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Corruption is
weapon of
war



World powers
blackmailing Pakistan
on IMF bailout



Pakistan's Missile
and
Nuclear Technology



How real is
white
supremacy?



US 'most war like
nation in history
of the world'



PAKISTAN'S QUEST FOR SOUTH ASIAN RECONCILIATION



- Trump & Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan might have just ruined Iran-India Relations
- China's PLA troops in Venezuela is game changer
- Sri Lanka's deadliest terror attack ever 253 people killed
- 22 killed in Quetta, Chaman bomb hits on Hazaras
- 14 people offloaded from buses, shot dead in Balochistan
- Modi's deadliest surgical strike so far has been to politicize the Ahmed Forces

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EDITORIAL

Brutal Attack of Sri Lanka and Terrorist Attack of Christ Church

Terrorist incident of Christ Church was a brutal act of a terrorist who opened fire on two mosques in New Zealand while the Muslims were offering their Friday prayers. The worst aspect of this cowardly act was that the terrorist was live streaming the entire incident which showed that he had no remorse for his actions. It is very important to note that acts of terrorism have increased all over the world and that terrorists are being classified as being Muslim terrorists, despite the Muslim countries disowning and them and working to eliminate such entities, and the criminally insane a term which is specifically used when a white person commits an act of terrorism. In doing so, they are expressing that Muslims are the source of terrorism and when a hired gun commits an act of terrorism against the Muslims, the western media portrays it as aggression amongst the people against the Muslims. Once the hired terrorist is branded criminally insane and his actions hinted at being retaliation, a debate starts among the public about whether Muslims should be allowed in Europe, US and the West in general or not. This is how a negative narrative is promoted against the Muslims. In reality, such incidents highlight that a terrorist has no religion or entity in fact his or her religion is working against humanity. People of the world should realise now that they are being manipulated by powers which have a much sinister ulterior motive. Agenda of these forces is to ensure that the world plunges into bloodshed and hatred while their profits increase so that they can further their evil, inhumane cause. These forces value wealth and resources above all else even above humanity. This accumulated wealth is then used to fuel their cause and eliminate their enemies. This is a battle for power and complete dominion over the world, in which the only loser is humanity itself. In the midst of all these conspiracies the people of New Zealand showed the entire world, how a responsible peace loving nation reacts to terrorism. People of New Zealand led by their fearless and compassionate leader, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. She recognized this incident as the worst form of terrorist attacks and refused to take the name of the terrorist citing his agenda as to get attention and fame. She visited the victims' families, consoled them and apologized to them and taking the blame for failing to defend their loved ones. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern stood as a champion of humanity and had the courage to speak the truth. This incident stirred the world and started to open their eyes to the reality that Muslims in fact are not terrorists but the victims of terrorism and the world started to support Muslims while differentiating them from terrorists. While this process was in its infancy, a group of cowardly terrorists decided to carry out vicious attacks in Sri Lanka at the time of Easter on the Christian community in which 253 people lost their lives. The attack was conducted on April 21, 2019 where three churches and three luxury hotels were targeted. The responsibility for these attacks was claimed by a terrorist organization Jamat Tuahid base in south India which is ample proof that India, Israel and USA are involved in this attack. . These attacks come at a time when the world had developed a soft corner for Muslims and such sentiments did not sit well with the plans of India, USA and Israel. They could not let the world abandon the false narrative that Muslims are terrorists which is why these cowardly attacks were launched on the Christian community to rile them up against Muslims. Evidence, however, has emerged for anyone who seeks the truth that this particular outfit had in fact been trained in India. Also, the swiftness with which USA linked the attacks to ISIS and expressed the desire to send boots on ground in Sri Lanka to battle terrorism clearly shows that these

planned attacks to support the plans of Israel, USA and Indian nexus and to restrict China's One belt One Road initiative.

Seminar on

Pakistan's Quest for South Asian Reconciliation

A Seminar was organized by Rabita Forum International on 30th April 2019. Ambassador Najmuddin Shaikh, Former Foreign Secretary Government of Pakistan presided while Mr. Nusrat Mirza Chairman Rabita Forum International, Prof. Dr. Tanweer Khalid, Prof. Dr. Huma Baqai and Ambassador Hasan Habib were the speakers.

Mr. Nusrat Mirza in his presentation showed four video Clips that proved Pakistan's superiority over India in the February 2019 skirmishes. This was admitted by Indian Air Marshal Denzil Keelor and Air Marshal Kapil Kak and Defense Analyst Paraween Sahwani. And Lt. General Hussain said in London based Think Tank IISS that Pakistan won on all fronts including Hybrid War.

Mr. Mirza expressed that Pakistan behaved as a very responsible nuclear State. He pointed out some salient features of recent Pak India armed skirmishes 1) that Pakistan defense in conventional warfare is now robust other than nuclear deterrence and tactical nuclear war heads to neutralize Indian Cold Start Doctrine and Proactive Strategic Initiative (PSI) 2) Pakistan is a responsible nuclear Power. 3) Pakistan reacted in self-defense 4) Pilot was released after the assurance of Indian RAW Chief that war will not be escalated. 5) Pakistan at every point was emphasizing to negotiate. Pakistan's quest for South Asian reconciliation was sincere and serious. Pakistan's efforts show its strength and confidence as has been appreciated by the Major Powers of the world. To some it was surprise but the demonstration of its seriousness and protecting its boundaries; Land, space and sea demonstrate its capability and the quest for peace. Mr. Imran Khan the Prime Minister of Pakistan has repeatedly offered India for negotiations and recently in China on 26th April 2019 repeated the offer.

Mr. Najmuddin Shaikh

In the opinion of Mr. Najmuddin Shaikh, the Peace in the South Asia has been and is under threat. On one side Kashmir Issue and the other side peace in Afghanistan has been continuously keeping South Asia's Peace in danger. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran has offered India for Peace as Peace is our requirement and also of the region for the development and prosperity. Pakistan has opened its boundaries to many countries. China, Pakistan, Russia and Iran are ready to play important role in the region which will guarantee prosperity. India should

reconsider its position of war mongering and join in this caravan of Peace. South Asia has been in great need of poverty alleviation. So Peace is essential in the region for all the countries. With the war, the poverty and unemployment shall increase. Both Pakistan and India should join hands to work for reconciliation. Narendra Modi promised one crore jobs for Indian youth to which he could not meet. The process of Peace and reconciliation has going on in Afghanistan. Taliban are being brought in to main stream. The scheme of one belt one Road is not only for China but also for Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia and Russia. This can be judged from the huge capacity of Gawader port. This capacity cannot be fulfilled by China only. 1600 Containers will be handled daily.

Prof. Dr. Tanweer Khalid

Pakistan has played very important role for the peace and stability of South Asia. The Tension and warlike situation is not in the interest of India even. Poverty and unemployment is to be addressed by Pakistan and India. Afghan border management is a good effort by Pakistan which has reduced terrorism considerably. The increasing influence of India in Afghanistan, however, is a matter of concern. Similarly the resolution of Indian Chahbahar influence is to be reduced. Russia has started balancing policy towards Pakistan and India. But Indian supremacy policy is hurdle to it. Pakistan is interested in trade, cultural and working relations with India.

Prof. Dr. Huma Baqai

The issue of Kashmir is the basis of concern. India with Palwama attacked used to create tension and war mongering which has affected India negatively. Pak China Economic Corridor is another cause of tension, though India has been invited to participate in this project. But India repeatedly denied. There were no war between Pakistan and India, but four so called wars could be said conflicts in the presence of Indus water Treaty.

Ambassador® Hasan Habib

International Media under the influence of India does issue statements against Pakistan. It created an atmosphere after Palwama. India violated Pakistani space and Pakistan punished India for its violation. In war no one succeeds, so adventurism of war is not good for India and the region. We should be inclined to develop infrastructure and land routes, sea lanes and air road should be development so that prosperity becomes the priority.

The seminar was attended by large number of Professors, doctors, students from Karachi University and Ilma University. Mr. Syed Samiullah presented the vote of thanks.

Summarized News & Articles

22 killed in Quetta, Chaman bomb hits on Hazaras

Hazaras protest against the killing; ask govt for provision of better protection

QUETTA: (APRIL 12, 2019) Twenty-two people were martyred and around 58 injured in two separate IED blasts in the Balochistan province, apparently targeting the Shia Hazara ethnic minority, ripped through Quetta's Hazarganji Sabzi Mandi Friday morning. Eight Hazara community members, an FC official and two children were among the dead. Body parts littered the scene and injured people screamed for help as black smoke cloaked the market after the explosion. Buildings located nearby were also damaged in the blast.

DIG Quetta Abdul Razzaq Cheema told reporters that the blast, which took place at around 7:35am, was caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) hidden among vegetables. Speaking at a press conference, Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau said initial investigation suggested it was a suicide bombing, insisting that it did not target any particular community.

Shortly after the bombing, the Hazara community youths rallied in Quetta, demanding more security from the authorities and the arrest of those behind the attacks. Qadir Nayil, a Hazara community leader, asked the government for provision of better protection. "Once again our people were the target and once again we will have to bury our dear ones," he said. "We demand more security from the government and all those involved in the act of terrorism should be found and punished," he added.

Qari Hussain Force, an affiliate of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) later claimed responsibility for the attack in which 10kg explosive material was used.

14 people offloaded from buses, shot dead in Balochistan

QUETTA: (18 Apr 2019) At least 14 people were killed in an ambush on several buses travelling between Karachi and Gwadar in the remote Ormara area of Balochistan province. Media reports claim 9 Pakistan Navy men among those gunned down after being identified through IDs.

According to reports, the unidentified assailants intercepted the buses in Buzi Top area on the Coastal Highway around midnight and offloaded 16 of the three dozens people, after checking their identity cards. The attack took place as the bus was traveling on the Makran coastal highway between the port city of Karachi and the Gwadar port in the southwest, local official Jehangir Dashti told The Associated Press. Dashti said the passengers targeted in the attack were killed after the assailants checked their identity cards but he could not confirm if all the slain were Punjabis.

"They identified non-Baloch by checking their identity cards and employee cards," said Buledi. "They took them to the nearby mountains and shot them dead after tying their hands."

“Dozens of gunmen” were involved in the attack and fled the scene afterward, Dashti said. “In this tragic incident, 14 passengers were forced off the bus, they were lined up in a nearby open area and killed by the terrorists,” he said. The Pakistani Navy said its sailors and officers who were travelling to work were also among the slain men. One was a member of the country's coast guard. Security forces from the nearby town of Buzi Top were dispatched and had reached the area, about 600 kilometers (375 miles) from the provincial capital, Quetta, he added.

BRAS TAKES CREDIT:

The Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS), an alliance of armed ethnic Baloch separatist groups, claimed responsibility for the attack in an emailed statement released. The Baloch Raji Ajoji Sangar (BRAS), an alliance of three Balochi separatist organisations, including the Baloch Liberation Army, Balochistan Liberation Front and Baloch Republican Guard.

'Terrorists killed in Peshawar operation belonged to TTP'

PESHAWAR: (16 April) Five terrorists killed in an anti-terrorism operation in Peshawar's Hayatabad area belonged to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), police sources said . The operation, which concluded after a 17-hour standoff with five terrorists killed and a policeman martyred, was conducted on an intelligence tip-off, police sources added. According to the sources, "The terrorists belonged to TTP and were involved in four major incidents, including attacks on a high court judge, an additional inspector-general of police and a FC vehicle."

"Imran Muhammad, a 20-year-old Afghan suicide bomber, was among those killed," they added. The police sources further said, "An explosive-laden motorcycle and suicide vests were found from the building where the terrorists had taken cover."

The suspects had taken cover in a residential building in Phase 7 of the Hayatabad locality, from where they attacked security forces. The building was demolished with explosives soon after the operation concluded.

No Pakistani soldier or citizen died in Balakot airstrike, Shushma Swaraj

Finally the truth under ground reality compulsions (ISPR)

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has finally admitted that no Pakistani soldier or citizen was killed in the Indian airstrike in Balakot, contrary to previous Indian claims of up to 300 casualties. "We had told the international community that the armed forces were instructed not to harm any Pakistani citizen or its soldier during the strike," Indian media quoted Swaraj as saying . "Our Army did the same without harming any Pakistani citizen or soldier."

But the foreign minister's latest comments are in stark contrast to previous tall claims by Indian officials of destroying an alleged terrorist camp and killing up to 300 alleged terrorists in the February 26 airstrike on the Pakistani town, about 40 km (25 miles) from the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistan had rejected India's claims, saying the Pakistani Air Force's (PAF) timely response had forced Indian warplanes to return and only drop their "payload" on a largely empty hillside.

Finally the truth under ground reality compulsions. Hopefully, so will be about other false Indian claims ie surgical strike 2016, denial of shooting down of 2 IAF jets by PAF and claim about F16. Better late than never. (ISPR) Maj. Gen. Ghafoor

US Rejected: Pak F-16 shot down during Feb 27 dogfight

The Indian Air Force asserted that it shot down an F-16 fighter jet of Pakistan during the February 27 dogfight, refuting a leading US news magazine report contradicting India's claim. Issuing a statement after the American magazine 'Foreign Policy' reported that a US count of the F-16s with Pakistan has found that none of these jets are missing, the IAF said, "during the aerial engagement, one MiG 21 Bison of the IAF shot down an F-16 in Nowshera sector."

IAF sources also said it has conclusive "circumstantial evidence" including wireless intercepts, signals and graphic captures from airborne warning and control system (AWACS) and electronic signatures to conclude that the F-16 jet was shot down during the aerial combat.

In its report, the US magazine said two senior US defense officials with direct knowledge of the situation told it that American personnel recently counted Islamabad's F-16s and found none of the planes missing. Pakistan has denied that it lost any F-16 jet during the aerial combat. Sources said electronic signals from the F-16 aircraft which was engaged by an Mig 21 Bison ended abruptly, confirming that it crashed after being hit. They said IAF's AWACS picked up signals of presence of an F-16 aircraft when Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman's MiG-21 Bison was engaging with the enemy jet. However, around eight seconds later, the F-16 went missing from the graphic screen of the AWACS, reflecting that the jet went down.

According to the magazine, Pakistan invited the US to physically count its F-16 planes after the incident as part of an end-user agreement signed when the foreign military sale was finalised. Some of the aircraft were not immediately available for inspection due to the conflict, so it took US personnel several weeks to account for all of the jets, one US official said.

Come see for yourself: Pakistan opens Balakot to international media

A group of international media journalists mostly India based and Ambassadors & Defence Attachés of various countries in Pakistan visited impact site of 26 February Indian air violation, near Jabba, Balakot.

A group of international media journalists mostly India based and Ambassadors & Defence Attachés of various countries in Pakistan visited impact site of 26 February Indian air violation, near Jabba, Balakot. DG ISPR briefed the group about details of the event negating repeated false Indian claims with ground realities. Visitors were shown bomb craters of denied Indian air strike attempt in barren open spaces with no loss to life or infrastructure. Group also visited nearby madrassa claimed by India for having been struck and killing scores of terrorists. Visitors freely interacted with student children and teachers and saw for themselves that madrassa stood on ground untouched with only innocent local children undergoing education. DG ISPR reiterated that India instead of pursuing false claims should accept the reality, stay a responsible state for peace in the region and especially to look inward to identify reasons for out of hand situation inside Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Later, group visited APS Swat, a state of the art education facility with computer and science labs, Auditorium and sports stadium. This was established by Pakistan Army as a gift for resilient people of Swat in recognition of their contributions and sacrifices in defeating terrorism as terrorists had specially targeted educational institutions during the unrest.

Later the group also visited Sabaoon (morning light) de-radicalization Centre Malakand a rehabilitation facility for psychologically treating indoctrinated Juvenile and help them return to normal life and become useful citizens of society.

Pakistan Navy successfully tests indigenous missile in North Arabian sea

KARACHI(Tuesday Apr 23 2019) : In an impressive display of fire power, Pakistan Navy's Fast Attack Craft (Missile) carried out Live Weapon Firing in the North Arabian Sea, said an official statement. Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Kaleem Shaukat witnessed the live firing onboard the Navy ship. The statement said that the indigenously developed cruise missile has anti-ship and land attack capability. The missile accurately hit its target on land, signifying the impressive capabilities of the indigenous missile system. "The successful Live Weapon Firing has once again demonstrated the credible fire power of Pakistan Navy and the impeccable level of indigenization in high-tech weaponry achieved by Pakistan's defense industry. This is a clear manifestation of the government's resolve to achieve self-reliance in this field," the press release said.

Speaking on this occasion, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff expressed his utmost satisfaction on the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy Fleet and commended the efforts of all those involved in achieving this significant milestone successfully. The naval vice chief emphasized the need to capitalize on indigenous defense capabilities. Vice Chief of the Naval Staff also reaffirmed the resolve of Pakistan Navy to ensure seaward defense and safeguard national maritime interests at all costs. He also appreciated the efforts made by the Navy engineers and researchers in making the project a success.

Book on fake Indian surgical strikes launched

'India's Surgical Strike Stratagem, Brinkmanship and Response' authored by Professor Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal was launched at the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR) Quaid-i-Azam University here on Tuesday. The panelists included Director General of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute Dr. Maria Sultan and Air Commodore (R) Khalid Banuri and former head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs at the Strategic Plans Division, while QAU Vice-Chancellor Professor Muhammad Ali was the chief guest on the occasion, where members of academia, dignitaries, and young scholars were in attendance.

Prof. Jaspal, an expert on global politics, nuclear proliferation, and national security, said he had conceived the book's idea after the first sham surgical strike of India in 2016. He said India's mantra of surgical strikes was very perilous since a surgical strike between two nuclear armed states was an unprecedented and rather a never occurred situation.

“This Indian mantra has catastrophic bearings for the region. I offer a fresh perspective (on the matter) that is not based on rhetoric but legal and international underpinnings,” he said. The writer termed India's farcical surgical strikes phantom and said the current Modi government amidst domestic imperatives and growing turmoil on Kashmir was trying to distract the attention of the international community.

VC Prof Muhammad Ali praised the writer for coming up with an objective research account of an issue, which has been much propagated by Indian government and researchers alike. He complimented the book as a symbol of evolving strategic thought on the matters of regional security and ramification of the standoff between two nuclear arch-rivals. “India continues to plan the facade of fake strikes to divert the attention of the world community from Kashmir issue and atrocities being committed by its troops on innocent Kashmiris,” he said.

Dr. Muhammad Ali also highlighted the importance of research and education for a vibrant and progressive society. He appreciated the SPIR for organising the book launch. Dr. Maria Sultan highlighted various facets of regional security and Indian hegemonic postures and Indian reliance on fake terrorists attack to divert the attention of the world away from Kashmir issue and also for vested political interests.

She appreciated the objective account by Prof Jaspal on the issue of alleged surgical strike. Khalid Banuri praised Prof Jaspal for his hard work and thoroughly researched account to off balance the Indian propaganda of so-called surgical strikes. SPIR Director Professor Nazir Hussain said Indian Army was notorious for orchestrating fake encounters and blaming Pakistan for conducting the phony attack.

He highlighted Indian hegemonic designs in the region and their ramification on regional security. He also shed light on the contributions of SPIR in the field of education and research.

Renowned Urdu writer and scholar Jamil Jalibi passes away

(Thursday 18 April 2019) Jalibi's literary works spread over numerous fields and span about 70 years, but his Tareekh-i-adab-i-Urdu, or the history of Urdu literature, in four volumes, is the kind of work that has eclipsed almost all other literary histories of Urdu and has made Jalibi a legendary figure in the history of Urdu literature.

His research on the earliest literary pieces of Urdu, especially the ones written in Deccan in the 15th and 16th century, has pushed back the history of Urdu literature by one-and-a-half century. His discovery of Urdu's first literary work, Masnavi Kudam Rao Padam Rao and some other classical works, such as Divan-i-Hasan Shauqi and Divan-i-Nusrati, have earned him the reputation as one of the most celebrated research scholars of Urdu. His other books include Janveristan (an Urdu translation of George Orwell's novel Animal Farm), Eliot Ke Mazameen (an Urdu translation of essays by T.S. Eliot), Pakistani Culture, Qadeem Urdu Ki Lughat, Arastu Se Eliot Tak, The Changing World of Islam, Tanqeed Aur Tajraba, Qaumi Angrezi Urdu Lughat, Adabi Tehqeeq and many others. He also edited Naya daur, a prestigious Urdu literary journal.

He was born in Aligarh on June 12, 1929, and came to Pakistan after partition in 1947. (For his services he has been awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Dawood Literary Award (four times), Baba-i-Urdu Award and Mohammad Tufail Award.)

Brief News International

Sri Lanka's deadliest terror attack ever

Health ministry says 253 people were killed 500 wounded

He blames difficulty in counting 'badly mutilated' bodies

Authorities in Sri Lanka saying the difficulty in identifying body parts at blast scenes led to the earlier inaccurate number. "Many of the victims were badly mutilated ... There was double counting," it said, adding the lower toll was reached once all autopsies were completed and cross-referenced with DNA samples. The suicide bomb attacks on three churches and four hotels have exposed an intelligence failure, with accusations that warnings had not been acted on and feuds at the top levels of government had undermined security cooperation.

Hemasiri Fernando, the defence secretary, resigned over the failure to prevent the attacks, saying he was stepping down to take responsibility for institutions he ran. But he said there had been no failure on his part.

A series of coordinated bombings on Easter Sunday has rocked churches and hotels in Sri Lanka. The latest deadliest attack in Sri Lanka since the end of the civil war 10 years ago. The blasts targeted four hotels - including the Shangri-La, Kingsbury and the Cinnamon Grand in the capital Colombo - as well as three churches.

Bomb detonators found at Colombo bus station: Police said they had found 87 bomb detonators at a Colombo bus station. A statement said police found the detonators at the Bastian Mawatha Private bus stand, 12 of them scattered on the ground and another 75 in a garbage dump nearby.

Tuesday 23rd April has been declared a national day of mourning in Sri Lanka. Tuesday, April 23: The first mass burial for the victims of Easter Sunday bombings took place in Colombo. Mourners and relatives of the victims brought flowers to the memorial service and prayed with the clergy as coffins were being carried in and out of the church.

UN: 'Evil must be held accountable' : The "evil" perpetrators of the attacks must be held accountable for their actions, a spokesperson for the current president of the United Nations General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, said. Espinosa's spokesperson called the attacks "senseless acts of violence" and also said "there is no justification for terrorism and... the world must unite to tackle it once for all".

President Maithripala Sirisena made the declaration which gives security forces special powers, including the right to search and arrest individuals.

Thirty-one foreign nationals killed: The bodies of 31 foreign nationals killed on Sunday have been identified, Sri Lanka's foreign ministry said in a statement, with 14 others unaccounted for and feared dead. Among those killed were eight Indian nationals, eight United Kingdom nationals, two Saudi Arabian nationals and two Chinese nationals. The ministry also said 17 foreign nationals wounded in the attacks were receiving treatment at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo and a separate private hospital in the capital.

Key Suspect of Sri Lanka Blasts Died in Hotel Attack

An extremist believed to have played a key role in Sri Lanka's deadly Easter bombings died in an attack on a Colombo hotel, the country's president confirmed Friday. "What intelligence agencies have told me is that Zahran was killed during the Shangri-La attack," President Maithripala Sirisena told reporters, referring to Zahran Hashim, leader of a local extremist group. Hashim appeared in a video released by the Islamic State group after they claimed the bombings, but his whereabouts after the blasts were not immediately clear. Sirisena did not immediately clarify what Hashim's role was in the attack on the Shangri-La, one of six bomb blasts that killed over 250 people on Sunday.

Sri Lanka arrests 40 suspects after bombings. There were no claims of responsibility for the attacks but the cabinet spokesperson and health minister Rajitha Senarathne blamed the bombings on local Islamist group Thowheeth Jama'ath, a little-known Muslim organizations.

Pakistan hands over Jinnah Hospital to Afghan authorities

Kabul (20 Apr 2019) The Government of Pakistan officially handed over 'state-of-the-art' Jinnah Hospital in Kabul to Afghan authorities. The FO said that Afghan Vice-President Sarwar Danish, Afghan Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz and Pakistani Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs,

Ali Muhammad Khan, jointly inaugurated the "200-bed state-of-the-art" hospital in a ceremony held in Kabul. Khan, the Pakistani representative, expressed hope that the Jinnah Hospital completed at a cost of \$24 million would be a "substantial contribution" to the health sector of Afghanistan.

The minister, as per the press release, also conveyed Prime Minister Imran Khan's message that Pakistan would continue to take all possible measures for the welfare of the people of Afghanistan, adding that the premier wished to see a "stable, secure, peaceful, prosperous and sovereign Islamic Republic of Afghanistan". Afghan minister Dr Feroz expressed his gratitude for the "generous gift" and appreciated "Pakistan's immense assistance in the health sector," which also includes the Nishtar Kidney Center in Jalalabad and the under-construction 100-bed Naeb Aminullah Khan Hospital in Logar.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zahid Nasrullah Khan, said that the Jinnah Hospital was a "flagship project" of the nation's US\$1 billion development assistance to Afghanistan, which according to the press release, was in "in pursuance of Pakistan's policy objective of deepening and broadening people-to-people connections between the two countries".

Belt and Road forum 2019

Chinese President Xi Jinping plugs China's soft power

The 2019 Belt and Road forum in Beijing as China shows off the expansion of its key infrastructure project. Leaders from some 37 countries are discussing the gigantic project with China's president Xi Jinping. Launched five years ago, it is set to boost trade between China and the world. So what does China's Belt and Road initiative, its new version of the Silk Road, involve? One route runs through Central Asia and Moscow all the way to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. It consists of roads and railways, as well as power stations, telecommunications networks, and pipelines. Then there's the Maritime Silk Road, which will connect China with Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia. China has already invested billions in infrastructure projects along the way. But critics are warning that president Xi's gigantic project is plunging its partners into debt, giving China increasing power, and there are concerns that the project could lead to a market monopoly by China.

China's Xi hails \$64 billion in new Belt and Road deals

Xi Jinping raised a glass to his signature foreign policy project at a Belt and Road conference in Beijing. While some countries fear that China is using the initiative for strategic gain, others are flocking to join it. Xi, who did not elaborate on the agreements in his closing remarks, said the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would "enjoy higher quality and brighter prospects" as "more and more friends and partners" joined the China-led project. BRI projects to build roads, bridges, pipelines and ports would focus on "open, clean and green development" and be based on market principles, he added.

China's expensive gambit

China has been trying to reinvigorate BRI after a slump in the number of new projects last year. The initiative, also known as the New Silk Road, aims to boost trade between China and the rest of Asia,

Africa, Europe and South America. China's central bank chief, Yi Gang, that Chinese banks have so far loaned some \$440 billion for Belt and Road projects.

The total value of all BRI projects worldwide currently stands at \$3.67 trillion, according to data from Refinitiv, a financial markets data provider.

The United States and some of its allies have warned that BRI increases China's global influence over low-income countries by offering them construction project loans they cannot repay. Sri Lanka handed over Hambantota port to China on a 99-year lease in 2017 after it failed to repay its debts.

New missile gap leaves U.S. scrambling to counter China

ZHUHAI, China, April 25 (Reuters) - Chinese President Xi Jinping has elevated his country's missile forces to a level where they pose an unprecedented challenge to the aircraft carriers and bases that form the backbone of American military primacy in Asia, a Reuters special report reveals today. Many of the missiles in Beijing's arsenal now rival or outperform those of the United States, puncturing the protective umbrella that for decades America has afforded its regional allies South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Captain James Fanell, a former U.S. Navy intelligence chief, told Reuters that China now has "the most advanced ballistic missile force in the world" and has "the capacity to overwhelm the defensive systems we are pursuing."

Critically, China has forged a monopoly in one class of conventional missiles that enable it to strike at U.S. aircraft carriers off its coast and at bases in Japan or even Guam in the Pacific Ocean. Under a Cold War-era treaty between the U.S. and Russia, neither country has been allowed to develop these weapons land-based, intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (3,418 miles). But China, which isn't a signatory to the treaty, has been deploying these rockets in massive numbers. Today's special report is part of "The China Challenge," a Reuters series on how Xi Jinping is reshaping and rejuvenating China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), by filling its top ranks with loyal allies and enhancing its missile, naval and nuclear capabilities.

In the event of a confrontation in the seas off its coast, Chinese military brass say they now have the means with which to keep American carriers at bay.

China threatens to turn Taiwan into next 'Lebanon'

google_plus_share

By Keoni Everington, Taiwan News, Staff Writer (15-04-2019)

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) -- As tensions rise across the Taiwan Strait, China in its state-run media mouthpiece the Global Times earlier this month threatened to turn Taiwan into another "Lebanon." In response to reports that Chinese fighter jets crossed the Taiwan Strait median line on Sunday (March 31), President Donald Trump's national security adviser John Bolton on April 1 said that Beijing's saber-

rattling would not "win any hearts and minds in Taiwan" and that the U.S. commitments to the Taiwan Relations Act "are clear." At a press conference on April 2, State Department spokesman Robert Palladino said, "The United States opposes unilateral actions by any party that are aimed at altering the status quo, including anything related to force or coercion."

The next day, on April 3, China's state-run tabloid, the Global Times issued an editorial in which it criticized Washington for accusing the PLA of damaging the status quo, while "the U.S. and the Tsai Ing-wen administration are continuously breaking the status quo in the Taiwan Straits." The tabloid then claimed that the U.S. is playing the "Taiwan card" because it views China as a strategic rival.

The article indicated that the crossing of the median line could be the first in a series of escalating countermeasures, which could culminate with Taiwan becoming another Lebanon: "The PLA has many choices, including crossing the 'middle line,' flying over the Taiwan island and even turn Taiwan into a Lebanon-like situation,"

After IAF's strike on Balakot, MoD turns to Russia to boost ammunition stocks

Army asks Russia for air defence missiles, rockets, anti-tank ammunition

By Ajai Shukla | Business Standard, 20th April 19

In Kargil, in 1999, the operations to evict Pakistani infiltrators found the military short of artillery ammunition and precision-guided aircraft bombs. Today, after the Indian Air Force's (IAF's) strike on Balakot on February 26 and retaliation the next day by Pakistani fighters, the military finds itself badly short of air defence missiles and surface-to-surface rockets.

In 1999, the ministry of defence (MoD) obtained bombs and ammunition from Israel on an emergency basis. This time round, the MoD has asked Russia to urgently replenish India's firepower.

India's emergency requests on Russia include launchers and missiles for the Igla-S "very short range air defence system" (VSHORADS), rockets for SMERCH multi-barrel, surface-to-surface rocket launchers and Mango armour-piercing ammunition for India's fleet of T-90 tanks, say sources in New Delhi and Moscow. While the Igla-S is a defensive weapon, the requests for SMERCH rockets and Mango armour-piercing ammunition indicates the military is preparing for ground offensives as well.

Moscow is cooperating to deliver India's orders on urgent priority. Russian negotiating teams, which have already engaged in discussions with the MoD, will be travelling shortly to New Delhi with techno-commercial offers for meeting Indian demands.

Business Standard learns the emergency sourcing from Moscow will be paid for under financial powers delegated to the vice chiefs of the three services. Last November, the MoD increased the vice chiefs' financial powers to Rs 500 crore for each transaction. The current purchases would involve multiple transactions, but the exact costs are still being negotiated with the Russians.

Contacted for confirmation, the Indian MoD responded: “Urgent purchases are necessitated at times based on emerging situations and these cannot be shared as they can compromise tactical and operational level planning.”

Given the threat from Pakistani fighters, which attacked Indian military installations in numbers on February 27 and shot down an Indian MiG-21 Bison, the most significant purchase is the Igla-S VSHORADS.

This portable air defence system is carried and operated by a two-man crew and fires missiles to shoot down enemy fighters at ranges of up to eight kilometres.

Last November, the MoD announced it had selected the Igla-S in the hotly contested VSHORADS tender for 5,175 missiles and 800 launchers for all three services. An MoD committee has been negotiating costs with Rosoboronexport (RoE), Russia's defence export body, but a contract has not been finalised. Other vendors in the VSHORADS contest, particularly Swedish firm Saab, are hotly contesting the selection of the Igla-S, which they allege failed user trials. However, with the Igla-S now meeting emergency Indian requirements, the larger VSHORADS tender seems settled in ROE's favour.

US approves anti-submarine helicopter sale to India

(2 Apr, 2019) The United States said it had approved the sale of 24 MH-60R helicopters to India, significantly boosting its emerging ally's firepower to target submarines as China expands in the Indian Ocean. In a quick reply to an Indian request submitted late last year, the US State Department said it was informing the US Congress as legally required that it was giving the green light for India to buy the 24 helicopters worth a total of \$2.6 billion.

Nicknamed the Romeo, the MH-60R helicopters manufactured by Lockheed Martin are designed for hunting submarines as well as knocking out ships and conducting search-and-rescue operations at sea.

“This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the US by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defensive partner,” the State Department said in a statement.

It called India “a major defensive partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region”.

India, which had estranged relations with the US since the Cold War, has emerged as one of its leading defense partner with the interests of the world's two largest democracies largely overlapping amid their concerns over a rising China and extremism.

India has been alarmed by China's growing interest in the Indian Ocean as it becomes a global naval power.

In a strategy dubbed by Indian and US observers as the “string of pearls”, China has made use of a growing number of naval bases in the Indian Ocean, most notably the Gwadar port. Indian naval

planners have responded with a doctrine to ensure freedom of movement throughout the Indian Ocean, stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca. The Romeos would replenish India's aging fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

North Korean Leader Arrives In Russia For Summit With Putin

(Wed. April 24, 2019) The Kremlin said they would discuss the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It is Kim's first trip to Russia and the first visit of a North Korean leader since Kim's father met with then-President Dmitry Medvedev in 2011. It is also Kim's first international voyage since President Trump walked out on a "bad deal" at the second U.S.-North Korea summit in February in the Vietnamese capital.

The failure of that meeting to produce an agreement was, analysts say, an embarrassment to Kim, especially to the North Korean domestic audience. "The primary purpose of the [Vladivostok] visit is essentially to rehabilitate Kim Jong Un's image after Hanoi," comments John Park, director of the Korea Project at the Harvard Kennedy School, "and the best way to do that is to get back to top-down summitry with another world leader."

Kim and Putin: Challenging the US role in denuclearization

(by Mansur Mirovalev) The Kremlin tried hard to present Kim Jong Un's first ever visit to Russia as an historic event aimed at proving how important Moscow is in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula - especially after the failure of US-North Korean talks in Hanoi two months ago.

Kremlin-controlled media described in great detail how Kim's armoured train arrived in the Pacific port of Vladivostok, how Russian officials welcomed him with traditional round bread and salt, what theatres, museums and landmarks the North Korean leader will visit during his three-day trip. "We are very much willing to take the Korean-Russian ties to a new, higher level," Kim said during a reception after talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin that lasted for more than three hours.

WikiLeaks Founder : Julian Assange arrested in London

WikiLeaks' Assange hauled from embassy, faces US charge

By: DANICA KIRKA, (Apr 11, 2019) Associated Press

LONDON (AP) - British police on Thursday 11 April, hauled a bearded and shouting Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy where he was holed up for nearly seven years, and the U.S. charged the WikiLeaks founder with conspiring with former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to get their hands on government secrets. Police arrested Assange after the South American nation revoked the

political asylum that had protected him in the embassy, and he was brought before a British court - the first step in an extradition battle that he has vowed to fight.

Video posted online by Ruptly, a news service of Russia Today, showed several men in suits pulling a handcuffed Assange out of the embassy and loading him into a police van while uniformed British police formed a passageway. Assange, who shouted and gestured as he was removed, sported a full beard and slicked-back gray hair.

He later appeared in Westminster Magistrates' Court, where District Judge Michael Snow wasted no time in finding him guilty of breaching his bail conditions, flatly rejecting his assertion that he had not had a fair hearing and a reasonable excuse for not appearing.

Assange's attorney, Jennifer Robinson, said he will fight any extradition to the U.S. "This sets a dangerous precedent for all journalist and media organizations in Europe and around the world," she said. "This precedent means that any journalist can be extradited for prosecution in the United States for having published truthful information about the United States."

Fire Mauls Beloved Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris

French President Macron: "We will rebuild"

Construction on Notre Dame began in 1163 and was completed in 1345.

(Brief Report) The iconic spire at the top of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris collapsed after a major fire broke out on Monday (15 April 2019) evening. Video showed part of the roof of the cathedral collapsing onto itself. The flames were finally declared out on next day Tuesday morning, according to a spokesman for the Paris fire service. Gabriel Plus said that "the entire fire is out," and that the emergency services were "surveying the movement of the structures and extinguishing smoldering residues."

Plus said that with the fire out, the next "phase is for the experts" to plan how to fortify what is left of the building. Firefighters managed to save the cathedral's landmark rectangular towers from the blaze, but a Paris deputy mayor, Emmanuel Gregoire, said the cathedral had suffered "colossal damages." Interior Minister Christophe Castaner told reporters that the cathedral was "under permanent surveillance because it can still budge."

France's leader vowed to rebuild the landmark. In an address to the nation Tuesday, President Emmanuel Macron said he wanted it done within five years, but an expert told CBS News that reconstruction could take decades.

Notre Dame Cathedral's history : Construction of Notre Dame began in 1163 during the reign of King Louis VII and was completed in 1345. The cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a worldwide Parisian icon and the location of some of the most important moments in the history of France. Henry VI

of England was crowned inside the cathedral in 1431 and Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned emperor of France inside the cathedral in 1804. The cathedral receives nearly 13 million visitors a year and is home to exquisite religious artifacts, paintings, sculptures and other priceless works of art.

US-led coalition 'killed 1,600 civilians' in Syria's Raqqa

Amnesty and Airwars say US, UK and French forces only admitted to 10 percent of killings. The US-backed assault to drive the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from its Syrian capital Raqqa in 2017 killed more than 1,600 civilians, a figure 10 times what the coalition has acknowledged, according to a new report. The investigation, published by Amnesty International and the monitoring group Airwars on (Thursday 25 April, urged top coalition members to "end almost two years of denial about the massive civilian death toll and destruction it unleashed in Raqqa". Donatella Rovera, senior crisis response adviser at Amnesty, said, "Many of the air bombardments were inaccurate and tens of thousands of artillery strikes were indiscriminate."

Libya death toll rises to 205 as Tripoli fighting continues: WHO

WHO says it has deployed more staff as UN-recognised government seeks international action against Khalifa Haftar. Libya's unity government issued an arrest warrant for General Haftar for allegedly ordering deadly air attacks against civilian areas. Six of Haftar's officers were also named in the warrant, which was issued by the military prosecutor general and published by the unity government's press office. The United Nations(UN)-affiliated WHO said in a post on Twitter it had deployed medical specialists to support front-line hospitals as the recent fighting had also left more than 900 wounded.

Articles

Pakistan's Quest for South Asian Reconciliations: In this

By : Nusrat Mirza

I would like to mention some important points of recent Pak India armed encounter

(1) That Pakistan's defense in conventional warfare is now robust other than nuclear deterrence and tactical nuclear war heads to neutralize Indian Cold Start Doctrine and Proactive Strategic Initiative (PSI).

(2) Pakistan is a responsible nuclear Power.

(3) Pakistan reacted in self-defense.

(4) Pilot was released after the assurance of Indian RAW Chief that war will not be escalated.

(5) Pakistan at every point was emphasizing to negotiate. Pakistan's quest for South Asian reconciliation was sincere and serious. Pakistan's efforts show its strength and confidence as has been appreciated by the Major Powers of the world. To some it was surprise but the demonstration of its seriousness and protecting its boundaries, space and sea demonstrate its capability and the quest for peace. Mr. Imran Khan the Prime Minister of Pakistan has repeatedly offered India for negotiations and recently in China on 26th April 2019 repeated the offer.

The Course of Military Encounter

1. Indian Air Force violated Pakistan's air space on 26th Feb. 2019 dropped some pay load at Balakot. Thanks Allah there was no loss. Perhaps India wanted to show a surgical strike considering that Pakistan will not respond as there was no loss or Indian Air force did not target because Pakistan Air Force was in formation for dog fight. So the Indian planes were in hurry to leave the Pakistan's space. PAF did not follow them in the Indian Air space. A wise decision.

2. In response to Balokot, the Pakistan Air Force prepared a platform for dog fight. Three of the IAF planes were hit; MIG 21's debris fell in to Pakistan's land, pilot captured, four Israeli make missile spies 2000 recovered from the plan. The other fighter plane Su 30's debris fell in Indian Occupied Kashmir and pilot died. The third one also fell in to Indian Territory but Pakistan has no proof so it did not claim of its shooting down.

3. India initially claimed that it has attacked Jaishe Muhammad's training camp and killed more than 200 militants. Finally it was officially admitted by India that no damage was done.

4. The Pilot of MIG 21's Abhe Nandan was released by Pakistan after the assurance Indian's Intelligence Chief RAW Anil Dhamsmana to Pakistan's ISI Chief Lt. Gen. Asif Munir on 27th February 2019 as reported by Indian newspapers.

5. After suffering a humiliating military defeat on the morning of 27 February 2019, India went wild trying to distract its population by switching the subject of discussion to allegations that Islamabad violated the Geneva Convention of 1949 by airing footage of the captured pilot, but in reality Pakistan actually confirmed its adherence to this cornerstone of international law and simultaneously contributed to de-escalating the worst military crisis with its nuclear-armed neighbor since their 1971 war almost half a century ago.

Pakistan's Superiority

6. Pakistan superiority was accepted by Indian Former Air Chief Denzil Keelor by saying that Indian Forces failed technically. India could not succeed politically and diplomatically against Pakistan. Pakistani intelligence has destroyed all Indian preparations. The Indian Air Force did violate Pakistan Air space but could not achieve the target. The Pakistani Air Force proved itself to be superior in action and planning.

7. Mr. Paraveen Sahwani an Indian Defense analyst speak the immediate after 27th February 2019 confirming Indian defeat.

8. Former Indian Army General Hoda Hussain

Speaking at a seminar organized by the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, he acknowledged that ISPR outclassed the Indian Army in the information war.

He said that Pakistan has defeated India on all fronts even in hybrid war.

9. A story was published in Daily Hindustan Times India that the release of the pilot was under Indian threat of missile attack. Indian Air marshal Kapil Kak clarified that the release of the pilot was not due to Indian threat as Pakistan has released the Indian pilot in Kargil war when fighting continued for a month even after the release of the pilot.

10. The horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki even after the elapse of 74 years is so much that normal children are not born. So nuclear countries should behave responsibly. Any small encounter could lead to a war that may turn to nuclear nothing will be left in the subcontinent.

11. In spite of all tactical or one time success in seven fields; air, Sea, land, cyber, diplomatic, media and hybrid war, Pakistan is pursuing for reconciliation which is commendable and shows Pakistan's sincerity and love for peace. This has been recognized by some countries but it should be appreciated by the world and compel India to behave like a responsible nuclear state and avoid the gimmick of war to win the Indian election of 2019. The pressure should be asserted by international community on Narendra Modi to stop childish acts. It will be in the best interest of Peace of world in general and the south Asian region in particular that Pakistan and India resolve Kashmir issue and all other problems so that the people of both the countries prosper.

12. India should end the breakdown of communication because in the absence of the communications many parties involved and confuse the matter and any small incident can lead to full-fledged war which is not in the interest of either country.

13. India should restart the backdoor channel and should remain in continuous contact with Pakistan leaving aside its mantra being a big country as both countries are nuclear and thus big or small country does not matter.

Air Cdre Mansoor A Shah

A superb pilot, brilliant strategist

“Air power takes shape with reference to setting the traditions and philosophy, and developing the psyche, capability and performance of the air force and the nation to which it belongs”

This quote from Air Commodore Mansoor Ahmed Shah (Late) generally known as Polly Shah, reflects the philosophical thoughts of our forefathers. He was part of the team which laid down the foundations of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on 14 Aug, 1947. He was born to Maj (Dr.) Habibullah Shah and Captain (Dr.) Enid Flora Shah. He was commissioned in the Royal Indian Air force on 09 Apr, 1945 as a pilot and won the “Best Flying Progress Trophy”.

British pilots in those days considered the native Indian pilots fit only for menial tasks of whitewashing, cleaning, digging, painting, and polishing. They would label local pilots as unsteady, unsafe and quite unfit for operations. Mansoor Shah and the other natives proved their British masters wrong. On the independence, he opted for PAF and amongst other pioneers, threw head down in establishing the PAF.

The log book page of Mansoor Shah on 14 Aug, 1947 is decorated with Pakistan flag with remarks “Pakistan Zinda baad”. He imbibed the motivated minds: “To be effective, air force personnel should have an extra-ordinary breadth of vision, general knowledge, coolness of temperament, technical understanding, capacity of sustained hard work, plus extreme tact, honesty and unflinching loyalty to colleagues and to cause”.

Establishing a new air force, bases and units, aircraft inventory, flying operations with only 200 officers (60 pilots) and 2000 airmen, maintenance, logistics, administration, education and training, rehabilitation and morale of the split families in a new force were the challenges of PAF. He narrated terms like hi-fi, air conditioned, stereo or fully loaded which were not in use. Demands were few and officers went proudly on bicycles to work which were hired from local contractor @ Rs 8 per month.

The wives would go out shopping on smoke belching public omni buses. He was a staunch follower of Quaid-e-Azam who fought for a neat and clean Pakistan. Polly was cautious of the Hindu mentality considering Muslims as foul and illegal excrescence like a cancer on the pure and beautiful body of mother India.

Mansoor Shah had professional praise for the first four British air chiefs, but also had reservations on the lack of air power strength in Pakistan which was restricted only to the use of transport aircraft during the Kashmir operations in 1947. He commented, experienced RAF helped Bharat in planning, controlling and airlifting the Indian military formations to Kashmir making it difficult for Pakistani volunteer tribesman to survive.

He flew the first supply drop mission in Dec, 1947 in Kashmir in the four-engine Halifax bomber, commonly known as death trap during those days due to its difficult handling. He managed successfully through the difficult terrain of the valley to deliver supplies to the Pakistani soldiers strangled there.

Polly Shah contributed to developments in PAF through induction of Fury, F-86, B-57, F-104, C-130, F-6 and Mirages. As an outspoken officer he criticized the purchase of Super-marine attacker by the PAF. Rightly so, as it was not even procured by the RAF. His daring action on night of 12 Sep, 1965 when he blew the logistics lines of Bharat Army moving on the Amritsar-Gurdaspur railway lines. He was not supposed to fly in enemy territory being a senior officer, but made personal example for his colleagues and peers. He had commanded No12 Squadron.

He was an amazing pilot who flew all the 29 types of aircraft in use with PAF (Piston engine and jet fighters, transport, reconnaissance and training). He also flew different types of aircraft i.e. a fighter and a transport aircraft the same day with a time difference of only a few hours. He had a total of 4,569 flying hours to his credit. He also flew 8 types of civilian aircraft in use with the Pakistan civilian agencies. He also enjoyed the honor of commanding three PAF bases i.e. Chaklala (Noor Khan), Peshawar and Mauripur (Masroor). Being the victim of the defence forces system, he could not make it to Chief of the Air Staff as only one out of 3 had to be promoted and remaining 2 had to go home.

Polly also served at PAF Academy Risalpur as an instructor as well as the acting commandant and taught flying skills to the young eaglets of PAF. Polly is graded a fatherly figure by his students, who still remember his teachings acumen as an ardent instructor. They appreciate the art of teaching air operations by Sir Polly, who would give everything he had in his kit bag of knowledge and experience.

One of his students Zulfiqar Ali Khan also rose to become the Chief of the Air Staff, PAF. He is remembered as an innovative and ingenious individual by his colleagues. He was graded an exceptional pilot by his seniors throughout service. He was also earmarked to command PAF base Dacca in Nov, 1971 but could not proceed due to suspended flights between East and West Pakistan. During service he served as Director Plans, Director Training and Chief Inspector at AHQ. He had the unique honor of serving at the important posts of Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Training), Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Administration) and Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Operations).

Polly was an expert war strategist. According to him, non-military writers credit the concept of pre-emptive strikes of PAF at the enemy's airfields during 1971 as replica of Israeli's pre-emptive strikes of 1967 Arab-Israel war. He commented these innovations were used by PAF during 1965 war. The concept of joint warfare was conceived during his last years of service. He was the first officer representing PAF at the Joint Staff level.

Polly knew part of air force in an art of war. He knew air force is an expensive business requiring stupendous financial outlays. During the actual armed conflict (because of the speed and range of modern aircraft, their tremendous flexibility and awesome capability and because of the very intricate technology involved), efficient utilization of an air force presents some of the most urgent, wide ranging, difficult and complex problems ever confronted to those responsible for the conduct of war. Due to their selfless devotion, these Muslim countries in those days, requested PAF for establishing and developing their air forces and selecting the aircraft for their use. He also had a deep insight over national and international politics. Starting from World War 2 till his last breath he inferred clear thoughts about international players' trends.

His had philosophical ideas which were a combination of divine religions, space, time as fourth dimension, Einstein's theory of relativity, negative or positive infinity, concepts of electrons, quarks, bosons, photons, gravitations, cosmic rays, galaxies, black holes, neutrons, stars, red giants and white dwarfs etc. He penned down two books "The Gold Bird" and "Flight through Life". He would quote from the book of former president Ayub Khan "Friends not Masters" that USA had always been acting as masters instead of friends.

Air Commodore Mansoor Shah was expert in narrating the jolly tales of initial days of the PAF. According to him the enjoyment those days was flying at low level. In one of the anecdotes a pilot went so low level over Arabian Sea that a jumping fish got entangled in the oil cooler of his flying machine. He would recall the club life at Peshawar club which had a vibrant social life. Polly Shah lived for 62 years with life partner Sibiha. Polly was one of lucky guys who enjoyed company of grand-children. His two daughters Farida and Sonia are happy housewives settled in Lahore and UK respectively. "My father was a great man", states his son Daud Shah, who was named on Prophet Daud (AS).

A graduate of Air Command and Staff College USA and Air War Staff College Quetta, Mansoor was recipient of Sitara-e-Quaid-e-Azam from the president of Pakistan in 1970. He was also decorated with commendation certificate by Commander-in Chief, PAF on 30 Sep, 1956. He was also decorated with Air University badge at Alabama (US) in Dec, 1956. Air Commodore Mansoor Ahmed Shah was an inspiration and a beacon for all PAF officers who knew him.

Book launch of "The Blind Eye: US non-proliferation policy towards Pakistan from Ford to Clinton"

The Woodrow Wilson Center, in collaboration with Stimson Center, organized the book launch of Dr. Rabia Akhtar's book. The session was moderated by Dr. Christian F Osterman (director of Nuclear History Project). The discussants included Hannah Hartland (Stimson Center) and Dr. William Burr (National Security Archives). The event had significant turn up and the participants included researchers, policy makers, academics, students, media, and officials from Pakistani embassy. Dr. Osterman praised the first history of U.S. non-proliferation policy towards Pakistan. He complained that the accounts of Pakistani nuclear policy are based on the declassified documents or archives from the U.S., Europe, and even India.

However, there are no such accounts from Pakistan. Pakistani authorities should learn from this work that there need to be similar resources for researchers in Pakistan so that its side of the story also becomes known. Dr. Rabia opined that in the absence of similar corroboration from the Pakistani side, it remains her own interpretation of history. Pakistan doesn't have a policy of declassifying documents and several of the personalities involved in Pakistan's nuclear program have died.

Brigadier (R) Feroz Hassan Khan had privileged access to interview important personalities that a junior researcher like her doesn't enjoy. Pakistan-U.S. relations are only defined in terms of the uneasy periods. *No one talks about the times where this relationship has been mutually beneficial*. All the U.S. administrations developed a quid pro quo of aid against non-proliferation guarantees, with the underlying understanding that Pakistan would not embarrass the U.S. *The A. Q. Khan story had started around 1974. The U.S. had intelligence reports on his activities all along but this information was only made public in 2004 once it was most favorable for them to arm-twist Pakistan.*

Similarly, the U.S. had information on Pak-China nuclear cooperation and DPRK - Pakistan missile linkages. However, the U.S. did not make these public until late opportune times. Had there been no Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan would have still developed nuclear weapons owing to its genuine security concerns vis-à-vis India, but the timeliness could have been different. The U.S. remained dismissive of Pakistan's threat perception and did not provide the security guarantees that Pakistan sought.

The non-proliferation amendments were designed around the good-cop bad-cop concept with built-in room for waivers to facilitate Pakistan in return for cooperation. Pakistanis can be seen as liar or hypocritical but it was more of Machiavellian realism at play, where it was ensuring that its national security requirements were fulfilled. Pakistan has no reasons to be apologetic for its actions. *None of this would have been possible without U.S. Patronage*. Hannah Haegland opined that the book was equally relevant for not just academia and researchers but also for policy makers. This work provides an interesting case-study of how outsiders can study the U.S. system and dexterously work it to their advantage.

If the U.S. can understand DPRK's motivations for going nuclear, it should also be able acknowledge Pakistan's security concerns. Note: instead of comparison with DPRK, she could draw a simile with India. The most exempted state*. There are several misunderstandings between the Pakistani and the U.S. strategic communities, which need to be resolved.

Complaints about the U.S. double standards are divisive. Such complaints are poorly received here because of *the distinction between vertical and horizontal proliferation since A. Q. Khan's actions were leading up to the latter*. Note: now the *U.S. and India plus eleven other Indian suitors are involved in Horizontal Proliferation i.e. state to state proliferation in violation of NPT. It's distinct from Nuclear Black market case because non-State actors were involved there...A NSG waiver to India means nothing!*

Dr. Burr commented that A. Q. Khan's activities were also in some ways serving Pakistan's national security objectives (reference to his procurements for Pakistan). The U.S. Administrations continued to hide things from the Congress. The *U.S. wanted to balance between non-proliferation and security objectives but security concerns were generally given preference*. At some instances, *the U.S. eye stayed blind officially even though they had irrefutable information on Pakistan's proliferation activities*. Pakistan's uranium enrichment program largely remained out of the U.S.' vision and it grossly underestimated Pakistan's determination. In response to a question about the extent of cooperation

that Pakistan received from China in its nuclear weapons program, Dr. Rabia referred to Brig (R) Feroz Hassan Khan's work but stated that the extent remain unknown and is likely to remain so.

In response to a *question by VoA correspondent, if there should be more scrutiny on Pakistan's nuclear program*, Dr. Rabia asserted that *Pakistan doesn't require any international scrutiny. Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state with a robust nuclear command and control, has credibly demonstrated it's nuclear capability, and remains engaged with relevant international organizations like the IAEA.

Corruption is weapon of war' Pakistan Army tricked by Politicians and Bureaucracy

By Dr. Shahid Qureshi

The objective reality is that Pakistan army (GHQ) is not calling the shots at all in every matter but it has been blamed and made to feel like that. Corrupt politician and civil bureaucracy, an army of over 4500 foreign nationals mostly from 5 I's (5 countries Intelligence sharing) syndicate states have successfully built up this narrative that: 'GHQ' is in everything happen and goes wrong in Pakistan'. Probably some people in the armed forces might have this 'illusion and false sense', that: 'they are the most powerful people in the country'.

If that is true than how come politicians and civil bureaucracy filled with foreign agents have completely destroyed the economy, infrastructure, police, governance and looted over \$200 billion under your nose and nobody knew about it?. They forced the army chief and current Prime Minister Imran Khan almost beg to the small countries for help and crusaders sitting in the IMF for few billion dollars. Economic independence is key to national independence.

To create a distraction whenever anything goes wrong, criminals in Pakistani bureaucracy starts counting religious Madrassas (charitable schools), and poor students as if they are responsible for all the looting of state wealth, fake bank accounts, money laundering and opening of Swiss accounts? These politicians and bureaucrats following international agenda have turned the armed forces of Pakistan into a police force, a disaster management agency, flood relief workers in towns and cities. For example in Swat even after when military stabilised the region civilians officers did not come to take control for many years and also in former FATA.

The incompetence and police corruption has increased the military and civilian deaths in Pakistan. A Police force is supposed to be eyes and ears of the nation in the time of war, but Pakistani police is not more than a prostitute of land mafia and 'killers in uniform' for politicians. Take the examples of SSP Rao Anwar of Sind Police and Inspector Abid Boxer of the Punjab Police, both of them have killed and injured hundreds on the behest of politicians Shabaz Sharif, Asif Zardari and land mafia like Bahria Town land grab mission in Malir, Karachi.

The law and courts have become the servants of the rich and powerful mafias. Pakistani courts are giving judgements which does not fit in the 'common sense' and 'legal sense' of the people. Drug dealers involved in smuggling of drugs in tons are getting bails from the Lahore High courts because the police and agencies are making weak cases, hiding evidence and colluding with the criminals, that is why conviction rates of NAB, (National Accountability Bureau) and Police is very low. They can change whisky bottles recovered from Sharjeel Memon's hospital room into honey by just testing with finger and tongue'. Pakistan has become state run by criminal mafia syndicates like in Colombia and Mexico.

Look at the Hayat Regency scandal in Islamabad where Supreme Court of Pakistan allowed an illegal high rise construction to be legal because all rich and powerful own the apartments in it including Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. Recently Supreme Court of Pakistan gave relief to Malik Riaz Hussian of Bahria Town and all his accomplices involved in 'Great Land Robbery' in Karachi of over Rs 30,000 billion biggest in the history of world. The above examples prove one point that there is no law and accountability for Rich and Mighty in Pakistan. Everyone in Pakistan is in a state of shock and feeling violated after Justice Sardar Mohammad Shamim Khan Chief Justice of Lahore High Court granted bail to Hamza Shabaz in a special chamber hearing on a day off without the accused being present, ordering NAB not to arrest him on money laundering and corruption charges until Monday for 48 hours. One court ordered that NAB must give all the accused (mostly) rich 10 days' notice before arrests. This does not fit in the common and legal sense where criminals need to be informed?

Sharifs have attacked the Supreme Court of Pakistan and have been dictating judges like Justice Malik Qayum for judgements against the opponents, their secret phone tapes conversations are available in media. Sharifs can harbour Indian Agency RAW agents in their sugar mills and offices, support Indian Raw Agent Kulbhushan Yadave, blame Army in Dawn Leaks, help Indian businessmen 'Ammbanis' in the insurance of Jam Nagar Refinery, invite Indian Prime Minister Modi to their home at Jati Ummra (Raiwind) at his granddaughter (Maryam's daughter) wedding, send his military secretary on gardening leave 'saying it is private wedding' and also get away with it. Something is really wrong here. No? Where is the grand power of the military and GHQ?

If the above cannot be done for the common people and only rich get relief from courts, then we may as well shut down these courts as they are burden on taxpayers after all people of this region survived without the Supreme Court for centuries. No? For Sharifs only Supreme Court Chief Justice Saqib Nisar behaved like a 'Jirga Head' and he called both Hamza Shabaz and Ayesha Ahad in his chamber and mediated the case in a way that saved him from being disqualified from parliament under article 62. It does not matter if Ayesha Ahad wife of Hamza Shabaz got the justice or not but Justice Saqib Nisar saved the leader of the opposition of Punjab Assembly.

Hamza Shabaz has been denying their relationship as wife for years but when a FIR was lodged by Ayesha Ahad and threat was made to form JIT on the issue, he admitted in the chamber and settlement was made. Pakistani Supreme Court granted six weeks bail to the convicted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to have medical treatment within the country. On the same day Lahore High court granted relief to his younger brother Shabaz Sharif and ordered to remove his name from the exit control list (ECL) so he could travel abroad.

It seems courts in Pakistan got drunk and judges have complete disconnect with the ground realities and challenges Pakistan facing from all sides. I have dealt with courts and mafias for many years and have first hand experience of judicial system. Someone was telling me the way judiciary is at the moment and how judges are recruited from certain chambers it would be impossible to anyone to bring any high-profile criminals to justice. I have seen these VIP criminals following the laws and queuing up in London busses and tube stations.

Now if all the above looting and plunder of national wealth is done by civilian politicians with the help of over 4500 dual national foreign agents in the civilian bureaucracy, how come military is responsible for everything goes wrong in Pakistan? The fact of the matter is that Pakistan army (GHQ) is not calling the shots at all and in reality they are tricked into feel like that. No? Dr. Shahid Qureshi is senior analyst with BBC and chief editor of The London Post. He writes on security, terrorism and foreign policy. He also appears as analyst on Al-Jazeera, Press TV, MBC, Kazak TV (Kazakhstan), LBC Radio London.

He was also international election observer for Azerbaijan April 2018, Kazakhstan 2015 and 2016 and Pakistan 2002. He has written a famous book "War on Terror and Siege of Pakistan" published in 2009. At Government College Lahore he wrote his MA thesis on 'Political Thought of Imam Khomeini' and visited Tehran University. He is PhD in 'Political Psychology' and studied Law at a British University. He also speaks at Cambridge University. He is a visiting Professor at Hebe University in China.

Nuclear winter

Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal

The strategic environment of South Asia is alarming due to the Indian ruling elite's irresponsible behaviour, particularly in the post-Pulwama incident on 14 February 2019. Currently, the armed forces of nuclear-armed India and Pakistan are on high alert, and reliable intelligence sources reveal that India is planning to attack Pakistan during the next week. Therefore, the Pakistani armed forces are prepared to defend the country.

Both sides' readiness to fight a war is too risky to regional strategic stability. The escalation of a conflict between the nuclear-armed rivals contains intrinsic fear of nuclear winter. It was reported that the Indian Army deployed nuclear-capable missiles during the first week of March and also Indian Navy deployed nuclear-propelled submarine, Arihant. Whether they were nuclear armed or not; it is a debatable factor.

The truth of the matter is that the deployment of nuclear-capable delivery vehicles serves the purpose of nuclear signalling and added a nuclear dimension in the current tension between India and Pakistan. Pakistan, however, refrained from even mentioning its nuclear weapons capability during the climax of the crisis on February 27."Repetitions do not make the truth of a lie. Despite claiming possession of evidence on shooting F16, IAF still short of presenting it.

Do not overlook Pakistan's silence for not drum beating losses on the Indian side. Fact is that PAF shot down two IAF jets, the wreckage is seen on the ground by all." the ISPR chief Maj Gen Ghafoor tweeted on April 8, 2019. The Pakistani ruling elite is confident about its conventional warfighting capability. Therefore, unlike the desperate Indian ruling elite; it is desisting from nuclear signalling.

India's deployment of nuclear-capable delivery vehicles validates New York Times' report that declared India's military equipment as 'vintage.' It states, "The aerial clash, the first by the South Asian rivals in nearly five decades, was a rare test for the Indian military and it left observers a bit dumbfounded. While the challenges faced by India's armed forces are no secret, its loss of a plane last month to a country whose military is about half the size and receives a quarter of the funding was still telling."

The report concluded that during the intense warfare, India would not be able to maintain appropriate supply to its troops. It has only ten days of ammunition. (Maria Abi-Habib, "After India Loses Dogfight to Pakistan; Questions Arise about It is Vintage' Military," The New York Times, March 3, 2019). Many strategic analysts disagree over the claim of the Report. Admittedly, India possesses a big military arsenal but cannot violate Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity with impunity. Despite the prevalent strategic equilibrium between India and Pakistan, Prime Minister Modi is planning to attack Pakistan. On April 8, Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that the government has "reliable intelligence that India is devising a new plan" to attack Pakistan. He added, "Preparations are being made, and there are chances of another attack against Pakistan.

According to our information, the action could be taken between April 16 and 20." Everyone knows that the so-called 'surgical strike' strategy of India was an utter failure at the military chessboard, but Prime Minister Modi seems to determine to conduct again 'surgical strike' to boost the morale of the demoralized Indian armed forces. In reality, Indian Prime Minister Modi wanted to win the 2019 Lok Sabha election through war hysteria.

He is cognizant to the increasing popularity of Congress-led election alliance and regional political parties due to the failure of his government's economic policy, his corruption scandals, and communal politics. Therefore, Modi has been sustaining tension with nuclear-armed Pakistan for increasing his popularity to win the parliamentary election and to conceal his corruption in murky \$8.9 billion deal to buy 36 Rafale fighter planes from France.

He claimed the results of the dogfight between Pakistan Air Force and Indian Air Force would have been different if India had inducted Rafale fighter jets into its arsenal. Nonetheless, Mr Modi accepted the defeat of his air force but did not refrain from planning to attack Pakistan. Prime Minister Imran Khan Government has been exercising utmost restraint in response to Prime Minister Modi's warmongering, Indian media jingoism and above all Indian Army's continuous colossal fire across the Line of Control.

Nevertheless, the escalation of the prevailing situation is very much likely, if India repeats its 26 February aggressive act. Hence, it is the responsibility of the international community to play its role in lowering the tension between nuclear-armed belligerent neighbours and prevent South Asia from the perilous nuclear winter.

World powers blackmailing Pakistan on IMF bailout

Today Pakistan is standing on the 'wrong side' of these global force blackmailing Pakistan, says EAC member

Indian economy allowed maintaining military build-up for a longer period, but Pakistan's economy, which was in tatters, could not allow it: Dr. Khan

'The well-coordinated growth numbers of Pakistan's economy by IFIs seem a planned design to create unrest among the business community'

Foreign powers want Pakistan to either slow down work on the CPEC or come out of it, eminent economist and Dean of Special Sciences and Humanities in the NUST Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan told The News. Dr. Ashfaque said Pakistan simply could not get out of this project of paramount importance, as it was good for its economy and people.

"From the very beginning, I have been suggesting the PTI government to avoid going to the IMF this time, as the geo-strategic environment has altogether changed. In the past, Pakistan always stood on the right side of these powers," said Khan who is also the Economic Advisory Council member. He argued that these powers had the clout of all major economies to dictate the IMF in Pakistan's case.

"Today Pakistan is standing on the 'wrong side' of these forces. The Indo-Pacific alliance also stands together to counter the growing influence of China in the world. Three US congressmen have recently requested that the IMF should not be allowed to lend money to Pakistan fearing that it will use this money to pay back the Chinese debt. Dr. Ashfaque said India also built up armed forces on its borders due to which Pakistan also took same measures.

He said the Indian economy allowed maintaining military build-up for a longer period, but Pakistan's economy, which was in tatters, could not allow it. Dr. Ashfaque said the government will slice down the development budget and maintain or increase the defence budget, but political parties and the social media will begin criticising allocation of major chunk of budget for defence. This, he said, will create a gulf between the masses and the armed forces and that's what the IFIs (international financial institutions) under the influence of big economies this time want under a well-planned design.

Coming to Pakistan's economy, Dr. Khan said GDP growth numbers worked out by the IFIs such as 3.9 percent by the ADB, 3.4 percent by the World Bank and 2.7 percent by the IMF served nothing but to push Pakistan to the Fund on strict terms. The well-coordinated growth numbers of our economy seem a planned design to create unrest among the business community across the country.

He said the IMF worked out 2.7 percent GDP growth for the current fiscal and 2.5 percent for the next. Dr. Khan said Pakistan was most likely to come up with close to 4 percent. 'However, the Fund is also stressing the government to make the revenue target of Rs5400 billion for the next budgetary year. He

argued that the IMF had factually made fun of it. On the one side, the Fund is predicting the lowest GDP growth, on the other side it is asking for 40 percent growth in revenue.

“When there is growth of 2.5 percent then pressurising to make revenue target on the highest sides is beyond wisdom of all economists,” he said. Dr. Khan said if Pakistan succumbed to the IMF pressure on the revenue target of Rs5400 billion, then the PTI government will be left with no option but to announce a mini-budget every quarter for more taxation to achieve the revenue target making Pakistanis' lives more miserable.

Dr. Khan feared that after the IFIs projected growth figures, rating agencies such as Standards & Poor's and Moody's will downgrade Pakistan's ratings, making it unable to generate financings from the international market. He claimed that the IMF had no capacity to even work out the growth of economy for next two months. Mr. Khan said the IMF will make Pakistan's budget with growth in revenue target of Rs5400, cut on development budget and massive surge on taxation and more appreciation of dollar.

He said discount rate will also be increased which will increase the borrowing cost for the private sector. Since the private sector will not borrow loans, Pakistan's economic activity will come to a standstill. With increase in dollar appreciation, the cost of Pakistan's 60 percent raw material import which is used for industrial production has increased manifold.

He said the government had depreciated the Pak Rupee value by over 36 percent with an aim to increase exports but unfortunately these had decreased by 11 percent. This, he said, can happen in a country where the imported materials stand at 25 percent.

Pakistan's missile and nuclear technology

The flawless deterrence to India's anti-satellite missile test

By Ammar Akbar

On 27th March 2019, India successfully launched its first anti-satellite missile from the Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island complex in Odisha and joined the exclusive club of countries which possess the technology. While the timing of the test during India's general election is no coincidence, the demo surely permitted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to boast about India's warfare capabilities in the near aboard. However, in reality, India's new space weapon is no way a threat to Pakistan's balance of power in the region, especially, with regards to Pakistan nuclear and missile power. In fact, India's anti-satellite missile test has violated international treaties and caused space terrorism. So in so that NASA is gravely concerned about the safety of the international space station and its astronauts.

Pakistan, on the other hand, remains a strong proponent of non-militarization of outer space; however, such maneuvers by India would be strategically responded. Surprisingly, the current Pakistan's missile

and nuclear technology serves perfect deterrence to this new development of India. Even far advanced nations such as China and Russia lack the capability to strike strategically-located military satellites that orbit at an altitude of 20,000 km. According to Jaganath Sankaran, a research associate at the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, anti-satellite missile equipment (ASAT) designed to incapacitate satellites for strategic military purposes have limits and pose no major threat to their respective adversaries. Technically speaking, the argument that the capability can dismantle enemies' satellites to weaken adversary's reconnaissance, surveillance and GPS systems is based on mere assumptions.

Even far advanced nations such as China and Russia lack the capability to strike strategically-located military satellites that orbit at an altitude of 20,000 km. The mission Shakti, after all, was not that powerful as the name sounds because India's recent ASAT destroyed only a low-orbit Microsat-R satellite orbiting at 283 km. Surely for a developing and poverty-ridden country like India, it is a big achievement but the entire buzz in the media does not change the balance of power in the region. India claims that it purposely tested the missile at low altitude so that the debris does not cause much damage to the international space station. But even if India was able carry out a similar ASAT test like the one China did in 2007, the ability to reach strategic satellites in deep space still would need highly advance technology which is technically not feasible and irrelevant in warfare.

India's space program is not as advanced compared to Russia, China and America, therefore labeling India, as space power is not rational. The reason lies in Pakistan's missile technology and nuclear deliverance systems, which openly challenge India's capability to disrupt Pakistan's full spectrum deterrence. India's assumption to dismantle Pakistan's satellite communication system and paralyze its nuclear missile guidance systems is not factual. This is because Pakistan military uses China's Beidou satellite navigation system, which orbits the Earth at 22,000 km and above. Not even advanced nations have the capability to destroy the satellite at such altitude let alone India. Beidou is rival to the American GPS. The American military is heavily dependent on its GPS for the deliverance of its nuclear guidance missiles. But due to the recent changes in the geopolitical partnerships in South Asia, especially the enhanced cooperation between USA and India, Pakistan military has switched from relying on GPS to Beidou satellite system.

This special allowance only given to Pakistan military to share the Beidou system has heralded a new age of strategic space partnership between China and Pakistan. The Shaheen-3 is a power to reckon with. With built-in MIRV technology, the missile has full capability to deter Indian second-strike capability from the Andaman and Nicobar islands and also penetrate the blanket coverage of S-400. This ensures that Pakistan's operationality in times of war would remain unhindered. In case in future if India increases the strike range of ASAT program, which is not possible due the fundamental constraints of physics and range limits, it would still be nearly impossible to immobilize Pakistan's communication network as it would have to destroy more than 30 Beidou satellites that provide Pakistan military 24-7 coverage to support its conventional and non-conventional weapons.

In fact, India targeting Chinese Beidou satellites would be considered a violation of China's sovereignty and be classified an act of war; therefore India would think twice before this suicidal step. It must be

reminded that R-36, the most advanced Russian intercontinental ballistic missile, which holds maximum operational range record of 16,000km, is unable to reach either Medium Earth Orbit (20,000 km) or Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (36,000km). Therefore, disrupting the navigational support for Pakistan's nuclear and tactical nuclear delivery is not possible. Pakistan has a variety of advanced missiles to deliver its nuclear warheads. Firstly, Babur-1 is an all-weather nuclear capable land, sea and air launch capable missile. With a range of 700km and other distinct features such as Terrain Contour Matching (TERCOM) and all-time Digital Scene Matching and Area Co-relation (DSMAC) technologies, which facilitate it to engage in different types of targets with pinpoint accuracy, the lethality of the weapon is recognized internationally. The inboard guidance system enables Babur to use satellite GPS (Beidou) and INS/TERCOM/DSMAC system independent of satellite to carry out 500km of nuclear strikes.

Secondly, Raad 2 is akin to Babur in technology but is a far more advanced air-launched cruise missile (ALCM). Due to limited information on the missile's full capabilities, the opacity surrounding its stealth technology is to leave the enemy defense systems unprepared. With an official disclosed range of 550km, the missile is loaded with self-navigating technology and can fly on a non-ballistic very low altitude trajectory in order to avoid radar detection. Raad gives Pakistan a standoff capability. It means its can deliver both conventional and nuclear warheads. The missile use of GPS and infrared imaging seeker to navigate with digital scene-matching techniques makes Raad the perfect nuclear deterrent. The third Pakistani masterpiece is a warhead carrier developed indigenously to counter the strategic imbalance created by India's procurement of S-400 is Ababeel. The surface-to-surface nuclear-capable missile has operational range of 2,200km and boasts MIRV system, which is capable of launching multiple nuclear warheads with inbuilt decoys flying objects to exhaust interceptor missiles- at mid-course and the terminal stage. The missile is so lethal that even Robert Ashley, the director of the American Defence Intelligence Agency, recognized the destructive and BMD capability of the missile.

The post-Pulwama fiasco instead humiliated India in the international arena; therefore to show military and technological might it needed to display some defence innovation. Furthermore, Pakistan's stock of nuclear-capable missiles includes Shaheens, Ghauris, Abdalis and Ghaznavis, all capable to sheer through enemy's defence lines. But the jewel of all is Shaheen-3, which has operational range of 2,750km with built-in inertial navigation system independent of GPS satellite. However, for further instrumentality, its navigation system can be integrated with Beidou-2. The Shaheen-3 is a power to reckon with. With built-in MIRV technology, the missile has full capability to deter Indian second-strike capability from the Andaman and Nicobar islands and also penetrate the blanket coverage of S-400. In fact, Pakistan's own second-strike capability achieved through nuclear-capable submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM), Babur-3, has taken hostile forces by surprise. As a result, the Indian army has triggered an arms race by spending billions of dollars on anti-missile defence systems.

An ISPR's press release notes that Babur provides Pakistan with a “credible second strike capability, augmenting the existing deterrence regime.” Only few countries in the world have achieved this capability and Pakistan is one of them. Babur-3 shares its navigational operations with its air and land versions and is completely immune to India's anti-satellite missile capability. Many experts including Vipin Narang, an associate professor of political science at MIT, believe that India's anti-satellite test

probably did not have much to do with satellites as it was a mere demonstration. He argued that it would not alter the balance of power status in the region.

In reality, it had one objective: to bolster the support for Modi's election campaign. The test was a mere political symbol to serve anti-Pakistan sentiment among the crowd. And the above technical analysis has identified that India has achieved no strategic advantage over Pakistan and the balance of power paradigm remains constant. Pakistan's arsenal still acts as deterrence to India's capabilities be it on land, sea or air. Pakistan is a sovereign and responsible nuclear nation and understands the socio-economic issues of the subcontinent but also knows the importance of survival needed in the international comity of nations. In fact, Pakistan Air Force enjoys air superiority over India, especially; when Pakistan's indigenous fighter jet JF-17 shot down two Indian Mig-21 Bisons. Moreover, the capturing of Indian Wing Commander Abinandan added salt to injury. The post-Pulwama fiasco instead humiliated India in the international arena; therefore to show military and technological might it needed to display some defence innovation. Instead, India ASAT has violated international laws and treaties. India is signatory of Outer Space Treaty 1967 and according to Article 4 of the treaty; it has violated the basic principles of the United Nations Charter under which the treaty was formulated. Article 4 states, "States Parties to the Treaty undertake not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner." The treaty clear highlights the illegality of Indian test, which involved a weapon of mass destruction.

It is most likely that India used a modified version of the Prithvi missile, which India has been developing for more than a decade. It has rather threatened space assets of other states because the debris of the wrecked satellite in the Earth's atmosphere challenges the safety of other peaceful space programs. Surely, mission Shakti was not launched for the collective benefit of the society as envisioned in the space treaties. Sadly, India has lost at both fronts. Neither it could prove its commitment to international space laws nor could it achieve strategic balance of power advantage over Pakistan. Pakistan is a sovereign and responsible nuclear nation and understands the socio-economic issues of the subcontinent but also knows the importance of survival needed in the international comity of nations. The recent India demonstration of power has not disturbed its nuclear parity with Pakistan. Therefore, India's space investment and focus would only weaken its already fragile and poverty-ridden economy. However, Pakistan respects international space laws and realizes the challenges to its economy but is also ready to safeguard its sovereignty against any misadventures by India.

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What does Pakistan need to close its air defense gaps?

By Usman Ansari

The most recent military standoff between India and Pakistan has exposed longstanding gaps in the latter's defenses that now appear to be receiving renewed attention.

Pakistan reportedly deployed medium-range LY-80/HQ-16 air defense systems in Kashmir to deter further Indian incursions...

Indian aircraft reportedly launched ordnance 40 kilometers away from Balakot, but any penetration of Pakistan-controlled airspace could not have been deeper than 6 kilometers...

Pakistan might reconsider another former interest China's HQ-9. Though certainly more affordable, it's debatable whether any HQ-9 variant available to Pakistan is as capable as the latest version of the S-300...

HQ-9 acquisition may demand organizational changes...

Long-range SAM systems would need to be under Air Force control...

An accelerated replacement of the legacy Mirage III/5 and F-7P/PG fighter jets is less likely...

Claims that Pakistan tested the latest Chinese PL-15 beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) appear inaccurate...the combination of the F-16 armed with the AIM-120 missile and the SD-10A-equipped JF-17 remains effective in light of current threats...Indian Air Force "simply got surprised and overwhelmed" by the Pakistani daytime strike on Feb. 27

The most recent military standoff between India and Pakistan has exposed longstanding gaps in the latter's defenses that now appear to be receiving renewed attention. Pakistan reportedly deployed medium-range LY-80/HQ-16 air defense systems in Kashmir to deter further Indian incursions, but analyst and former Pakistan Air Force pilot Kaiser Tufail believes this may not be enough. During a Feb. 26 airstrike on Pakistani soil, Indian aircraft reportedly launched ordnance 40 kilometers away from Balakot, but any penetration of Pakistan-controlled airspace could not have been deeper than 6 kilometers. "Nonetheless, there is a pressing need for long-range SAM's surface-to-air missiles in this era of standoff weapons delivery. There should be no doubt about that," Tufail said.

In March, Maj. General Asif Ghafoor, the head of Inter Service Public Relations, the Pakistani military's media branch, announced that the country was in talks with Russia for the procurement of defense equipment, including aircraft as well as anti-tank and air-defense systems.

Pakistan previously showed interest in Russia's S-300 SAM system, but analyst and former Australian defense attache to Islamabad Brian Cloughley says Russo-Indian defense relations may prevent such a sale. "As the Indians are getting the S-400, I doubt that Russia would provide Pakistan with any SAM system," he said. Rather, Pakistan might reconsider another former interest China's HQ-9. Though certainly more affordable, it's debatable whether any HQ-9 variant available to Pakistan is as capable as the latest version of the S-300.

However, citing the “close nature of the defense relationship between Pakistan and China,” aerospace expert Douglas Barrie, with the International Institute for Strategic Studies, believes sourcing a Chinese system “has considerable attraction, not least of all in potentially being able to plug into any future developments China might have.”

But an HQ-9 acquisition may demand organizational changes. Tufail noted that although the Pakistan Air Force is “responsible for the overall command and control of air defense and operates all early warning airborne systems and radars” as well as airfield defenses, the Army operates SAM systems that defend “countrywide vulnerable areas/points as well as over the battlefield.” However, long-range SAM systems would need to be under Air Force control, Tufail added, as the service has “a far greater visibility of the air defense ground environment and can not only manage such a system better, but can prevent fratricide in a beyond-visual-range shooting scenario.”

While the acquisition of a long-range SAM system remains possible, an accelerated replacement of the legacy Mirage III/5 and F-7P/PG fighter jets is less likely. Pakistan analyst Kamal Alam says options are limited. “The Air Force will look for more in-house capability, as its foreign options are dry, given American pressure on almost all European countries to not supply fast jets to Pakistan. That would mean China is the only option unless America eases up on its [foreign military sales] ban,” Alam said.

Mirage/F-7 squadrons are replaced with JF-17 combat aircraft at a rate of one squadron per year. “However, this would still take five years at least, and could go beyond that time frame if JF-17 export orders have to be filled,” Tufail noted. No immediate plans seem to be in place for new air-to-air missiles, however “all weapon systems get upgraded in due course, so we are likely to see newer missiles in the coming years,” he added. Claims that Pakistan tested the latest Chinese PL-15 beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) appear inaccurate, and Tufail thinks the combination of the F-16 armed with the AIM-120 missile and the SD-10A-equipped JF-17 remains effective in light of current threats. Future weapon systems upgrades could include a ramjet-powered system in light of India's interest in the Meteor BVRAAM to replace R-77/AA-12 Adder missiles and Mica missiles, though Tufail likens Indian criticism of those missiles to “a bad workman blaming his tools.”

He highly rates the R-77 and Mica and believes the Indian Air Force “simply got surprised and overwhelmed” by the Pakistani daytime strike on Feb. 27. That airstrike took place over the cease-fire line in the disputed region of Kashmir. Indian jets responded and a confrontation ensued. “That is not to say that the Meteor is not amongst the best, but it, too, might be rendered toothless if the Indian Air Force employs it as poorly as it did on Feb. 27,” he said.

Trump & Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan might have just ruined Iran - India Relations

By Andrew Korybko

The American and Pakistani leaders independently took two very important and uncoordinated moves at almost the exact same time that might coincidentally have the same effect of ruining Iranian-Indian relations. Iranian-Indian relations might be about to enter their worst-ever period in modern history as a result of two very important and uncoordinated moves undertaken at almost the exact same time by the American and Pakistani leaders.

PM Khan just paid his first visit to Iran where he and his hosts announced that they'll enter into a new era of anti-terrorist cooperation that geopolitical analyst Adam Garrie comprehensively analyzed in his recent piece on this breaking news event. The ball was indeed in Iran's court to stop India's anti-Pakistani Baloch terrorism like I wrote the other day, and to Tehran's credit, its leadership finally understood this and decided to expand its military partnership with the global pivot state of Pakistan. This will greatly complicate India's Hybrid War capabilities in clandestinely using Iranian territory to carry out terrorist attacks against Pakistan by proxy as it obsessively seeks to sabotage CPEC, meaning that PM Khan's visit will have far-reaching and long-term geostrategic security consequences in the New Cold War.

In parallel with this, Trump decided that the US won't renew its Iranian oil sanctions waivers and that Washington's GCC partners of Saudi Arabia and the UAE will help the Islamic Republic's energy customers replace their imports with Gulf resources instead. India was very vocal last year about its intent to defy the US' unilateral sanctions against Iran, but as I wrote in my piece at the time about the "Indian Illusion", all of this was just rhetoric to hide the fact that New Delhi was quietly implementing its new American patron's will.

Trump just put Modi on the spot, however, and it might augur negatively for the Indian leader during the ongoing month-long electoral process if he publicly capitulates to the US' demands and replaces Iranian resources with Gulf ones like I suspected he's been planning to do since late last year after his summit in Argentina with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. As such, this American move might also be yet another "bad cop" tactic against Modi to get more strategic concessions out of India.

It therefore wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Trump and PM Khan might have just ruined Iranian-Indian relations for good when considering the combined effect of their latest moves to that relationship. The Pakistani leader exposed India's Hybrid War terrorist plot during his talks with the Iranian leadership which probably explains why the two neighboring nations decided to take their military cooperation with one another to the next level, while the American leader is forcing India to stop importing Iranian oil under the threat of potentially crippling "secondary sanctions" and to replace its resources with those from the Islamic Republic's hated GCC foes.

Although Iran and India still have shared strategic interests in the Chabahar Corridor and North-South Transport Corridor, the trust that formerly defined their relations is broken and their ties will never be the same. The end result is beneficial to the US and Pakistan for different reasons and might even interestingly be a tangential outcome of their recent diplomatic cooperation in Afghanistan.

This article was originally published on Eurasia Future.

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.

Centre for aerospace power studies

By Air Commodore (R) Jamal Hussain

The Centre for Aerospace Power Studies was established at PAF Base Faisal in June 2001 at the direction of the Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. Its primary function is to propagate the attributes of aerospace power for the better awareness of the general public. Publication and distribution of original articles relating to aerospace power, especially in South Asia is one of the methods being employed by CAPS to achieve its aim. Comments on the publications or inquiry on any aspect of air power is welcome and should be forwarded to:

The Balakot Raid and its Aftermath

Let me clarify at the very outset, I am not privy to the exact strike package the PAF had launched and the tactics employed. These are classified information. My painting of the aerial combat is from open sources and is based on my perception. These do not reflect the official version of the PAF.

Prelude to the Balakot Raid

To better comprehend the logic behind the Indian Air Force pre-dawn Balakot strike on February 27 2019, one has to examine the rationale and domestic impact of the earlier 'surgical strike' Modi's government had allegedly conducted in 2016, following the Uri massacre. The Uri bloodbath had left over 40 Indian soldiers dead and despite clear pieces of evidence proving that it was carried out by elements within the Indian Held Kashmir, Modi squarely blamed Pakistan and threatened serious military reprisals.

In the prevalent nuclear environment and with the two adversaries nearly equally matched in a short, sharp conventional military showdown, the options for the Indian defence set up to conduct a retaliatory strike inside Azad Kashmir or elsewhere in Pakistan was rather limited. But some action had to be undertaken to carry out Modi's orders and appease the Indian public who were by then baying for the Pakistani blood. On September 29 2016, the Indians triumphantly announced the conduct of a very successful 'surgical strike' led by their brave commandos where the raiding party infiltrated deep across the LOC and killed the insurgents there who were from their viewpoint, responsible for the Uri raid. For Pakistan, the announcement came as a complete surprise as on the day mentioned, at best there was a brief LOC skirmish initiated from the Indian side which Pakistan had effectively countered.

Two Pakistani soldiers had embraced martyrdom and about half dozen or more Indian combatants were reportedly killed in the process. There were no other civilian or military casualties, was Pakistan's firm

stance and it allowed the media to visit the regions where the Indian military had allegedly carried out their deadly raid. The incident, from their viewpoint, was dismissed out of hand and any retaliatory action was not considered necessary. On the Indian side, their military projected the strike as a major success while providing at best sketchy details of the raid.

When asked by their reporters to display photographs of the slain militants and the destroyed enemy camps, the spokesperson replied that the release of the pictures had been deferred keeping confidentiality in mind and these are still under preparation. In the event, no concrete and clear pictorial evidence were provided but the Indian media gave it the necessary spin to project to their public the Modi government had avenged the Uri massacre by punishing Pakistan. The so-called surgical strike while it did little damage to Pakistan or its military, it boosted Modi's image within India as a strong leader who had stood up to the Pakistani interference in the Kashmir Valley and had avenged the Uri attack. That Pakistan did not retaliate militarily convinced the Indian defence strategists and planners that limited military actions, real or perceived could be initiated against Pakistan without risking any escalatory response by them, thus averting any nuclear crisis. In the bargain, much political mileage could be extracted by such a process.

The Pulwama attack on 14 February 2019, on the Jammu Srinagar Highway that resulted in the death of 40 Indian security personnel was a major crisis and the government of India had to respond. That the initial reports clearly indicated the involvement of a local Kashmiri youth and absolutely no credible and verifiable evidence of any Pakistani connection was put forward, Modi and his cohorts immediately blamed Pakistan and threatened major retribution.

No proof of Pakistan's involvement was put forward. To the contrary, with the passage of time, news from within India are emanating that point to a diabolical scheme by the BJP led government where the Pulwama attack was actually masterminded by them so that Pakistan could be blamed and the anti-Pakistan sentiments further whipped up.

Afghan peace would fall apart without Taliban reintegration into society

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's (SIGAR) office has presented its report to U.S Congress regarding the undergoing peace process and has pinpointed main streaming of Taliban and their family into Afghan society as a key element for the success of the effort. Reintegration along with two other factors was what SIGAR report based the probability of sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

“A failure to successfully reintegrate Taliban fighters and their families into Afghan society, a failure to improve civil policing, and a failure to ensure effective oversight of continuing foreign financial assistance could each undermine the sustainability of any peace agreement that might be reached,” SIGAR chief John Sopko warned in the annual report.

Reintegration along with two other factors was what SIGAR report based the probability of sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), founded in

2008, is the leading oversight authority which the U.S Congress created to bring an independent analysis of Afghanistan situation and the threat to U.S investments, both financial and strategic, other than what the executive branch releases.

The governing administration at times paints the picture in a way which suits the policy narrative of the president or lobbying group and which is far from the on-ground situation. Since 2014, insecurity, corruption, and illegal drug trade have been at the top of SIGAR's list as the threat to U.S interests in Afghanistan.

Reintegration of Taliban

The most pressing question of the stakeholders in Afghanistan, other than the United States of America which has its interest secured based on developments so far with respect to the ongoing peace process, is the post-withdrawal politics context of the country. It is a genuine apprehension that as soon as the last U.S soldier is airlifted from Afghanistan; the Taliban are going to run over the ill-trained and ill-equipped Afghan forces taking the reins of power in Kabul.

Since 2014, insecurity, corruption, and illegal drug trade have been at the top of SIGAR's list as the threat to U.S interests in Afghanistan. But a statement coming from Afghan Taliban that they are not looking for a monopoly on power says that they actually are ready to share power with the current Kabul regime. "The Taliban members want to live with other Afghans, tolerate one another and start living like brothers. We believe in an inclusive Afghan world, where all Afghans can see themselves in it," Taliban Doha based spokesperson Sohail Shaheen said.

A proper framework in this regard is yet to be formalized and so far, it is the only conciliatory statement which has made its way into the mainstream media. If there has already been a covert deal during the course of negotiations, it remains concealed from the general overview.

Economic stability

Another crucial element for long-term peace is the economic wellbeing of the people of Afghanistan. The drug empire even under the watch of the United States of America for years has thrived because of one simple fact that there are no alternatives for Afghans to earn their living. So far, almost the entire budget for the Kabul regime is contributed by the USA and its allies and unfortunately, it has not been used to implement reforms on the grass root level.

Instead, billions of dollars ended up being plundered by different level of Afghan establishment from politicians to the army. Therefore, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction apprehension is legit that it is necessary to look for a way to help the Afghan economy going or else further financial assistance would meet the same fate it has been for last 18 years.

Who's afraid of Afghan peace talks Kabul & Delhi?

Henry Kissinger wouldn't have approved the way Zalmay Khalilzad, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, handles the Afghan peace talks. Even if Tweeter were in vogue in the late sixties, Kissinger wouldn't have used it to signal to Hanoi or the Vietcong. But caught between the "Khalid Operation" Afghan government's new security plan and the Taliban's riposte Operation Al-Fatha ("victory" in Arabic) dubbed the "spring offensive" Khalilzad began tweeting furiously to vent his exasperation.

What emerges from Khalilzad's serial tweets during April 12-14 is that his negotiations with the Taliban are in a state of drift. Khalilzad blames the Taliban for being "reckless" and "irresponsible" to announce the spring offensive. He claims, "Many Talibs including fighters and some fighters oppose this announcement." He maintains that the US and its allies back Kabul's security plan, but qualifies it saying Washington also seeks "to bring parties to the table to negotiate peace." Khalilzad urges "all sides... (to) end unnecessary violence, and instead engage in intra-afghan dialogue which leads to negotiations on a political settlement and a road map to end the war this year." The urgent requirement is for a "comprehensive ceasefire and negotiations leading to a lasting peace."

The sequence of events in the past fortnight suggests that Kabul has effectively put a spoke in the wheel just as Taliban appeared, finally, to soften its stance and agreed to meet government representatives as part of an Intra-Afghan dialogue. The precipitate announcement of the Khalid Operation on April 2 drew forth a Taliban reaction on April 12 its spring offensive. A day later, on April 13, Afghan President Asharf Ghani hit Taliban hard with a sharply-worded statement condemning the spring offensive and vowing that the Afghan forces have been "clearly directed to take counter-measures" to defend the country. The fate of the inter-Afghan dialogue slated to take place in Doha on April 19-21 hangs by a thread. The Afghan leaders who are enthused by the idea of the intra-Afghan dialogue feel stranded Hamid Karzai, Haneef Atmar, Atta Noor, Ismail Khan, Younus Qanooni, Mohammad Mohaqiq, etc. (In a statement on Sunday, Karzai expressed displeasure over "Khalid operation".) In essence, Ghani and his circle defense Minister Assadullah Khalid, interior minister Amrullah Saleh, national security advisor Hamdullah Mohib, etc. will have one more "fighting season."

The coming fighting season to be exceptionally violent because a new player has appeared. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is no longer a phantom. Although concentrated presently in the eastern Afghan provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar bordering Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, ISKP's regional ambition spans Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan and it takes a special interest in the Af-Pak region. On March 11, ISPK claimed to have undertaken a major operation in Lahore killing Pakistani security personnel and last week in Quetta. In this increasingly murky backdrop where the battle lines are increasingly getting blurred, Ghani's circle is confident that Khalilzad can be blocked from imposing a peace settlement. What counts most will be the support of two regional states Iran and India. These two countries share Ghani's angst over an imposed Afghan settlement.

Tehran is furious about the Trump administration's recent move to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its elite wing the Quds Force as terrorist organizations. The Quds Force leads Tehran's Afghan strategies. Yet, US Secretary of State Pompeo threatened last week that Washington regards the legendary commander of Quds Force, Maj Gen Qassem Suleimani as a terrorist in the same

way as the ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. It is doubtful if Pompeo consulted Khalilzad before threatening to eliminate Soleimani. At any rate, there is going to be a price to pay. An influential Iranian strategic expert close to the IRGC, Saadullah Zarei warned in an interview in the weekend that Iran has many friends in the region and Washington should know that its IRGC designation is going to be hugely consequential. Zarei added cryptically, "The consequences have already started as we can see that the American forces are now exposed to serious risks in Afghanistan." Indeed, American soldiers are being targeted more frequently of late. As for India, the compulsions are more varied. Delhi is on the same page as Ghani in harbouring the grouse that Khalilzad keeps it out of the loop on the Afghan peace talks. Khalilzad of course is playing safe, because any display of camaraderie on his part with Delhi will only antagonize the Pakistani leadership, which won't do good for his peace mission.

On the other hand, Delhi has invested heavily on Ghani's circle, who in turn reciprocate with unreserved strategic trust in India's commitment to push back at Pakistan, something in which they cannot do on own steam. Both estimate that Pakistan is persisting with an insidious strategy to gain a backdoor entry for its protégé, Taliban, in the governing structure in place in Kabul something Islamabad failed to achieve militarily. They view with suspicion Pakistan PM Imran Khan's refrain regarding the need of an Interim Government in Kabul. They assess that Khalilzad is ambivalent about it. India has conveyed its disquiet directly to Washington regarding any move to replace Ghani with an interim government on whatever pretext.

An Indian analyst with links to the security establishment wrote recently that the US "cannot afford to achieve durable peace" in Afghanistan via a settlement that sidelines or bypasses the Ghani Government and India. He warned, "At best, any hurried tactically expedient contrived settlement arrived at by US Special Envoy at Doha with unwarranted compromises may only secure a temporary reprieve and fig-leaf for withdrawal of US Forces from Afghanistan. Such a compromise will not only fail to achieve durable peace in Afghanistan but also inherently carry within itself seeds of renewed conflict and strife in the immediate wake of exit of US Forces from Afghanistan."

However, what the Indian establishment is not going to articulate openly is that far beyond its concerns regarding Pakistan's perceived power projection into Afghanistan, there is also the dark and brooding medium and long term scenario that China is "waiting in the wings to fill the vacuum in Afghanistan with Pakistan's collusion" once the US forces withdrew. Indeed, Delhi welcomes a permanent US military deployment to Afghanistan, similar to the decades-long American presence in Japan and South Korea. Without doubt, high-level consultations between Delhi and Washington are needed, given India's centrality as a pivotal player in the US-conceived Indo-Pacific Security Template. The current preoccupations in Delhi over the general election will get over by May 19, and in the interim, the Indian establishment heaves a sigh of relief that Ghani government has succeeded in slowing down Khalilzad on his tracks.

Taliban capture about 150 Afghan soldiers after chase into Turkmenistan

By Najim Rahim & Rod Nordland

The Taliban carried out the biggest known capture of Afghan soldiers of the war, taking 150 prisoners after they chased units into neighboring Turkmenistan and that country forced them back, Afghan officials said on Sunday. The operation took place in the northwestern Afghan province of Badghis, and brought to 190 the number of soldiers captured by insurgents in the hotly contested district of Murghab with 16 more soldiers killed in less than a week.

Last Monday, an entire Afghan Army company was killed or captured there. By Saturday, its defenders said the district had fallen mostly into Taliban control, though Afghan forces were still holding the district's government center. The latest capture was perhaps the biggest setback for the Afghan security forces since a Taliban offensive in August in the southeastern city of Ghazni killed as many as 200 soldiers and police officers, but few prisoners were taken then. The biggest recent capture of soldiers by the Taliban was about 50 who surrendered after a siege of their base, known as Chinese Camp, in Faryab Province, also in August.

Mirza Mohammad Yarmand, a military analyst and retired general, expressed alarm at the losses. "I have not seen or heard of such a big loss in the Afghan Army in recent years," Mr. Yarmand said. "If these numbers are true, then it's the biggest capture by the Taliban at one time and in the same area. This is a very sad incident." The episode consisted of two days of attacks by the Taliban in the Morichaq area of the city of Bala Murghab against two units of the Afghan Border Forces. Early Saturday, 50 soldiers from the force surrendered, and an additional 100 fled Taliban pursuit and crossed the nearby border into Turkmenistan, according to Saleh Mohammad Mubarez, commander of the Afghan police in the district. By the end of the day, he said on Sunday, Turkmenistan had forced them back into Taliban hands.

Lieutenant Habibullah, a deputy company commander in Badghis who uses only one name, also confirmed the surrenders. "Turkmenistan told the Taliban, 'We will give the border force soldiers' weapons to the Afghanistan government and give you the border force soldiers, but the Taliban said that you should give the troops to the Afghan government and give us their weapons,'" he said.

On Saturday, some Afghan officials played down the capture, saying the soldiers who had crossed into Turkmenistan would be returned to the government side. Jamshid Shahabi, a spokesman for the Badghis provincial governor, said the escape toward Turkmenistan by the 100 soldiers had been part of a previously arranged security plan.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defense, Qais Mangal, said that those who had surrendered were not regular soldiers, but irregular militia fighters. But numerous local officials said they were indeed regular soldiers with the border forces, which are part of the Afghan Army. On Sunday, Mr. Mangal said he did not immediately have any further details on the border episode. There was no public comment by the authorities in Turkmenistan.

The Afghan authorities did send reinforcements to Murghab District, which has been under heavy attack for two weeks, but local officials said that they had been insufficient. "The situation is very bad: The

district is on the verge of collapse,” Mr. Mubarez said. “The reinforcements have not been enough. The air force must help and launch airstrikes.” Mr. Shahabi, the spokesman for the Badghis governor, said, “The air force is ready to strike but the Taliban use civilians' homes as shelters, so the air force cannot launch strikes.” Farid Akhezi, a member of the provincial council in Badghis, also confirmed the surrender of 150 border force soldiers on Saturday. The Taliban wiped out an entire Afghan National Army company in the same district on Monday, killing 16 soldiers and taking 40 prisoners. Over the course of the week, 44 Afghan security force members were confirmed killed in Taliban assaults in Badghis, in addition to the 190 reported to be taken prisoner.

The Taliban said that they had taken the Morichaq area and captured all the Afghan forces there, but the insurgents actually had lower estimates of the number of prisoners than government officials had given. A spokesman for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, said on his Twitter account that they had captured 72 soldiers and police officers in the fighting in Bala Murghab and killed many others. He also posted photographs showing what he said were prisoners; more than 60 are visible in them, although it was not possible to confirm the authenticity of the pictures.

Taliban treatment of government prisoners varies widely around the country. In some cases they are imprisoned, in others tortured and executed. More often, however, they are released after promising not to rejoin the fight. In an unrelated attack elsewhere in northwestern Afghanistan, the Taliban overran an Afghan National Army base in the district of Qaisar in Faryab Province, killing 15 soldiers and five police officers in hours of fighting on Saturday night and Sunday morning, according to the governor of the district, Rahmatullah Qaisari. “This morning when our forces went to recover the corpses, the Taliban had hidden bombs under the bodies, which went off and killed two policemen,” he said. That took the death toll there to 22.

Mr. Mangal, the Defense Ministry spokesman, said of the attack on the Qaisar base: “There were casualties, but I do not have information about the exact number. The attack was repelled.”

China's PLA troops in Venezuela is game changer

By M. K. Bhadrakumar

Unlike Russia, which has a history of force projection abroad, this is an extremely rare Chinese move. Although vital Chinese interests are at stake in the war against terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Syria, China refrained from publicising any such deployment. The reports mention that the group of Chinese

military personnel is 120-strong and arrived on the Margarita Island in the Caribbean Sea off the Venezuelan mainland on March 28 'to deliver humanitarian aid and military supplies to the government forces.'

After delivering the humanitarian supplies, the Chinese PLA troops were apparently transferred to a Venezuelan military facility. While the delivery of aid is one of many expected shipments, according to government officials, the arrival of Chinese military personnel was under-reported in international press.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Venezuela imported \$349 million worth of arms from China between 2010 and 2014 alone initially, with less sophisticated equipment such as radars and aircraft to train pilots, reinforced vehicles and replacement parts, etc. but military goods that arrived in 2017 including armoured tanks, ammunition, uniforms and infantry equipment, as well as replacement and service parts for Russian-made pieces.

A week ago, around 100 Russian military personnel were deployed to Venezuela to instal a military helicopter training facility, but details of the Chinese PLA mission have not been disclosed. There is close coordination between Moscow and Beijing on foreign policy issues and it is entirely conceivable that the two countries' deployments are synchronised moves.

Both Russia and China have heavily invested in Venezuela, the latter by far outstripping the former. According to a recent report in the LA Times, "Over the decade ending in 2016, China loaned Venezuela approximately \$62 billion, much of which Caracas could repay with oil. Moscow in the last several years gave Venezuela \$17 billion in loans and investment, and in December the two governments signed a new deal in which Russia will invest \$6 billion in Venezuela's oil and gold sectors."

"China and Russia are Venezuela's two main creditors, and they have been the principal economic force keeping the Maduro government afloat, making the difference between solvency and bankruptcy, financial experts say." Interestingly, the LA Times report, however, made a distinction that China and Russia pursued different attitudes toward their financial commitments in Venezuela, with China being "more pragmatic" and Russia "more ideological".

Whereas for its investment, Beijing sought to receive raw materials, cheap oil and other returns, Moscow was credited with having greater interest in "in extending its military presence and setting up a beachhead in the Americas and within spitting distance of the United States..." "For Russia, investments and military saber-rattling about protecting Venezuela has always been about showing strength in America's neighbourhood...

The Kremlin has tried to mimic what it sees as U.S. and NATO foreign policy of entering and meddling in Moscow's perceived sphere of influence, such as Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, particularly Ukraine."

Indeed, Moscow's condemnation of US interference in Venezuela has been conspicuously more forceful than that of China, which actually called for dialogue and a negotiated resolution to the crisis. Many US analysts assumed that China might even be losing faith in President Nicolas Maduro and decided to keep

its head beneath the parapet preferring to focus on its lending practices in Venezuela and even scouring for bargain-basement deals. But such facile hypotheses have been turned on their head with the sudden arrival of the Chinese PLA troops on the languid Margarita Island famous as a popular holiday destination for its sand and mangroves, wind surfing and kite boarding.

One reason could be that in the Chinese assessment, although tensions are rising in Venezuela and uncertainties remain due to the duality of power, and a criticality may well be reached in the nearest future with the refugee problem causing disaffection among neighbouring countries and with no signs of Washington easing the pressure for regime change in Caracas, there is also at the same time an inherent balance or equilibrium that has come to prevail in the situation insofar as neither side in the conflict enjoys a decisive advantage.

A war of attrition is under way which can end only if either side loses patience and forces a showdown, which seems unlikely as things stand. In the assessment of the Russian experts, while a lot of shadow boxing is going on from the American side with the US' Latin American allies even expecting swift and tough action by the US, the fact of the matter is that there is no stomach for anyone really for demanding an outright military intervention to change the regime in Venezuela.

Washington seems to fear that any military intervention may prove to be counterproductive and could have chaotic outcome, and, worse still, even unite the Venezuelan people against the US, apart from causing turbulence among Latin American countries.

Nonetheless, the arrival of Russian military personnel in Venezuela "caused a nervous reaction in Washington", as the foreign ministry in Moscow noted on March 30 in response to a sharply-worded statement by the US National Security Advisor John Bolton the previous day strongly cautioning the Kremlin against "deploying military assets to Venezuela, or elsewhere in the Hemisphere, with the intent of establishing or expanding military operations."

Bolton warned Moscow, "We will consider such provocative actions as a direct threat to international peace and security in the region." But the Russian foreign ministry brushed off Bolton's warning and claimed that although geographically, Russia's Chukotka Peninsula is located in the Western Hemisphere, Moscow had no intentions to "establish or expand military operations" in Venezuela.

Having said that, "any (US) attempts to intimidate Russia with sanctions for its legitimate cooperation with Venezuela look absurd." The foreign ministry underscored that the US "plans for a rapid change of regime in Caracas have failed. By its self-assurance, Washington has let down those in Latin America and Western Europe who unwisely hastened to recognise an impostor, whom the people had not elected, as the head of Venezuela.

By taking this step, they have deprived themselves of any room for diplomatic manoeuvre." Furthermore, Moscow asserted that it proposed to do "everything within our power" to promote a national dialogue in Venezuela. However, Moscow has also signalled indirectly that any ideas of establishing a military base in Venezuela so close to the US shores is far from its thoughts. Clearly, the

firm but prudent Russian stance went a long way to encourage China to shift to an overt proactive role. Needless to say, Russia (and Cuba) will welcome this Chinese shift.

If the Russian and Cuban presence in Venezuela has been bad enough for the Trump administration, the arrival of the PLA troops will be a bitter pill to swallow, given extensive Chinese involvement in Latin America. Indeed, China is joining Russia to assert the intention to safeguard its vital interests in Venezuela.

To be sure, both Moscow and Beijing have taken note of President Trump's recent remark that he intended to talk things over with his Russian and Chinese counterparts regarding Venezuela, which is as good as saying that he isn't considering any military intervention, no matter the rhetorical remarks by US officials.

No doubt, the PLA deployment to Venezuela is at once a game changer in the crisis situation surrounding that country. At a substantive level, China has conveyed its readiness and capability to salvage the besieged Maduro government. Beijing has not only underscored that it is a stakeholder but also asserted its expanding global influence. Of course, China firmly repudiates the Monroe Doctrine. Thus, in many ways, this becomes a watershed moment in world politics.

The reported arrival of Chinese military personnel in Venezuela is undoubtedly a major event in world politics.

The H - 20 and JH – XX

China's two (yes, two) new stealth bombers

The JH-XX would likely have shorter range (900-1500 miles) and a smaller payload than the H-20, but would be much faster at speeds up to twice the speed of sound. In January 2018, two sentences in an annual report by the DIA on Chinese military power sent a minor shockwave rippling across the defense-related internet:

“The PLAAF is developing new medium- and long-range stealth bombers to strike regional and global targets. Stealth technology continues to play a key role in the development of these new bombers, which probably will reach initial operational capability no sooner than 2025.” (This first appeared several months ago.)

Bombers, plural. In a separate chart, an un-designated next-generation “Tactical Bomber” is listed, denoted as being equipped with a high-resolution Active Electronically Scanned Array radar, precision-guided bombs and long-range air-to-air missiles. In the last few years, China's development of what appears to be a subsonic long-range heavy strategic bomber called the H-20 has become increasingly evident especially in 2018, when the Chinese government began teasing a public unveiling to take place in 2019.

The flying wing bomber, which apparently resembles the U.S. B-2 Spirit in form and function, is to be produced by Xi'an Aircraft Corporation, which already manufactures older H-6 strategic bombers and the chubby Y-20 transport plane. However, the stealth "tactical" or "medium" bomber was newsworthy.

The fighter-bomber in question is believed to refer to the JH-XX, a rival stealth bomber concept proposed by Shenyang Aircraft Corporation believed to have been passed over in favor of the longer-range H-20.

Shenyang is better known for producing fighters, including Chinese derivatives of the Russian Flanker jet and a J-31 stealth fighter which may be exported or serve on Chinese aircraft carriers. The first image of this JH-XX concept was leaked at a convention in 2013.

Then in May 2018, the prestigious Chinese magazine Aviation Knowledge flashed concept art on its cover of a futuristic-looking stealth jet measuring roughly thirty meters in length, with two huge turbofan engines atop the rear fuselage, canted tail-stabilizers near identical to Northrop's YF-23 Black Widow stealth prototype, a big bomb bay in the belly and side weapon-bays for carrying long-range air-to-air missiles. This image has since inspired model kits and online fan-art. (One should bear in mind that speculative artwork of the "F-19 stealth fighter" in the 1980s ended up bearing little resemblance to the actual F-117 stealth jet.)

It's not clear why the DIA believes the JH-XX is actively under development. Rick Joe of The Diplomat, who has written arguably the most detailed English-language profile of the JH-XX prior to the DIA report, expressed his skepticism in a series of tweets: "Regarding the DIA report 'confirming' a PLA stealthy medium bomber; the info hasn't changed since last year when I wrote this piece: 'To the best of our knowledge the JH-XX does not seem to be actively pursued...'"

"Now, maybe the DIA report was based on classified Intel the public is not privy to, but from the quality of the rest of the report I doubt it," he said in a separate tweet. "Chances are they relied on some open source/public articles about JH-XX and interpreted them a bit over zealously." Thus, it may be prudent to wait for further evidence to emerge before taking the JH-XX's active development as a given.

Why would PLA even order two types of stealth bombers? Effectively, the JH-XX would represent a different set of design compromises. The H-20 trades speed in exchange for greater payload, range and stealth. The 'game plan' for such a bomber is to penetrate enemy airspace without being detected at all, as it doesn't have the agility to evade enemy fighters or missiles. Its projected range of five thousand miles would allow it strike targets across the Pacific, especially if combined with aerial refueling and long-range missiles.

The JH-XX would likely have shorter range (900-1500 miles) and a smaller payload than the H-20, but would be much faster at speeds up to twice the speed of sound. (Note, however, that friction generated at Mach 2 may erode the expensive coatings of radar-absorbent materials on stealth aircraft.)

Thus, while a JH-XX might eventually be detected as it sprints towards its target, the combination of speed and reduced detection range would theoretically give interceptors and air defenses too little time to react.

Overall, the H-20's long range and heavier payload is more useful to the PLA. However, the JH-XX would bring a different mix of capabilities and might be better for penetrating certain very dense air-defense networks where evading detection may not be possible even for a stealthy H-20.

The United States and the Australian Air Force formerly operated supersonic F-111 Aardvark regional bombers that had a similar mission profile, though lacking in stealth characteristics.

Furthermore, in the early 2000s, the Pentagon considered procuring bomber variants of the Raptor stealth fighter and the YF-23 before passing on that idea in favor of the B-21 Raider strategic stealth bomber. In fact, Tyler Rogoway and Joseph Trevithick at The Drive speculate that the JH-XX concept may have been informed in part by technical documents possibly acquired by Chinese hackers for these aircraft.

Unlike the H-20, the JH-XX's high speed would make it viable for carrying air-to-air missiles, not only for self-defense, but for hit-and-run attacks on vulnerable support planes, or to rapidly intercept incoming bombers. While the JH-XX likely wouldn't be optimized for short-range aerial dogfights against highly maneuverable fighters, its stealth, speed and large payload could still make it a deadly delivery platform for beyond-visual range air-to-air missiles.

One last intriguing application of the JH-XX concept could be naval strike. The PLA Naval Air Force currently operates 250 JH-7 'Flying Leopard' supersonic naval strike bomber. These non-stealthy planes depend on long-range anti-ship missiles and electronic warfare to overcome the formidable air defenses of modern surface warships.

A stealth fighter bomber could conceivably get much closer to, say, an opposing carrier-task force, before being detected giving the targeted vessels a much smaller window to engage their defenses.

Of course, stealth capabilities might also make the JH-XX an especially survivable electronic warfare and spy plane in its own right. Naval analyst Robert Farley has speculated that the JH-XX might even be intended for carrier deployment.

If the JH-XX is truly under active development, then additional rumors and photos may eventually surface. Until then, the supersonic stealth-bomber's development status must come with an asterisk, even if that won't dissuade model-makers and defense writers alike from speculation.

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China's space prowess overshadows ASAT test

Ashley Tellis: India must “brace itself for a long-term space competition”

By Ajai Shukla

An analysis of India's March 27 anti-satellite (ASAT) test concludes that it was directed squarely at China, but would not deter Beijing from interfering with, or damaging, India's satellite network in wartime. The report by Ashley Tellis, which the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace released on Tuesday, argues that, while India has demonstrated its ASAT interceptors can destroy Chinese satellites with kinetic (direct impact) strikes, Beijing's highly sophisticated ASAT programme provides it with several non-kinetic options to disable Indian satellites without physically striking them.

Beijing's ASAT capabilities “include the capacity to mount sophisticated cyber-attacks directed at [Indian] ground stations with the intent of either corrupting or hijacking the telemetry, tracking, and command systems used to control various spacecraft on orbit. They also involve huge investments in developing ground-, air-, and space-based radio frequency jammers that target the uplinks, downlinks, and cross links involved in either the control of space systems or the transmission of data arising from various space system activities,” says Tellis.

Beijing began developing non-kinetic weapons to disable enemy satellites following widespread criticism of its ASAT test in January 2007, which created about 3,000 space debris that will constitute a hazard for decades. “Beijing has concentrated on developing... mainly low- and high-energy lasers, as well as space-based high power microwave systems as more usable alternatives. Low-energy lasers can dazzle or damage electro-optical or infrared sensors and would be particularly effective against India's earth observation and scientific research spacecraft, most of which are located in low earth orbits,” says Tellis. He argues that China would not take seriously an Indian threat of retaliating against a Chinese non-kinetic strike with a debris-creating kinetic strike, and is “hence not particularly conducive to successful deterrence.”

“Ground-based high-energy lasers and space-based high-power microwave weapons on the other hand could, when successfully deployed, permanently destroy the electronic circuitry of various kinds of satellites without creating the unwanted debris usually associated with a physical collision. While such lasers would likely be most effective against satellites in low earth orbits, space-based high-power microwave weapons could target all kinds of space systems even in higher orbits,” he says.

Beijing's ambitious star wars programme also incorporates “service satellites” that do not smash into adversaries' satellites, but push them off their trajectory or physically damage them with robotic arms. “Finally, China retains an impressive capability to target India's master control facilities (and other nodes in its telemetry, tracking, and control network) through both space-based jamming and precision air and missile attacks, while also possessing the capacity to indiscriminately destroy India's (and others') space platforms through high-altitude nuclear explosions.

Because the latter would put at risk both Chinese and adversary spacecraft simultaneously, it is unlikely that such operations would ever be preferred by Beijing when it has so many other less risky alternatives available,” says Tellis. Consequently, “India's kinetic ASAT system has important but limited value: it can deter kinetic strikes on India's space systems, but this is the least likely eventuality because Beijing is already investing heavily in suppressing India's (and others') space systems through less destructive but comparably effective alternative instruments,” says the report.

Meanwhile, China continues to develop kinetic “direct ascent interceptors” such as the SC-19 and its successor the DN-3, which provide “hit to kill” capabilities against adversaries' high-value space platforms. Tellis says India has no choice but to develop similar non-debri-causing technologies to be able to “credibly deter Beijing's space denial programs below the levels of ultimate physical violence directed at various space systems the gray zone in which more counter space activities are likely to materialize in the future.”

Calling India's ASAT test “a shot across the bow to China”, the Carnegie report calls in India to “brace itself for a long term space competition. If it fails to do so, it will have to contend with the worst of both worlds: heightened threats from China in the face of increasing Indian vulnerability.”

With China certain, proposes measures to manage it

“Can give China access to Indian ports, if it accommodates our core interests”

By Ajai Shukla

A new report on national security that the Congress Party released on Sunday in Delhi provides an insight into how key relationships with China and Pakistan will be managed if a Congress-led government comes to power next month. “Future strategic rivalry between China and India is a certainty, and a successful trading partnership cannot overcome the reality of this competition,” says the report, titled “India's National Security Strategy” and authored by Lieutenant General DS Hooda, former army commander in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

To break the deadlock in border talks, the report suggests: “Ongoing border talks are achieving no major breakthroughs and focus of negotiations must shift to accurately defining the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This too is a complicated task but if successful, will go a long way in preventing the occurrence of (extended patrol clashes) like Depsang, Chumar, and Dokalam (sic).”

In fact, Beijing has steadfastly resisted defining the LAC. It has dragged its feet even on the preliminary step of exchanging maps marked with each side's perception of the LAC's alignment. The report cites areas of cooperation with China, including shared development goals, increased trade and common environmental concerns. It proposes that, depending upon China's “willingness to show an understanding of our core interests”, India could someday “offer access to China through Indian ports [to the Indian Ocean].”

This would constitute a major reversal of New Delhi's current unwillingness to participate in, or even discuss, the Belt and Road Initiative with Beijing. On Pakistan, the report appears to back the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government's tough line, stating: "The events following the Pulwama bombing have established new redlines", and that "India must be prepared for unilateral, limited military actions against terror groups in Pakistan."

However, discussing the report after its release, Congress leader P Chidambaram dismissed the "drum beating and chest thumping" that had come to characterize all discussions about Pakistan. "War is not an option. Anyone who says otherwise is misleading the Indian people. We build strong armies not to win a war but to avoid a war," he said.

Chidambaram said the war-talk that one hears in Delhi is "far removed from the radar of rural India." He said: "There are limits to our economic capacity and that has to be carefully apportioned between defence of India and development of the people." While not ruling out talks with Islamabad, Chidambaram said: "We must find a way to normalise relations with Pakistan. If we need to change behaviour of Pakistan we need to change our behaviour towards them."

Asked what changes he would propose, Chidambaram admitted "We have tried pretty much everything, but that does not mean we do not go on trying." He said the two sides had already come close to solutions on the Sir Creek and Siachen disputes, while the "most difficult" J&K dispute could be tackled at the end. On Afghanistan, the Congress will continue New Delhi's unbending opposition to the Taliban, even though the US and Russia are now in dialogue with the insurgent group. "India has always supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process of peace and reconciliation... but must not compromise on its position and get drawn into supporting the Taliban," says Hooda's report.

To tackle the J&K insurgency, Hooda argued for simultaneously addressing its two distinct "centres of gravity": the Pakistan sponsored dimension and internal Kashmiri alienation. "We have had separate military and political strategies. We need a combined and comprehensive politico-military strategy. There must be a well-crafted information campaign [to overcome the] feeling in Kashmir that the state is at war with its own people," said Hooda.

Asked whether the NDA government had never communicated a political objective to the army in Kashmir, Hooda said: "We have never had a clear political objective, and if there was one, it has not been transmitted to the troops on the ground."

Range cruise Missile launched from ship container

The Russians and the Israelis already have such missiles

By Bill Gertz

Could turn any merchant ship (or truck or train) into a missile platform Pictured the Israeli variant. China is building a long-range cruise missile fired from a shipping container that could turn Beijing's large fleet of freighters into potential warships and commercial ports into future missile bases. The new missile is in flight testing and is a land-attack variant of an advanced anti-ship missile called the YJ-18C, according to American defense officials.

The missile will be deployed in launchers that appear from the outside to be standard international shipping containers used throughout the world for moving millions of tons of goods, often on the deck of large freighters. The YJ-18C is China's version of the Club-K cruise missile built by Russia that also uses a launcher disguised as a shipping container. Israel also is working on a container-launched missile called the Lora.

Spokesmen for the Defense Intelligence Agency and Navy declined to comment. Disclosure of the new missile comes as the Trump administration is nearing completion of a trade deal with China aimed at allaying American concerns over illicit trade practices by Beijing. The new missile also could undermine China's current buying and building spree for international commercial port projects.

The YJ-18C container missile also is being developed as China is engaged in a major global program called the Belt and Road Initiative that will provide Chinese military forces and warships with expanded access through a network of commercial ports around the world. China operates or is building deep water ports in several strategic locations, including Bahamas, Panama, and Jamaica that could be used covertly to deploy ships carrying the YJ-18C.

Other locations include Pakistan's Gwadar port near the Arabian Sea and in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa close to the strategic choke point of the Bab el Mandeb at the southern end of the Red Sea. Rick Fisher, a China military affairs expert, said he is not surprised China is copying the Russian Club container-launched missile.

"It fits with China's penchant for seeking asymmetric advantages against its enemies," said Fisher, a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center. The new missile also supports China's longstanding development of deniable technologies such as a hard-to-track shipping container fitted with missiles.

The weapon system also could be sold to Iran or North Korea as China has done in the past with other weapons systems, including long-range missile launchers that were transferred to North Korea. Fisher said China also showcased a precision-guided multiple launch rockets concealed in a shipping container-launcher, similar to the Club-K concept during a military show in 2016. "Containerized missiles give China, Russia, and its rogue state partner's new options for directly or indirectly for attacking the United States and its allies," Fisher said. "Shipping container missile launchers can be smuggled through ports or via highway ports of entry and stored for years in a climate-controlled building within range of U.S. military bases, and taken out when needed for military operations," he added.

Container missiles also can be deployed on commercial ships that can sail off U.S. coasts or within American ports prior to a conflict. “Potentially, Chinese missile launching containers could be stored near the Port of Seattle, waiting for the day they can launch an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) warhead-armed missiles over the Bangor nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) base,” Fisher said.

“The EMP blast might take out electronics on the [submarines] and all over the base without having to launch a nuclear missile from China. Washington would be in chaos, would not know against whom to retaliate, and perhaps China uses American distraction to begin its real objective, the military conquests.

Kashmiri’s want to determine their status by the unconstrained will: Ambassador Buch

Ambassador Yusuf Buch, former senior advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations said, India's aim to use the label 'terrorists' or 'fundamentalist' is to divert the attention of the world powers from the ground realities in Indian Occupied Kashmir. “We are told that the big powers can only follow calculations of their interests against competing ones and cannot frame their policies in accordance with a moral view of situations arising in the world.

If this is a doctrine of some kind of compulsion or inevitability bearing on them, it rests on a bogus contention. When the big powers themselves feel endangered or confronting an extremely serious situation, what do they do except speak a moral language? Words come from their mouths dripping with morality.

Let us not, therefore, be deluded by the kind of talk that would make us renounce an appeal to moral sentiments in explaining our struggle in Kashmir,” Ambassador Buch said in a meeting at his residence in New York with Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Secretary-General of the Washington-based World Kashmir Awareness Forum.

Responding to a question, Buch said, “The settlement of Kashmir to be based on a rational framework is intrinsic to the India Pakistan situation. But it gains force from the present global imperative of pulling out the roots of extremism, quenching the fire of the rage behind it and giving psychological strength to the forces of moderation and rationality.

No better present could be handed to extremists than an unprincipled deal between India and Pakistan which mocks the suffering and sacrifices of Kashmiris and nullifies the sustained effort, historically launched under western leadership at the United Nations, to enable Kashmiris to determine their status and future by their unconstrained will.”

Referring to the Indian claims that Kashmir was an integral part of India, Buch explained, “The question needs to be faced: at what point of time and by what justifiable means did Kashmir become a part of India? By the Maharaja's accession? But India itself acknowledges that the accession was subject to plebiscite under international auspices.

By the decision of the Jammu & Kashmir Constituent Assembly? But India assured the United Nations Security Council that the decision of the Assembly would not prejudice the plebiscite and come in its way. By the sheer passage of time?

But, despite the lapse of decades, Kashmiris have shown themselves as unreconciled to Indian occupation and rule. By the elections held periodically in the Indian-occupied area? But these elections are known to have been rigged and their outcome is totally disowned by the people of Kashmir, as the mass uprising amply bears out.”

He pointed out that the notion that the present Indian policy is unshakeable, and will remain so, betrays a very shallow and, indeed an unrealistic and unfair view of India itself. Is it imaginable that a society as large and resourceful in thought and intelligence as India's would remain locked forever in a destructive and at best a sterile course?

Were the world powers to summon a little moral courage and beckon India to a rational settlement of the Kashmir dispute, they would be surprised to see the volume of support that would well up from patriotic and thoughtful sources within India itself.

Ambassador Buch cautioned that gimmickry and maneuvers, no matter by whom encouraged and approved, cannot be a response to a demand for which tens of thousands have shed their blood in Kashmir. To ignore this principle is to plan for failure, he added.

Don't expect US - Iran war before 2021

There is no reason to disbelieve the boast by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claiming credit personally for US President Donald Trump's decision to designate Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) as a “foreign terrorist organisation” under American law. It is common knowledge that all major decisions and most minor decisions by Trump regarding the West Asian situation are dictated by Israel's interests.

Deep-pocketed Jewish billionaires such as Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, far-right Christian evangelicals and the well-known Israeli lobby wield enormous influence over Trump whose son-in-law Jared Kushner is also known to be an ardent Zionist who has funded West Bank settlements. Both decisions by Trump in recent weeks granting US recognition to the illegal Israeli annexation of Syria's Golan Heights region as well as yesterday's move against Iran's IRGC are to be seen as motivated by the desire to bolster Netanyahu's campaign seeking a fresh term in Israel's parliamentary election on April 9.

The Pentagon and the State Department had reportedly expressed misgivings over Trump's decision branding IRGC as a terrorist organisation. Indeed, Trump's announcement on April 8 says clearly that the US state department will take the lead role in implementing this decision. Trump avoided voicing any intention to confronting the IRGC militarily and instead underscored his decision is to impose economic sanctions against the Iranian security organisation.

Considering that the IRGC has a long reach in the economic arena, especially in vital sectors such as energy, telecommunications, etc., in effect, Trump's decision amounts to an extension of the US sanctions against Iran. Therefore, as Trump put it, the decision becomes a template of his "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran, which has been under implementation.

Tehran's reaction has been surprisingly restrained under the circumstances. To be sure, Tehran has retaliated by naming the US Central Command (which is headquartered in Doha and covers the so-called Greater Middle East stretching from the Levant to Central Asia) as a terrorist organisation. Interestingly, Iranian reports highlighted that it is a "tit-for-tat" measure that is, a move Iran had no choice but to make. The overall mood is one of resignation that the Trump administration is under the Israeli spell and has taken a step that is not exactly in American interests.

There have been no threatening statement from Tehran directed at the US, either. In a highly nuanced remark, the influential chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Parliament, Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh hastened to clarify that Iran's measures against the US Central Command, in response to US anti-IRGC move, is defensive, not a declaration of war.

Again, Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council, which is the apex executive body on foreign and security policies, has also restricted itself to saying in a statement, "Undoubtedly, the US regime will bear all the responsibilities for the dangerous consequences of its adventurist move." This must be noted carefully as a signal to the US defence and security establishment.

Most important, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei estimated Trump's move as only to be expected, given the IRGC's pivotal role in countering Iran's enemies. He said the US move will fall flat. The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari was quoted as saying, "This U.S. move was quite laughable since the Revolutionary Guards are in people's hearts ... The Revolutionary Guards will increase its defensive and offensive capabilities in coming year."

On the political plane, however, Tehran will step up its "resistance". More Iranian support for Hamas can be expected. Similarly, the US move, coming hot on the heels of recognising the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, will only further further consolidate the "resistance". The known unknown is going to be the impact on Afghanistan. Tehran has links with the Taliban. But it has been voicing strong backing for President Ashraf Ghani's insistence that the peace talks should be "Afghan-led, Afghan-controlled." Iran's overriding concern is the stability of Afghanistan and the welfare of the Shi'ite communities. Conceivably, the US must be factoring in the imperative need to discourage Iran from playing a spoiler role in Afghanistan. Among the Iranian security agencies, it is the IRGC that is in the driver's seat in steering policies in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The point is, the US Central Command and the IRGC (plus various Iran-backed militia forces) "co-habitate" these theatres.

It is inconceivable that the US would precipitate any hostile moves against the IRGC that draw forth retaliation and jeopardise the safety and security of American personnel. Iran has the capacity to inflict pain and give sleepless nights to the US personnel deployed under the Central Command and, to be sure, the Pentagon and the CIA are well aware of that. We may, therefore, expect a tacit understanding by the two antagonistic parties to stay out of each other's path. Of course, that is easier said than done,

since these are high kinetic theatres witnessing acute confrontation. But then, US-Iran tango has a 40-year history of shadow boxing.

Some shrill rhetoric can be expected from the US side, especially from US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton. Both are stridently “anti-Iran”. Bolton had been in the payroll of Iranian dissident groups based in the West. Both Pompeo and Bolton are passionately devoted to serving Israeli interests. But, in the final analysis, it is Trump and Trump alone who matters.

Quite obviously, Trump will be extremely wary of getting into a shooting war with Iran. Trump knows only too well that a war with Iran will have regional ramifications and can hurt his presidency. His game plan through this year and the next will be to ensure that his “maximum pressure” strategy deters Iran from causing any serious political embarrassment during his campaign, which is due to start later this year, for his re-election bid in 2020.

Suffice to say, Trump's IRGC designation is unlikely to lead to any shooting war with Iran till end-2020, at least. Having said that, there will be no let-up in Tehran's pursuit of “resistance” in Syria and Iraq. And, given the pivotal role of the IRGC in Iran's foreign and security policies, any form of direct engagement politically or at the diplomatic level between Washington and Tehran can be ruled out.

Having said that, make no mistake that the US' regional strategies in Syria and Iraq will come under severe challenge. To be sure, a strategic stalemate is Israel's objective too as the guarantee against US retrenchment from the Middle East.

The orchestration of Russiaphobia is the prelude to war

The Russian Embassy in Washington has prepared an accurate 121-page report, the Russiagate hysteria: a case of severe

By Paul Craig Roberts

Everyone should read this report. It documents the fake news, lies, violations of diplomatic standards and international law, and gratuitous aggressive actions taken against Russia during the period beginning May 18, 2016 and continuing through the issuance of the Mueller Report.

Without explicitly saying so, the report shows that neither the US government nor the American media has a nanoparticle of integrity. Both are criminal organizations that are willing to risk war with Russia in their pursuit of narrow politicized agendas.

This is important information for Americans and the rest of the world to have. Every person, every government and every private organization that supports Washington's Russiophobic policies is contributing to the growing threat of nuclear war. One hopes also that the entirety of the Russian government, media, and population also read the report as it has equally powerful messages for Russia. The messages are no doubt unintended, but they nevertheless emerge from the embassy's report.

The Russian government should marvel at its naivete in trusting Washington, US institutions such as Citibank, and US adherence to international law. For 121 pages the report lists transgression against Russia followed by transgression and lie followed by lie; yet the Russian government continued to send diplomatic notes that are never answered, requests for meetings that are never answered, requests for evidence that are never answered.

One would think that month after month of abuse would have caused the Russian government to wonder where was the intelligence, "cooperative spirit," reason, and "common interest in global security" that Russia's responses to Washington assumed were present in Russia's "partner." The Russian government's naive and gullible response to Washington played into Washington's hands.

By responding to Washington's orchestrated Russiaphobia as if it were some kind of mistake based on bad information, the Russian government allowed Washington to keep the process of demonization alive and thereby contributed to the ongoing demonization of Russia.

If, instead, the Russian government had denounced the demonization of Russia as Washington's act of preparing Americans for war with Russia and had taken a belligerent rather than a complaining stance, the realization that Washington's policy had serious cost would have spread throughout the US and Europe and voices would have arisen against Washington's dangerous and reckless policy. Today in place of the uniformity of voice against Russia, there would be dissent opposing Washington's irresponsible provocations.

The danger of Russian self-delusion is not over. The embassy's report expresses the hope that now that the Mueller report has concluded that the much heralded collusion has no basis in fact, relations between Washington and Russia can be normalized and cooperation achieved. There is no such possibility. The Democrats are screaming "coverup" and demanding the resignation of attorney general Barr and Trump's impeachment.

The prostitutes are claiming that the Mueller report vindicates their reporting. Trump continues to use US foreign policy to commit criminal acts. He has declared that the president of Venezuela is the person he picked, not the one Venezuelans elected. He has given to Israel part of Syria as if Syrian territory is his to give. He threatens Iran with war as Israel requires. In other words, American arrogance rises to ever higher heights.

At some point the Russian government and Russian people are going to have to accept the fact that to reach an understanding with Washington Russia must either surrender her sovereignty or become as belligerent as Washington and replace Russia's useless refutations of Washington's accusations with

accusations of her own. Otherwise, Washington is going to keep pushing until war is the only possible outcome.

Russia China - Pakistan economic and strategic relations

Russia's ambassador to china strongly hinted at Moscow's interest in n-CPEC+

By Andrew Korybko

The Russian Ambassador to China's latest statement of intent to pursue the integration of Beijing's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) with the Moscow-led economic and security structures in Central Asia strongly hints at the Eurasian Great Power's interest in N-CPEC+ as the most viable way for bringing this about.

The Russian-Pakistani Strategic Partnership might soon enter a qualitatively new phase if the Russian Ambassador to China's latest statement is anything to go by. His Excellency Ambassador Andrey Denisov said that Russia intends to pursue the integration of Beijing's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) with the Moscow-led economic and security structures in Central Asia, which strongly hints at his country's interest in N-CPEC+ as the most viable way for bringing this about.

This aforementioned initiative refers to the global pivot state's northern branch route to the Central Asian Republics that might also one day include the RuPak Railway proposal via Afghanistan as well, which could altogether connect Russia to the Afro-Asian Ocean through China's flagship series of BRI megaprojects in Pakistan collectively referred to as CPEC.

For reasons of political sensitivity pertaining to its parallel strategic partnership with India, Russia can't openly endorse CPEC but can still nevertheless participate in it so long as it clothes its efforts in non-CPEC language about integrating the Eurasian Economic Union (EAO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with BRI like the Ambassador just did.

Russia's S-400 sale to India won't imperil its partnership with Pakistan

Important groundwork is already being made on this front at the policymaking level after three interconnected events that recently took place between Russia and Pakistan. Mr. Oleg Barabanov, a programme director at the Valdai Club (Russia's most prestigious think tank), a professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO, which is run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and a professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences confirmed Russia's "Return to South Asia" in the wake of the Pulwama incident and subsequent "surgical strike" fiasco by the rogue state of India in a thought-provoking piece that he published at his influential think tank in early March.

This was soon thereafter followed up by Pakistan's Strategic Vision Institute hosting a conference on bilateral relations with Russia where Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua unveiled a seven-point roadmap for taking ties to the next level, which evidently made progress a lot faster than most observers could

have expected after the President of Pakistan's National Defence University just shared his views on bilateral relations at the Valdai Club last week.

Quite clearly, Russia has surmounted its “deep state” divisions over South Asia despite public optics to the contrary by the increasingly desperate Indophile faction, unafraid to move forward with its newfound strategic partnership with Pakistan because it understands the game-changing significance of this relationship in regards to its broader return to the region.

It would therefore be very symbolic if Russian President Putin met with Pakistani Prime Minister Khan on the sidelines of next week's Belt & Road Initiative Forum in China to casually discuss this and other aspects of their countries' strategic partnership with one another, but even if that doesn't happen, there's no doubt that Ambassador Denisov's latest statement broadly framed how both leaders envision their relations developing in the future.

What all of this portends is that Russia will very likely succeed in its centuries-long mission to reach the warm waters of the Afro-Asian Ocean, but in an historic twist, it'll do so peacefully and with the active assistance of its Chinese and Pakistani partners in the new Multipolar Trilateral as it simultaneously makes progress on the Golden Ring geopolitical project that they're all a part of.

The US army is cutting and canceling hundreds of weapons programs

By David Axe

The Army's \$190-billion budget proposal, which represents an \$8-billion boost compared to the branch's 2019 budget, channels \$9 billion into six main efforts. "We made hard choices inside of our budget," McCarthy said. We wanted to do that so we can protect them in the out years if it's a flat fiscal environment." The U.S. Army is slowing, cutting and canceling hundreds of weapons programs in order to free up cash for just six kinds of new hardware.

The "Big Six" are key to winning high-tech wars against modern armies such as Russia's or China's, according to the ground-combat branch. The Army's \$190-billion budget proposal, which represents an \$8-billion boost compared to the branch's 2019 budget, channels \$9 billion into six main efforts. The highest-priority category is Long-Range Precision Fires or LRPF. In other words, artillery and ground-to-ground rockets. In 2020 the Army wants to spend \$1.3 billion improving its howitzers and rocket launchers and developing new, longer-range munitions.

Howitzers are getting longer barrels to boost their firing range plus new, father-flying shells. Rocket launchers are getting new, longer-range munitions, potentially including some with anti-ship capability. Next in line is Next-Generation Combat Vehicles or NGCV. Tanks and fighting vehicles. The Army in 2020 wants to spend \$2 billion developing NGCV. The new vehicles eventually would replace the Cold War-vintage M-2 fighting vehicle and potentially the M-1 tank, as well.

The Army has tried and failed at least twice to develop a replacement for the M-2. One attempt ended with the 2009 collapse of the overly-complex Future Combat Systems program. The other failed in 2014 on account of its ballooning weight. After NGCV there's Future Vertical Lift, an initiative to develop a new, high-speed aircraft to replace existing UH-60 and CH-47 helicopters plus a separate attack and reconnaissance aircraft to fill the gap left by the Army's failure to develop a replacement for the now-retired OH-58D scout helicopter. The twin aviation efforts would get \$800 million in 2020.

The Army's fourth priority is its communications network, which would tie together all the other forces and would get \$2.3 billion in 2020. Air & Missile Defense -- surface-to-air missiles and their supporting launchers and radars -- is the fifth priority and would receive \$1.4 billion in funding in 2020. Finally, the Army in 2020 wants \$850 million for its Soldier Lethality effort, which produces kit for the individual infantryman. The category includes new night-vision devices.

In all, the Big Six categories include more than 30 individual programs. They must prove they work before the Army buys them in bulk, Army Under-secretary Ryan McCarthy stressed. He alluded to the Future Combat Systems family of lightweight armored vehicles, an ambitious but flawed and pricey program that then-defense Secretary Robert Gates canceled in 2009. "The Army has had challenges with major defense acquisition programs in the last 20 or so years, because we don't lock in threat, operating concept and ultimately materiel and have it all come together," McCarthy said. To pay for the 30 or so Big Six programs, the Army is proposing to cancel 93 other programs and trim or delay 93 more. To select the sacrificial programs, the Army convened a bunch of planners for long planning sessions the attendees jokingly referred to as "night court."

"You went in there and tried to explain your program to the leadership, and if it didn't survive contact, it was out," McCarthy explained. The idea was to move around money within a roughly \$190-billion annual budget instead of asking Congress for a bigger overall budget. That way, the planning is proof against a worsening economy or a big change in federal spending priorities.

"We made hard choices inside of our budget," McCarthy said. We wanted to do that so we can protect them in the out years if it's a flat fiscal environment." Among the casualties are upgrades to old M-2 fighting vehicles, Avenger air-defense vehicles and CH-47 helicopters. The Army also is slowing down production of new Joint Light Tactical Vehicles and Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles. The JLTV is an armored truck that replaces up-armored Humvees. The AMPV is an armored infantry carrier that replaces 40-year-old M-113 carriers. In all, the night-court planners shifted \$33 billion in the Army's five-year budget projection for the years 2020 to 2024. The ground branch would spend \$8 billion of that in 2020 and the remaining \$25 billion over following four years, with all the diverted spending going toward Big Six programs.

David Axe serves as Defense Editor of the National Interest. He is the author of the graphic novels War Fix, War Is Boring and Machete Squad.

How real is white supremacy?

By Paul Craig Roberts

I don't share the interest many have in the reported mass shootings. However, there are wider issues associated with the shootings, and I do find these issues interesting. For example, mass shootings are a relatively new occurrence. I believe the first was in 1966 at the University of Texas when a former US Marine who was enrolled as a student shot a number of people from the university's clock tower. What caused this breakdown in moral behavior?

We can't simply say that the shooter became unhinged or insane. There have always been such people. Had the Marine been on active duty in Vietnam and experienced mass shootings of Vietnamese? Did he decide to bring the horror inflicted by Americans on Vietnamese home to Americans? Did student protests against the Vietnam War in which he was at risk make him feel unappreciated?

I don't remember if there were answers provided in 1966. I understand people's frustration with the lack of answers that is often the case in events today. For example, readers ask me, as if I know, why the New Zealand government has criminalized having a copy of the New Zealand shooter's manifesto. I do not know, but a good guess is that the New Zealand government wants to control the explanation and does not want any competition from the shooter himself.

Remember the 2016 Nice, France, truck attack on Bastille Day when a white delivery van was reported to have run over a large number of people. The only video we had of the truck's progress was a fuzzy one that showed little taken at a distance from a hotel balcony by the exact same person who provided the only video of an earlier reported terror attack in Germany. That the same person happened to be present with camera ready for back-to-back terrorist events in two different countries struck many as suspicious.

Suspicious mounted when it was reported that Nice city officials had video cameras on every corner, block by block, of the avenue along which the truck progressed, but were prohibited from releasing the videos by the central authorities in Paris who ordered the Nice officials to destroy the only evidence that clearly recorded the event.

Nice authorities resisted this order as it was an order to destroy evidence, which is a felony, but the evidence was never publicly provided. Many who followed the story justifiably concluded that the French government was hiding the evidence in order to control the story. The prostitute media, including the BBC, never expressed any interest in why the actual evidence of what happened was deep-sixed. The prostitutes reported as if the fuzzy video, which in fact showed no one being hit by a truck much less the more than 500 reported killed or injured, proved the official story.

All of these terror events, those that seem to be real and those that seem to be staged, have explanations ready prior to the event. Indeed, the explanation of the event is sometimes provided as the news is reported. This should strike people as suspicious, and it does strike some that way. Thus, I understand that many wonder why the New Zealand government and the prostitute media are suppressing the shooter's explanation.

A long succession of poorly reported terror events, together with such blatant and obvious lies told by Washington and its NATO vassals as Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, Assad's use of

chemical weapons, Iranian Nukes, Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia gate, the lies about Gaddafi, Maduro the dictator starving his own people, and so on and on, have destroyed trust in governments and the media. People are accustomed to seeing high government officials of Western countries stand in front of a TV camera and tell the most blatant and obvious lies.

Whatever you decide is the case in the New Zealand shooting, take care not to conflate a protest or a defense of the West, however misguided, with “white supremacy,” as the latter is how the story is spun. If a defense of the West is white supremacy, then a defense of blacks is black supremacy and a defense of Jews is Jewish supremacy. It is, of course, much safer to defend blacks and Jews than white gentiles, which shows that whites certainly have no supremacy.

Consider also whether there is a difference between the New Zealand shooter killing Muslims in a mosque and the US and its vassals including the New Zealand government killing Muslims in mosques, weddings, funerals, schools, hospitals, and play grounds during the past 20 years of indiscriminate bombings that constitute “the war on terror.” Terror is what the Western governments with scant protest inflict on Muslims. Perhaps the New Zealand shooter thought as everyone else was killing Muslims, he could also.

Another interesting question is whether left wing and Jewish groups who work overtime to demonize white people, especially heterosexual males, have any responsibility for the New Zealand shooter's reported attack. Was it an act of frustration by a shooter provoked by the constant demeaning of his race, gender, sexual preference, and culture?

Jewish lobbies have largely succeeded in establishing Jewish Supremacy. In many Western countries it is, or borders on, a hate crime to criticize Jews and Israel. Scholars have even been imprisoned for correcting errors in the Holocaust story. In the US Jewish lobbies have succeeded in having half of the states pass laws denying state government contracts to any business or person who participates or supports in any way boycotts of Israeli goods and services or advocates for disinvestment in Israeli companies.

President Trump even cut off US aid to the Palestinians whose country has been stolen by Israel. It is considered anti-semitism to even mention what Israel has done, and is currently doing, to Palestinians. Professors lose their university positions. Journalists get fired. Students are sent to sensitivity training. This is real supremacy. White gentiles have nothing like it. Yet Jewish lobbies the very people who constantly complain about hate speech use hate speech to the full extent as they lead the movement to demonize white gentiles. Here is the latest “media advisory” from the Center for Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University.

Courtesy Institute for Political Economy.

Jimmy Carter US 'most warlike nation in history of the world'

Former president says peaceful China 'ahead of us in almost every way'

By Brett Wilkins

The only US president to complete his term without war, military attack or occupation has called the United States “the most warlike nation in the history of the world.” During his regular Sunday school lesson at Maranatha Baptist Church in his hometown of Plains, Georgia, Jimmy Carter revealed that he had recently spoken with President Donald Trump about China. Carter, 94, said Trump was worried about China's growing economy and expressed concern that “China is getting ahead of us.”

Carter, who normalized diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing in 1979, said he told Trump that much of China's success was due to its peaceful foreign policy. “Since 1979, do you know how many times China has been at war with anybody?” Carter asked. “None, and we have stayed at war.” While it is true that China's last major waran invasion of Vietnam occurred in 1979, its People's Liberation Army pounded border regions of Vietnam with artillery and its navy battled its Vietnamese counterpart in the 1980s. Since then, however, China has been at peace with its neighbors and the world.

Carter then said the US has been at peace for only 16 of its 242 years as a nation. Counting wars, military attacks and military occupations, there have actually only been five years of peace in US history1976, the last year of the Gerald Ford administration and 1977-80, the entirety of Carter's presidency. Carter then referred to the US as “the most warlike nation in the history of the world,” a result, he said, of the US forcing other countries to “adopt our American principles.”

China's peace dividend has allowed and enhanced its economic growth, Carter said. “How many miles of high-speed railroad do we have in this country?” he asked. China has around 18,000 miles (29,000 km) of high speed rail lines while the US has “wasted, I think, \$3 trillion” on military spending. According to a November 2018 study by Brown University's Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, the US has spent \$5.9 trillion waging war in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other nations since 2001.

“It's more than you can imagine,” Carter said of US war spending. “China has not wasted a single penny on war, and that's why they're ahead of us. In almost every way.” “And I think the difference is if you take \$3 trillion and put it in American infrastructure you'd probably have \$2 trillion leftover,” Carter told his congregation. “We'd have high-speed railroad. We'd have bridges that aren't collapsing, we'd have roads that are maintained properly. Our education system would be as good as that of say South Korea or Hong Kong.”

The US has also invaded or bombed dozens of countries and supported nearly every single right wing dictatorship in the world since the end of World War II. While there is a prevalent belief in the United States that the country almost always wages war for noble purposes and in defense of freedom, global public opinion and facts paint a very different picture. Most countries surveyed in a 2013 WIN/Gallup poll identified the United States as the greatest threat to world peace, and a 2017 Pew Research poll found that a record number of people in 30 surveyed nations viewed US power and influence as a “major threat.”

The US has also invaded or bombed dozens of countries and supported nearly every single right wing dictatorship in the world since the end of World War II. It has overthrown or attempted to overthrow dozens of foreign governments since 1949 and has actively sought to crush nearly every single people's liberation movement over that same period. It has also meddled in scores of elections, in countries that are allies and adversaries alike.

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Just like Trump, media outlets rarely label far - right attacks 'terrorism'

A rare exception in the glaring trend came last month when New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was swift to characterize the massacre in Christchurch as the work of a white nationalist terrorist

By Julia Conley

A new study shows that media outlets frequently echo the instinct of political leaders like President Donald Trump when they refuse to label the violence of far-right assailants as "terrorism" while showing significantly less reluctance if an attack was carried out by an Islamic extremist. The British media monitoring firm Signal AI found that most news sources are quick to draw links between incidents identified as "Islamist" attacks and terrorism, but are far less likely to do the same when an attack suspect is linked to far-right ideologies like white nationalism.

Suspected attackers claiming allegiance to the Muslim faith were three times as likely to be called terrorists, according to Signal AI, with 78 percent of the reports the group studied identifying them as such. Meanwhile, far-right attackers were only called terrorists 24 percent of the time in the 200,000 broadcast scripts and news articles the group read, all of which had been aired and published in the last two years.

On social media, many critics were unsurprised to read Moore's findings but took the report as a call to action for media organizations. The study noted that reporting on the mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand last month were a notable exception. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern immediately labeled the attacks as acts of terrorism and disavowed the suspect, who holds white nationalist views. As a result, Signal AI found, news outlets called the suspect a terrorist far more than they generally have when an attacker represents the far right. "The Christchurch shooting is actually exceptional in how willing the media were to label the shooter a terrorist," reported Moore. "We can see the impact of Ardern's comments in real-time coverage of the shooting," the study added.

"The example set by Ardern immediately filtered into the media. Before her comments few publications labeled the attack terrorism; after them, few did not. Ardern's voice was powerful in setting the tone for the response to the attack."

Ardern's decisive action after the attack contrasted sharply with Trump's statement of sympathy for the white supremacists who staged a violent rally where an anti-racist protester was killed in 2017; and his refusal to call a white supremacist who killed 11 people in a Pittsburgh synagogue last year a "terrorist" while he has immediately done so after attacks perpetrated by people pledging allegiance to ISIS.

"Influential figures may have the ability to shift the narrative around events and topics," reported Moore. "Spokes people's language filters into the media and, likely, into public dialogue."

Behind the Omar Outrage Suppressed history of 9/11

Trump's demagogic ploy with the freshman lawmaker raises the more serious question of who and what led to the "Day of Planes," writes Max Blumenthal

By Max Blumenthal

As Donald Trump sharpens his re-election messaging, he has sought to make a foil out of freshman Democrat Rep. Ilhan Omar, homing in on her identity as a black Muslim immigrant and her brazen defiance of what was once a bipartisan pro-Israel consensus. Trump's most recent attack was the most inflammatory to date, implying through a characteristically dishonest Twitter video that Omar had played some role in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Trump was referencing comments Omar made this month during a banquet of the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR): "CAIR was founded after 9/11, because they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties," Omar said during a 20-minute-long denunciation of public bullying and violent attacks against Muslims living in the West. (CAIR was founded in 1994, contrary to Omar's claim).

As innocuous as Omar's comments might have seemed, they were easily spun by a right-wing bigot-sphere seeking to portray her as not merely insensitive to the deep wound Americans suffered on 9/11, but as a possible terror-sympathizer. As Bernard Kerik, the disgraced former NYPD commissioner and convicted felon, said of Omar on Fox News, "she's infatuated with Al Qaeda, with Hamas, with Hezbollah."

For Trump, the manufactured outrage offered yet another opportunity to advance his rebranded version of the Southern Strategy, painting Omar as the face of a Democratic Party overrun by socialists, Muslims, MS13 and trans radicals as a clear and present danger to the reactionary white exurbanites commonly referred to in mainstream media as "swing voters."

Amid an onslaught of menacing condemnations and online death threats triggered by Trump's tweet, prominent Democrats mobilized to defend Omar. However, many were too timid to mention her by name, apparently fearing that doing so would play into Trump's cynical strategy. Some refused to defend her at all. And among those willing to speak up, most felt compelled to lead their defense by

reinforcing the quasi-theological understanding of 9/11 that leaves anti-Muslim narratives unchallenged. “The memory of 9/11 is sacred ground, and any discussion of it must be done with reverence,” insisted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

In Washington, 9/11 is understood as an act of inexplicable evil that materialized out of a clear blue sky. “They hate us because we're free,” Americans are still told in a semi-official drone, conveniently excising the attacks that took place on 9/11 from their historical context. This ruthlessly enforced interpretation has had the effect of displacing blame from those who bear direct or indirect responsibility for the attacks onto much more convenient scapegoats like the Islamic faith and its diverse mass of adherents.

In my new book, “The Management of Savagery,” I explain which people did what things to lay the groundwork for the worst terror attack on U.S. soil. Not all of those people were Muslim, and few have faced the kind of scrutiny Omar has for her seemingly benign comment about 9/11. As I illustrate, many of them maintained lustrous reputations well after the ash was cleared from Ground Zero.

Today, some of their names Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ronald Reagan, H.W. Bush are prominently engraved on airports, federal offices, and library halls around the country. Others became the subject of rowdy bestsellers such as “Charlie Wilson's War,” or saw their exploits dramatized in Cold War kitsch productions like “Rambo III.” And then there were those who waged America's dirty wars from the shadows, and whose names will scarcely ever be known.

While these figures lay claim to the mantle of “national security,” their true legacy was the callous abandonment of that concept in order to advance imperial objectives. During the Cold War, they forged partnerships with theocratic monarchies and armed Islamist militants, even distributing jihadist textbooks to children in the name of defeating the Soviet scourge.

Today, as Rep. Tulsi Gabbard the lone foreign policy dissenter within the Democratic presidential field pointed out, they are doing it all over again through their protection of the world's largest Al Qaeda franchise in Syria's Idlib province, which came into being thanks in large part to U.S. intervention in the country.

To effectively puncture Trump's demagogic ploys, the discussion of 9/11 must move beyond a superficial defense of Omar and into an exploration of a critical history that has been suppressed. This history begins at least 20 years before the attacks occurred, when “some people did something.” Many of those people served at the highest levels of U.S. government, and the things they did led to the establishment of Al Qaeda as an international network and ultimately, to 9/11 itself.

Taliban 'unimportant'

Back in 1979, some people initiated a multi-billion-dollar covert operation to trap the Red Army in Afghanistan and bleed the Soviet Union at its soft underbelly. They put heavy weapons in the hands of Islamist warlords such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, dispatched Salafi clerics such as “Blind Sheikh” Omar Abdel Rahman to the battlefield, and printed millions of dollars' worth of textbooks for Afghan children

that contained math equations encouraging them to commit acts of violent martyrdom against Soviet soldiers. They did anything they could to wreak havoc on the Soviet-backed government in Kabul.

These people were so hellbent on smashing the Soviet Union that they made common cause with the Islamist dictatorship of Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq and the House of Saud. With direct assistance from the intelligence services of these U.S. allies, Osama bin Laden, the scion of Saudi wealth, set up his Services Bureau on the Afghan border as a waystation for foreign Islamist fighters.

These people even channeled funding to bin Laden so he could build training camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border for the so-called freedom fighters of the mujahideen. And they kept watch over a ratline that shepherded young Muslim men from the West to the front lines of the Afghan proxy war, using them as cannon fodder for a cold-blooded, imperial operation marketed by the Wahhabi clergy in Saudi Arabia as a holy obligation.

These people were in the CIA, USAID, and the National Security Council. Others, with names like Charlie Wilson, Jesse Helms, Jack Murtha, and Joe Biden, held seats on both sides of the aisle in Congress. When they finally got what they wanted, dislodging a secular government that had provided Afghan women with unprecedented access to education, their proxies plunged Afghanistan into a war of the warlords that saw half of Kabul turned to rubble, paving the way for the rise of the Taliban. And these people remained totally unrepentant about the monster they had created.

“Can you imagine what the world would be like today if there was still a Soviet Union?” remarked Zbigniew Bzezinski, the former NSC director who sold President Jimmy Carter on the Afghan proxy war. “So yes, compared to the Soviet Union, and to its collapse, the Taliban were unimportant.” To some in Washington, the Taliban were a historical footnote. To others, they were allies of convenience. As a top State Department diplomat commented to journalist Ahmed Rashid in February 1997, “The Taliban will probably develop like Saudi Arabia. There be the Saudi-owned oil company Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that.”

CIA cover-ups and blowback

Back in the U.S., some people fueled the blowback from the Afghan proxy war. The Blind Sheikh was given a special entry visa by the CIA as payback for the services he provided in Afghanistan, allowing him to take over the al-Kifah Center in New York City, which had functioned as the de facto U.S. arm of Al Qaeda's Services Bureau. Under his watch and with help from bin Laden, some people and lots of aid were shuttled to the front lines of U.S. proxy wars in Bosnia and Chechnya while the Clinton administration generally looked the other way.

Though the Blind Sheikh was eventually convicted in a terror plot contrived by a paid informant for the FBI, some people in federal law enforcement had been reluctant to indict him. “There was a whole issue about Abdel-Rahman being given a visa to come into this country and what the circumstances were around that,” one of his defense lawyers, Abdeed Jabara told me. “The issue related to how much the government was involved with the jihadist enterprise when it suited their purposes in Afghanistan and whether or not they were afraid there would be exposure of that. Because there's no question that the

jihadists were using the Americans and the Americans were using the jihadists. There's a symbiotic relationship.”

During the 1995 trial of members of the Blind Sheikh's New York-based cell, another defense lawyer, Roger Stavis, referred to his clients before the jury as “Team America,” emphasizing the role they had played as proxy fighters for the U.S. in Afghanistan. When Stavis attempted to summon to the witness stand a jihadist operative named Ali Abdelsauod Mohammed who had trained his clients in firearms and combat, some people ordered Mohammed to refuse his subpoena. Those people, according to journalist Peter Lance, were federal prosecutors Andrew McCarthy and Patrick Fitzgerald.

The government lawyers were apparently fretting that Mohammed would be exposed as an active asset of both the CIA and FBI, and as a former Army sergeant who had spirited training manuals out of Fort Bragg while stationed there during the 1980s. So Mohammed remained a free man, helping Al Qaeda plan attacks on American consular facilities in Tanzania and Kenya while the “Day of the Planes” plot began to take form.

In early 2000, some people gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to prepare the most daring Al Qaeda operation to date. Two figures at the meeting, Saudi citizens named Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, were on their way to the United States. While in Kuala Lumpur, the duo's hotel room was broken into by CIA agents, their passports were photographed, and their communications were recorded.

And yet the pair of Al Qaeda operatives was able to travel together with multiple-entry visas on a direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Los Angeles. That's because for some reason, some people from the CIA failed to notify any people at the FBI about the terror summit that had just taken place. The “Day of Planes” plot was moving forward without a kink.

In Los Angeles, some people met Hazmi and Midhar at the airport, provided the two non-English speakers with a personal caretaker and rented them apartments, where neighbors said they were routinely visited each night by unknown figures in expensive cars with darkened windows. Those people were Saudi Arabian intelligence agents named Omar Bayoumi and Khaled al-Thumairy.

Crawford, Texas

It was not until August 2001 that Midhar was placed on a terrorist watch list. That month, some people met at a ranch in Crawford, Texas, and reviewed a classified document headlined, “Bin Laden Determined to Strike Inside the US.” The bulletin was a page-and-a-half long, with detailed intelligence on the “Day of Planes” plot provided by Ali Mohammed, the Al Qaeda-FBI-CIA triple agent now registered as “John Doe” and disappeared somewhere in the federal prison system.

Those people reviewed the document for a few minutes before their boss, President George W. Bush, moved on to other matters. According to The Washington Post, Bush exhibited an “expansive mood” that day, taking in a round of golf. “We are going to be struck soon, many Americans are going to die,

and it could be in the U.S.," CIA counter terrorism chief Cofer Black warned days later. Bush did not meet with his cabinet heads again to discuss terrorism until Sept. 4.

A week later, on Sept. 11, some people did something. They hijacked four civilian airliners and changed the course of American history with little more than box cutter blades in their hands. Fifteen of those 19 people, including Hazmi and Midhar, were citizens of Saudi Arabia.

They were products of a Wahhabi school system and a politically stultifying society that had thrived under the protection of a special relationship with the U.S. Indeed, the U.S. had showered theocratic allies like Saudi Arabia with aid and weapons while threatening secular Arab states that resisted its hegemony with sanctions and invasion. The Saudis were the favorite Muslims of America's national security elite not because they were moderate, which they absolutely were not, but because they were useful.

In the days after 9/11, the FBI organized several flights to evacuate prominent Saudi families from the U.S., including relatives of Osama bin Laden. Meanwhile, Islamophobia erupted across the country, with even mainstream personalities such as TV news anchor Dan Rather taking to the airwaves to claim without evidence that Arab-Americans had celebrated the 9/11 attacks.

Unable to find a single operational Al Qaeda cell in the country, the FBI turned to an army of paid snitches to haul in mentally unstable Muslims, dupes and idlers like the Lackawanna 6 in manufactured plots. Desperate for a high-profile bust to reinforce the "war on terror" narrative, the bureau hounded Palestinian Muslim activists and persecuted prominent Islamic charities like the Holy Land Foundation, sending its directors to prison for decades for the crime of sending aid to NGOs in the occupied Gaza Strip.

As America's national security state cracked down on Muslim civil society at home, it turned to fanatical Islamist proxies abroad to bring down secular and politically independent Arab states. In Libya, the U.S. and UK helped arm the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a longtime affiliate of Al Qaeda, using it as a proxy to depose and murder Muammar Gaddafi. As that country transformed from a stable, prosperous state into an Afghanistan-style playground for rival militias, including a chapter of the Islamic State, the Obama administration moved to do the same to Damascus.

In Syria, the CIA armed an outfit of supposedly "moderate rebels" called the Free Syrian Army that turned out to be nothing more than a political front and weapons farm for an array of extremist insurgent factions including Al Qaeda's local affiliate and the Islamic State. The latter two groups were, of course, products of the sectarian chaos of Iraq, which had been ruled by a secular government until the U.S. came knocking after 9/11.

The blowback from Iraq, Libya and Syria arrived in the form of the worst refugee crises the world has experienced since World War II. And then came the bloodiest terror attack to hit the UK in history in Manchester. There, the son of a Libyan Islamic Fighting Group member, who traveled to Libya and Syria on an MI6 ratline, slaughtered concert-goers with a nail bomb.

Cataclysmic social disruptions like these were like steroids for right-wing Islamophobes, electrifying Trump's victorious 2016 presidential campaign, a wing of the Brexit "Leave" campaign in the UK, and far-right parties across Europe. But as I explain in "The Management of Savagery," these terrifying trends were byproducts of decisions undertaken by national security elites more closely aligned with the political center figures who today attempt to position themselves as leaders of the anti-Trump resistance. Which people did which things to drag us into the political nightmare we're living through? For those willing to cut through the campaign season bluster, Ilhan Omar's comments dare us to name names.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling "Republican Gomorrah," "Goliath," "The Fifty One Day War" and "The Management of Savagery," published in March 2019 by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including "Killing Gaza" and "Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie." Blumenthal founded the Grayzone in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America's state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

Modi's deadliest surgical strike so far has been to politicise the Armed Forces

By projecting India's military capabilities for personal political gain, the Prime Minister has blunted deterrence and encouraged adversaries to take counter-moves

By declaring at an election rally that he had the courage to conduct surgical strikes on land, air and in space, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has demonstrated that he has no qualms in projecting military power for personal gains. His strikes have blunted India's military deterrence by exposure, alerted adversaries to counter-moves and, importantly, politicised senior officials in these three war domains.

Consequently, the biggest victim of Prime Minister Modi's three-dimensional surgical strikes has been India's war-fighting capability. In a multi-party democracy, military preparedness is inversely proportional to politicisation the strength of India's military institutions lies in their remaining apolitical.

While preparedness implies capability-building, including military reforms and realistic training for war, politicisation the project that began with the Vajpayee government and was completed with the 2016 surgical strikes means that senior military leadership aligns its service's objective with that of the ruling political party (instead of the government), which in the case of the BJP is not the same as the national objective.

Let's start with India's least evolved space domain, where Modi claimed on March 27 that with the single Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test India had joined the elite club of space powers comprising the US, Russia and China. The facts first: India fired a missile and hit its own satellite at 300km altitude in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), which extends from 160km to 2,000km the dividing line between atmosphere and space being 100km above mean sea level.

The DRDO chief, Sateesh Reddy, however, claimed India “has a capability to hit a target as far away as 1,000km in space.” Officials clarified that the low altitude of 300km was chosen to ensure that debris from the destroyed satellite does not pollute space since it would decay and fall-back into the atmosphere faster. Claims were made by former DRDO chief V.K. Saraswat too.

He said that with the ASAT test, India had acquired deterrence; no enemy would mess with India's space objects; the technology would help in intercepting long-range ballistic missiles (help improve indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence) which could be taken up in phase-two of the ASAT programme. He also said that the technology was ready in April 2012 when India successfully test-fired the 5,000km range Agni-5 missile, but it was the Modi government which gave resources, permission and encouragement to do the ASAT test.

Now, some home-truths. With the successful Agni-5 test-firing, the DRDO achieved ability to make a solid-propellant missile which could reach hypersonic speeds of more than Mach 5 (Mach being the speed of sound). The problem was and still remains the need for guidance and control of the missile in the hypersonic region. For clarity, let's take the analogy of a sports car cruising at 200km without the steering!

The DRDO has made several efforts since 2012 to get the restrictive and critical guidance and control technologies for hypersonic missiles in addition to high-energy propellants (for higher altitudes) from a friendly nation, but has not succeeded. True to form, all these years, DRDO did not invest time, energy and finance for building indigenous guidance and control technology knowing well that hypersonic missiles with desired guidance and control become ASAT missiles for hit-and-kill of satellites from LEO to Higher Earth Orbit (HEO) or geo-stationary orbit (from 160km to over 35,000km). With the recent ASAT test, it is certain that procuring these technologies from outside would become harder.

Interestingly, Reddy has admitted in his recent interview to the Times of India, that his challenges are (a) “to get high accuracy level”, (b) “improve capabilities to reach a target at a high altitude”, and (c) “to develop a host of technologies that enabled us to identify, track and intercept.” Simply put, DRDO lacks hypersonic technologies, where Russia and China are considered to have outpaced the US. India, in its ASAT test, seems to have made a virtue out of its technology compulsion by killing a satellite at 300km, and by claiming capability of 1,000km range.

Incidentally, all satellites, depending on their commercial and military role, are placed at the altitude of more than 800km, where India has not demonstrated credible assurance level by actual testing. DRDO has a history of making premature and boastful claims. Take Saraswat, now a member of NITI Aayog, for instance.

In an interview with me as DRDO chief in February 2010, he had made the following claims: by 2013, India would achieve phase one of indigenous Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) to protect Delhi, Mumbai and other metropolis cities from hostile 2,000km range ballistic missiles; thereafter DRDO would start phase two to protect these from hostile 5,000km range ballistic missiles in three years (by 2016); and India had all the building blocks to match China's first ASAT test (done at 850km). If all this was true,

what was the need for India to buy the Russian S-400 air defence missile systems and incur US' annoyance?

Hence, before any more money is put in the indigenous BMD programme, there is a need for a proper, objective technical audit to know what has actually been achieved within the programme and in terms of spin-off technologies. It would also provide the roadmap for research, especially in basic and applied sciences, an area of weakness.

The ASAT test was no more than a Technology Demonstrator (TD), whose announcement should have been avoided. TDs have no deterrent value. If anything, they blunt deterrence, by prematurely showcasing existing technology. Given this, India, as yet, has no role in evolving rules for global space order. For one, the world is still far from reaching there. For another, the gap between space technologies of India and the rest (Russia, China and US) is so huge and unbridgeable in the absence of meaningful research, that India is not likely to be on the scene.

Not for nothing, the world refused to take notice of the ASAT test. China kept quiet. Russia offered a politically correct comment. The US, not willing to comment on the test, expressed appreciation at India's sensitivity about satellite debris. And Pakistan, whom Modi probably wanted to convey the message by calling the test Mission Shakti after the 1998 nuclear tests Operation Shakti, remarked, "Boasting of such capabilities is reminiscent of Don Quixote's tilting against windmills."

In the realm of politicisation of constitutional institutions, the breach in research organisations was preceded by the military, the most recent of which was the Indian Air Force, when the government used the service on February 27 to score political points. Of course, the declaratory motive of the air surgical strike on Jaish-e-Mohammed's training camp in Balakot was to avenge the Pulwama suicide bombing attack, but the cat jumped out of the bag within days.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's election posters came up in several places with motifs of the Pulwama attack and IAF strikes in Balakot forming the backdrop. Wing Cdr. Abhinandan, who was taken prisoner of war by Pakistan (released two days later), also started figuring on election publicity material.

To remove all doubt, Air Chief Marshal B.S. Dhanoa made political rhetoric a part of his speech. Speaking at the induction ceremony of Chinook heavylift helicopters in Chandigarh, ACM Dhanoa told the media, "When the Rafale comes... they (Pakistan Air Force) will not come anywhere near our Line of Control or border."

Surely, the air chief understands the difference between war and show of war. The singular conclusion of the two-day air spat was that while Pakistan and its armed forces were ready for an escalation (war), India's agenda was limited to the show of war, since after conceding that the PAF's strike was an act of war, India did nothing. The obvious conclusions were that (a) India did not have the political will and military escalation capabilities, and (b) the Modi dispensation had exposed the IAF's war-fighting capabilities by using it for electoral gains.

India needs a strong military, but the BJP has shown preference for a military which can be employed for successfully projecting the right-wing agenda of a muscle-flexing India. Unfortunately, like the army, the IAF also seem oblivious of the cost this politicisation is going to extract. Since Balakot, the PAF has strengthened its air defence network. It has deployed more Chinese HQ-16 surface to air missiles on the border.

It is using more CH-4 and CH-5 surveillance drones; it has purchased strike-capable Wing Loong-II UAVs; it would certainly be the first overseas customer of Chinese CH-7 long range, high altitude, stealth combat drones. It already has more useable cruise missiles than India. And the interoperability between the People's Liberation Army and the Pakistan military would be further strengthened in accordance with the public pledge made by China that it would protect Pakistan's sovereignty. Meanwhile, India is yet to operationalise Rafale and S-400.

Why has Pakistan taken these steps? Because it is determined to maintain conventional war-fighting (operational) level parity with India in order to obviate the need to move to the higher nuclear level. The unambiguous message for India is that the use of air power will get an equal response from Pakistan. Serious observers know that the IAF lacks even local superiority capability, and Pakistan is much better placed to plug its war-fighting gaps. This is what makes ACM Dhanoa's statement political.

When the chief of air staff speaks the language of the political leadership, it is time to worry. Both deterrence in peacetime and if it fails the outcome of land-war would be determined by IAF's preparedness. An air force with blunted capability spells disaster, especially when the army succumbed to the pressures of politicisation in 2016, when, towing the government line, it labelled cross-Line of Control raids as surgical strikes.

The politicisation of the army started well before Modi came to power in a rather innocuous fashion. In the mid-1990s, when the BJP was still some distance from power, it created a defence cell by recruiting ex-servicemen. The ostensible idea was twofold to understand the concerns of the uniformed class and to evolve some sort of a national security policy which could inform its eventual defence posture when it came to power.

At the time, Lt Gen. J.F.R. Jacob, the hero of 1971 who humiliated Pakistan by getting its top military commander in East Pakistan to surrender to him, headed the BJP's defence cell. Explaining the reasons why he joined the BJP, he told me that it was the only political party willing to listen to ex-servicemen's viewpoint on how to make India militarily strong. Clearly, this was a clever move.

By endearing itself to army veterans, the BJP gradually aligned them to its thinking. Some got on the BJP bandwagon for ideological reasons and some for the alternative career option that it offered. This helped fulfil BJP's unsaid agenda of converting the ex-servicemen community, numbering hundreds of thousands, into a potential vote-bank.

Till then, this was a completely untapped resource as no political party had ever thought of manipulating the military community, both out of lack of foresight and the inherited moral code of letting the military be apolitical. Interestingly, after the February 2019 Supreme Court judgment, even serving military

personnel can now register themselves as voters and participate in general elections. Hence, all the more reason for political outreach to this section of the society. Waking up late, even the Congress has now started reaching out to ex-servicemen.

Perhaps, this was bound to happen. But the worrying part is that this political alignment is happening at the cost of national security. As long as the Modi government was keeping ex-servicemen happy by announcing schemes like One Rank, One Pension (howsoever imperfect), it was fine; but by formalising counter-terror operations as the primary role of the army something that the generals who had spent decades honing their skills in it wanted it has politicised the institution.

Today, most serving and retired army officers go all out to praise the Modi government. Few remember that the cardinal job of the Indian Army remains preparedness for war, to defend the military lines with two powerful adversaries. And this has been the biggest surgical strike that Prime Minister Modi has dealt to India's military institutions.

The writer is editor of FORCE newsmagazine.

Ceri conference on Pakistan & India

By Interaction desk

Alain Dieckhof, director of CERI (Center of International Relations) hosted a lively conference this evening at SciencesPo for Christophe Jaffrelot. The subject was “India on the eve of the elections: assessment of the Modi government”. This was first conference hosted by SciencesPo on the region post Pulwama and was eagerly awaited by journo, academics and think-tanks.

For context, Jaffrelot is an pre-eminent voice in France on subjects related to South Asia. He is, in particular, considered an Indo-Pak expert and widely quoted by the media and frequently consulted by Quai d'Orsay, especially on matters related to Pakistan. Without any doubt, Jaffrelot's voice holds a lot of weight in France.

Please find below some observations on the conference:

Definitely Jaffrelot made no Indian friends during this conference as he took a very aggressive tone vis-à-vis Modi. With some Indians present in the audience, there was retaliation from their side, needless to say, which led to some raised voices.

Jaffrelot claimed that India has just gone through five years of “ethnic democracy” with majoritarian nationalism (Hindutva) imposing its identity on everyone in India. Frequently quoted Orwell.

Compared how India resembles Israel now. The only difference being that Israel has the supremacy of Jews enshrined in the Constitution (Israeli Declaration of Independence as Israel has no formal Constitution). India doesn't have Hindutva in its Constitution but Jaffrelot believes that India is moving

towards codifying it in its Constitution as demanded by RSS. RSS' goal is to change the constitution to enshrine Hindutva.

Hinduism is constantly being promoted on political scene with all minorities being victim of it.

India is beginning to rewrite its history. Some egregious examples were displayed. More than 1500 changes were made to school textbooks rewriting India's history. Jaffrelot claimed that Nehru has simply been wiped off school textbooks in Rajasthan. Similarly in another state, textbooks are claiming that Maharana Pratap won the famous battle of Haldighati against Akbar (when he lost it).

Fake news is being institutionalized and history is also a victim of that. Ideological reconstruction is being carried out at massive scale.

According to Jaffrelot, this ethnic narrative transcends religion. More history would be rewritten to reconcile the fact that Aryans themselves were invaders and that these Hindus per se aren't sons/daughters of soil.

Indian rationalists' (Indian Rationalist Association) are trying to stand up against this system and they are being targeted by RSS. Jaffrelot names three rationalists recently assassinated by RSS "criminals".

Similarly liberal academics and NGOs are being targeted by the BJP government as well. Jaffrelot claims that JNU's budget has been drastically cut by Modi government to get the liberal academics in line. Similarly Foreign Contribution Regulation Act has been applied on NGOs across the board. A number of NGOs receiving foreign funding are seen by the India's central government as involved in anti-development activism and have this been shut down by the Indian government. FCRA is an act to consolidate the law to regulate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain individuals and associations. Because of this the number of NGOs in India has gone down from 33k to 13k. Jaffrelot names Greenpeace, Teesta's NGOs Sabrang Trust and Citizens for Justice and Peace license being cancelled.

Same goes for journalists who are targeted for not towing the Hindutva line.

Jaffrelot was amazed by the submission and docility of Muslims in these circumstances (with the notable exception of Jammu and Kashmir).

Christians as well as Christian NGOs have not been spared. Jaffrelot mentioned assassination of pastors and nuns.

Jaffrelot then mentioned different anti-Muslim campaigns run with the tacit acceptance of Modi government. The first campaign was launched in the autumn of 2014 and was called "Love Jihad". The second campaign profiled "homecoming ceremonies" to "reconvert" religious minorities back to Hinduism. The rhetoric surrounding these ceremonies paints followers of Islam and Christianity as "stolen property" that Hinduism is now rightfully "reclaiming". Once again ethnic tangent is covered with religion. Third example given was that of "ghettoisation" of Indian municipality laws. In Ahmedabad and Baroda, a Muslim family cannot shift. To a Hindu majority neighborhood. Thus Muslims are being forced

to stay in their own neighborhoods. This model is beginning to be applied all over India. Similarly, Muslims cannot pray in public anymore in Hindu majority areas. And finally cow protection movement being run all over India by RSS, resulting in public lynching of Muslims (gave example of Cow Protection Task Force created in Maharashtra).

These Muslim lynchings are systematically filmed and shared on social media to achieve the desire "chilling effect".

Gave example of the utilisation of National Security Act to arrest Muslims transporting cows or being butchers.

Similarly vigilant groups are acting in connivance and in cohort with local police to intimidate minorities.

Jaffrelot spent some time talking about RSS and how it was made up of higher castes Hindus who are feeling disenfranchised with positive discrimination and quota systems for lower castes. Gave example of higher caste Rajputs who are academically nowhere and are now wondering about their future and blaming minorities for taking their rightful position in society.

Police has been totally politicized and is being used to further Hindutva agenda.

This Hindutva nationalism is now operating on grass roots level and Jaffrelot openly wondered if India has gone past the point of no return. He rhetorically asked if political alternance might not make a societal difference in case Modi loses the elections.

Talked about what he called "Chowkidar effect" of Modi. Jaffrelot said that Modi was taking a leaf out of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's famous press conference when ZAB said that there are two ZABs: One in front of you and the other in all of us. Basically Chowkidar effect is vigilantism at individual level (and Modi is encouraging it).

Modi is running the elections on Pakistan card (Defence) and Chowkidar effect (anti-corruption drive).

Jaffrelot claims that Modi is not credible anymore on economic development and that's why he's using Pakistan and Chowkidar card. In five years, Modi has destroyed 20 million of jobs instead of creating jobs, thanks in part to demonetization.

Jaffrelot then demolished Modi's narrative on anti-corruption and how incestuous of a relationship he has with business circles. He openly called it "Crony Capitalism". The rich has gone richer in Modi's era and all the business circles have aligned themselves with Modi's agenda so that they can continue their business (gave many examples of Ambani).

Modi's contacts own all the electronic media in India now and a massive majority of media outlets have aligned themselves with Modi as well to survive. Thus the Modi narrative is being repeated over and over again.

A lot of people in audience were shocked at such realities in India and asked Jaffrelot why Western governments were not crying out loud. His reply was: 1) Western countries' economic agenda with

India; 2) how West is using India for “China Containment Drive” (formation of coalition etc to encircle China) and 3) Islamophobia of the West (how can a Hindu be a terrorist? Muslims are always the terrorists etc.)

At the end, concerning Pakistan, Jaffrelot reiterates his PoV that Pakistan's establishment was behind LeT and JeM and directly behind Uri, Pathankot and Pulwama. Although he did precise that Pulwama was conducted by an Indian and not a Pakistani.

Nuclear bunker in Delhi, zeitgeist of achhe din

We in Delhi live expecting a nuclear attack the way people in Mumbai expect to be stuck in traffic

By T K Arun

When the cover page of Delhi Times is, yet again, an ad for a residential complex of 4-5 bedroom apartments fitted with the usual amenities, some not-so-common facilities and a soaring, glitzy tower to house them in, Times employees nod in approval: if ad revenues are good, increments should not be stingy. But then you notice an extra-ordinary feature of this housing project: it offers a nuclear bunker. This, my friend, is what Germans mean by zeitgeist, the spirit of the times.

We in Delhi live expecting a nuclear attack the way people in Mumbai expect to be stuck in traffic or the residents of Chennai are resigned to giant cut-outs blotting the skyline. If you did not quite know this, despite bustling through the business of life in the national Capital, don't be too hard on yourself. No one knew they needed an iPod till Steve Jobs unveiled one in October 2001, after he had already launched a version of iTunes for the Macintosh computer.

A functional internet was in place, even if access to high-speed broadband was a privilege. The electronics was ready to mass-produce iPods. People loved music, listening to music and not listening to the guy in front was part of the popular culture. All it needed was the design and marketing genius of Steve Jobs to make a phenomenon out of the iPod, and later, the iPhone.

The neurosis is already in place, to make a nuclear bunker look like not just a good idea but something we just cannot do without. A climate of fear, the constant dread of an enemy poised to strike anytime anywhere, with the help of contingents of anti-national traitors standing ready to do their bit to break up the motherland, the ever looming presence of the soldier in the public discourse, with retired generals pulverising the enemy every minute of evening prime-time television, the army chief speaking like a politician (meaning, of course, with polished grace, total logic and relying on hard facts authenticated on Whatsapp), a dominant narrative in which anyone who dares to differ with the dominant narrative is automatically a traitor, deserving to be charged with sedition and thrashed in the courtroom, a high-priest of the gospel of the besieged and media outlets eager to spread the grim word what more could makers of nuclear bunkers ask for?

The sheer banality of offering a nuclear bunker along with indoor squash courts and pool side party spaces serves an important purpose: it is part of normalising the neurosis. Have the barista pour you a flat white and, while sipping it, if the sirens go off, announcing an air attack, gulp down anti-national thoughts about why our brave airmen and fancy missile interceptors failed to fend off the menace whizzing towards you, and duck into the nuclear bunker.

Come out once the attack is over, go back and finish your coffee and reach for that squash racquet. Did someone mutter something about nuclear winter, electromagnetic storms and radiation that Geiger cannot count? What you don't know won't hurt you, because you would be beyond this-worldly sensation.

Why blame this neurosis on an internal ideology of being under siege, of victim hood? Isn't the Pak threat real? Do not Pak generals see terror as an instrumentality of strategic reach beyond what nuclear bombs, tactical as well as medium range missiles and the world's sixth largest army offer Pakistan? Of course, the answer to both the questions is in the affirmative. But that does not mean that Pakistan's capacity for mischief cannot be contained, if not quite neutered, without India drawing itself into a shell like a tortoise.

India has to be on guard against external aggression and against internal subversion. India has been doing both, quite effectively, over the decades; and Pakistan is hollowing itself out as a country that spends more on defence than it can afford, cuts back on essential services, not to speak of welfare, and will soon be forced to choose between popular revolt and scaling down of delusions of military grandeur.

The process began with the break-up of Pakistan, the creation of Bangladesh, India's nuclear test of 1974 and steady accretion of economic and military muscle. The build-up of the Taliban, with CIA help to throw out the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and the sponsoring of terror groups focused on Kashmir gave Pakistan's ambitions extra rope. The spawn of religious radicalisation Pakistan encouraged to create recruits for jihad now attack Pakistan itself.

As Pakistan battles all-round backwardness, religious extremism and social instability, Bangladesh has overtaken Pakistan in per capita income and on almost all indicators of social development. Only China's support to Pakistan, designed to tie India down to South Asia, postpones Pakistan's reckoning with the dead-end of its strategy of defining itself in hostility towards India.

India is perfectly capable of wearing Pakistan down, while putting down its offensive thrusts, including terror modules within India. After the 2008 Mumbai attack, Indian security agencies hunted down and destroyed all domestic terror modules. No, the problem is not that containment is not viable without India getting into a mental lockdown.

The problem is the Hindutva ideology, which wants to redefine Indian nationhood as Hindu and portray all non-Hindus as potential enemies and second class citizens, and a political strategy of creating a sense of insecurity orchestrated by constant cries of external threats and internal treason.

Insecure people look for heroes to save them. A hero has obliged without notable reluctance. The house with the nuclear bunker attached is a manifestation of the spirit of these times, Achhe Din, the good times we had been promised five years ago.

India retains Kashmir only with the barrel of a gun: Dr. Fai

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. “Kashmir, a former princely state under the suzerainty of the British raj, achieved independence on August 15, 1947, when Britain renounced its dominion over the territory. On that date, Kashmir had neither opted for accession to India or to Pakistan, and was under no legal obligation to relinquish its independence. India did not then argue that Kashmir was indispensable for its national or economic security.

Indeed, India championed a resolution in the United Nations Security Council in 1948 mandating a plebiscite in Kashmir conducted by the United Nations to determine its future sovereignty. India reneged on its plebiscite commitment and obligation because it knew that a commanding majority of the people of Kashmir would never vote accession to India,” this was stated by Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Secretary General, Washington-based World Kashmir Awareness Forum at 'Kashmir Roundtable' held at “International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization” of the International Islamic University, Malaysia. The Institute is headed by an internationally known scholar and author, Datu Dr. Osman Bakar. Dr. Fai also spoke at ABIM Global Forum, organized by another internationally known human rights activist and the member of 'Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,' Jeddah, Sheikh Ahmed Azam.

Dr. Fai added that the cause of Kashmir's chilling strife and turbulence is the denial of self-determination. Acceding to self-determination is the answer to Kashmir's agony. That acceptance would also relieve India of the multiple national security and economic adversities spawned by its denial of self-determination. More important, Kashmir self-determination would eliminate the chief cause of India's national security vulnerability.

War with Pakistan would become fanciful. The liberation of Kashmir would not create a cascading dismembering of India. Its legal history is unique. And it speaks volumes that self-determination in East Timor, Eritrea, and Czechoslovakia did not occasion a spiraling disintegration of Indonesia, Ethiopia, or the Czech and Slovak republics.

The nuclear weapons programs of India and Pakistan have heightened mutual tensions and placed the entire South Asian region and the world generally in grave danger of a nuclear winter or otherwise. Experts generally concur that Kashmir is the foremost nuclear hotspot on the planet. But this imperative is stalled on Kashmir, which has been the chief genesis for nuclear proliferation in India and Pakistan. Thus, the United Nations and every nation individually have self-preservation interests in a peaceful and permanent Kashmir settlement that honors human rights and international law.

The people of Kashmir are mindful of the existence in Indian public square of sections of sane and enlightened opinion that deplore the Kashmir policy pursued by their Government and have come to the conclusion that it is causing grave damage to India's reputation and lowered its international standing. Compared to the clamorous bigoted and fundamentalist forces in India, these sections speak only in soft tones, and have yet to influence policymakers.

Kashmiris assure them, nevertheless, that their efforts have deeply gratified them and they hope that they will sustain their campaign which responds equally to genuine patriotism and to human conscience. Indian human rights activist, author and scholar, Arundhati Roy has said it the best on August 22, 2008 that, "Having declared that the militant movement has been crushed, it (India) is now faced with a non-violent mass protests. This one is nourished by people's memory of years of repression in which tens of thousands have been killed, thousands have disappeared, hundreds of thousands tortured, injured and humiliated." The resources of the two countries should be redirected from bombs to books, from submarines to schools, from missiles to medicines, from frigates to food, from runways for bombers to roads for people. This is not starry-eyed thinking. Germany and France once glared at one another with suspicion and large military arsenals for centuries before becoming close allies buoyed by thick economic relations by 1963 through the statesmanship of Adenauer and De Gaulle. No insurmountable obstacle prevents Narendra Modi and Imran Khan from similarly reconciling and boosting prosperity by addressing the root cause of the tensions Kashmir dispute. The people of Kashmir are not asking military intervention from the world powers. Neither are they asking for rugged economic sanctions. They are asking only that the United Nations and the United States exercise its high international bully pulpit to reproach or condemn India for its chilling human rights record in Kashmir as part of a campaign of moral suasion and transparency in the disputed territory. That was an effective instrument of United States policy in ending apartheid in South Africa, and they see no reason to believe it would be less influential in prodding India to end its human rights villainies in Kashmir.

The element that has been missing in efforts toward a settlement is the political representation of Kashmiris. There is no way to provide this on a principled basis except by an election in Kashmir under the control and supervision of the United Nations. This would enable all the different ethnic communities and zones in Kashmir to elect representatives who in turn will appoint a team or teams with the mandate to negotiate a settlement with both India and Pakistan and to manage the transitional phase in the State.

No drastic overhaul of the existing administrative machinery will be required to initiate this phase. But the removal of the military and para-military troops from towns and villages and freedom of movement of State subjects between the two parts will be pre-requisite. Far from seeking to rectify its atrocious human rights record, India has legalized its state-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir. It has given its occupation forces powers to shoot to kill and the license to abuse the people of Kashmir in whatever ways they like in order to suppress the popular movement for self-determination. These tactics have no military purpose whatsoever. Their only imaginable purpose is to terrorize a people into submission.

In such an atrocious atmosphere of trauma, horror and chaos, delusional Indian government officials are vehemently declaring everything is under control. Yet, India has completely lost Kashmir, it retains it

only with the barrel of a gun and that cannot last. Yaswant Sinha, the leader of BJP and former foreign minister of India has emphatically declared “We are losing Jammu and Kashmir”. “We have lost. There is no question of losing. We hold on to Jammu and Kashmir only by dint of the fact that we have our armed forces there,” he added. The Siasat Daily, December 31, 2018.

The solution to the suffering of everyone in Kashmir Muslims and non-Muslims lies in finding a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the crisis. This can only happen if the UN take an active role in facilitating a dialogue between all the parties to the dispute India, Pakistan and Kashmiri leadership. Any attempt to strike a deal between two without the association of the third, will fail to yield a credible settlement. Unmistakably clear by the flimsy arguments that were contrived in the past seven decades.

India's dangerous delusions

By Zamir Akram

During an election rally on April 14, Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that he had called Pakistan's nuclear “bluff” by carrying out air strikes within Pakistan. In his exact words, Modi boasted, “Pakistan has threatened us with nuclear, nuclear, nuclear” and then he asked rhetorically, “Did we deflate their nuclear threat or not?” Of course, Modi's supporters raised chants in an expression of their approval. Perhaps this was merely a case of aggressive electioneering in which Modi has focused on national security as the main theme. But such claims have also been made by several Indian policymakers and defence analysts after the recent Pulwama crisis which demonstrates that there is a wider acceptance for such views. In reality this is a dangerous delusion.

The fact is that the recent Pakistan-India hostilities underscore the continuing prevalence of nuclear deterrence and vindicate Pakistan's strategy of 'Full Spectrum Deterrence'. This is clear from the way the crisis unfolded and eventually concluded without a full-scale war breaking out. The bomb attack by a lone Kashmiri killing over 40 Indian paramilitary troops on the eve of national elections, for which Modi blamed Pakistan, triggered an Indian aerial attack on Pakistani territory. But the Indians were careful to describe the attacks “as pre-emptory non-military strikes”, which did not cause any substantive damage. In fact, they would have bombed more populous areas which would have been a major escalation.

But, since India had crossed a red line, Pakistan was bound to retaliate. While doing so, it, nevertheless, exercised restraint so as not to escalate by causing extensive damage. In these exchanges, two Indian aircraft were shot down, but the captured pilot of one of these planes was soon returned as a goodwill gesture. Bruised by this reversal, India intended to launch missile attacks against six Pakistani targets but Pakistan's declared intention to carry out a response three times larger dissuaded the Indians. By then international efforts to de-escalate the situation also came into effect, leading to the end of the crisis.

Most importantly, at no stage during this crisis, did India activate its so-called “Cold Start” on “Pro-active” doctrine of launching limited conventional strikes “under a nuclear overhang” a doctrine that is already operationalised in terms of military deployments that seek to use Indian numerical superiority in

conventional forces against Pakistan. India demonstrated such 'restraint' because any Indian resort to its Cold Start Doctrine would have been a major step up the escalation ladder, undermining nuclear deterrence and inciting Pakistan's option of enforcing 'Full Spectrum Deterrence'.

Since India did not resort to its Cold Start Doctrine, Pakistan's military response was measured and restrained so as to exercise escalation control and damage limitation. Besides, at no time during the crisis, did Pakistan threaten use of nuclear weapons, since its conventional capabilities were sufficient to deter India. But it seems that the Modi's government has drawn the wrong conclusions from the Pulwama crisis by questioning the basis of credible nuclear deterrence with Pakistan.

They would do themselves a favour by recognising that after the 1998 nuclear tests by both countries that led to credible nuclear deterrence based on mutual assured destruction, there is no space for even a limited conventional war since it can escalate to a nuclear catastrophe. However, because this nuclear deterrence has neutralised India's numerical superiority in conventional weapons, it has tried to restore this advantage through the Cold Start Doctrine, seeking space for conventional war despite nuclear deterrence.

In response to Cold Start, Pakistan formulated its 'Full Spectrum Deterrence' policy, which, according to the National Command Authority statement of September 2013, maintains that "Pakistan would not remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics in South Asia and would maintain a full spectrum deterrence capability to deter all forms of aggression." A former director general of the Strategic Plans Division, General Kidwai, elaborated this further by stating in December 2017 that "Pakistan possesses the full spectrum of nuclear weapons in all the three categories: strategic, operational and tactical, with full range coverage of the large Indian land mass and its outlying territories." While Pakistan maintains deliberate ambiguity about the circumstances that would trigger use of its nuclear weapons, this would obviously commensurate with the level of the Indian aggression.

As a responsible nuclear weapon state, Pakistan obviously did not judge the Pulwama crisis as justification for use of nuclear weapons, since its conventional capabilities were sufficient to deter India. However, it would be a totally different scenario if Pakistan's territorial integrity is threatened or breached by a Cold Start type conventional or nuclear attack. For Modi or any Indian leader to think differently would be a hugely destructive error of judgment. Unfortunately, however, there is an apparent lack of realism among Indian decision-makers. Apart from pursuing space for conventional war despite nuclear deterrence, they have lately begun to question the fact that nuclear weapons are meant to prevent wars and not to fight them.

Several former officials and military experts are now advocating a "disarming pre-emptive nuclear first strike" to destroy Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and the development of Indian ballistic missile defences to counter a Pakistani response by its surviving nuclear weapons. Since Pakistan has already ensured the survivability of its nuclear weapons against a first strike and possesses the capability to penetrate Indian missile defences, such an option is a non-starter to say the least. Indian adventurism has been encouraged and enabled by irresponsible powers, especially the US. Obsessed by the aim of containing China, the US has pandered to Indian ambitions for regional hegemony so as to use India as a counter-

weight to China. Since this also undermines Pakistan's security, the Indo-US nexus threatens strategic stability in South Asia.

Instead of pursuing its dangerous delusions, it would be far better for India to engage with Pakistan to ensure regional strategic stability. Resorting to suicidal warmongering or even scoring cheap electoral gains through misleading their own people about India's "invulnerability" in the nuclear age, is nothing but a fool's errand.

Like America with "Russia gate", India is now obsessed with "Pakistan gate"

By Andrew Korybko

The Indo-American Strategic Partnership has rapidly progressed to such a point that the South Asian state is now copying some of the same conspiracy theories as its new patron, though instead of India being obsessed with suspected Russian interference in its elections like America was, its people can't stop talking about its imaginary Pakistani variant.

Pakistan gate

Pakistani Prime Minister Khan made global headlines earlier this week when he said that it might be easier for his country to clinch peace talks with India and resolve the Kashmir Conflict if Modi wins re-election after his country's month-long electoral process concludes at the end of May. This took many Indians completely off guard who had hitherto been preconditioned by none other than the ruling BJP itself to think that Pakistan was "meddling" in their elections in order to support the opposition Congress party and their coalition allies. The Pakistani leader explained his initially surprising position by rationally noting how it would be less likely that right-wing forces would oppose any BJP-led peace talks unlike the spoiling effect they could have if left-leaning Congress attempted to initiate the same, which makes sense upon further contemplation and is actually a very wise observation.

From - gate to - gate

Instead of being interpreted as such, however, India's "confirmation bias" on all sides caused it to continue cannibalizing itself over the entirely speculative issue of "who Pakistan really supports", with practically all parties refusing to believe that their neighbor is just sitting on the sidelines watching in awe as the Indian political class tears itself apart over this issue and discredits their claim to being the self-professed "world's largest democracy". Interestingly, what's unfolding in India at the moment with Pakistan gate is very similar to what has been taking place in its military-strategic partner over the past couple of years with Russia gate. This suggests that the vassal state is copying some of the same conspiracy theories as its new patron, including the role that elements of its permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies ("deep state") are playing in this process.

"Deep state" meddling

Democratic-friendly elements of the American “deep state” essentially entrapped Carter Page, after which they consequently used this false flag as the pretext for “justifying” a far-reaching FISA surveillance operation against the entire Trump campaign which then sought to exploit its “six degrees of separation” from Russia to concoct a weaponized narrative that ultimately failed to prevent him from winning the election and then later getting him overthrown through a de-facto coup. Something along the same lines happened with the BJP - friendly elements of the Indian “deep state” that “passively facilitated” the Pulwama incident which was later blamed on Pakistan and used as the pretext for “justifying” a so-called “surgical strike” against it that also miserably failed in what it sought out to do, though it nevertheless succeeded in making Indians hysterical about anything to do with Pakistan.

Witch hunts

The BJP has even gone as far as to imply that all dissidents who disagree with its official version of events are treasonous, which is reminiscent of how the then-ruling Democrats suggested that anyone supporting Trump was either under the influence of “Russian propaganda” or a “Russian bot” if they were expressing their views in cyberspace. Just as Russia became a convenient scapegoat for the pro-incumbent elements of the American “deep state” to centralize their power behind the scenes and meddle in their own country's elections, so too has Pakistan been abused to serve the same purpose vis-a-vis the pro-incumbent elements of the Indian “deep state”, with both of their permanent bureaucracies presently in the process of merging their narratives into a geopolitically weaponized one ridiculously alleging that Russia and Pakistan are jointly waging “hybrid wars” across the world.

Concluding thoughts

It therefore shouldn't be surprising that India's “deep state” is copying its American counterpart's Russia gate conspiracy theory and remixing it with a national touch to produce Pakistan gate in pursuit of the exact same purpose of remaining in power, though just like with its inspiration, this might ultimately end up backfiring against its practitioners since it's impossible to control chaotic processes once Pandora's Box has been opened.

In any case and regardless of the eventual electoral outcome, the Indian and American “deep states” will continue to converge into a single unipolar shadow entity dedicated to the shared objective of stopping multipolarity, using the “bonding experience” of their respective manufactured -gate conspiracies to accelerate this ongoing process and ensure that the Indo-American Strategic Partnership is one of the Eastern Hemisphere's most geopolitically disruptive developments this century.

Apologies cannot eclipse Jallianwala Bagh

Will an apology bring the erstwhile British Empire to its knees? It is just symbolic and a footnote in history books

The remembrance of Jallianwala stands for much more than the brutal murder of hundreds. The figures are disputed. The British admit to the death of 379, with 1,100 wounded. The civil surgeon registered 1,526 casualties. Indian sources claim a 1,000 dead. The figures are unimportant, the facts clear. Brigadier Dyer opens fire on a trapped crowd protesting the Rowlatt Act, which imprisoned people without offense or trial. Following the massacre, Tagore returned his knighthood. Future Nobel winner Kipling defended Dyer.

Lt Governor of Punjab Michael O' Dwyer, an imperialist racist, had connived with Dyer. Later, with Lord Chelmsford's approval, O' Dwyer imposed martial law in Amritsar. The House of Lords initially approved, but on July 8, 1920, the House of Commons voted 247-37 against Dyer. The six volume Hunter Commission (1920) condemned Dyer for "error", while the dissenting members stated that the killings went beyond error, totally lacking justification. Eventually, Dyer was relieved of his command, the recommendation for a CBE for the Third Afghan War cancelled. He died in 1927 of jaundice and arteriosclerosis. O' Dwyer was assassinated by Udham Singh in Caxton Hall. He was hanged at Pentonville jail.

Misplaced apology

Somehow, we keep insisting that the British should apologise for this mass murder. The insistence on apology is totally misplaced. Jallianwala Bagh is symptomatic of the actions of the British Empire in all its domains. What do we expect the British to apologise for? Colonial and imperial rule? That they will not do. For them, Jallianwala Bagh was an 'aberration' which would be healed by time. This was certainly the attitude of Queen Elizabeth on October 13, 1997 at a banquet in India, even if she laid a wreath and observed a 30-second silence at Jallianwala itself. It is reported that Prince Philip thought that the death of 379 people did not appeal to the conscience as the demise of 2,000 might have done. In February 2013, British PM David Cameron called the massacre "a deeply shameful event in British history". In 2019, Theresa May apologised. London's mayor Sadiq Khan said in 2017 that the British government should apologise. But the question is whether an apology is an answer to close controversies over Jallianwala Bagh. Prime Minister I.K. Gujral thought it was not necessary for the queen to apologise. Shashi Tharoor thinks it is. Why are we so insistent on an apology? Will it bring the erstwhile British empire to its knees? The very concept of an apology is not to be trifled with. It is just symbolic and a footnote in history books.

Memory should be kept alive

The memories of Jallianwala have to be kept alive, lest apologies eclipse the event. To simply ask for a formal apology is to disgrace memories of an atrocity. It looks as if Indians ask or beg for an apology and British leaders give it. Indeed, Queen Elizabeth's stated view was that there was bad and good, let us forget the bad and move on with the good. As for British politicians, we will never know whether such apologies are only to appease the subcontinent emigrants to Britain, whose vote they seek. The realities of truth will enable us to understand the true weight of apologies and their discontent. As soon as we accept that Jallianwala Bagh was an unfortunate aberration, we support the empire and what it stood

for. The British policy of controlling media and punishment for sedition stalks its history. Recall Napier's message to the queen after the conquest of Sindh: "Peccavi" a pun saying "I have sinned/sindh".

Macaulay's famous Minute spoke colonial condescension to condemn oriental learning and desired create brown Englishmen schooled in English. From 1857 to 1947, the Empire did not ease up. Diversion of food for World War II caused the Bengal famine of 1943. Even before 1919, Dadabhai Naoroji revealed the exploitation of India for British prosperity and William Digby condemned the thought of a "prosperous" British India. Reputedly, by that time, Indians had already made the demand for freedom and against the indignities of the empire. Apology will not redeem the empire. Nor should an opportunity be given to do so.

Not just an Indian issue

Jallianwala Bagh is not just an Indian issue, but also affects the history of the entire sub-continent, if not the world. Historical events are made by continuously stoking memory into consecration. In England, 1066 is a historical event of when their history began. Caesar crossing the Rubicon is treated as a historical event as he brought troops into Rome. 1947 is a historical event for the sub-continent. Jallianwala is a historical event. We must be clear of what it stands for. The British would be quite happy to apologise and consign it to the dustbin of history. For Indians, it must represent all the inequities of the Raj, and colonialism and imperialism throughout the world. No apology is enough to transgress memory. Jallianwala Bagh represents imperial atrocity and genocide across the ages. I am not suborning history, but just consecrating facts for what they represent. Today, the forces of the Sangh (which made little contribution to the freedom movement) want to angle history from a Hindu point of view in ways to support hate for other communities.

That is not my intention here. There is a huge difference between the British Empire exploiting India and rulers from the Aryan onward, who assimilated and remained in India. Pre-British history teaches lessons about how India became a unique multi-cultural civilisation. The coin of history has many sides, but Jallianwala Bagh represents only two: the might and atrocities of the empire on the one side; and vicious exploitation by the British on the other. History must be founded on truth. History will not redeem itself by idle apologies, but by a constructive understanding of the future for all of us. Jallianwala Bagh is not to be forgotten, nor etched out of history by apology.

My views on reviews

By Shafique Ahmed Shafique

Name of book: Aks-e-Shaoor

Author: Mashriq Siddiqi

Publisher: Bisat-e-Adab, Pakistan, A-6,

Adeel Centre, Block 'M', North Nazimabad, Karachi

Pages : 160 | Price : Rs 100

The world famous English writer and critic Huzlet says:

"To know the best in each class infers a higher degree of taste, to reject the class is only a negation of taste, for different classes do not interfere with one another". Any criticism touches to its extreme end without any justification becomes unhealthy and prejudiced. Whatsoever, the judgement requires honesty and sympathy. No justice can be done without sympathy. Sympathy is that very power which convinces a critic to analyze the subject matter open heartedly as well as open mindedly. Instead of preferring personal like and dislike a critic should underline the general requirements of a good literary piece. The above quotation of Huzlet is also stressing to adopt sympathy and balanced attitude towards poets, writers or their works during the analytical study.

The book "Aks-e-Shaoor" is a collection of Mashriq Siddiqi's poetry and ghazals. The study of the book under review opines that Mashriq Siddiqi is a poet of middle level. So I am not going to compare him with Meer, Ghalib, Shaifita and Momin in this write up. Every poet no matter whether he is bigger or smaller to some extent has his own vocabularies, way of thinking, style of expression, study of social landscape, and interest of subjects. The author of Aks-e-Shaoor is a man of more than 55 years age and looks serious about creative activities. To him writing poetry is not a source of amusement. His poetic efforts speak by itself that whatever he writes he means it. He himself opines:

The enlightening is governing on the every leaf of this book

My temperament is also prominent in my every verse. After many days and nights painstaking creative efforts the book "Aks-e-Shaoor" is in your hands today. There are jewels of meanings which tiding over it. This is the first crown along with very many colored vocabularies." Shair (poet) means the person who has consciousness. Whatever a poet writes in the shape of verse is the reflection of his consciousness. The consciousness of a poet comes into being through his social, political and cultural experiences. On the one hand these experiences create consciousness and insight and on the other these things make vision in the artists personalities. The consciousness is an extraordinary awareness of life and its related elements.

According to above views we find awareness, consciousness and vision in the poetic works of Mashriq Siddiqi. His poetic texture is a well compound of romance, social environment, cultural values and political awareness. But there is no sloganism, all these elements have been presented brilliantly and

articulatively with the aesthetic values. There are also some shades of global issues in his poetry which have unbreakable links with human beings' dreams and desires. The poet of "Aks-e-Shaoor" is a man of simplicity. His life is full of struggle and he may be called a self-made man. He is also a good social worker and has pain for the suppressed masses. Though he is not a millionaire and capitalist but in sense of love, politeness and manner he is more richer than these people.

The book containing 89 ghazals, 10 poems one Hamd and one Na'at is a readable collection and has quality to touch the wire of human feelings. In some verses he looks a satiric and in some places he appears with straight forward style. There is a kind of freshness of style as well as imageries, in the poetic works of Mashriq Siddiqi. The book under discussion is an evidence that Mashriq Siddiqi's ghazals are better than his other poems. His articulative efforts have exhibited very well in the said genre. He has proved himself that he knows that very temperament, idioms, metaphors and diction which are not only the basic identity and characteristic of ghazal but also its beauty. There are three writes-up written by prominent writers such as Naushad Noori, Ahmed Ilyas, and Hadi Husain. Naushad's write-up is in shape of letters in which he has given his analytical views on the author's book.

Hadi Husain and Ahmed Ilyas have also given their opinions on Mashriq Siddiqi's poetic ingenuity and aesthetic approach. The multi-coloured title has made the book very attractive.

Muhammad An anticlerical hero of the

European enlightenment

By John Tolan

Publishing the Quran least, was the opinion of the Protestant city councillors of Basel in 1542, when they briefly jailed a local printer for planning to publish a Latin translation of the Muslim holy book. The Protestant reformer Martin Luther intervened to salvage the project: there was no better way to combat the Turk, he wrote, than to expose the 'lies of Muhammad' for all to see.

The resulting publication in 1543 made the Quran available to European intellectuals, most of whom studied it in order to better understand and combat Islam. There were others, however, who used their reading of the Quran to question Christian doctrine. The Catalonian polymath and theologian Michael Servetus found numerous Quranic arguments to employ in his anti-Trinitarian tract, *Christianismi Restitutio* (1553), in which he called Muhammad a true reformer who preached a return to the pure monotheism that Christian theologians had corrupted by inventing the perverse and irrational doctrine of the Trinity.

After publishing these heretical ideas, Servetus was condemned by the Catholic Inquisition in Vienne, and finally burned with his own books in Calvin's Geneva. During the European Enlightenment, a number of authors presented Muhammad in a similar vein, as an anticlerical hero; some saw Islam as a pure form of monotheism close to philosophic Deism and the Quran as a rational paean to the Creator. In

1734, George Sale published a new English translation. In his introduction, he traced the early history of Islam and idealised the Prophet as an iconoclastic, anticlerical reformer who had banished the 'superstitious' beliefs and practices of early Christians the cult of the saints, holy relics and quashed the power of a corrupt and avaricious clergy.

Sale's translation of the Quran was widely read and appreciated in England: for many of his readers, Muhammad had become a symbol of anticlerical republicanism. It was influential outside England too. The US founding father Thomas Jefferson bought a copy from a bookseller in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1765, which helped him conceive of a philosophical deism that surpassed confessional boundaries. (Jefferson's copy, now in the Library of Congress, has been used for the swearing in of Muslim representatives to Congress, starting with Keith Ellison in 2007.) And in Germany, the Romantic Johann Wolfgang von Goethe read a translation of Sale's version, which helped to colour his evolving notion of Muhammad as an inspired poet and archetypal prophet.

In France, Voltaire also cited Sale's translation with admiration: in his world history *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), he portrayed Muhammad as an inspired reformer who abolished superstitious practices and eradicated the power of corrupt clergy. By the end of the century, the English Whig Edward Gibbon (an avid reader of both Sale and Voltaire) presented the Prophet in glowing terms in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89):

The creed of Mahomet is free from suspicion or ambiguity; and the Koran is a glorious testimony to the unity of God. The prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets, on the rational principle that whatever rises must set, that whatever is born must die, that whatever is corruptible must decay and perish.

In the author of the universe, his rational enthusiasm confessed and adored an infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of his own nature, and deriving from himself all moral and intellectual perfection ... A philosophic theist might subscribe the popular creed of the Mahometans: a creed too sublime, perhaps, for our present faculties.

But it was Napoleon Bonaparte who took the Prophet most keenly to heart, styling himself a 'new Muhammad' after reading the French translation of the Quran that Claude-Étienne Savary produced in 1783. Savary wrote his translation in Egypt: there, surrounded by the music of the Arabic language, he sought to render into French the beauty of the Arabic text. Like Sale, Savary wrote a long introduction presenting Muhammad as a 'great' and 'extraordinary' man, a 'genius' on the battlefield, a man who knew how to inspire loyalty among his followers. Napoleon read this translation on the ship that took him to Egypt in 1798.

Inspired by Savary's portrait of the Prophet as a brilliant general and sage lawgiver, Napoleon sought to become a new Muhammad, and hoped that Cairo's ulama (scholars) would accept him and his French soldiers as friends of Islam, come to liberate Egyptians from Ottoman tyranny. He even claimed that his own arrival in Egypt had been announced in the Quran. Napoleon had an idealised, bookish, Enlightenment vision of Islam as pure monotheism: indeed, the failure of his Egyptian expedition owed

partly to his idea of Islam being quite different from the religion of Cairo's ulama. Yet Napoleon was not alone in seeing himself as a new Muhammad: Goethe enthusiastically proclaimed that the emperor was the 'Mahomet der Welt' (Muhammad of the world), and the French author Victor Hugo portrayed him as a 'Mahomet d'occident' (Muhammad of the West).

Napoleon himself, at the end of his life, exiled on Saint Helena and ruminating on his defeat, wrote about Muhammad and defended his legacy as a 'great man who changed the course of history'. Napoleon's Muhammad, conqueror and lawgiver, persuasive and charismatic, resembles Napoleon himself but a Napoleon who was more successful, and certainly never exiled to a cold windswept island in the South Atlantic.

The idea of Muhammad as one of the world's great legislators persisted into the 20th century. Adolph A Weinman, a German-born American sculptor, depicted Muhammad in his 1935 frieze in the main chamber of the US Supreme Court, where the Prophet takes his place among 18 lawgivers. Various European Christians called on their churches to recognise Muhammad's special role as prophet of the Muslims. For Catholics scholars of Islam such as Louis Massignon or Hans Küng, or for the Scottish Protestant scholar of Islam William Montgomery Watt, such recognition was the best way to promote peaceful, constructive dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

This kind of dialogue continues today, but it has been largely drowned out by the din of conflict, as extreme-Right politicians in Europe and elsewhere diabolise Muhammad to justify anti-Muslim policies. The Dutch politician Geert Wilders calls him a terrorist, paedophile and psychopath. The negative image of the Prophet is paradoxically promoted by fundamentalist Muslims who adulate him and reject all historical contextualisation of his life and teachings; meanwhile, violent extremists claim to defend Islam and its Prophet from 'insults' through murder and terror. All the more reason, then, to step back and examine the diverse and often surprising Western portraits of the myriad faces of Muhammad.

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