshta Tabassum, Prof. Dr. Riaz A Shaikh, Amb. Najmuddin Shaikh, Prof. Seema Siddque, Dr. Mahboob Muqaddam, Dr. Shujaat Hussain, Zafar Imam Advocate, Amb. Hassan Habib

Karachi. Addressing a seminar in which academia of Karachi present, General (R) Ehsan ul Haq 'Former Chairman Joint staff Committee (CJCSC) said that Pakistan is most resilient Country which has been accepted by the world now.

He further elaborated that Pakistan faced numerous challenges but neutralized them. Pakistan is looking for investment which is coming and only Saudi Arabia may invest 32 billion dollars in Pakistan when Crown Prince visits Pakistan.

He was expressing his views in a seminar organized on Pakistan's Economic & Security Challenges of Pakistan and way out by Rabita Forum international in a local hotel where Deans and professors together with large number of Students were present.

The other speakers were Prof. Dr. Riaz A. Shaikh dean social Sciences SZabist, Professor Dr. Shahida Wizarat Dean Economic IOBM, Prof. Dr. Shaeshta Tabassum

Chairperson International Relation Department, Prof. Dr. Tanweer Khalid Chairperson Preston University, Former Secretary Foreign Affairs Najmuddin Shaikh, Prof. Seema Naz Siddiqi Federal Urdu University, Prof. Dr. Uzama Shujaat Institute of European studies, Air Commodore (R) Jamal Hussain, Nusrat Mirza, Chairman, Rabita Forum International, Dr. Shujaat Hussain Ilma University, Prof. Ambassador Habib Hasan IOBM, Zafar Imam Advocate and other spoke on the occasion.

Nusrat Mirza said Pakistan is prepared to meet any challenge that come across Pakistan. Ambassador Najmuddin sheikh was of the opinion that peace in Afghanistan is necessary for the peace of the region.

Dr. Tanwee Khalid considered that Asia Pacific is epic centre of trade and politics, Dr. Shahida Wiazarat was worried that seed may genetically change to destroy agriculture. Dr. Riaz Shaikh discussed the contradictions control of the country to be saved with any eventuality.

Dr. Shaeshta Tabassum expressed concern over the increasing challenges due to CPEC. In response to all question raised General Ehsan replied Pakistan is one of the most secure Food countries.

House has to be brought in order and good governance should have to be our priority. What we learned from China that they controlled all contradiction with governance and they always advise to keep good relation with all countries including USA.

Pakistan is not isolated but in the epic centre of opportunities. India may loose due to tyranny it is thrusting up on Kashmiri people. The students of universities of Karachi were present in large number and asked critical questions which replied to their satisfaction.

Dinner hosted by Rabita Forum International

at Marriott Hotel on 13 Feb. 2019

Prof. Dr. Shahida Wizarat, Prof. Dr. Tanveer Khalid, Prof. Dr. Shaeshta Tabassum, Nusrat Mirza, General Ehsan-ul-Haq, Former Chief of Joint Staff Committee, Lt. Gen. (R) Moin Uddin Haider, Zafar Imam Advocate, Col. Imran, Syed Raziuddin, Air commodore(r) Jamal Husain.

Lunch hosted by Nusrat Mirza, Chairman, Rabita Forum International to Editors of Karachi Daily Newspapers

Zainul Abedin, Such TV, Saeed Khawar, Editor "92 News", Abrar Bakhtiar Editor Daily Ausaf, Maqsood Yousufi Editor Nae Baat, host, Muzaffar Ejaz Editor Jasarat, Ahmad Husain Editor Daily Dunya on 20 Feb. 2019 at Chandni Restaurant Pearl Continental Hotel, Karachi.

Policy options for Pakistan in the post US withdrawal Afghanistan

By Prof. Dr. Shaista Tabassum

Chairperson Dept. of International Relation Karachi University

Pakistan Geographical location is strategically very pivotal. It is at the South Asia region the adjacent region of which is the centre of attraction of World politics. Pakistan is at the cross road of Central Asia, a neighbor of Afghanistan, Iran and India and close to the oil rich Middle East. Pakistan's is located in the heartland of the World.

The heartland theory was presented by Halford Mackinder in 1904 in a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society London. The crest of the paper said, "The Heartland of the World stretches from the Volga to the Yangtze and from Himalayas to the Arctic Ocean." Outside the pivot area, in a great inner crescent are Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China and in an outer crescent, Britain, South Africa, Australia, the US, Canada and Japan. From this geographical structure of the World geopolitics draws the conclusion that who rules east Europe commands the Heartland, who rules the Heartland commands the World Islands who rules the Word Island commands the World. Pakistan's location is exactly what is defined by the theory as the Pivot area of the World. Some parts of Pakistan are located in the inner rim crescent of the theory. That is why geography not only shapes Pakistan's foreign policy, but also its defense considerations and strategic outlook.

Pakistan has a longtime rival located just next door that is India. Both the states have historical rivalry. At present Indian strategy is by calling it a supporter of

terrorism, diverting HR violations in Kashmir and its domestic politics, developed closed strategic relations with the US and also with the Afghan govt. Moreover India is attempting to isolate Pakistan not only in South Asia but in the World as well. While Pakistan is following a policy of constantly engaging India in any form of dialogue by proposing many peace initiatives at the track I, II, III and IV level. It has a no tolerance policy any violation of borders will be rigidly countered by all means even the use of force is also possible. To a larger extent Pakistan's policy proved to be successful countering Indian strategy. At the same time a combination of pragmatic foreign policy backed with credible conventional and nuclear deterrence could serve desired national security interests. While remaining strategically relevant to US, Islamabad will have to continue to cultivate good relationship with Beijing. On internal front, Pakistan must revive her economy and achieve more national cohesion so as to offset the negative effects of Indo-US strategic convergence. It should fulfill its obligations under relevant UNSC resolutions (placing required restraints on designated entities and persons) Insist on elimination of the BLA and TTP presence from Afghanistan in the context of an Afghan political settlement.

Indian strategy has failed in Afghanistan. It is mainly because India's mishandled domestic politics of Afghan. Indian influence has significantly reduced especially among the major political parties of Afghanistan. While the Afghan people continue to appreciate its contributions to the reconstruction and development of the country, its traditional allies who fought against the Taliban in the 1990s have distanced themselves from India. Moreover all Indian efforts to open a transit corridor to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran's Chabahar port, thus bypassing Pakistan, came to a standstill because of the renewed US sanctions on Iran.

Now US wants to withdraw from Afghanistan but in a respectful manner. It would be withdrawal not surrender but Trump election campaign is driving the peace process. If the peace process timings would not align with his electoral campaign needs, it is possible that US may hurriedly wind up Afghanistan without the full settlement. AT the same time the wish list is long most importantly US wants to leave with the guarantee that civil war will not erupt the guarantee of which

nobody can give. While the Taliban They agree that Afghanistan territory will not be used against US or any other country but US wants assurance which again nobody can give. Talibans are not ready to give space to Ashraf Ghani's government. Problems for the American is that the Talibans know that Americans are desperate to withdraw and they can also push for a delay for the best bargain. Talibans will never agree for peace un-till they have get a major share in power. Share would be possible when US concessions on constitutional rights and democratic values.

What Pakistan's role and policy could be in this situation. Now in the endgame, the US expects Pakistan to provide another service that is it is expected that Pakistan will manage the unavoidable post war political mess in Afghanistan and will bring stability in the region in the post American withdrawal Afghanistan. This is a very serious and in fact a dangerous task which Pakistan is expected to perform. Present day challenge to Pakistan is not when and how US will withdraw rather how to bring all parties on board. The government of Pakistan must take its own decision and its own national interest. There is dire need to define our national interest not the interest of any other state. Pakistan must work against any effort of dividing Afghanistan. It is the responsibility of all the parties in the settlement that they must work to avoid any violence among stake holders. Pakistan must also take preemptive measures against Indian repulsive policy in Afghanistan, because it is expected that India would not so easily allow Pakistan to take the major share in the post Peace process Afghanistan.

Pakistan's diplomacy must work simultaneously with the US and China, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia to prevent civil war and promote a viable political settlement in Afghanistan. A conference involving these states and major Afghan parties could be convened to draw up the broad parameters of such a settlement.

The Security Paradigm shift & Pakistan

By Prof. Dr. Tanweer Khalid

Honorary Secretary, The Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Karachi

Global power shifts are significant as they tend to 'displace or restructure the existing international order generating political and strategic turbulence'. The 21 century sees power shifting to Asia while regional states in Asia are interacting to broaden their power. These shifting strategic priorities have made the world more complex.

Asia has remained dominated by European Colonists for nearly two centuries and now by the United States of America by its cumulative financial strength over the last two decades contributing to the global slight of powers towards Asia where China, India and Japan are coming up as Asia's leading global players.

The end of US unipolar domination of world affairs, Asian powers are emerging as multiple poles in Asia's strategic structure with Russia joining as a Eurasian power it is leading towards an unbeatable triangle. We need to understand more of geo-political, geo-economic and security dynamics of Asia because this paradigm shift has implications for South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular.

Security is an essentially contested concept with no universally accepted definition. To Pakistan the exact essence of national security cannot be realized without attaining a resilient economy because the contours of a new economic and political geography within South Asia are clearly emerging with enhanced activity among China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian States.

A new global economic order is now emerging to replace the one that existed since the end of World War II.

This is invariably complex as it depends on continuously shifting set of economic relationships. This transition already has an influence on the thinking patterns, politics, cultures and economic development in the region. This new geography is primarily driven by economic proximity rather than a security-led paradigm.

Several countries have taken progressive steps by merging trade with Foreign Policy objectives. Pakistan needs to do the same and develop medium-term economic growth goals to be owned and delivered by the highest office of the state. The twin phenomena of 'strategic peril' and 'economic promise' pose a daunting challenge to synchronize with the global transformations.

South Asian governments have been unable to meet the challenges in face of perceived external threats to their security and great power ambitions pursued through domination over others. Economic shift to Asia has profound implications for the balance of strategic power.

The security of South Asia is better thought of as a series of concentric but overlapping circles. The centre of gravity of the world economy is now Asia-Pacific hence great power interest in South Asia is not limited to Afghanistan but broadened to include its potential as a market, as a source of military power and extends to interests in its stability.

The rise of China in her quest for primacy first in Asia and then globally with a hierarchical view of an international order in the BRI (Belt Road Initiative) poses challenges to the established order of western supremacy and uncontested American primacy. Pakistan placed in the political geography of major power politics has economic and strategic implications with any change in the interests of these states.

Pakistan enjoys an all weather friendship with China and is the recipient of aid and infrastructure as an emerging developing economy. It will be an indirect part of Chinese effort of linking East Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe by the New Silk Road. Pakistan is also an ally of the United States. In face of China becoming

the largest economy in 2014 in face of purchasing power, the fastest growing G-20 economy, the world's largest exporter with an enormous leverage in influencing trade networks, the US will find it increasingly difficult to region its position of global economic dominance.

China and Pakistan have long been sharing strong political, cultural and economic relations amplifying their engagement to secure their respective interests within and outside the region. Sino-Pakistan link is being eyed by India as being focused against it but there is also the Indo-US strategic partnership being viewed by China as a close tilt towards the US particularly after the signing of the civil nuclear deal in 2005.

ISIS Presence in Afghanistan and threat to central Asian states

By Interaction Desk

It seems true that the United States is facilitating the rise of ISIS in Afghanistan due to which has become cautious and active to counter ISIS threat. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with his Pakistani counterpart to discuss the threat of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Afghanistan. In a press conference after their meeting, Lavrov described the presence of ISIS in northern and eastern Afghanistan as “rather serious,” and showed concern that there were thousands of ISIS gunmen operating across the war-torn country. Russia's frequent concern of the Islamic State's presence in Afghanistan has been closely intertwined with Russian President Vladimir Putin's broader internal consolidation and foreign policy objectives. Russian policymakers have emphasized the ISIS threat to unite anti-Western nationalists around Russia's expanded diplomatic involvement in Afghanistan, strengthen Moscow's alliances with Central Asian countries, and establish common ground with Pakistan on the resolution of Afghanistan's political crisis.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump authorized a MOAB (“mother of all bombs”) strike in April 2017 that killed 92 ISIS militants in Afghanistan, Russian officials have argued that U.S. policymakers have become complacent about the Islamic State's ability to threaten regional stability. To highlight this perceived policy failure, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov released a statement in December 2017 that praised Russia for being one the first countries to label ISIS as a major security challenge, and claimed that over 10,000 ISIS militants were

present in Afghanistan, with many arriving from Syria and Iraq. The narrative that Washington has not adequately responded to the Islamic State's rise remains at the forefront of Russian official rhetoric on Afghanistan. Lavrov reiterated Kabulov's concerns about ISIS fighters migrating from the Middle East to Afghanistan, and decried NATO's failure to devote adequate resources to defeating this threat.

American counters the narrative of Russia by saying that Russia is looking for greater influence with Taliban. Russia and other countries like could counter Daesh menace by strengthening Taliban as in recent months; Tajikistan has allegedly assisted Moscow's supplies of light weaponry to the Taliban's anti-ISIS operations, and facilitated Russia's pre-emptive defensive measures against ISIS. Russia in this way “displays of support against ISIS this way Moscow as a benevolent protector of Central Asian countries against terrorism rather than as a hegemonic actor. Further it can enhance effectiveness of its regional alliances. For this very Pakistan and Russia are close relation as Pakistan has been much affected by the terrorism. Though Pakistan has very impressively controlled terrorism by the west but still it needs the help of friends to counter Daesh in the time to come.

On March 21, Russia held a Joint Working Group (JWG) on counter terrorism with Pakistan at the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad. After this JWG, officials from both countries described the threat of ISIS in Afghanistan as a “grave concern,” and argued that the diffusion of foreign fighters from Iraq and Syria to South Asia was a major threat to regional stability. Pakistani officials have shared Russia's focus on ISIS in Afghanistan, because Islamic State's rise is a symbol of the ineffectiveness of U.S. Counter terrorism strategies in SA. As Pakistan continues to face international scrutiny for its links to the Taliban and Haqqani Network, Russia's strategy of blaming Washington for the poor security situation in Afghanistan is appealing to Pakistani policymakers, and could cause collaboration against ISIS to act as a stepping stone for a more comprehensive Russia-Pakistan security partnership. Russia needs to upgrade its support to its alliances with Central Asian countries, and strengthen Russia's partnership with Pakistan. The success of this strategy ensures that Russia will continue to frame its

involvement in Afghanistan around combatting the receding threat of ISIS for the foreseeable future.

The new Beijing - Moscow Axis

A shared rivalry with the U.S. has reunited the two powers, as in the early days of the Cold War. But this time, China is the senior partner

By Yaroslav Trofimov

When President Sukarno of Indonesia inquired about China's economy in 1956, Mao Zedong replied candidly that the country remained poor and agrarian and didn't have much to export "apart from some apples, peanuts, pig bristles and soybeans."

What Mao's modesty concealed was his desperation to industrialize, especially for military purposes, and his hope that the Soviet Union would help him to achieve that goal. Beijing frequently acknowledged Moscow as a mighty "Big Brother," and the pecking order between the two countries was clear. Just months after ascending to power in 1949, Mao had spent several humiliating weeks holed up in a shabby dacha outside Moscow, restricted in his movements and treated as a minor vassal while he pressed for meetings with Stalin.

Seeing China as its new dependency, Moscow sent thousands of Soviet engineers and workers and trainloads of manufacturing equipment during the 1950s. By the time relations between the two Communist regimes broke down in the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union had erected a network of industrial plants across China, enabling its protégé to produce planes, tanks and ships. Moscow even provided Beijing with nuclear-weapons technology.

Now, a half century later, the tables have turned, and the two nations are forging a new bond with the U.S. as their common rival once again. China today is an export-driven economic giant with ambitions for world leadership, embodied in President Xi Jinping's quest for a global "community of shared destiny." Russia, for its part, has been ostracized by the West for President Vladimir Putin's adventurism and remains deep in the economic doldrums. The former superpower has been forced to adjust to life as China's junior partner and occasional supplicant.

Western sanctions that followed Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine have given geopolitical urgency to the Kremlin's pursuit of China, a neighbor long seen with fear and distrust. Gone are the days when the U.S. could leverage these anxieties: Russia's establishment has concluded it has no choice but to cast aside its suspicions. For Moscow, Beijing has become an indispensable partner, a source of the capital, technologies and markets that it can no longer easily find elsewhere.

"China and Russia are more aligned than at any point since the mid-1950s," U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats told the Senate in the annual intelligence community assessment this week, warning that threats to U.S. national security from the renewed collaboration will expand and diversify in the years ahead. Though aligned, the two nations are not formal allies and do not always see eye to eye on foreign policy. China doesn't recognize Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula just as Russia doesn't endorse China's claims to contested islands in the South China Sea and continues to sell weapons to China's regional rivals, India and Vietnam.

Yet over the past year, President Donald Trump's determined effort to roll back China's world-power aspirations and to restrict its trade and access to technology has nudged Beijing closer to Moscow. Despite its many structural weaknesses, Russia is increasingly valued by Beijing because of its diplomatic clout, remaining military might and weapons know-how. "We share a strategic understanding on how to prevent U.S. influence on this continent," said Guo Xuetang, director of the state-run Institute of International Strategy and Policy Analysis in Shanghai.

“China doesn't want a two-front war, and neither does Russia. So China defends the east, and Russia defends the west.”

Just like Mao, Mr. Xi chose Moscow as the destination of his first foreign trip in office, in 2013 though he received a very different welcome, with the Kremlin's ceremonial Horse Guard riding out to meet him. Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi are roughly the same age, and they have developed a strong personal rapport. State media in both countries featured the two leaders making blinis together, topping them with caviar and downing shots of vodka last year.

Since Mr. Xi took office, the two countries have broadened security and economic cooperation.

Last September in Siberia they held their biggest joint war games to date, with 3,000 Chinese troops driving armored columns on Russian soil. In January, Russia's Central Bank said that it had moved 14.7% of its currency reserves into the Chinese yuan, selling American dollars as part of a strategy to reduce Russia's exposure to further U.S. sanctions. Ties between Russia and China these days are “at their best period in history,” Mr. Xi has repeatedly said, and Mr. Putin has described the relationship in equally effusive terms.

“For the foreseeable future, we are going to be very close partners, de facto allies with China, even though there will never be a formal alliance,” said Sergei Karaganov, a former Kremlin adviser and the honorary chairman of Russia's influential Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. Russia depends on China's economy and partly on its military heft, he said. “Meanwhile, without relying on Russia, China would not have been able to remain steadfast in what is unfortunately becoming its inevitable confrontation with the United States.”

The brief previous period of friendship between Moscow and Beijing in the 1950s was based on shared Communist ideology and ended once Mao began to chafe at Soviet domination following Stalin's death. During the Cold War, exploiting this rivalry was one of America's major strategic achievements, famously marked by President Nixon's breakthrough visit to China in 1972. A joint effort by the U.S.

and China to assist anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan in the 1980s effectively precipitated the Soviet Union's collapse.

Though there is no overt ideological alignment between Russia and China today, the two governments share a hostility to dissent, deep suspicion of Western interference and a strong desire to impose tighter controls over their own societies. Mr. Xi has presided over a push to stamp out corruption and bolster the Communist party's role in the economy and the society at large a campaign akin to Mr. Putin's earlier effort to tame Russian oligarchs and crush political opposition. China was inspired by Russia's legislation cracking down on non-governmental organizations, while Russian officials have expressed admiration for China's comprehensive internet censorship and "social credit" plan to rank citizens based on their loyalty and behavior.

Even as the relationship has blossomed, however, the two nations grow less equal with each passing day. In fact, when viewed in historical terms, the Russia-China dynamic represents one of the world's most dramatic reversals in the balance of power.

Russia was one of the imperialist predators that hacked away parts of China in the 19th century. As recently as 1991, China's economy was smaller than Russia's, despite its vastly larger population. China's GDP is now about eight times Russia's, according to World Bank figures, and the gap widens every year. China's economy has slowed, growing just 6.6% last year, but it still far outstrips Russia's 1.8%.

These divergent economic trajectories have translated into different approaches to the international order. Russia's demographic and economic stagnation means that it only has so much time left before its military might its only remaining claim to being a global power starts to erode, too. Moscow has thus sought rapid change, sometimes too recklessly for China's tastes: overrunning the borders of other sovereign countries, assassinating foes abroad and trying to undermine Western institutions that are constraining its influence, such as the European Union and NATO.

“China and Russia have different attitudes. Russia wants to break the current international order,” said Shi Ze, a former Chinese diplomat in Moscow who is now a senior fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, a think tank affiliated with the country's foreign ministry. “Russia thinks it is the victim of the current international system, in which its economy and its society do not develop. But China benefits from the current international system. We want to improve and modify it, not to break it.”

Many in Moscow's foreign-policy establishment are coming to terms with the strategic implications of this imbalance. Already, Russian leaders go out of their way to praise China's “One Belt, One Road” program even though the ambitious infrastructure initiative is certain to boost China's influence in areas that Russia has long jealously guarded as part of its own backyard, such as Central Asia and Belarus. “It's very difficult to remain a one-sided superpower, strong militarily but not economically,” said Ruslan Pukhov, director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, a Moscow think tank that focuses on security issues. “China's military might will grow alongside its economy, and ours will slowly degrade.”

Aware of Russian sensibilities, Chinese officials are diplomatic in describing the relationship. “True, Russia's GDP is currently similar to the GDP of Guangdong province,” said Ding Xiaoxing, who heads the Eurasia Institute at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, the think tank affiliated with China's Ministry of State Security. “But you can't judge the national power of Russia just by its GDP: One-fifth of the world's resources lies in Russia, it is the world's biggest country, and it has one of the world's strongest militaries.”

As Russia's economic ties with the West fray, it has turned to China as a new market, with a massive cross-border natural-gas pipeline going into operation as soon as this year. Driven by Russian natural-resource exports, bilateral trade surged by 27% last year, reaching \$107 billion. Chinese direct investment in Russia remains paltry, however. “It is still a simple trade relationship. The market openness is very limited,” said Feng Yujun, director of the Center for Russian and Central Asian Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. Russian officials, he added,

“are still not that comfortable with switching from being a big brother to being an equal partner.”

The U.S. remains incomparably more important than Russia to China's economic development, Mr. Feng said. America's soft power in China also eclipses Russia's influence, at least so far. For every Chinese student in Russian universities, 10 others are pursuing degrees in the U.S. and, because of the prestige of U.S. education, these graduates usually land much better jobs. An average Chinese, while familiar with Hollywood icons, would be hard-pressed to name a contemporary Russian actor or singer.

“No matter how badly our political relations slide, the Chinese people have a great intimacy with the U.S. For the past 150 years, there is no other power that inspired China so much,” said Zhu Feng, director of the Institute of International Studies at Nanjing University. “But the Chinese and the Russians are totally different people. We have always believed that the Russians are very lazy, drink vodka, enjoy their princely territory.... That lack of intimacy is a very big barrier.”

A bigger obstacle to closer cooperation is Moscow's fear that China will move one day to seize areas in Russia's Far East that Beijing ceded in the mid-1800s. (Stalin ethnically cleansed them of large Chinese and Korean populations in the 1930s.) Though the Far East accounts for some 40% of Russia's land mass and much of its mineral wealth, it is inhabited today by only 8 million people fewer than the nearby Chinese provincial city Harbin.

In the late 1960s, as Mao broke away from Moscow, open warfare erupted along the Far East border, with Chinese soldiers invading disputed islands on the Amur River. Hundreds died; the Military Museum of Chinese People's Revolution in Beijing still showcases a trophy Soviet T-62 tank captured in 1969. The border issue was finally settled in 2008 with the transfer of most disputed areas to China. Russian media at the time was filled with scaremongering stories about how millions of Chinese migrants would soon colonize Siberia and the Far East.

In part because of these fears, very little infrastructure connects the cities of Russia's Far East, such as Khabarovsk, with booming China next door a self-

imposed isolation that has stunted the region's development. At the same time, the collapse of the Russian ruble (which has lost roughly half of its value against the Chinese yuan since 2014) means that many of the Chinese traders and workers who had migrated across the border are now moving back.

“It makes no sense to be a Chinese guest worker in Russia now,” said Leonid Bliakher, a professor at Pacific National University in Khabarovsk. “The incomes in northern China are comparable to, or even higher, than what they could be earning here.” Now it's Russians who cross the other way to find work, hawking matryoshka nesting dolls, rye bread and chocolates in wrappers emblazoned with Putin's face to Chinese tourists in Harbin.

Even the Russian security services, traditionally paranoid about the Far East's vulnerability to China, concluded after 2014 that they shouldn't worry about the threat from Beijing, at least not for now, said Alexander Gabuev, China expert at the Carnegie Moscow Center. Instead, they are increasingly working with China against a common foe: the West. “The similarity of these two regimes and their behavior isn't any worse as a ground for closeness than the similarities among the democracies,” Mr. Gabuev said. “The principle now is: not always with each other, but never against each other.”

Is China about to abandon its 'no first use' nuclear weapons policy?

By Minnie Chan & Kristin Huang

The growing US-China naval arms race is putting pressure on Beijing to reconsider its long-standing nuclear policy, analysts say

But one source said that unlike the US, China is incapable of launching a pre-emptive strike and so has little choice but to retain “no first use” policy

China might come under pressure to reconsider its long-standing “no first use” nuclear policy as it engages in a maritime arms race with the United States, analysts have warned. Nuclear competition is brewing between the two countries as China makes gains in weapons development and Washington tries to limit Beijing's military build-up in the South China Sea.

The United States is still decades ahead in nuclear weapons development but a successful test late last year of China's new submarine-launched ballistic missile, the JL-3, is cause for concern in Washington. The test signals that China is moving ahead with a new class of strategic submarines called SSBNs, vessels that could be equipped with nuclear-armed JL-3s and that would be more difficult to detect than conventional land-based nuclear weapons.

In a sign of that growing concern, US President Donald Trump said in October that his decision to withdraw from a decades-old atomic accord with Russia was driven

by a need to respond to China's nuclear build-up. US Vice-President Mike Pence has also stressed that the US Navy would “continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allowed” in the South China Sea remarks that Beijing took as aimed at China.

According to Zhao Tong, a fellow in Carnegie's Nuclear Policy Programme, based at the Carnegie Tsinghua Centre for Global Policy, the US and its allies are stepping up their anti-submarine warfare in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Chinese scientists make progress on nuclear submarine communication

In a report late last year, Zhao said this was increasing mistrust between the two countries and raising the possibility that Beijing might rethink the “no first use” nuclear weapons policy, which has been in place since the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964.

In a separate report, the Washington-based US-China Economic and Security Review Commission said Beijing was looking at expanding its nuclear delivery systems, setting off debate in China over whether its nuclear arms should be used only as a deterrent and not as a “first strike”. The United States and China are both capable of delivering nuclear weapons through three systems: land-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear missile-armed submarines and strategic aircraft with nuclear bombs and missiles.

The JL, or Julang, series of missiles for nuclear-powered submarines is part of a People's Liberation Army strategy to extend the country's nuclear retaliation capabilities further from land to sea. But China trails the US in these areas by decades, a technological gap that means Beijing could only for now work on its capacity to retaliate, or “second strike” options.

One military source said that unlike the US, China was incapable of launching a pre-emptive strike and so had little choice but to retain its “no first use” policy.

China 'will build 4 nuclear aircraft carriers in drive to catch US Navy'

Hong Kong-based military expert Song Zhongping said China's nuclear capability was also well behind that of Russia. The US and Russia combined have more than 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons. "China needs to strengthen and improve its at-sea nuclear deterrent capability by increasing both the quality and quantity of its SSBNs and attack subs because the US is making every effort to restrain Chinese strategic subs from sailing further," Song said.

He said America's moves "are aimed at undermining Beijing's second-strike capability", adding that Beijing's decision to develop more nuclear subs "was also pushed by the massive replacement of old generation submarine-launched ballistic missiles".

Observers said the Chinese navy's successful flight test of the JL-3 missile in the Yellow Sea in late November had encouraged the PLA Navy to press on with developing the new generation of strategic submarines known as the Type 096.

The JL-3 is designed to be carried and launched by the Type 096, which are attack submarines that are more difficult to detect than land-based missile launchers and can move furtively near enemy waters. The missile is based on the PLA Rocket Force's land-based DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missile, which has a flight range of 12,000km (7,456 miles) and could potentially hit any US mainland target within an hour.

And while the new missile has flight range of about 9,000km (5,600 miles), Chinese military experts say it could be extended to 12,000km when fully developed, putting it on a par with US and Russian equivalents.

Is Trump killing nuclear arms control or will he be the world's saviour?

And there appears to be the political will to develop the technology. A retired naval official said the Central Military Commission, which is chaired by President Xi Jinping and oversees the military, had set aside an enormous sum of money for upgrading and replacing China's naval weapons, particularly its SSBN fleet.

"Funding is not a problem the navy has so much money to burn," the former warship commander said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The commander

said China hoped to narrow its technology gap with the US in SSBNs from 30 years to about 10 years by 2025, when both the next generation of these subs and of submarine-launched ballistic missiles would join the navy.

The nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and aircraft carriers were the “two most powerful and cutting-edge strategic weapons that China should pull out all the stops to develop”, the commander said, adding that construction of the Type 096, is already under way. The PLA Navy so far has four Type 094 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, each outfitted with 16 JL-2 missiles for routine underwater patrols equivalent to the missile component of their Western counterparts.

But military experts said China's four Type 094 subs would not adequately safeguard the country's national security. Meanwhile, the US Navy has 18 Ohio-class nuclear-powered submarines, with 14 capable of carrying up to 24 powerful Trident I missiles. But America also is developing its next-generation Columbia-class submarines, which will carry 16 of its most advanced Trident II missiles.

Antony Wong Dong, a Macau-based military observer, said the shortcomings and limited number of China's sea-based nuclear weapons had constrained China's military capability during peacetime patrols.

US accuses Russia, China of lack of transparency on nukes

“The JL-2 is a single-warhead missile, while the Type 094 is well-known for its noise and is easy to detect,” Wong said. “That's why China needs to develop the JL-3, which is expected to carry multiple warheads with a longer range.” Song said China's aircraft carrier projects would accelerate its nuclear submarine build-up since subs were needed to provide underwater protection for the flotillas.

China plans to build at least four carrier battle groups by 2035 to achieve its goal of having a maritime force capable of operating across the deep waters of open oceans and defending the country's expanding overseas interests. In the past year, it has launched two aircraft carriers and started construction on its new-generation aircraft carrier, the Type 002.

Collin Koh, a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said China might be trying to boost its sea-based deterrent capability strength by developing an array of weapons to enhance its offensive strike capacity. But Beijing's effort to develop precise land-based launchers, solid-fuelled ICBMs and hypersonic gliders would escalate the arms race among Beijing, Washington and other countries in the region, he warned.

US and China team up to keep nuclear material from terrorists

“In various regional conflict scenarios we might have to take into account not just the role of the US Navy in tackling the Chinese SSBN threat but also the prospective roles played by other US allies and partners,” he said. Several US partners “have built up significant anti-submarine warfare capabilities across the region”, he said.

The uncertain future of warfare

By Leopold Schmertzing

The most useful analysis on the future of warfare highlights how cultural, institutional and professional biases can cloud objective thinking on forthcoming military conflict. For example, analysts often fall into the same trap: imagining the conflicts they would like to fight rather than the conflicts that are most likely to transpire.

Nevertheless, analysts cannot shy away from thinking about the future; after all, it really is their core business. In a recent paper that was meant to be a discussion starter inside the European Union's institutions, I made a long list of assumptions about the future of warfare. Building on this issue, below is an overview of what analysts view as the main uncertainties pertaining to warfare for the next decade. These are issues experts normally cannot agree on, yet are decisive for the future trajectory of big global trends.

Is China going to surpass the West in military capability?

China has the capabilities and the will to catch up. However, to surpass "the West" China would need to undertake its full transformation into an interventionist power. In addition, no one is sure how far China's current strengths centralized control over priorities, investment and the private sector, a

long-term plan and a focus on big ticket technical solutions such as artificial intelligence (AI) and space technology are useful in innovating its military in the future.

Will China (and Russia) build up a military alliance that could project power globally?

The Trump administration's policies are harming the alliances and friendships the United States has carefully developed and seen as one of its greatest assets over the last 70 years. Does this provide space for China to come in and create a global "Silk Road alliance" with new and old authoritarian regimes above all Russia and opportunist democracies? How would Western militaries do in a worldwide conventional war against such a group of peers? The West has not been good in estimating its capability versus that of its competitors.

What is the danger and the potential of the cyber dimension in warfare? The future of cyber will depend on the future of vulnerabilities, especially the development of the internet of things, and on possible international control and verification.

The digital revolution has produced a new domain in which to spy, sabotage and prepare the battlefield, but some experts think the worst gaps in our defenses have been filled. A new generation of military and civilian leaders seems increasingly aware of the realities of this game. AI might provide more balance between offense and defense, and international norms start to shape behavior. Nevertheless, the future holds more players, more hackable systems and more valuable and critical cyber territory to fight over.

What will be the future of research and application of robotics, autonomous systems and artificial intelligence? Much depends on how fast these technologies will develop, how quickly and economically they will be incorporated into weapons systems and the effect of international regulation. Their impact will also depend on their capability in the wide range of future crises, and in subduing civilian populations.

Arms races and early adoption could lead to loss of control. Beyond that, the major question is how AI will develop as an evolutionary or revolutionary capability and how we master our interaction with AI advice and decisions. Preferring AI and autonomous systems in a supportive role rather than as final arbiter of life and death might come with a heavy price tag, but it is one we might be willing to pay to maintain our belief in the value of a human finger on the trigger.

Will there be a paradigmatic technological breakthrough in either quantum computing, general artificial intelligence or defensive strategic weapons? All three breakthroughs are low-probability, high-impact events. A general AI would revolutionize the whole world, and with it warfare. Quantum computing has been a catchphrase for some time, but its revolutionary potential has not been sufficiently researched.

Current fantasies of technologies rendering even hypersonic or ballistic missiles useless would of course change the nature of deterrence and could open a new age of limited warfare. How far will nuclear deterrence limit and shape big power conflict? Most experts still think that the risk of a nuclear exchange in a major war between nuclear powers is too damaging for anyone to try their luck. Others point out that limited wars could be fought under the assumption that the use of nuclear weapons would be seen as breaking a taboo and would pose even graver consequences for the user.

One growing uncertainty is in misinterpreting your opponent(s). Due to the multipolar nature of the future international system, nuclear powers will have to deal with more ambiguity, aggressive behavior and shifting alliances. This puts additional strain on political, diplomatic and military systems that presently might not be built for such a world. What will happen to the idea of using nuclear weapons as deterrents or bargaining chips?

The fates of countries that have developed or kept their nuclear weapons versus those that have not might affect the thinking of other states contemplating the adoption of nuclear capability. One just has to compare the current state of Libya, Ukraine and Iran to that of North Korea, Israel and Pakistan. Important here will

be the future trajectories of the North Korea conflict (which could signal options to other countries), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and treaty non-signatories (such as India, Pakistan and Israel), and potential nuclear weapon states (such as Japan, Saudi Arabia and Iran).

Leopold Schmertzing is a policy analyst in the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS).

Heading towards strategic instability

India must be alert as there is a possibility of emerging disruptive technologies prompting inadvertent conflict

By Happymon Jacob

In late 2018, the government decided to set up three new agencies the Defence Cyber Agency, the Defence Space Agency and the Special Operations Division in order to address the new age challenges to national security. While this is indeed a useful step in the right direction, it is also important to note that the constitution of these agencies is a far cry from the crucial recommendations given by the Naresh Chandra Task Force and the Chiefs of Staff Committee, both of which had suggested the formation of three separate joint commands to deal with new challenges to India's national security in the cyber, space and special operations domains.

This rather lacklustre response to major 'futuristic' challenges to our national security raises a larger question: is India adequately prepared for the new age wars in general or is it still preparing for the last war it fought, and won?

High-tech innovations

There is a revolution in military affairs that seems to have attracted the attention of strategic analysts and policy planners across the world. The current focus in military thinking across the world is increasingly moving away from traditional heavy-duty military hardware to high-tech innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, satellite jammers, hypersonic strike technology, advanced cyber capabilities and spectrum denial and high-energy lasers.

In the light of the unprecedented capabilities that these systems offer, there is also an increased focus on developing suitable command and control as well as doctrinal concepts to accommodate and calibrate them. The arrival of these technologies might deeply frustrate strategic stability as we know it given their disruptive nature. Strategic stability in the contemporary international system, especially among the nuclear weapon states, depends on several age-old certainties, the most important being the issue of survivability of a state's nuclear arsenal and its ability to carry out a second strike after a first attack.

Once accuracies get better, hypersonic glide vehicles replace conventional delivery systems, real time tracking and surveillance make major strides, and AI-enabled systems take over, survivability of nuclear arsenal, which lies at the heart of great power stability, could take a severe beating. There was, for instance, an assumption that the naval leg of a nuclear triad is the most survivable part since it is hidden away in the depths of the ocean away from the adversary's gaze. However, the potential ability of deep-sea drones to detect ballistic-missile armed nuclear submarines or SSBNs may make this assurance a thing of the past thereby frustrating traditional calculations.

Now add the arrival of these new technologies to the emerging strategic competition among great powers. The U.S.'s withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty is perhaps an indication of a potential arms race in the offing. In a January 2018 article, the Economist put it succinctly: "Disruptive new technologies, worsening relations between Russia and America and a less cautious Russian leadership than in the cold war have raised fears that a new era of strategic instability may be approaching."

Fears of conflict

There is an inherent paradox vis-à-vis high technology-enabled military systems. While on the one hand, it is imperative for states to redesign their systems in the light of these new technologies, especially the digital and cyber components, this also makes the cyber- and digital-enabled systems vulnerable to covert cyberattacks. More so, given that such surreptitious attacks might take place in the early stages of a conflict, ensuing confusion and scare might lead to uncontrolled escalation with little time for assessment and judgement.

The biggest fear about these technologies, the implications of which we don't fully understand yet, is their potential to increase the risks of intentional and inadvertent nuclear use. Such scenarios may be unlikely but not improbable. Here's what the Economist had to say on precisely such a scenario: "Both China and Russia fear that new American long-range non-nuclear strike capabilities could be used to deliver a disarming attack on a substantial part of their strategic forces or decapitate their nuclear command and control. Although they would still launch their surviving nuclear missiles, improved missile-defence systems of the U.S. would mop up most of the remainder before their warheads could do any damage."

The fear of a bolt-from-the-blue attack against one's command and control systems or a disabling strike against strategic arsenal using new technological solutions is likely to dominate the strategic mindspace of great powers in the days ahead, thereby further deepening mistrust and creating instability. Therefore, the possibility of emerging military technologies prompting inadvertent escalation and conflict cannot and should not be ruled out.

Chinese capabilities

China has emerged as a key factor in the field of emerging military technologies. This is something that will concern New Delhi in the days ahead. Some analysts believe that Beijing is in the lead position in emerging technologies with potential military applications such as quantum computing, 3D printing, hypersonic missiles and AI. If indeed, Beijing continues to develop hypersonic systems, for instance, it

could potentially target a range of targets in the U.S. While the Chinese focus is evidently on U.S. capabilities, which China interprets as a potential threat, this is not without latent concerns for New Delhi. India might, in turn, consider developing some of these technologies which will create dilemmas for Islamabad. The cascading strategic competition then looks unavoidable at this point, and that is worrisome. And yet, it might be difficult to avoid some of these developments given their dual use.

However, there is a need to ask how survivable India's naval platforms are given the feverish developments of advanced sensory capability in the neighbourhood. Is it sufficiently prepared to face the new age wars? Has the urgency associated with these technological developments dawned on the security planners in New Delhi? It is in this context that we must revisit the government's decision to set up the agencies to address cyber and space challenges. Clearly, this is a timely effort from the government to have finally decided to set them up though they are not yet in place. It is unfortunate that unlike what was envisioned earlier, these agencies will be reduced in their powers and their standing in the pecking order of defence planning in the country.

Moreover, reports indicate that the Space Command will be headed by the Air Force, the Army will head the Special Operations Command, and the Navy will be given the responsibility of the Cyber Command. If indeed that happens, their effectiveness in terms of tri-service synergy will be much less than anticipated. Even more so, given that the higher defence decision-making in the country is still civil services-dominated, despite the recent attempts to correct it, the effectiveness of these agencies will remain weak.

Happymon Jacob teaches disarmament studies at JNU.

Freed Saudis resurface billions poorer after prince's crackdown

By Devon Pendleton & Simone Foxman

Almost 15 months after rounding up dozens of Saudi Arabia's richest and most powerful people and imprisoning them in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has declared the raid a lucrative success. An anti-corruption commission headed by the crown prince said a total of about \$107 billion -- a mix of cash, real estate, companies and securities -- has been recovered from 87 people.

Aside from confirming a \$1 billion payment from the former head of the National Guard, the government has said little about the nature of the individual settlements. Less than four months ago, the crown prince told Bloomberg News that \$35 billion had been collected from the prisoners. Verifying the commission's claims is made more challenging by the opacity of the Saudi market. Closely held companies rarely disclose financials and the value of real estate -- the preferred asset of many wealthy Saudis -- is obscured by unrecorded transactions and restrictions on buyers.

Detainees have been trickling out of prison for more than a year. Saudi-Ethiopian billionaire Mohammed Al Amoudi, was freed just last Sunday after being held in

an undisclosed location on bribery and corruption charges. Also released within the past few weeks: philanthropist and former government minister Amr Al-Dabbagh; former McKinsey & Co. partner Hani Khoja; and Sami Baroum, an ex-managing director of one of the kingdom's biggest food companies. Authorities have constrained post-prison life for many of those targeted, with travel bans and heightened surveillance within the country.

This is the latest status of four billionaires:

Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud

Change in net worth since day before his arrest: down \$4 billion to \$15 billion

Arguably the most high-profile target of the crackdown, Alwaleed was released after 83 days in detention, looking thinner but praising the kingdom's leadership. He told Bloomberg News shortly afterward that he signed a confidential "confirmed understanding" with the government and that operations at his business empire were back to normal. Shares of his investment group, Kingdom Holding Co., have dropped 22 percent since his arrest.

Alwaleed, Saudi Arabia's richest person, has a 95 percent stake in the company that comprises half of his net worth. In October, Kingdom Holding signed a \$1 billion loan, its first financing since his arrest, and the firm's chief executive officer said last month that it's considering spinning off some real estate investments. Alwaleed, known to be a restless globetrotter, is said to have been banned from traveling abroad. He has about \$2.6 billion of assets outside the Middle East.

Mohammed Al Amoudi

Change in net worth: down \$1.4 billion to \$8.7 billion

Al Amoudi, the nation's second-richest person, was released Jan. 27, six weeks after Saudi officials confirmed he was being held on corruption and bribery charges and would stand trial. His fortune originated with a government contract during the reign of King Fahd and is now mostly tied to assets outside the kingdom.

He owns the biggest fuel company in Sweden and is the largest individual investor in his native Ethiopia, where he owns gold mines, hotels and agricultural tracts. While his businesses abroad continued to operate independently during his detention, the status and control of his Saudi assets -- which include a chain of gas stations and an engineering firm -- is unclear. Al Amoudi is healthy and in good spirits and has met with senior managers of his companies, according to a person close to the billionaire, who asked not to be identified because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly. Saleh Kamel

Change in net worth: down \$700 million to \$3 billion

Kamel, a self-made finance and health-care entrepreneur, is a pioneer of modern Islamic finance. His fortune stems from Bahrain-based Albaraka Banking Group and Dallah Albaraka, a sprawling Jeddah holding company that controls businesses spanning health care, real estate and food manufacturing.

Kamel was also one of Saudi Arabia's earliest media magnates. In the 1970s, he founded one of the country's first television production companies and was an early investor in Middle East Broadcasting Center, a regional media giant whose chairman, Waleed Al Ibrahim, was also detained and released in January 2018. After the emptying of the Ritz, the government took control of 60 percent of MBC, including shares belonging to the Kamel family, while Al Ibrahim retained his 40 percent share, according to people familiar with the matter.

Fawaz Alhokair

Change in net worth: down \$520 million to about \$950 million

Alhokair is a co-founder and major shareholder of the Fawaz Alhokair Group, a franchise retail company he formed with his brothers in 1990. He was freed after reaching a settlement with the government, a senior official said at the time. The company is preparing to sell 30 percent of its shares in its Arabian Centres mall unit, a listing that had previously been put on hold because of Alhokair's arrest. Shares of the company -- of which he owns 23 percent, according to recent Saudi stock exchange filings -- have tumbled 41 percent since his detention.

With assistance by Vivian Nereim, Zainab Fattah, and Zaid Sabah.

Iraq seeks US presence but rejects occupation

The US President Donald Trump has been struggling to terminate America's 'endless wars', but without much visible success so far. However, the terminator in the White House may be succeeding in spite of himself in one major Middle Eastern theatre Iraq where, ironically, Trump intends to keep US troops deployed for the foreseeable future. To demonstrate his grit symbolically, Trump chose Iraq for his first ever visit to a combat zone as the US commander-in-chief when he had a 3-hour stopover at Al Asad air base on the Syrian-Iraqi border last December.

Candidate Trump regretted that the Obama administration withdrew troops from Iraq and failed to seize that country's fabulous oil fields as war booty. And in a CBS interview a week ago, Trump expansively added a further dimension to the tale, saying, "We (US) spent a fortune on building this incredible base. We might as well keep it. And one of the reasons I want to keep it is because I want to be looking a little bit at Iran because Iran is a real problem."

Asked if that meant he wanted to be able to strike Iran, Trump said, "No, because I want to be able to watch Iran. All I want to do is be able to watch. We have an unbelievable and expensive military base built in Iraq. It's perfectly situated for looking at all over different parts of the troubled Middle East rather than pulling

up.” Again, last Tuesday, during his State of the Union address last Tuesday before the US Congress, Trump repeated his case for keeping “an eye on Iran.”

However, Trump's bravado has triggered a blowback. The Iraqi leadership takes serious objection to any US attempt to use Iraq as a theatre to hit at Iran. The New York Times was spot on by noting that Trump might have “achieved a previously unattainable goal,” which was “unity in the Iraqi political establishment” in “a collective rejection of his proposal.”

The Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi underscored that Baghdad has not allowed the US to have any military bases in Iraq and that he will not accept his country being used as a base against any of its neighbours. President Barham Salih also said that the Iraqi Constitution prohibits activities directed another country from Iraqi soil and expressed his opposition to Trump's intention.

In a rare political comment, the most revered and influential Shiite cleric in Iraq (if not among the Shiites the world over), Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has rejected Trump's statements on US troops, insisting that Iraq wants “good and balanced relations” with its neighbours and that it “rejects being a launching pad for harming any other country.”

Curiously, Trump has stirred up the hornet's nest just when talks are beginning to negotiate a formal agreement giving underpinning to the US deployment to Iraq. To be sure, the pro-Iran political and religious groups have kickstarted a campaign to oust the US troops from Iraqi soil. Of course, Baghdad also realises that the US military presence and continued support is imperative to consolidate the security gains made since 2014. On the other hand, the leadership in Baghdad is also obliged to demonstrate that it is standing up for Iraq's sovereignty.

Clearly, the US military deployment to Iraq has several dimensions. Needless to say, Trump blurted out the truth when he said the US military and intelligence view Iraq as a listening post on Iran. Unlike in Syria where the US military presence lacks legitimacy under international law and is facing criticism from Russia, Turkey and Iran, when it comes to Iraq, American forces were invited by

the established government in Baghdad and almost all Arab countries support the deployment.

Second, even in the unlikely event of Baghdad evicting US troops from the country, the pro-US Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) could always seek to host at least a residual force of coalition troops in the Region. The KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani recently affirmed Erbil's stance that US troops should remain in Iraq while ISIS still poses a threat, arguing that this "is in the best interest of Iraq."

The bottom line is that a complete withdrawal of US troops similar to the 2011 withdrawal, when Washington failed to retain even a residual troop presence is highly improbable in the near term so long as the spectre of an ISIS resurgence continues to haunt the authorities in Baghdad. (Read a report by WaPo's Adam Taylor, Do U. S. Troops Have A Future In Iraq?)

Third, Iraq has become in the recent period a turf for competing influences Iran's looming presence, nascent Saudi influence (encouraged by the US and Israel) and the overarching Iraqi nationalism. The protracted negotiations for the formation of a coalition government in Baghdad following last year's parliamentary election testify to a certain depletion of Iran's predominance in Iraqi politics although Tehran-backed militia forces constitute the steel frame of Iraqi security and trade and economic relations with Iran are vital for the survival of the Iraqi economy.

Read a fascinating essay in the Middle East Eye entitled Iraq's new leaders can't be reduced to a US vs Iran binary. Fourth, unlike in Syria where Iran has shared interests with Russia and Turkey for the eviction of the US troops, Tehran is more or less on its own in countering the US presence in Iraq. Russia's influence in Baghdad is a pale shadow of what it used to be in the Soviet era.

As for Turkey, it has specific interests in Iraq which can be safeguarded on its own steam (with or without Iranian help.) Besides, it is far from certain whether Russia and Turkey relish the prospect of an Iraq dominated by Iran. Quite obviously, Russia and Turkey have steered clear of Iran's 'resistance' politics. If the Israeli

version is to be believed, Moscow even acquiesces with the relentless Israeli attacks on Iranian assets in Syria.

Finally, the big question remains: Isn't it a good thing that the US and Iran 'co-habitate' the Iraqi turf? After all, they have a common interest in Iraq's stability. Big Oil has a big presence in Iraq (and this could even be Trump's real motivation.) ExxonMobil is doing roaring business in the great oil fields of southern Iraq. On the other hand, the Iraqi economy and society is tied by umbilical cords to Iran. And Washington is not unaware that it is unrealistic and might even be destabilising to try to rupture the 'win-win' Iran-Iraq economic ties.

Above all, Iraq provides a unique window of opportunity for Washington and Tehran to assess each other's intentions from close quarters provided, of course, they keep an open mind, polemic and grandstanding notwithstanding.

Iraq no more safe Haven for USA

By Nusrat Mirza

Having got accepted by Taliban to pull out American Forces and Taliban ready to settle their difference with new Northern Alliance or Ashraf Gani Government, Taliban have given assurance to USA that it will wipe out ISIS in a month. This is tricky subject. USA would like to keep fighting the Taliban with ISIS to take revenge from Taliban as USA will give full support to ISIS sitting in Iraq.

USA has changed the strategy leaving Syria and Afghanistan and making its base in Iraq to deal with Iran, Pakistan, China and Russia. In Iraq it will have no presence of Taliban and less presence of Hizbullah because Hizbullah will be engaged by Israel in Syria and Lebanon and Iran, Russia and Turkey may not have such concentration and harmony against the presence of USA in Iraq.

Iraqi Chief of Army Staff General AGhanimi has assured for its country's full support, should USA stay in Iraq. On 5th December 2018, there was a conference in Baghdad under auspicious of NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI) in which a few international organizations and Canada's Army Chief General Dany Fortin participated.

This conference welcomed American troops in Iraq which can consolidate NATO and gave American a chance to build a safe base in Iraq which will provide more safety than Syria and Afghanistan where Iran and Russia jointly has given tough time to USA and in Afghanistan Taliban has fought a longest war in USA history with the support of Pakistan, Iran and Russia and most probably China.

American considers that they are well placed in Iraq with the term Syraq and play its game safely than Syria and Afghanistan. USA can satisfy clergy Ayatullah Seestani for turning Iraq a greater Shia state than Iran if Qatif province from Saudi Arabia is annexed and Ahwaz Arabic speaking area of Iran be taken to add in present area of Iraq. The Yinon Plan or Col. Peter Ralph Plan which changes the boundaries of whole Middle East including Iran and Pakistan has to be implemented by USA.

This plan was proposed in 1983 by an Israeli diplomat Yinon for Greater Israel and keeps no Muslim country larger than Israel neither by population nor by Area. But for the time being, Iraq could be allowed to be larger and can be reduced later on. That means that American has not changed the plan but changed the strategy. It has moved from Syria and Afghanistan to Iraq to execute its plan which it has for Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China and Syria. Israel has already started bombing Syrian airports.

Its army spokesman has said that Israeli forces have attacked Syria targets several times. Iran's air Force Chief has said that if Israel will go beyond the limit, Iran will eliminate Israel from the surface of the earth. Iran can do so or not it is a question. Iran's missile program, however, is considered in west to be horrible. But how far it can meet the Israeli nuclear challenge together with USA one, it is to be judged if and when such time could ever be seen.

Some signals can be taken in to consideration: one Israeli attacks on Syrian bases, second increased terrorist's activities in Pakistan, especially in Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtoon Khuwa provinces, third in Iran terrorist activists have been launched by west. Fourth USA has pull itself from INF (Intermediate Range Nuclear Treaty) Fifth, Afghan Taliban shall be got engaged with ISIS and Afghanistan may see deadlier era as supposedly USA sponsored ISIS will give

Taliban hard time while they will be part of negotiated formed Afghan Government. For now, Afghan Taliban were not exposed while being in government they will be easy target for ISIS.

Further, USA is changing the war pattern to which saying Paradigm Shift: USA has formed Space Force, it is withdrawing forces from venerable regions, taking less responsibilities towards world peace, giving tough time to China in Business arena and to Russia in lethal arms, Star war programs have been commenced by Russia and USA.

China has launched its satellite on the back side of the moon that endangers USA's space satellites. One can judge from this that world has become more dangerous than before. The good news for the time being is, if it is considered so that there is going to be agreement between Afghan Taliban and USA soon to which Taliban are optimistic when they say USA is serious for Afghan issue settlement while, USA experts' are of the opinion that still it is a long way to go.

In Iraq, however, new development has taken place on 11th February 2019. Mr. Mahdi Taqi member national Security and Defense commission has given notices to Prime Minister of Iraq, Commander in Chief Adil AbdulMehdi and Army Chief General Usman Alghanimi to provide the parliament the information about number of bases and the Us Army personnel present in Iraq within two days other they will face the impeachment. This is a signal that USA has to face resistance in its presence in Iraq which it was considering safe.

The writer is Chief Editor of Interaction and an analyst on strategic Affairs and Columnist, Former advisor to Chief Minister Sindh, Former Consultant to Government of Pakistan.

PM warns Iran Attack Israel and 'it will be the last anniversary you celebrate'

After IRGC commander threatens to raze Tel Aviv and Haifa if US strikes and pledges support for Hezbollah, Netanyahu tells it not to make 'terrible mistake'

By Toi Staff

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday threatened the Iranian regime with destruction after an Iranian military leader warned that the Islamic Republic would raze major Israeli cities if the US attacked it. "I don't ignore the threats from the Iranian regime, but I'm also not intimidated by them," Netanyahu said in a Hebrew-language video uploaded to social media.

"If this regime makes the terrible mistake and tries to destroy Tel Aviv or Haifa, it won't be successful, and it will be the last anniversary of their revolution they will ever celebrate." "They should take that into account," he said.

The threat came as Iran marked the 40th anniversary of its revolution with rallies and marching that featured chants and banners calling for "Death to America," and "Death to Israel." Monday's celebrations in Tehran were also a backdrop to

the military's display of Iranian-made missiles, which authorities showcase every year during anniversary celebrations.

Yadollah Javani, deputy head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps political bureau, said during a rally that Israel would pay if the US attacked Iran. "The United States does not have the courage to shoot a single bullet at us despite all its defensive and military assets. But if they attack us, we will raze Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground," Javani was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA, according to Reuters.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps spokesman, Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, said during the rally that "Islamic Iran has reached a level [that enables it] to protect its borders by effective military capabilities, and firmly punish any aggressor," according to Reuters citing IRNA. Top political and military leaders in Iran regularly call for Israel's annihilation, with a senior general recently claiming it would defeat the Jewish state "within three days" in the case of a war.

At a rally in Tehran, president Hassan Rouhani addressed the crowds for nearly 45 minutes, lashing out at Iran's enemies America and Israel and claiming their efforts to "bring down" Iranians through sanctions will not succeed. "The presence of people in this celebration means that plots by the enemies ... have been defused," Rouhani said. "They will not achieve their ill-omened aims."

Israeli television reported last week that Israel has discovered a new ambitious precision missile factory being constructed by Iran in Syria together with the Syrian government and Lebanese terror group Hezbollah, after Israel bombed and destroyed a previous one. According to Channel 12 news, the factory is intended to focus on producing precision missiles, dramatically upgrading the threat to Israel from the vast arsenal of rockets and missiles deployed against it in southern Lebanon by Iran's proxy, Hezbollah.

Despite Iran's efforts to conceal the facility, Israel has nevertheless discovered, tracked and uncovered it, the network said, as part of its effort to thwart Iran's military entrenchment in Syria.

Israel says it has carried out hundreds of airstrikes on Iranian-linked targets as part of a campaign to prevent Tehran from establishing a military presence in Syria.

NATO Russia's new missile lowers bar for the use of nuclear arms

By David Reid

Russia has failed to agree with the U.S over a missile it has developed.

NATO has called on Russia to come back within the terms of a treaty signed by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987.

The Russians have developed a missile which NATO says could lower the bar for the use of nuclear arms.

The U.S. looks set to quit a missile treaty with Russia after the latter failed to agree to destroy a nuclear-capable missile which is said to be banned under a decades-old agreement. A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels on Friday broke up without agreement between Moscow and NATO's 29 member countries.

Russia has said it will not comply with a February 2 deadline to destroy the missile, which is called the SSC-8 by NATO. The missile is thought to be able to

carry nuclear weapons at medium range and with short notice, thereby threatening European cities.

At Davos on Thursday, the secretary general of NATO warned that the new missile from Russia not only breaks a treaty with the U.S. but also lowers the bar for the use of nuclear weapons. In October, President Donald Trump announced the U.S. will end its 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia, accusing Moscow of violating its terms by developing the missile that contravenes the agreement.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos on Thursday, Jens Stoltenberg agreed: "Russia is in violation of that treaty. They have developed and deployed new missiles which are mobile, hard to detect, have a short warning time and they are therefore reducing the threshold for the use of any nuclear weapons," he said. The INF Treaty between the U.S. and Russia sought to eliminate nuclear and conventional missiles, as well as their launchers, with short ranges (310620 miles) and intermediate ranges (6203,420 miles).

Stoltenberg said NATO would do what it could to help preserve the INF treaty but his military commanders were already looking into the consequences of Russia's new weapon and how it would need to be opposed. "This is really serious and we have to do this in a measured and responsible way." he said.

US commitment to NATO

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation Tuesday that aims to stop Trump from withdrawing from NATO following his concerns that other members are not paying enough. Stoltenberg said he saw evidence that other countries were now stepping up efforts to provide the biggest reinforcement in NATO since the end of the Cold War.

"NATO allies have added \$41 billion defense spending and by next year it will be \$100 billion so European allies and Canada are really stepping up," he claimed. Speaking at the annual forum earlier on Thursday, German Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen told CNBC that her country's military spend was coming from a very low base but was continuously rising.

"After (German) reunification, we all thought peace was dominating and we all cut back on our armed forces. German armed forces were at the absolute lowest level five years ago when I came into office," she said. Germany is expected to spend around 1.5 percent of its budget on defense by 2024. Von Der Leyen said that figure would represent an 80 percent increase from 2014. The minister argued that it would be misleading to focus on defense commitment solely by the percentage of a country's growth. "It is a matter of outcome, of capabilities. We are the only continental country that are protecting and reassuring our Baltic friends. We are the second largest troop contributor to NATO and Afghanistan," she added. Von Der Leyen said NATO is "the strongest mightiest military alliance we have" but could not be expected to deal with every regional issue.

The real purpose of Russia's 100-megaton underwater nuclear doomsday device

By Alex Lockie

Russia is said to have built a new 100-megaton underwater nuclear doomsday device, and it has threatened the US with it.

The device goes beyond traditional ideas of nuclear warfighting and poses a direct threat to the future of humanity or life on Earth.

Nobody has ever built a weapon like this before, because there's almost no military utility in so badly destroying the world.

But an expert on nuclear strategy told Business Insider the weapon might have a larger role in helping Russian President Vladimir Putin break down NATO with the threat of nuclear destruction.

Since 2015, when images of a Russian nuclear torpedo first leaked on state television, the world has asked itself why Moscow would build a weapon that could end all life on Earth.

While all nuclear weapons can kill thousands in the blink of an eye and leave radiation poisoning the environment for years to come, Russia's new doomsday device, called "Poseidon," takes steps to maximize this effect.

If the US fired one of its Minutemen III nuclear weapons at a target, it would detonate in the air above the target and rely on the blast's incredible downward pressure to crush it. The fireball from the nuke may not even touch the ground, and the only radiation would come from the bomb itself and any dust particles swept up in the explosion, Stephen Schwartz, the author of "Atomic Audit," previously told Business Insider.

But Russia's Poseidon is said to use a warhead many times as strong, perhaps even as strong as the largest bomb ever detonated. Additionally, it's designed to come into direct contact with water, marine animals, and the ocean floor, kicking up a radioactive tsunami that could spread deadly radiation over hundreds of thousands of miles of land and sea and render it uninhabitable for decades.

In short, while most nuclear weapons can end a city, Russia's Poseidon could end a continent. Even in the mania at the height of the Cold War, nobody took seriously the idea of building such a world-ender, Malcolm Davis, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told Business Insider. So why build one now?

A NATO-ender

Davis called the Poseidon a "third-strike vengeance weapon" meaning Russia would attack a NATO member, the US would respond, and a devastated Russia would flip the switch on a hidden nuke that would lay waste to an entire US seaboard. According to Davis, the Poseidon would give Russia a "coercive power" to discourage a NATO response to a Russian first strike.

Russia here would seek to not only reoccupy Eastern Europe "but coerce NATO to not act upon an Article 5 declaration and thus lose credibility," he said, referring to the alliance's key clause that guarantees a collective response to an attack on a member state. Russian President Vladimir Putin "has made it clear he seeks the

collapse of NATO," Davis continued. "If NATO doesn't come to the aid of a member state, it's pretty much finished as a defense alliance."

Essentially, Russia could use the Poseidon as an insurance policy while it picks apart NATO. The US, for fear that its coastlines could become irradiated for decades by a stealthy underwater torpedo it has no defenses against, might seriously question how badly it needs to save Estonia from Moscow's clutches. "Putin may calculate that NATO will blink first rather than risk escalation to a nuclear exchange," Davis said. "Poseidon accentuates the risks to NATO in responding to any Russian threat greatly, dramatically increasing Russia's coercive power."

Davis also suggested the Poseidon would make a capable but heavy-handed naval weapon, which he said could most likely take out an entire carrier strike group in one shot.

Russia's new nuclear ferocity

Russia has recently signaled its willingness to use nuclear weapons to coerce the West with its violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Davis said. These missiles are purpose-built for taking out European capitals from the Russian mainland. But Russia has frequently engaged in nuclear saber-rattling when it feels encircled by NATO forces, and so far it has steered clear of confronting NATO with kinetic forces. "Whether that will involve actual use or just the threat of use is the uncertainty," Davis said.

While it's hard to imagine a good reason for laying the kind of destruction the Poseidon promises, Davis warned that we shouldn't assume the Russians think about nuclear warfare the same way the US does.

America is at it again

With its massive oil and gold reserves, Venezuela is now on US radar

By M K Bhadrakumar

The South Block has issued a wishy-washy statement, counselling that 'it is for the people of Venezuela to find a political solution to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue and discussion without resorting to violence'. The statement went on to state an obvious fact, namely, 'We believe democracy, peace and security in Venezuela are of paramount importance for the progress and prosperity of the people of Venezuela.' Pray, who are we propitiating with such pious homilies? This waffly statement fudges the real issues involved in the crisis brewing in Venezuela. India may very soon have no option but to pop its head above the parapet and stare at what is so patently obvious to most countries on the planet that a slow motion US-sponsored coup attempt is under way to grab power in Caracas and make Venezuela a vassal state. Of course, 'America First' is the motivation. Venezuela has the biggest known oil reserves and gold deposits. Like watching a black-and-white talkie, the mind wanders back restlessly to the era of gunboat diplomacy and Jallianwala Bagh.

It is exactly four years since PM Modi and then US President Barack Obama issued on the margins of Republic Day celebrations in 2015 the infamous Joint Strategic Vision Statement on the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region. Among other things, Modi and Obama called on 'all parties to avoid the threat or use of force and pursue resolution of territorial and maritime disputes through all peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea' and sought 'to work together to promote the shared values that have made our countries great'.

What the US is doing in Venezuela is the exact opposite of what Obama and Modi agreed to do. It is patently obvious that a US plot to undermine and overthrow the present government led by President Nicolas Maduro has been afoot for quite a while. The US has lately gone to the extraordinary extent of inciting an opposition politician to usurp power. What it is doing is in direct contravention of international law and the UN Charter. Indeed, such unilateralism has become a characteristic of US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era starting with the dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia. The US went on to invade Afghanistan and landed troops at the Bagram air base, ignoring the feeble protest of then Foreign Minister in Kabul, Abdullah Abdullah. Two years later, it invaded Iraq on the basis of what turned out to be a pack of lies and destroyed that country, committing war crimes of horrific proportions. Today, it is in occupation of a third of Syrian territory and has grabbed that country's oil fields and principal water resources.

India would know that a leopard cannot change its spots. But the new mantra is that the US-India relationship has gone from being a bilateral relationship to a global partnership. Venezuela shows the grotesqueness of any pretensions of India having global partnership with the US. Actually, by consorting with the US, the Modi government may also have acquired some of the leopard's spots. India, too, has begun selectively preaching democracy in its neighbourhood. Curiously, the US and India also collaborate in such ventures be it Sri Lanka or the Maldives and, ironically, even choose to pardon the one South Asian country where there has been a glaring retrogression of democratic values, Bangladesh. Who is the jury and the judge to pass verdict on democratic practices? Democracy is a many-

splendoured thing. Its Indian mutation has hardly anything in common with Germany's. At any rate, Russian PM Dmitry Medvedev asked a very pertinent question: 'How would the American people respond, for example, to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives declaring herself the new President against the backdrop of the government shutdown?'

Arguably, President Trump should not even be holding office, having failed to secure majority in popular votes. Our own government has ruled on the basis of a mandate from less than one-third of votes cast in the 2014 poll. Yet, Maduro won with over two-thirds votes in an election last May, where despite the opposition's decision to boycott it, 48 per cent of the electorate had cast votes. Indeed, some big issues are arising. The US diplomats have incited the Venezuelan military to revolt. A flashpoint is reaching because the US embassy in Caracas is now notionally accredited to the illegal government led by the opposition figure Juan Guaido (who declared himself President following a call from US Vice President Mike Pence), whom Trump promptly gave diplomatic recognition. Washington has threatened to punish Caracas if it expelled US diplomats. Meanwhile, all assets of the state of Venezuela in the US are being frozen.

True to British history, Bank of England leads the pack of predators by refusing to hand back gold bars worth \$1.2 billion, which belong to Venezuela. According to Bloomberg, the Bank of England's decision to deny Maduro officials' withdrawal request comes after top US officials, including Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, 'lobbied their UK counterparts to help cut off the regime from its overseas assets'. Are things any different from the era of the East India Company? That is precisely what makes the Modi government's supine statement on Venezuela humiliating. There are times when a proud nation must be able to remember its own cruel colonial past

A new phase in the great game

U.S., Soviets, India, Pakistan vied to shape a new Afghanistan in late 1980s

U.S. Ambassadors Dean and Raphael warned Washington unconditional support to Pakistan and fundamentalist factions of mujahedin was destabilizing the region

Reagan administration supported India's active role in connection with Soviet withdrawal, but changed position when Delhi tried to keep extreme fundamentalists from coming to power

Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was major Indian concern in connection with U.S. aid to Islamabad; New Delhi and Washington consulted closely on arms control, cables show

Two U.S. ambassadors in the late 1980s warned the U.S. government about potentially detrimental developments in Afghanistan in the wake of a Soviet military withdrawal, according to declassified documents obtained by the National Security Archive at The George Washington University. Ambassador John Gunther Dean in New Delhi highlighted the dangers of unfettered backing for the most hardline rebel factions in Afghanistan, while Ambassador Arnold Raphael in Islamabad pointed out the intent of America's ally, Pakistan, to exert its influence in this "new phase ... in the perennial great game."

The documents published here for the first time today by the National Security Archive come from the Ambassador John Gunther Dean Collection at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library. They show the delicate dynamics underlying negotiations about the future of Afghanistan on the eve and during the first phase of the Soviet withdrawal that started in May 1988 and was completed on schedule on February 15, 1989. The declassified records also offer insights into the role of Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi, mainly through his correspondence with President Ronald Reagan, selections of which are featured in today's posting. When Gandhi becomes prime minister after the assassination of his mother Indira, he pledges to conduct a more balanced foreign policy and to improve relations with the United States.

The initial assessment of U.S.-Indian prospects was quite optimistic; the Reagan administration was looking to wean India away from its heavy reliance on the USSR and saw India's potentially constructive role in encouraging the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan (See Document 1). During Gandhi's first visit to Washington in June 1985, both sides expressed their hopes for an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan free of outside intervention. In the course of his frequent correspondence with Gandhi, much of which is focused on Afghanistan. Reagan initially welcomes India's activism on the Afghan issue and encourages Indian-Pakistani and Indian-Soviet dialog. Also initially, in line with Reagan's position at Geneva, the U.S. administration is willing to provide guarantees of non-interference after the Soviets withdraw and informs Gandhi about it "to dispel any mis-perceptions."

However, the relationship soon stagnates, in the words of a State Department cable, and then sours because of U.S. support for Pakistan while the latter is backing the most radical factions of the Afghan mujahedin and keeps developing its secret nuclear program. The State Department cites India's "unrealistic expectations" and looks for ways to reinvigorate U.S.-Indian relations. When the new ambassador, John Gunther Dean, arrives in New Delhi at the start of the new phase in U.S.-Indian relations, he quickly develops a close and trusting relationship with Rajiv Gandhi. He shares the goal of an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan and works actively with the Indian government to encourage

its involvement in the Afghan settlement and a shift away from the USSR. Dean is immediately briefed by the top Indian leadership about their contacts with visiting Soviets and the content of the Gandhi-Gorbachev conversations. Dean observes that the Soviet position on Afghanistan is closer to the Indian position. Over time, Dean realizes that the Reagan administration is abandoning its Geneva position regarding non-interference (meaning an end to supplying the mujahedin with arms) after the Soviet withdrawal. The U.S. ambassador finds himself sharing Indian concerns about the danger of destabilization if an Islamic government comes to power in Kabul. As the Reagan administration realizes that Gandhi does not share the U.S. position of unconditional support for the “freedom fighters,” it tries to curtail Indian activism on the Afghan issue, which it initially encouraged, even hands a *démarche* to Indian Ambassador Kaul. Dean sends an action telegram conveying India's resentment and concerns but gets slapped by a stern cable from Secretary of State George Shultz, which expresses doubts about the quality of Dean's reporting from Delhi.

After the Soviet withdrawal starts, Dean offers veiled criticism of his own government's position and voices support for Gandhi's position that, following the Soviet withdrawal, U.S. support for the mujahedin is counterproductive and that Pakistan is building an “Islamic nuclear force” and working for a major realignment in South Asia, which will create an Islamic coalition across the Middle East.

Dean's assessment and warnings are shared and amplified by Ambassador Arnie Raphel's reporting from Islamabad. Raphel talks to the Pakistani military leadership who tell him about their ideas for an Islamic republic in Afghanistan and “an Iran come to its senses,” which would also join an Islamic coalition stretching from Turkey to Pakistan that would in turn provide “strategic depth” and counterbalance to India.

Raphel perceptively concludes that while the United States looks at Afghanistan just in terms of Soviet withdrawal, the Pakistanis are looking at it as a “new phase... in the perennial great game.” Raphel warns Washington that Pakistani support for rebel leaders Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani would

not encourage a peaceful transition in Afghanistan. On August 17, 1988, President Zia ul-Haq was killed in a mysterious plane crash, which also killed Ambassador Raphel. The following September, Ambassador Dean returns to Washington on his own initiative, requesting meetings with Shultz and Vice President George H.W. Bush because he feels he needs to discuss why the United States is abandoning its early policy on Afghanistan and supporting the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. He also harbors a theory that Israeli secret services could be behind the Zia plane crash.

Upon arrival in Washington, the inconvenient ambassador is denied the meeting he thought was scheduled and instead is put under psychiatric evaluation resulting in a finding that he is "unstable" and "deranged," which leads to his retirement from the foreign service (see Document 30). History has shown that the concerns expressed by Ambassadors Dean and Raphel were prescient as Afghanistan fell under the control of the most radical and repressive fundamentalist government in the 1990s, which in turn led to the resurgence of the Taliban.

'America First' means nuclear superiority

The US president's annual State of the Union address traditionally focuses on domestic issues but it also throws some light on the foreign policy priorities. President Trump's speech on Tuesday adhered to the pattern and if anything, the portions on foreign policy received scant attention, restricted to his “agenda to protect America's National Security.” Trump's re-election bid for a second term in 2020 provided the backdrop.

Trump boasted about the US' military build-up and flagged the mammoth budget allocation of \$716 billion to “fully rebuild” the US military. As part of it, he said, the US is “developing a state-of-the-art Missile Defence System.” He saw no reason to be apologetic about “advancing America's interests” and cast his decision to withdraw the US from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in that light.

Trump made a pro forma offer to consider negotiating a “different (INF) agreement, adding China and others (read India and Iran)” but himself sounded sceptical, and went on to assert that the US “will outspend and out-innovate all others by far” in an arms race. He all but sought the US' nuclear superiority.

Clearly, the global strategic balance is going to come under enormous stress in the period ahead. It is inconceivable that Russia will allow the global strategic balance to be shifted. In conventional forces, Russia is at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the West and that gives added impetus to maintain the overall strategic parity with the US. Notably, Russia test-fired an RS-24 Yars intercontinental ballistic missile today following Trump's speech and within hours of an earlier similar American test-firing of a Minuteman ICBM in California. The RS-24 Yars is a vastly improved version of the famous SS-29 ICBM that the Soviet Union deployed. It is presently the mainstay of the ground-based component of Russian nuclear triad.

This thermonuclear intercontinental ballistic missile has a range of 12 000 km, which brings the entire territory of the United States within its reach. Yars is equipped with multiple independent re-entry vehicle (MIRV) and is designed to evade missile defense systems (which Trump boasted about.) It maneuvers during the flight and carries both active and passive decoys and has at least 60-65% chance to penetrate defenses.

Significantly, during Tuesday's address before the Congress, Trump made no references to arms control negotiations with Russia, leave alone to comment on the fate of the New START nuclear arms reduction agreement (2010), which is due to expire in 2021.

Indeed, the 'breaking news' in Trump's speech was the announcement of his second summit meeting with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on February 27-28 in Vietnam. Trump sounded upbeat about his "bold new diplomacy" with North Korea and claimed credit (justifiably so) for avoiding a catastrophic war on the Korean Peninsula. He acknowledged that there is much unfinished business, but placed trust in his "relationship" with Kim.

The only other foreign-policy topics that Trump touched in the speech were the US' standoff Venezuela, the Middle Eastern conflicts (Syria and Afghanistan) and of course Iran. While he was rhetorical about the "brutality" and the "socialist policies" of the Venezuelan government of President Nicolas Maduro, Trump steered clear of any threats to intervene in that country. Trump merely said that the US stands with the Venezuelan people "in their noble quest for freedom." On

the other hand, Trump gently moved away from Venezuela to attack the “new calls to adopt socialism” in the US too and stated his resolve that “America will never be a socialist country.”

As regards the Middle East, Trump said his approach is based on “principled realism”. He recalled that his approach has been consistent: “Great nations do not fight endless wars.” Trump said it is time the troops came home from Syria, having defeated the Islamic State. Curiously, in comparison with Syria, Trump made a somewhat nuanced reference to the Afghan war. Without elaborating, Trump hinted that the Taliban is not the US' sole interlocutor for holding negotiations to reach a political settlement in Afghanistan. But the surprising part was when he said,

“As we make progress in the negotiations, we will be able to reduce our troop presence and focus on counter-terrorism. We do not know whether we will achieve an agreement.” The carefully-worded formulation steered clear of making a commitment of a total US withdrawal from Afghanistan. In fact, Trump pointedly spoke of a reduced troop presence in Afghanistan while also underscoring the need to continue with counter-terrorist operations.

From Trump's remarks, it appears that the US has somewhat pulled back from the reported progress at the recent 6-day talks in Qatar with the Taliban representatives. Whether this ambivalence is due to pressure from the US military and the Ashraf Ghani government against a withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan or is merely a tactical posturing to pressure the Taliban to make concessions remains to be seen.

Ghani's preferred strategy (which US military commanders also advocate) is to reconcile the Taliban on the terms in which he had earlier reconciled Gulbuddin Hekmatyar two years ago which is to say, by offering the insurgents an opportunity to join his government. The Pentagon has been doggedly opposed also to giving up the American bases in Afghanistan, which it considers to be of vital importance for the US' long term global strategies.

Ghani had telephoned the US Vice-President Mike Pence in the weekend before Trump's speech on Tuesday. Yet, Trump plainly ignored the Ghani government. Trump made harsh references to Iran as “sponsor of terror” and the government in Tehran as a “radical regime” and “corrupt dictatorship”, but, strangely, he stopped well short of adopting any confrontational overtone, leave alone threaten Iran. Trump merely said, “We will not avert our eyes from a regime that chants death to American and threatens genocide against the Jewish people.”

In overall terms, the impression will be that Trump projected a foreign-policy outlook where the US will eschew military interventions in foreign countries that are in the nature of protracted entanglements through the remaining period of his term in office and concentrate instead on his domestic agenda, which he intends to make the center piece of his campaign for re-election. A mood of retrenchment is evident all through and left to himself, Trump would like to avoid foreign-policy entanglements that do not directly impact American interests or his own campaign to win a second term as president. Having said that, make no mistake, fundamentally and in a longer term perspective, Trump is actually pitching for “America First”. He believes in a strong America, whose military superiority will be unchallenged and whose capacity to force its will on the world community is never in doubt. Implicit in the strategy is a resumption of the US' elusive chase for nuclear superiority through an extremely expensive arms race in which Trump thinks Russia lacks the financial resources to compete with the US and China can be overwhelmed in military technology.

The real reason America is scared of Huawei - internet-connected everything

Five things you need to know about 5G, the next generation of wireless tech that's fueling tensions between the US and China

By Will Knight

There was a time when the world's two great superpowers were obsessed with nuclear weapons technology. Today the flashpoint is between the US and China, and it involves the wireless technology that promises to connect your toaster to the web. The two countries are embroiled in a political war over the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei. The Americans have recently stepped up long-standing criticisms, claiming the tech giant has stolen trade secrets and committed fraud, and that it has ties to the Chinese government and its military.

The company denies the charges and has sought to defend its record on privacy and security. Meanwhile, US allies including Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Germany, and Japan have all either imposed restrictions on Huawei's equipment or are considering doing so, citing national security concerns. Behind the headlines, though, the spat is also about the coming wave of networking technology known as 5G, and who owns it.

Here are five things you need to know about the technology and its role in the tensions.

1. What is 5G?

Rather than a protocol or device, 5G refers to an array of networking technologies meant to work in concert to connect everything from self-driving cars to home appliances over the air. It's expected to provide bandwidth of up to 20 gigabits per second enough to download high-definition movies instantly and use virtual and augmented reality. On your smart phone. The first 5G smart phones and infrastructure arrive this year, but a full transition will take many more years.

2. Why is it better?

5G networks operate on two different frequency ranges. In one mode, they will exploit the same frequencies as existing 4G and Wi-Fi networks, while using a more efficient coding scheme and larger channel sizes to achieve a 25% to 50% speed boost. In a second mode, 5G networks will use much higher, millimeter-wave frequencies that can transmit data at higher speeds, albeit over shorter ranges. Since millimeter waves drop off over short distances, 5G will require more transmitters. A lot of them, sometimes just a few dozen meters apart. Connected devices will hop seamlessly between these transmitters as well as older hardware. To increase bandwidth, 5G cells also make use of a technology known as massive MIMO (multiple input, multiple output). This allows hundreds of antennas to work in parallel, which increases speeds and will help lower latency to around a millisecond (from about 30 milliseconds in 4G) while letting more devices connect.

Finally, a technology called full duplex will increase data capacity further still by allowing transmitters and devices to send and receive data on the same frequency. This is done using specialized circuits capable of ensuring that incoming and outgoing signals do not interfere with one another.

3. What are the security risks?

One of 5G's biggest security issues is simply how widely it will be used. 5G stands to replace wired connections and open the door for many more devices to be connected and updated via the internet, including home appliances and industrial machines. Even self-driving cars, industrial robots, and hospital devices that rely on 5G's ever-present, never-lagging bandwidth will be able to run without a hiccup. As with any brand-new technology, security vulnerabilities are sure to emerge early on. Researchers in Europe have already identified weak spots in the way cryptographic keys will be exchanged in 5G networks, for example. With so many more connected devices, the risk for data theft and sabotage what cyber security folks call the attack surface will be that much higher. Since 5G is meant to be compatible with existing 4G, 3G, and Wi-Fi networks in some cases using mesh networking that cuts out central control of a network entirely existing security issues will also carry over to the new networks. Britain's GCHQ is expected to highlight security issues with Huawei's technology, perhaps involving 4G systems, in coming weeks.

With 5G, a layer of control software will help ensure seamless connectivity, create virtual networks, and offer new network features. A network operator might create a private 5G network for a bank, for instance, and the bank could use features of the network to verify the identities of app users. This software layer will, however, offer new ways for a malicious network operator to snoop on and manipulate data. It may also open up new vectors for attack, while hardware bugs could make it possible for users to hop between virtual networks, eavesdropping or stealing data as they do.

4. Can 5g be made secure?

These security worries paint a bleak picture but there are technical solutions to all of them. Careful use of cryptography can help secure communications in a way that protects data as it flows across different systems and through virtual network seven guarding it from the companies that own and run the hardware. Such coding schemes can help guard against jamming, snooping, and hacking.

Two research papers offer a good overview of the risks and potential solutions: 5G Security: Analysis of Threats and Solutions; Security for 5G Mobile Wireless

Networks. “If you do it correctly, you will actually have a more robust network,” says Muriel Médard, a professor who leads the Network Coding and Reliable Communications Group at MIT.

5. Why is Huawei's 5G causing so much concern?

As the world's biggest supplier of networking equipment and second largest smart phone maker, Huawei is in a prime position to snatch the lion's share of a 5G market that, by some estimates, could be worth \$123 billion in five years' time. Stalling the company's expansion into Western markets could have the convenient side effect of letting competitors catch up. But there are also legitimate security concerns surrounding 5G and reasons to think it could be problematic for one company to dominate the space. The US government appears to have decided that it's simply too risky for a Chinese company to control too much 5G infrastructure.

The focus on Huawei makes sense given the importance of 5G, the new complexity and security challenges, and the fact that the Chinese company is poised to be such a huge player. And given the way Chinese companies are answerable to the government, Huawei's apparent connections with the Chinese military and its cyber operations, and the tightening ties between private industry and the state, this seems a legitimate consideration.

But the ongoing fight with Huawei also goes to show how vital new technology is to the future of global competition, economic might, and even international security.

US intelligence damns BJP's Hindutva

The portions relating to the regional security scenario in South Asia in the report titled “Worldwide Threat Assessment” by the US intelligence community presented to the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in Washington on January 29 make grim reading. The overall security scenario is bleak, especially in India-Pakistan relations. The past trend of regional tensions will continue, but there are new dangers.

And in this connection, the DNI report has highlighted that “Political maneuvering resulting from the Indian national elections probably will further constrain near-term opportunities for improving (India-Pakistan) ties.” Under a separate sub-heading 'Indian Elections and Ethnic Tensions', Page 35 of the 42-page DNI report amplifies on this by highlighting that Modi's Hindu nationalist campaign might trigger communal clashes in India in the run-up to the 2019 poll. The excerpts are reproduced below:

QUOTE

Indian elections and ethnic tensions

Parliamentary elections in India increase the possibility of communal violence if Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stresses Hindu nationalist themes. BJP policies during Modi's first term have deepened

communal tensions in some BJP-governed states, and Hindu nationalist state leaders might view a Hindu-nationalist campaign as a signal to incite low-level violence to animate their supporters. Increasing communal clashes could alienate Indian Muslims and allow Islamist terrorist groups in India to expand their influence.

UNQUOTE

The excerpts are self-explanatory and shouldn't really come as 'breaking news' because many thoughtful Indian commentators have written about the likelihood of the Indian democracy taking such a tragic trajectory in the immediate months ahead as the Bharatiya Janata Party galvanizes its bid to retain power and rule India for another five years.

However, what makes the DNI report significant is that this is not an intellectual cogitation but a considered assessment made on the basis of hard intelligence inputs by the various US agencies operating in India. Of course, the DNI is the fountainhead of the American intelligence community with almost seamless resources to penetrate foreign countries and their elites. And here, the DNI director Daniel Coats, who is the US' intelligence czar, is reporting to the American lawmakers mandatorily. Simply put, in the US assessment, India is heading for a dark tunnel through the next few months as the BJP accelerates its election campaign.

Election gimmicks are nothing new in Indian politics. But if a calibrated attempt is made to trigger inter-communal violence to polarize the voters, this time around it can take an apocalyptic turn. The DNI report warns, "Increasing communal clashes could alienate Indian Muslims and allow Islamist terrorist groups in India to expand their influence." That is to say, given the backdrop of the ascendancy of forces such as the Islamic State, there are grave implications for regional and international security as well.

To be sure, this is an appalling state of affairs if the ruling party deliberately triggers communal tensions to improve its electoral prospects. Paradoxically, the BJP, which roots for a strong India, is actually weakening India's national unity and

fragmenting the Indian society, undermining decades of mammoth efforts since independence to forge national integration. How did things come to such a pass?

The heart of the matter is that Modi government's track record in power is abysmally poor. Modi campaigned in the 2014 poll by presenting a development agenda and projecting his capacity to offer clean and efficient government. He projected himself as a modernizer and a performer who gets things done.

He offered to create a large number of jobs for India's restless youth numbering tens of millions. But he failed to deliver on his pledges. Besides, the Rafale scam, demonetization, agrarian crisis, etc. highlight a picture of venality and corruption and utter lack of sensitivity to the grim realities of Indian life and have tarnished Modi's public image.

The BJP leader and Nitin Gadkari hit the nail on the head when he said three days ago that politicians who sell dreams to the people and fail to fulfill them get “beaten up” by the public. No matter Gadkari's intentions in saying so, it becomes an apt description of the BJP's dilemma today. This dilemma was very much in evidence during Modi's last two visits to Kerala in quick succession within the month, when he was careful not even to remotely invoke his 2014 development agenda. Instead, he chose to give tutorials to his Malayali audience on the history and culture of their native homeland.

This is precisely what the DNI reports warns against that Modi's campaign for the 2019 poll may be stressing “Hindu nationalist themes” and his acolytes might take the cue from him to resort to violence against the minority communities. The extraordinary thing about the DNI report is that it was compiled over months but has turned out to be so prescient.

The move by the Modi government to approach the Supreme Court for the return of excess land around the disputed site in Ayodhya to the “original owners” precisely fits the paradigm outlined in the DNA report. The US intelligence appears to have effectively penetrated the Hindu fundamentalist organizations that mentor the BJP and the Modi government.

Of course, we will never know what DNI director Coats would have said in his in camera briefing to the American senators regarding the shenanigans of India's Hindu nationalists. At any rate, it is damning indictment of India's ruling party when it is perceived as a threat to regional security and as a blot on Indian democracy.

ISI, Maoists, urban naxals Why the 2019 LS poll is the most threatened one

By Vicky Nanjappa

There has been an intelligence report from the United States that suggests that there would be a spike in Pakistan sponsored terror attacks in India. This comes in the wake of several such intelligence reports in India which speak about a huge internal threat as well. This is a hotly contested election and there are several elements who would look to disrupt it says an Intelligence Bureau official. The threat in India looms large from the Naxalites, their sympathizers in the urban areas, the Khalistan terrorists, Islamic State inspired modules and the usual suspects, Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. An IB officer tells OneIndia that as per their assessment the threat would be larger from internal forces. There is no doubt that Pakistan would back them, but the threat perception is higher from the local groups.

The highest threat perception is from the naxalites, the IB officer explains. One would witness a spike in naxal related violence in their strongholds. They would also look to push their agenda in the southern states this time, the officer also explained. In the north, the threat remains the highest from the Khalistan groups, Lashkar-e-Tayiba and ISIS inspired modules. These groups are being actively

backed by the ISI and as the elections near, they would look to activate more modules.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there would be every attempt made by the terror groups to derail the polls. The state would remain on a very high state of alert as the maximum activity from terror groups can be expected in that state. In addition to this there would be a propaganda machinery at work especially by those who have been sympathetic towards the naxalites. They would look to orchestrate violence, like was seen in the the Bhima-Koregaon case.

There is a high chance of these persons instigating farmers and tribals. They would look to ensure that protests turn violent and also spill into the cities, the officer also said. Meanwhile the US intelligence report states that there would be a spike in terror attacks by Pakistan and communal violence ahead of the Parliamentary elections, a US intelligence report has warned. (This seems to be a concocted story to involve Pakistan, which does not need to do anything but watch from the side lines. What India had been doing to Pakistan is coming back home.

The latest edition of the worldwide threat assessment report has said that the challenges facing South Asian states will grow in 2019 because of Afghanistan's presidential election in mid-July and the Taliban's large scale attacks, Pakistan's recalcitrance in dealing with terrorist groups, and Indian elections that risk communal violence. The report was tabled in the US Congress on Tuesday by Director of US intelligence Daniel Coats. He also deposed before the senate intelligence committee.

On India, the report warned of an increase in the possibility of communal violence if the BJP stresses Hindu nationalist themes. It went on to say that the ruling party's policies in the first term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have deepened communal tensions in some BJP-governed states. It also said that Hindu nationalist state leaders may view a Hindu nationalist campaign as signal to incite low level violence to animate their supporters. The report warned that an increase in communal clashes "could alienate Indian Muslims and allow Islamist terrorist groups in India to expand their influence".

"Pakistan's recalcitrance", that militant groups supported by Islamabad "will continue to take advantage of their safe haven" there to "plan and conduct attacks in India and Afghanistan, including against US interests," the report also said.

Chill in the Valley

The non-initiation of dialogue is an immense disservice to our security forces. The momentum of internal talks must be matched by reviving the same with Pakistan

By Maj Gen (R) Ashok K Mehta

A deeply poignant moment of the 70th Republic Day parade was the spellbinding citation of Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani for the award of the Ashok Chakra, the highest 'peacetime gallantry award', which is a terrible misnomer in war-ravaged Kashmir. A terrorist-turned-soldier, Wani is the first Kashmiri to bag this medal for conspicuous valour. Having won two Sena Medals earlier, he is the bravest son of the soil.

An equally poignant moment was captured in the highly emotive picture of Wani's Commanding Officer of Rashtriya Rifles battalion clutching his father, consoling him. Kashmiri soldiers and terrorists gunning for each other is not a new normal in the Valley. The stunning irony of this epic encounter is that very few, if any, Kashmiris are celebrating his martyrdom for fear of reprisals.

Only a handful attended his funeral in Kulgam; whereas when another Wani, Kashmir's poster boy, Burhan Wani, was killed in 2016 by the security forces, crowds of sympathisers, fellow terrorists and overground workers were among an

unprecedented 30,000 (by one account) and 150,000 (by another estimate) mourners. Such is the striking chasm in commemorating trauma and tragedy in Kashmir.

Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik was right. It is not the militants that have to be killed but militancy. Military commanders in the State have for long been agonised over this dilemma body count but also securing the support of the people. Unfortunately, local support is diminishing, converting to public disrupting military operations to enable the terrorists escape. And when they are killed, it is the same civilians who publicly glorify their martyrdom. But no Kashmiri leader no one had a word of praise for soldier Wani's bravery and sacrifice.

When terrorist Wani was being described as a cat with nine lives, he was also being paired with the academic hotshot, UPSC topper Shah Faesal two Kashmiris on divergent paths to stardom. While Faesal has abandoned the civil service for politics, for reasons he has principally attributed to “the environment of siege in Kashmir”, he has said a lot more:

Like “the roots of conflict are deeper than mere radicalisation”; “Kashmir is not a development issue” (even as the Governor was promising 40 new colleges and five medical colleges); “Hurriyat is a stakeholder and without its participation, a peace process is unrealistic”...Faesal has been more blunt in admitting he quit his Government job to protest the unabated killings in Kashmir, subversion of the Central Bureau of Investigation, Reserve Bank of India and National Investigation Agency; and marginalization of Muslims. We will see if he becomes a topper in politics.

Another Wani, journalist Khurshid Wani, who writes for The Pioneer, declared 2018 *annus horribilis*. On Republic Day, he noted: “Transition of power four times, highest levels of violence in a decade, lowest economic activity and unending political uncertainty marked one of the most tumultuous years in the recent history of Jammu & Kashmir”.

For the security forces, though, there was cause to celebrate. With the elimination of three remaining terrorists, Baramulla became the first of 13 police districts in Kashmir to become militant-free. The last time a district was declared 'militant-free' was Kulgam in 2008 but that was short-lived. Srinagar Corps Commander, Lt Gen Anil Bhatt, who was awarded UYSM on Republic Day, hailed the Ramzan ceasefire, the holding of local elections and the extending duration of an incident-free Amarnath Yatra as outstanding achievements of 2018.

Further, accounting for 257 terrorists at an attrition rate of 1:8 (soldiers : terrorist), capturing 54 terrorists and killing 26 terrorist leaders are highest military successes since 2010. Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat is pleased with the strong counter-infiltration grid; though 140 infiltrators got through while nearly 100 were killed. Rawat asked: "Will Faesal ask misguided youth to give up the gun"?

In tit-for-tat killings, the advantage was claimed by Lt Gen Ranbir Singh, Army Commander in Jammu & Kashmir and the mentor of surgical strikes. Revenge for Pakistan taking out our soldiers with sniper fire has been taken with interest, he said. The military continues with its mission of ridding the Valley of terrorists bringing down the threat from the present 300 terrorists to zero and declaring the Valley terrorist-free while simultaneously regaining local support to bring back normalcy.

Alienation and Islamist radicalisation are galloping ahead without any effective steps to arrest their momentum and rollback. A former BSF intelligence chief, SS Guleria, has said Salafism backed by Pakistan has sounded the death knell of Kashmiriyat, which is being eroded by a fanatic Islam, and Wahabi preachers are systematically propagating the Salafi ideology among village youth on Fridays and encouraging students to hate non-Muslims.

The Hurriyat, Jamaat-e-Islami, Ahl-i-Hadith and other similar organisations have spread extremist ideologies in the Valley. Guleria has recommended the re-opening of cinemas, bars and liquor shops as well as staging concerts, playing IPL matches and restructuring the madrasa curriculum. It is time to target the instigators/abettors of violence and hatred.

The overall picture at the beginning of 2019 is bleak and chilly as the weather in the Valley. Every couple of years, say in a decade, the clock moves a full circle. Security forces do what they are best at: Putting the lid on violence and reducing the terrorist population to a manageable level. In other words, creating conditions conducive to resuming a political process with all stakeholders, including the Hurriyat.

Non-initiation of dialogue is immense disservice to the security forces, who ultimately carry the can. The momentum of internal dialogue has to be backed up with reviving the talks process with Pakistan. Ideally, the two have to operate in tandem. Pakistan Army Chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa has reportedly sent feelers for talks to Gen Rawat, who is ready to take a leap of faith. After the Central elections and elections in

Jammu & Kashmir, both strands of the Kashmir dialogue can be started sometime in mid-2019. The start of a peace process in Afghanistan shows there is no military solution. Radha Kumar noted in her book, *Paradise at War*: “For the sake of Kashmiris, we must hope that a peace agreement is arrived at, sooner than later.

The state of conflict in which they've had to live for the past 30 years with only brief interregnums of peace is intolerable...”. A young Kashmiri architect told Kumar recently: “I just want to be left alone in my Kashmir.” Given the 70 years of India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, that might be too much to ask. But that should not be, Kumar concludes.

The writer is a retired Major General of the Indian Army and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the revamped Integrated Defence Staff.

Making the best of a bad situation

That's just the worst-case scenario, though, and it's possible that events might not unfold entirely like that, or that Iran is even considering such a Machiavellian strategy in the first place. Having said that, it's extremely unlikely that any “best-case scenario” will materialize because Iran crossed the Rubicon by directly blaming the ISI for supporting terrorism, thus drawing the consternation of many patriotic Pakistanis who deeply appreciate this institution's irreplaceable role in defending their country from that said scourge.

Bilateral ties will probably take some time to recover from the self-inflicted damage that Iran wrought to them with this outburst even if it explains behind closed doors how its “deep state” divisions were the cause of it, but that doesn't mean that all is lost for now. If Iran has the political willpower, then it can make the best out of this bad situation that its official representatives are responsible for by showing a sincere desire to deepen security cooperation with Pakistan along their shared border.

Going further, the two countries could combine their relevant military and socio-economic resources into creating a comprehensive “Democratic Security” strategy for sustainably stabilizing the transnational Balochistan region between them, possibly even securing some Chinese funds for this through an initiative

that the author suggested late last year could eventually be branded as “BRI-Aid”. There's no better time than now for Balochistan to transform from a “Blood Borders” barrier to regional integration into a CPEC+ bridge for facilitating the Golden Ring, but the ball is completely in Iran's court.

Concluding thoughts

As regrettable as it is to see, Iran took the bait and fell for the Hybrid War plot of blaming Pakistan for the latest terrorist attack along their shared border in Balochistan, which has had the immediate consequence of reviving the US' “Blood Borders” scenario in the region as a Kurdistan-like wedge develops between these two Muslim Great Powers.

Iran dealt enormous damage to bilateral relations with its reckless rhetoric holding the ISI responsible for what happened, but the worst-case (though nevertheless realistic) scenario of the Islamic Republic counter intuitively serving as the US' indirect Indian-led access route to the Golden Ring's Central Asian core can still be avoided if Tehran has the political will to team up with Islamabad against terrorism and turn Balochistan into a bridge for regional integration.

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Significance of trump's state of the union address for international state actors

By Mahvish Malik

A famous Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson once said that Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary. President of the United States (POTUS) Donald Trump is often criticized for being 'blunt' and 'arrogant' in media appearances. Mr. President's ultranationalist approach towards rational decision making is often debated in different aspects of domestic and foreign policy decisions.

During his Annual State of the Union address on 5 Feb 2019, President Trump reflected on political, economic and military commitments at domestic and international level and signaled some important international trends and U.S. approach towards some regions. This year's address was more focused on elaborating President Trump's progress over domestic rhetoric commitments. As compared to the last years' address, less aggressive language was used against China and Russia.

Perhaps, the Administration was focused on echoing the Republican's political agenda for paving the path for their future national policy documents including the Nuclear Posture Review and Missile Defense Review etc. Moreover, the

political context in case of North Korea was more hostile in early 2018 whereby, President Trump used more aggressive language against North Korea.

The main section of the 2019 Union Address focused on highlighting the progress towards fulfillment of the domestic commitments towards jobs protection, revitalizing infrastructure, healthcare policies, immigration system and committed to pursue foreign policy that flags U.S. interests first. The other part cited the significance of imposing 250 billion dollars trade tariffs on Chinese goods.

Moving further, President Trump debated the issues that remained integral for protecting American national security around the world. In this regard, President Trump credited his Administration with the withdrawal from the 'disastrous Iran nuclear deal' and remained committed to impose toughest sanctions on Iran in future. On contrary, many states including U.S. allies are unappreciative of this political move and put their economic investments in jeopardy.

The other debate on protecting American national security included, development of a state-of-the-art Missile Defense System; securing a 100 billion dollars increase in

defense spending from NATO allies; withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and hinting towards possible negotiations on a different agreement which especially includes China.

Most significantly, the U.S. withdrawal from INF treaty was a major blow for nuclear non-proliferation regime. U.S. intentions of only pursuing those arms control measures that would include China and others by not implying names hints at the inclusion of rest of the nuclear armed states. This is the time where, arms control regime is fading out due to vanishing precedents like INF Treaty towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The prospects of India being willing to participate in such an arrangement especially when said arrangement runs contrary to Indian military interest of modernizing its nuclear forces and achieving the delusional status of regional hegemon in South Asia is worth exploring. Moreover, President Trump appreciated his Administration's pursuit of a 'new bold diplomacy' for a peaceful

Korean Peninsula while mentioning his meeting with Kim Jong Un on 26-27 Feb 2018. However, this U.S. Peaceful behavior towards North Korean counterpart in forthcoming meetings may not last forever, until or unless, these political dialogues achieve some concrete initiative or agreements with regards to denuclearization of Korean Peninsula.

On the issue of Afghanistan, President Trump seemed to reiterate his position of no long-term stay of the U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. The POTUS asserted that, as we make progress in these negotiations, we will be able to reduce our troop presence and focus on counter-terrorism. We do not know whether we will achieve an agreement -- but we do know that after two decades of war, the hour has come to at least try for peace.

His appreciation for current political dialogue for Afghan Peace Process is a positive step towards building the peaceful future of Afghanistan. This policy is in-line with Pakistan's official position on supporting Afghan Peace Talks for contributing towards Afghans political settlement. Therefore, in the backdrop of major geo-political developments, this annual address has mainstreamed and reiterated the U.S. role in different regions; while showed its vague commitment towards nuclear arms control measures.

India and Pakistan Rattle Their Nuclear Sabres

by Eric Margolis

While Americans were obsessing over a third-rate actor's fake claims of a racial assault, old foes India and Pakistan were rattling their nuclear weapons in a very dangerous crisis over Kashmir. But hardly anyone noticed that nuclear war could break out in South Asia.

India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed, have fought four wars over divided Kashmir since 1947, the lovely mountain state of forests and lakes whose population is predominantly Muslim. India controls two thirds of Kashmir; Pakistan and China the rest. This bitter dispute, one of the world's oldest confrontations, has defied all attempts to resolve it.

The United Nations called on India to hold a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's future, but Delhi ignored this demand, knowing it would probably lose the vote.

Muslim Kashmiris have been in armed revolt against harsh Indian occupation since the 1980's. Some 70,000 civilians, mostly Muslims, have died to date. Today, India stations a million soldiers and paramilitary forces in Kashmir to repress popular demands by Muslim Kashmiris for either union with neighboring Pakistan or an independent Kashmiri state.

India's human rights groups accuse Delhi of grave human rights violations, including torture, murder, rape and collective punishment. Delhi says it is

protecting Kashmir's Hindus and Sikhs from Muslim reprisals, and blames the uprising on what it calls 'cross border terrorism' initiated by old enemy, Pakistan.

Last week, a Kashmiri 'mujahidin' rammed his explosive-laden car into a bus filled with paramilitary Indian troops at Pulwama, killing over 40 and provoking outrage across India.

Unable to crush the decades-old uprising in Kashmir, India threatens major reprisal attacks on Pakistan. However, Kashmir is mountainous, offering poor terrain for India's overwhelming superiority in tanks and artillery. So, Indian commanders have long pressed Delhi to allow them to attack further south on the flat plains of Punjab.

Powerful Indian armored strike corps are poised to slice into vulnerable Pakistan and chop it up into pieces. India has also considered heavy air strikes into Pakistani Punjab and even a naval blockade to cut off Pakistan's oil imports.

Outnumbered and outgunned six to one by India, Pakistan has developed a potent arsenal of nuclear weapons that can be delivered by aircraft, short and medium-ranged missiles and artillery. Pakistan says it will riposte almost immediately with tactical nuclear weapons to a major Indian attack. Both sides' nuclear forces are on a hair-trigger alert, greatly increasing the risks of an accidental nuclear exchange.

More detail on this threat scenario may be found in my ground-breaking book on the region's many dangers, 'War at the Top of the World.' Rand Corp estimated a decade ago that an Indo-Pak nuclear exchange would kill two million immediately and 100 million in ensuing weeks. India's and Pakistan's major water sources would be contaminated. Clouds of radioactive dust would blow around the globe.

India is deeply frustrated by its inability to crush the independence movement in Kashmir, labeling it 'terrorism.' True enough, Pakistan's crack intelligence service, ISI, has links to the many Kashmiri mujahidin groups. But the uprising is also due to often brutal, corrupt Indian rule over Kashmir and the desire by Muslims for self-rule. As I have often written, every people has a god-given right to be misruled by their own people.

Right now, India is debating a major punitive strike against Pakistan. India national elections are imminent. The Hindu nationalist government in Delhi fears being accused of being soft on Pakistan. It was during a similar crisis in the 1980's that Pakistan's tough leader, Gen. Zia ul-Haq, flew to Delhi in a surprise visit and averted a war being planned by India.

If India does launch attacks they will likely be large in scale and involve heavy use of tactical air power. If units on either side become bogged down in fighting, commanders may call for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Far outgunned Pakistan has been clear about such recourse. The urge to be first to strike with nuclear arms will be powerful.

Once again, the bitter Kashmir dispute endangers the rest of the world. The great powers should be pressing both India and Pakistan to reach a compromise on this problem. But India has long opposed internationalization of the issue, saying it is a domestic Indian matter. It is difficult to imagine the current Hindu nationalist government in Delhi backing down over Kashmir. But India must be very cautious because behind Pakistan stands its ally China which shares a long, often poorly-defined border with India. Kashmir, not Korea, is the world's most dangerous border.

‘Courtesy Eric S. Margolis’

Predators at work Venezuela - Is war on the Horizon?

Here's How Trump's Poised to Manipulate the Humanitarian Situation in Venezuela

By Andrew Korybko

There's a very high likelihood that the US will commence a limited multilateral invasion of Venezuela if Maduro continues to block the Trojan Horse of a “humanitarian convoy” into his country and the military doesn't turn against him in the near future because of it.

Russia hints that war is on the Horizon

Venezuela's on the knife's edge of being the US' next victim of a forceful regime change after Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned on Thursday afternoon that “Washington already made a decision about a forceful intervention” in the country, which followed Trump's remark over the weekend that the military “is an option” for dealing with the crisis and his reminder to the world during his recent State of the Union speech of the Bolivarian Republic's terrible economic situation.

Lost amidst Trump's rhetoric is any mentioning of the fact that the US' Hybrid War on Venezuela is largely responsible for triggering the socio-political calamity there, which is now dangerously approaching the scenario of a limited multilateral invasion that the author wrote about last week.

The Trojan horse

Having had its geopolitical intentions exposed in the global media by Russia, however, the US needs to invent a “publicly plausible” pretext for its next foreign war that could distract the masses from its regime change goals, and therein lays the significance of the rapidly emerging narrative about a so-called “humanitarian intervention”.

There's no question that a humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the country after three million people fled from it in the past couple of years, but the Trump Administration is pressuring Venezuela into accepting a “humanitarian convoy” into its borders, one that could very likely function as a Trojan Horse for either arming anti-government “sleep cells” and/or establishing de-facto foreign control over parts of its territory.

Pompeo's pronouncement

Well aware of the threat that this convoy represents, Venezuela blocked the bridge on its border with Colombia's Cucuta to prevent the Trojan Horse from passing, which is its sovereign right to do as the country's UN-recognized government.

As expected, the US responded by issuing very vague threats to Venezuela in an attempt to pressure it into allowing the convoy to enter its territory, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeting that “The Venezuelan people desperately need humanitarian aid. The U.S. & other countries are trying to help, but #Venezuela's military under Maduro's orders is blocking aid with trucks and shipping tankers.

UN = useless nations

The UN itself is against politicizing the dispatch of humanitarian aid in what could be interpreted as a rebuke of both the US and Venezuela; the first-mentioned for likely intending to abuse the convoy as a Trojan Horse and the latter for not allowing aid to reach its increasingly desperate population that will undoubtedly experience intensified suffering soon once the economic consequences of Washington's latest sanctions start to show.

Nevertheless, the UN is powerless to shape the course of events that are unfolding at an ever-faster pace than expected, seeing as how the US and its Lima Group allies have total dominance of the conflict's dynamics at this point in time. Recognizing this, the US is poised to manipulate Venezuela's humanitarian situation.

Weaponized narratives

It predictably didn't succeed in getting Caracas to open up the gates to “wolves in sheep's clothing”, so the US is attempting to misleadingly reframe the optics of this crisis in a manner that makes it appear as though a “crazy socialist Third World dictator is starving his own people”.

The intent behind this is to generate domestic and international support for what might likely be the limited multilateral invasion of Venezuela's ultra-strategic Zulia state on the interconnected pretexts of “saving its starving population” and “preempting another Migrant Crisis”, the latter of which could be leveraged by Trump to counter the Mainstream Media's narrative that he “hates” migrants and refugees (especially those from Latin America).

The anti-military Psy-Op

Having said that, the US would prefer for its regime change plans to proceed as “peacefully” as possible so that its companies can quickly take over the country's strategic assets and begin profiting from them right away instead of having to invest lots of capital in rebuilding them after a disastrous civil-international war, so the latest threat of a “humanitarian intervention” is also part of the ongoing psy-op against the Venezuelan military to encourage the desertion of its rank-and-file troops and the defection of its top brass “before it's too late”.

Without the solid backing of the armed forces, Maduro wouldn't be able to remain in office and the rolling coup against him would assuredly succeed.

My views on reviews

By Shafique Ahmed Shafique

Name of Magazine : Ghanimat (quarterly)

Name of Editor: Akram Kunjahi

Issue: 22

Printer: Hammad Printing Press, Pakistan Chowk, Karachi.

"Ghanimat" a Quarterly Urdu Book Serial is a literary journal which has a remarkable identity for its standard and selection of fine literary pieces. The fresh issue No-22 of "Ganimat" is in front of me I studied this issue with great interest and felt pleasant. From the editorial to the last page it can grip the attention of readers.

There are varieties of genres such as Hamds, Na'ats, articles, short stories, light essays, book reviews, ghazals and various kinds of poetic genres. These are vividly depicting the standard of choice and tight selection of the editor Akram Kunjahi. "Ganimat" has its own temperament. It is among those periodicals which have their unique say.

Akram Kunjahi himself a good poet and essayist so he can honestly decide which ghazal, poem, short story and write-up is able to be published in the magazine. Most of people specially, those who are educated are aware of this fact that to start publishing a literary magazine is easy but to kerep it regular and alive is not easy.

It is heartening for the lovers of Urdu language and literature that Akram Kunjahi is publishing his quarterly journal "Ganimat" timely and regularly. It is also praiseworthy and to some extent surprising that he is publishing "Ganimat" not only in Karachi but it is coming out from Gujrat too.

There has been given a special space to the giant poet and writer Hazrat Raghīb Muradabadi in this issue to remember and to tribute him and his precious social, cultural and literary services. This special corner is very much important for devotees and paramour of literature.

It may be said without any doubt that Hazrat Raghīb Muradabadi was one of the avant-gardes of our literary world. Akram Kunjahi has done a very good job by offering him glorious tributes and re-fresh his memory. I hope that he will continue this act of praiseworthy by giving tributes to other giant personalities of Urdu literature.

It is not possible to comment all writings one by one which have been included by the editor in this magazine. In a nutshell, it can be opined that all poets of Hamd, Na'at, Ghazal, poetry and other poetic genres are successfully created fine pieces. Seven write-ups on literary personages and literary issue are thought provoking. Reviews on books have been written scholarly.

The editorial is written not only on interesting subject but it is an eye-opener and invites us to think over asperity and evenness of past and present Urdu criticism. Akram Kunjahi is himself a good literary critic having enough ability to discuss as well as analyze literary issues. He is a clear headed man of letters so, whatever he thought, he straightforwardly expressed in his writings.

"Bazm-e-Ghanimat" is also a good part of the magazine as it consists of discussions on the items which published in the last issue, it is not only a part for mere praise (Qasida) of the editor.

According to Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803--1882): "literature is a record of best thoughts," if it is correct then Akram Kunjahi fairly and impartially is recording to some extent "best thoughts" through "Ghanimat" and with the selfless co-

operation of poets, short story writers and critics. I hope that the editor of this quarterly journal will keep it up.