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Strong earthquake rattles of Azad Kashmir



Pakistan Navy is conducting operational exercise RIBAT-2019



The stability and prosperity of South Asia cannot be separated from the Kashmir issue: Turkish President



India draws up USD 130 billion-worth modernization plan for armed forces



63rd IAEA General Conference Vienna, Austria 16-20 Sep. 2019

PM Imran Khan Minces no words at UN, calls out Modi Govt. for oppression of Kashmiris

## PAKISTAN WILL PROTECT IT'S FREEDOM AT ALL COST



ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE  
SOLIDARITY WITH  
FREEDOM MOVEMENT  
OF INDIAN OCCUPIED  
KASHMIR

یومِ دفاع پاکستان: تحریک آزادی کشمیر کے ساتھ جہتی

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## Editorial

### Pakistan Will Protect Its Freedom At All Cost

Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Imran Khan delivered an unforgettable, very impressive address to UN general assembly on September 27, 2019. MR. Khan's speech was direct, honest and was truly reflective of the feelings of the people of Pakistan. His speech mainly addressed four serious issues. With the Kashmir issue, Mr. Imran Khan summarized Pakistan's relation with India, since, he came into power. He made the difference between his intentions, at the start of his tenure, and till date understanding on Indian mindset very clear. Pakistan's Prime Minister told the world in a direct manner that Pakistan done everything to improve relations with India, but Indian PM Narendra Modi is not interested in having good relations with Pakistan as Modi is a follower of RSS ideology. This ideology believes that Hindus are Aryans making them superior to all other races and it believes in cleansing India of all minorities. This ideology is much similar to that followed by Hitler and by that reasoning it is an extremist ideology. PM Imran made it clear that despite of Pakistan's best efforts to improve relations with India, Modi regime looks to blame Pakistan for the reactions of its Modi's extreme policies. While highlighting Pakistan's serious efforts to improve relations while India's maintenance of an extremist stance, PM Imran Khan had a tone of finality in his words highlights that 'enough is enough'. PM Imran Khan stressed to the world that 11 UN Security Council resolutions were violated when India abolished Indian occupied Kashmir's (IoK) special status in August 2019. He clearly informed the world that their inaction on the Kashmir issue has brought two nuclear powers to the brink of war. He clearly highlighted with examples that the matter of Pulwama and any other incident that way follow India's curfew of Kashmir would be a result of the tyranny of Indian army and Pakistan cannot be held responsible on the matter. He clarified that in order to avoid a global catastrophe the world leaders need to ensure that India lifts the curfew in Kashmir and that Kashmir is given the right to self-determination.

A clear warning was issued by PM Imran Khan stating that a conventional war between India and Pakistan will most certainly end in a nuclear war highlighting Pakistan's willingness to take whatever steps necessary. Second important issue addressed PM Imran Khan was of islamophobia and in doing so he became the voice of 1.3 billion Muslims in the world. He clearly stated that in the West something as simple as hijab is viewed as a weapon. In the West a woman is free to take off clothes but not to put them on. PM Imran Khan clearly highlighted that Islamophobia has increased drastically post 9/11 and the Western countries have done nothing but promote it further. Terms like radical Islam and Islamic terrorism have contributed to increase Islamophobia and it is due the use of these terms people fail to understand that there is no extremist side to Islam. In fact it is a religion of peace. Another important aspect of PM Imran Khan's address at UNGA was his brutally honest statements about how rich countries are leeching off poor countries expanding the gap between the rich and the poor. He highlighted the loopholes which are used to exploit poor countries. While questioning the existence of tax havens and how corrupt individuals are allowed to invest the fruits of their corruption in developed countries, Mr. Imran Khan boldly emphasized the need to correct these loopholes and countries like Pakistan to reclaim their looted wealth. The issue of global climate change is another crucial issue for Pakistan which PM Imran Khan highlighted in front of UNGA. While emphasizing that Pakistan is in the list of top 10 countries to be seriously affected by climate, his criticism of global powers for lack of serious initiatives in this regard echoed the hall. PM Imran Khan's address was significant in many ways particularly because of the honesty with which he presented Pakistan's case in support of Kashmir and the sincerity with which he represented the Muslims of the world. Another interesting fact highlighted due to PM Imran Khan's speech is the ineffectiveness and complete failure of UNO.

## Summarized News & Articles

### **26 dead, over 300 injured as strong earthquake rattles Azad Kashmir, other parts of Pakistan**

(Tuesday 24 -09-2019) At least 19 persons were killed and more than three hundred injured as 5.8 magnitude earthquake rattled Azad Kashmir and other parts of Pakistan. The death toll was confirmed by Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Azad Kashmir Sardar Gulfaraz.

Several houses, shops and buildings collapsed in different parts of Azad Kashmir, whereas, images obtained from the affected areas show massive cracks on roads. Rescue teams have rushed to the spot and emergency has been declared at all the hospitals. Meanwhile, mobile service has also been affected in the area. Meteorological Department said that according to its preliminary assessment, the epicentre of the 5.8-magnitude quake was located near the mountainous city of Jehlum in the Punjab province.

"The quake was 10 kilometres deep and was felt in most of Punjab province, some parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The worst hit was Mirpur, Azad Kashmir," Chief meteorologist Muhammad Riaz told.

In other parts of the country, tremors were felt in Sheikhpura, Hafizabad, Chiniot, Jalalpur, Bajaur, Mirpur, Zafarwal, Skardu, Manga Mandi, Kohat, Charsadda, Kamoke, Kasur, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Daska, Gujrat, Sialkot, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Chitral, Malakand, Multan, Shangla, Okara, Nowshera, Attock, Jhang and adjoining areas.

The tremors were also felt Daska, Faisalabad, Chiniot, Mansehra, Batagram, Torghar, Mirpur (Azad Kashmir) Bhimber, Jhelum, and Mandi Bahauddin.

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### **Pakistan Navy is conducting Operational Exercise RIBAT-2019**

Pakistan Navy Conducts Live Missile Firings In North Arabian Sea to review operational preparedness

Islamabad (27th September, 2019) Pakistan Navy is conducting Operational Exercise RIBAT-2019 to review operational preparedness of Pakistan Navy. To consolidate Fleet Fire Power, successful live missile firings were also held from surface and air platforms during the exercise, affirming the impressive war fighting capabilities of Pakistan Navy.

The exercise is aimed at validating various operational concepts and tactical war fighting procedures including joint operations involving all Pakistan Navy's Field Commands as well as Pakistan Air Force. During the Exercise RIBAT, Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force units are participating in maritime operations in various domains under complex grey hybrid warfare environment.

Concurrently, Pakistan Marines and Special Operation Forces (SOFs) are also rehearsing special operations including Coastal Defence, Air Defence and Maritime Interdiction Operations etc.

The exercise displays Pakistan Navy's intent to maintain highest state of readiness and combat potential to ensure seaward defence and protection of maritime interests of Pakistan during peace and war.

Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi witnessed the missiles firings and expressed his utmost satisfaction on the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy.

He also reaffirmed the resolve that Pakistan Navy is ready to defend its sea frontiers and would give a befitting response to any misadventure by the adversary.

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### **Veteran Pakistani actor Abid Ali passes away**

KARACHI: Veteran Pakistani television actor, director and producer, Abid Ali passed away on Thursday 5th Sep. 2019. He was 67. Abid Ali had been ailing from a liver disease for a long time, and was being treated at a private hospital in Karachi.

Born Abid Sher Ali in 1952 in Quetta, he worked as an actor, director, and producer, acting in several TV and film productions.

After working at Radio Pakistan, Abid Ali launched a successful career as an actor with the PTV drama Jhok Sial in 1973. But he was perhaps best known for his role as Dilawar Khan in Waris, the classic 1979 PTV drama serial.

He was the director and producer of Dasht, a 1993 hit drama in which he also played the role of Shams Shah.

Abid Ali is the recipient of the prestigious Pride of Performance. He has three daughters, including renowned model and actress Iman Aly and singer Rahma Ali.

His daughter, Rahma, also later confirmed her father's death in a message posted on her Instagram account.

Several people from all walks of life paid their respects to the legendary actor on social media.

---

### **Former cricketer Abdul Qadir passes away at 63**

LAHORE (Friday 6th Sep. 2019) Former leg-spinner Abdul Qadir passed away at age of 63 after suffering a cardiac arrest in Lahore. According to family sources, Abdul Qadir was taken to hospital immediately after suffering a heart attack where doctors declared him dead and informed that he left this world even before reaching the hospital. "My father never had a heart problem so it was sudden and shocking that he suffered a severe attack and could not survive," Salman Qadir expressed.

Abdul Qadir has served in several positions including chief selector at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) as well as a commentator. He played 67 Tests taking 236 wickets and 104 One Day Internationals (ODIs) where he bagged 132 wickets representing the national team. He started his career with a Test match against England in Lahore on December 14, 1977, and played his last Test against West Indies in Lahore on December 6, 1990. He played the first ODI against New Zealand in Birmingham on June 11, 1983 while playing his last ODI against Sri Lanka in Sharjah on November 2, 1993.

Qadir's unique dancing action was as attractive as it was destructive, spinning the ball prodigiously and had a lethal googly and a flipper.

Former Pakistan captains Wasim Akram, Moin Khan, Rashid Latif and Waqar Younis led the condolence messages, saying Qadir's death was "a great loss of Pakistan cricket".

Many important figures expressed grief on the death of one of the greatest player ever to play the game.

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## **Salahuddin Ayubi: Murder by the State?**

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 | Source : SUNDAY

It's been one year since we are in the declared 'Naya Pakistan', and so I ask, where are the promises of a changed Punjab police? Have they all gone down the drain? This responsibility is solely under the Chief Minister of Punjab, Usman Buzdar Khan. As there is no Home Minister in Punjab, all the power, therein, lies with him.

What we saw on 4th Sep 2019, should be deemed a failure of our society. The way the Punjab police brutally tortured and eventually murdered alleged ATM robber, Salahuddin Ayubi, is a sheer violation of human rights. The mute suspect was reprimanded in Rahim Yar Khan after authorities recognised him from a video that went viral of him sticking his tongue out in front of CCTV security cameras in an ATM vestibule. In similar fashion, a video of the suspect being tortured and being forced to take his tongue out on camera while he is being mercilessly beaten up took the internet by storm. Merely a day after his arrest, the news of his death went public sparking a series of investigations of the police force. If this was Britain, we would have seen the streets of London full of protesters because they have humanity embedded in their values and norms. Salahuddin's murder is a display of how cruel and unjust we are as a society. We don't have efficient regulations or records of people with learning disabilities, nor do we have the expertise in the police force who could have judged, by his behavior, that his actions were not intentional. We need to be on one page and we need to discipline ourselves to accept this change alongside establishing merit recruitment. Only then will our police force be like the modern economies.

The idea of a regulatory society should be promoted, which simply means regulation as 'decentred from the state' diffused through society. Uncertainties arise from unpredictability, structural uncertainty and value uncertainty. We need to provide a considerable degree of freedom for experts and policy makers as well as introduce the concept of dialogue between them only then can human rights violations can be avoided.

It's never too late with sheer determination and purpose, the change we need in our police force is possible. Passion strives excellence and success, and that is the only hope left if this land of the pure. UNHCR's Article 1 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." And so, I would appeal to the honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan to take suo moto action on this case, so that those responsible shall be tried according to the law. ( Written by Ibrahim Tariq Shafi)

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### **Brief News International**

#### **The stability and prosperity of South Asia cannot be separated from the Kashmir issue: Turkish President Erdogan**

Dr. Fai : (United Nations, New York. September 24, 2019.)

"The people of Kashmir were heartened by President Tayyip Erdogan's intervention during the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly when he said, "The stability and prosperity of South Asia cannot be separated from the Kashmir issue." This is the most practical, viable and sensible statement put forth by the President of Turkey," said Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Secretary General, 'World Kashmir Awareness Forum.'

President Erdogan reminded the world leaders "Despite the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council, Kashmir is still besieged and 8 million people are still stuck in Kashmir," "They (Kashmiri people) cannot get out," of their houses.

Who will disagree with the vision of President Erdogan when he suggested to the world body? "In order for the Kashmiri people to look forward to a safe future with their Pakistani and Indian neighbours, it is imperative to solve this problem through dialogue on the basis of justice, and equality instead of conflict."

Fai suggested that the world powers have two choices before them. One is to continue confining themselves to warning both Pakistan and India against going to war with each other. This policy bases the no-war prospect in South Asia on a very precarious foundation. The prospect of a nuclear exchange in that vast Subcontinent cannot be dismissed in the event of hostilities breaking out between the two countries.

The second option is to play a more activist, mediatory role in regard to Kashmir as suggested by President Erdogan. This can take the shape of a multilateral dialogue or an appropriate use of the newly-developed procedures and mechanisms at the United Nations. The U.N. would supply the catalyst that is needed for a settlement. And UN should besides appointing a special envoy on Kashmir, a person of an international standing, like President Mary Robinson of Ireland; should persuade both India and Pakistan to initiate a peace process with which all parties are involved India, Pakistan, Kashmiri leadership and the United nations. (Dr. Fai is the Secretary general of the World Kashmir Awareness Forum.)

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### **Turkey's Erdogan refuses UN dinner over presence of Egypt's Sisi**

(September 27, 2019) Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rejected an offer to join a dinner with the US President Donald Trump upon seeing the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi accompanying him, local Daily Hurriyet reported yesterday.

Erdogan was expected to join Trump for dinner at the same table after the opening of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York. However, he was reported to have refused to sit at the table "after walking into the room and seeing Trump was joined by Sisi."

"President Erdogan left the room when he saw Sisi sitting at the same table with Trump," the local agency said on Twitter.

The dinner table was said to have also included UN Secretary-General António Guterres, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the Polish President Andrzej Duda. Erdogan has been an outspoken critic of Sisi's rule since he seized power from the country's first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, in a 2013 coup. He recently urged the UN to launch an official investigation into Morsi's recent death in prison.

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### **Israel calls on citizens not to travel to Egypt, Jordan and Turkey**

Israel's Counter-Terrorism Bureau yesterday warned Israeli citizens against travelling to Turkey, Jordan and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula during the October Jewish holiday season. KAN reported that the national bureau had called on Israeli tourists not to travel to the neighbouring countries, "including Iran during the Jewish New Year holiday."

The warnings came “in anticipation of military operations against Israeli tourists by Iran or Hezbollah of Iran or Hezbollah.”

Although there has been no official warning against travelling to Europe, the Israeli government recently warned its citizens to “stay vigilant” in any touristic and crowded places, cultural centres, and markets across Europe.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

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### **Saudi oil facility attacks loud explosions erupted at Khurais oilfield and Abqaiq processing facility**

Saturday's drone attacks severely disrupted global energy infrastructure and sent oil price soaring

At 3.31am and 3.42am on Saturday 21 Sep. 2019, loud explosions erupted at Khurais oilfield and Abqaiq processing facility, both owned by Saudi Aramco, the country's state-owned oil company, often described as the kingdom's crown jewel.

Abqaiq is the world's largest oil processing facility, where about two-thirds of the total Saudi supply is refined and cleaned of impurities such as sulphur and sand. “This is the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure,” said Homayoun Falakshahi, an oil and gas equity analyst at Kpler, a Paris-based energy data firm.

A facility of such importance was supposed to be insulated from the wider instability of the Middle East. “Because of its importance it is very well protected, under extremely high security measures,” Falakshahi said.

The fact that it can be severely disrupted is a sign that the world's energy infrastructure is more vulnerable than previously believed, and considered a legitimate target.

The Khurais field and processing plant resumed 30% of production within 24 hours of the strike and will produce 1.2 million barrels a day by the end of September, Fahad Al Abdulkareem, general manager for Aramco's southern area oil operations, said at a briefing on Friday. Workers are there 24 hours a day to speed the repairs, but the site showed significant damage.

The Khurais field has a maximum output capacity of 1.45 million barrels a day and processes all of its oil on site, according to Al Abdulkareem. The assault affected four of its crude-stabilization units -- 90-meter (300-foot) towers that reduce pressure and remove gas from the crude. One of the columns shown to reporters was a charred wreck, and at least one other was even more badly damaged, he said.

Aramco also showed reporters pipes that had been pierced by fragments from the missiles, causing them to spew oil, feeding the fires. Workers were busy replacing segments of piping and insulation at the facilities, and conducting tests on the damaged crude-stabilization columns.

The world's biggest crude exporter has vowed a swift restoration of output at Khurais and Abqaiq after the attack by drones and missiles disabled 5% of global supply. There's concern in the market about how long it will take the kingdom to fully restore lost production as it depletes inventories to meet supply commitments and operates without its usual buffer of spare capacity.

The pre-dawn attacks on Saturday knocked out more than half of crude output from the world's top exporter - five percent of the global oil supply - and cut output by 5.7 million barrels per day.

Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have been locked in a war with a Saudi-UAE-led coalition since 2015, claimed responsibility for the attacks, warning Saudi Arabia that their targets "will keep expanding".

But US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo swiftly accused Iran of being behind the assault, without providing any evidence. The claim was rejected by Tehran which said the allegations were meant to justify actions against it.

Iran FM Zarif rejects US accusations as 'distraction'

Iran dismissed US accusations over weekend attacks of Saudi Arabia's oil sites as a distraction from the realities in the Middle East, Iran's Students News Agency ISNA quoted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif . "The United States should seek to look at the realities in the region, rather than simply using distractions. We feel that the US government is trying to somehow forget the realities in the region," Zarif said.

Irani Defence minister denies Iran played any role in attack

Iran's defence minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said Tehran had no involvement in the attacks on the Aramco oil installations, according to the semi-official Tasnim news agency. "Rejecting comments about Iran's role in the operation, [Hatami] said the issue is very clear: There has been a conflict between two countries [Yemen and Saudi Arabia]." Tasnim said.

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### **Afghan president survives Taliban attack at election rally**

(17-9-2019) Two separate suicide attacks in Afghanistan have killed at least 48 people and injured dozens others.

In Parwan province, north of the capital Kabul, an election rally where President Ashraf Ghani was due to speak was attacked, and 26 people died.

Another blast, near the US embassy in central Kabul, killed 22 people.

The Taliban said they were behind both attacks. The group has continued a concerted bombing campaign while at the same time taking part in peace talks. But US President Donald Trump described the negotiations with the Taliban as "dead" earlier this month.

The Taliban refuse to talk to the Afghan government and have vowed to disrupt the presidential election in the country on 28 September. In a statement, they said: "We already warned people not to attend election rallies, if they suffer any losses that is their own responsibility."

The Taliban, which have threatened to attack and disrupt the election later this month, said that suicide bombers had conducted both strikes.

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### **Trump says Osama Bin Laden's son was killed in US operation**

(14 Sep, 2019) US Prsident Donald Trump has confirmed that the son of Osama Bin Laden, Hamza, was killed in a US "counterterrorism operation." The death of Bin Laden's possible successor was reported earlier this year.

“Hamza Bin Laden, the high-ranking Al-Qaeda member and son of Osama Bin Laden, was killed in a United States counterterrorism operation in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region,” said a statement from Trump's office sent to journalists on Saturday.

The death of Hamza has deprived Al-Qaeda of his “important leadership skills and the symbolic connection to his father.” Within Al-Qaeda, Bin Laden's son was “responsible for planning and dealing with various terrorist groups,” it added.

Hamza Bin Laden's death in an airstrike was first reported late in July. Back then, Trump said that the man was “very threatening” to the US, but declined to provide any further details. With the official confirmation of Hamza's death, however, it still remains unclear when and where the US operation took place exactly.

Hamza made his last known public statement through an Al-Qaeda propaganda mouthpiece in 2018, threatening Saudi Arabia with terrorist attacks and calling for the Saudi monarchy to be overthrown. Son of the 9/11 attacks mastermind, born around 1989 in Jeddah, has long been wanted by the FBI, which offered up to \$1 million for information on his whereabouts.

Human rights activists angry with Gates Foundation award to 'Butcher of Gujarat' Modi

Activists have started a petition calling for the Foundation to take back Modi's award because of his human rights record

New Delhi(8th September, 2019) Human rights activists, lawyers and politicians have stirred a controversy by opposing the announcement of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. They have labelled him the “butcher of Gujarat” and “Hitler of the East”.

Union Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Jitendra Singh, announced the award. An opinion piece in The Washington Post titled 'The Gates Foundation shouldn't give an award to Narendra Modi' accused the leader of the “Hindu nationalist party” for inciting violence against minorities and curtailing the freedom of expression.

The article, written by lawyers Suchitra Vijayan and Arjun Singh Sethi, said: “In light of Modi's record, including promoting repressive policies in the past month in Kashmir and the northeastern state of Assam, he should not be given the award.

“The Gates Foundation claims on its homepage that 'All lives have equal value'. Giving the award to Modi would betray that promise and everyone who has suffered under his rule.”

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### **India will eventually take control of Pakistan Kashmir, Indian FM predicts**

(17 Sep, 2019) India's foreign minister says he expects Pakistan-controlled Kashmir to one day become Indian territory, fanning the flames of an escalating territorial dispute between the two nuclear rivals. The region of Kashmir currently administered by Pakistan “is part of India and we expect one day that we will have physical jurisdiction over it,” Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told a news conference. He added that India faces a “unique challenge” from Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of “openly” using terrorism as part of its foreign policy. His inflammatory statements come a day after a chief minister in the Indian state of Gujarat warned Pakistan that New Delhi was ready to take back Kashmir in order to “reunite” India.

Islamabad “should be ready to lose Pakistani-occupied Kashmir,” Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani was quoted as saying by local media, using the Indian term for the disputed territory.

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## **In 'last-minute' decision, Trump to now share stage with Modi in Houston gala**

By NAYANIMA BASU | 15 September, 2019

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Houston in Texas on 22 September, during the very first leg of Modi's visit, sources have told ThePrint. Prime Minister Modi, who will be leaving for the US on 20 September, will not just address the Indian diaspora there as part of a mega event in Houston called 'Howdy! Modi' but will also call on top American CEOs of the energy sector in Texas. Trump is likely to attend even that with the Prime Minister, according to sources.

This comes as a “last-minute decision” by Trump as both leaders will be meeting again at the UN General Assembly meet later that week in New York, sources said. Apart from showing off to world that he has “got Trump's back” on Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, Modi will also be granting a platform to the US president to appeal to over 5,00,000 members of the Indian diaspora ahead of what is expected to be a tightly-contested US Presidential election in 2020, said another source.

### India to look to end trade standoff

At the separate bilateral meeting in New York on 25 September, India is expected to hand over a “lucrative” trade deal to Washington in an effort to end the rising trade tensions between the two countries. Under the much-awaited trade package, India is expected to lower import duty on high-end automobiles, mobile phones and other high-end telecom products. New Delhi is also expected to relax norms that will allow easy entry of US agricultural products and medical devices into the Indian market. India has become a major importer of energy from America and it seeks to enhance that aspect of the relationship even further by allowing US energy firms to invest here. The Trump administration is so upset with India on the trade front that it has not convened a meeting of the annual US-India Trade Policy Forum since 2017. It was last held in Washington in October 2017.

### Major defence deals in the offing

During the visit, Modi is also expected to give his nod for defence deals worth \$10-12 billion with the US as India remains Washington's 'Major Defence Partner'. India has plans to buy multi-role helicopters, air missile systems, drones and more Apache attack helicopters from the US.

The latest deal being finalised by India under the foreign military sales programme of the US is the acquisition of 10 more Poseidon-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft for over \$3 billion. Earlier this month, eight Apache AH-64E (I) helicopters were inducted into the IAF at the Pathankot frontline airbase near the India-Pakistan border.

While the leaders may agree to these deals in-principle during Modi's trip, they will be signed during the upcoming 2+2 talks that will take place later this year when the defence and foreign ministers of both sides meet. Trump and Modi had last met in August on the sidelines of the G-7 meet in Biarritz, France, where India was able to silence America on its intentions to “mediate” the Kashmir dispute. New Delhi had then offered to expand trade and business ties that would help Trump to “Make America Great Again”.

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### **India deploys warships to keep tabs on Pakistan's naval exercise**

(Friday 27th Sep. 2019) India has “forward deployed” some warships, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft and fighter jets to keep track of a major naval exercise by Pakistan in the north Arabian Sea, which will include missile and rocket firings as well as combat manoeuvres over the next few days. Defence establishment sources on Wednesday said “close tabs” are being kept on the unfolding Pakistani exercise, with the Indian armed forces also being kept operationally ready “to prevent any misadventure”. “There is a heightened threat perception about strikes, whether by state or non-state actors, after India revoked J&K's special status. Even if the Pakistani exercise is a regular one, intentions can change very quickly,” said a source. Pakistan has issued a maritime alert for commercial shipping in the north Arabian Sea that it will be conducting “live” missile, rocket and gun firings between September 25 and 29. The entire exercise will be tracked, both in terms of “operational capabilities and any deviations from the routine”, by “several assets” of the Indian Navy and IAF, said sources. The Navy is also using its Poseidon-81 patrol aircraft for long-range maritime reconnaissance over the exercise area. “There are at least seven to eight Pakistani warships there,” said a source. The Indian armed forces have been maintaining high operational readiness ever since the IAF conducted the air strikes against the Jaish-e-Mohammed training facility at Balakot in Pakistan on February 26. (Source: Times of India)

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### **India draws up USD 130 billion-worth modernization plan for armed forces**

New Delhi: India has finalised a road map to spend USD 130 billion in the next five to seven years to modernise the armed forces and bolster their combat capabilities over rivals in the region, according to an official document and military sources. The plan includes procurement of a range of weapons, missiles, air defence systems, fighter jets, submarines and warships, drones, surveillance equipment and developing infrastructure for extensive use of artificial intelligence, official sources said.

While India's spending has remained relatively constant in the last 10-15 years compared to its GDP, China's has significantly ramped up defence budget during the period.

“The government will spend USD 130 billion for fleet modernisation in the next 5-7 years across all armed forces,” the official document stated. Multiple military sources said the government's aim is to invest in capabilities so that the armed forces can effectively deal with any possible threat from either China or Pakistan.

Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced clearing a long-pending proposal to establish the post of chief of defence staff (CDS) for boosting coordination among the Army, the Indian Air Force and the Navy.

The sources said the CDS will play a key role in implementing the modernisation drive in the three forces. The sources said establishing India as a military power in the outer space will be another key aspect of the plan. The government's immediate priority is to fast-track pending proposals including procuring 2,600 infantry combat vehicles, 1,700 future ready combat vehicles for the Indian Army and paving way for supplying 110 multirole fighter aircraft to the Indian Air Force, they said.

“Infantry modernisation is a key focus area,” said a source.

Sources said government is aware of China significantly ramping up its air and naval powers, adding the aim is to equip both the the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy with capabilities on par with its adversaries. To bolster its

operational capability, the Navy has already finalised a plan to have 200 ships, 500 aircraft and 24 attack submarines in the next 3-4 years. At present, the Navy has around 132 ships, 220 aircraft and 15 submarines.

The sources said the government is also determined to significantly enhance IAF's overall combat capabilities and a detailed plan is being finalised. The government is also working on a mega defence project to make the airspace over almost all its major cities, including Delhi and Mumbai, virtually impregnable, the sources said.

It is also inducting the first batch of its intercontinental ballistic missile system Agni V which is expected to significantly bolster the country's air defence system. The missile, with a strike range of 5,000 km, is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Very few countries, including the US, China, Russia, France and North Korea, have intercontinental ballistic missiles. In its missile armoury, India currently has Agni-1 with a 700 km range, Agni-2 with a 2,000-km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500-km range. The sources said the government's focus will be to develop the domestic defence industry and key policy initiatives are expected to be rolled out for it in the next couple of months.

(Source: India Today)

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### **IAF gets its first Apache helicopters, army aviation stakes its claim**

By Ajai Shukla | Business Standard, 03 Sept 19

Providing the Indian armed forces with a badly needed firepower boost, The Boeing Company formally handed over eight Apache AH-64E armed attack helicopters to the Indian Air Force (IAF) at Pathankot on Tuesday.

These are the first of 22 Apaches that will equip two IAF attack helicopter squadrons that have, so far, flown Russian-origin Mi-25 and Mi-35 attack helicopters. The first to fly the Apache will be Pathankot-based 125 Helicopter Unit, named "Gladiators". Next up for the Apache will be 104 Helicopter Unit, based in Suratgarh, Rajasthan.

Both these Apache units are scheduled to be fully equipped and operational by end-2020. "I am happy to note that the delivery schedule is on time with eight helicopters already being delivered," said IAF chief, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa, at the handing-over ceremony in Pathankot.

The Apache, especially its latest, and most advanced, variant called the AH-64E, is widely respected as the world's most formidable attack helicopter. Sixteen countries have bought more than 2,000 Apaches since the initial variant entered service in the early 1980s. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government initiated the procurement of 22 Apaches, while the current government signed the \$1.4 billion contract in September 2015.

The Apache is primarily designed to provide fire support to ground forces, including to infantrymen who can manpack only limited weaponry, especially in the mountains; and to mechanised units that have pinned down enemy tanks frontally, setting the stage for Apaches to fly in from the flanks, hidden by tree lines or sand dunes, and set enemy tanks ablaze with missiles and rockets.

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### **No Apple Store nearby? Computer hardware STOLEN from India's first indigenous aircraft carrier**

Theft in INS Vikrant in Cochin shipyard triggers fears of security breach

(18 Sep, 2019) When it comes to computer heists, you might expect criminals to target their local electronics store. But in India, an enterprising thief (or group of crooks) managed to swipe hardware from... an aircraft carrier.

Police are currently probing the theft of a hard disk, random access memory (RAM) and processor from four computers recently installed in an Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC). The warship, the first of its kind, is currently under construction at a shipyard in Kochi, India.

There are CCTV cameras outside the ship construction area, but none inside the ship which may make finding the culprits a difficult task, according to police officials who spoke to local media.

Authorities learned of the theft over the weekend, after initial trials of the ship's electronics failed. It was initially presumed that there were problems with the wiring, when in fact the vessel's computers had been rendered inoperable by the heist.

According to reports emanating from the CSL, four hard disks, random access memory cards and a processor were stolen after dismantling four computers which were installed in the ship. The shipyard authorities have no idea when the incident took place but it was noticed on Sunday. Officials said there were no camera inside the ship as the work was going on.

The Indian Navy has downplayed the incident, saying that the stolen hardware was of no military significance. Even if no military secrets were stolen, the theft could delay the carrier's completion. The warship is expected to enter service sometime between 2020 and 2022.

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### **Afghanistan's Presidential Election 28 September 2019**

Afghanistan presidential vote shows low turnout after technical glitches & violence in wake of US-Taliban talks collapse

Preliminary results are not expected before October 17 and final results not until November 7. If no candidate gets 51 percent of the vote, a second round will be held between the two leading candidates

Population : 35 Million | Registered Voters: 9.6 Million

Voting Age : 18 Years | Security Personnel: 72,000

Poll Officials: 110,000 | Polling Centers: 5,373

Polls close: Polls have closed in Afghanistan's presidential election, the fourth since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Incumbent President Ashraf Ghani is seen as the frontrunner in the 14-man race, with Abdullah Abdullah, the country's chief executive, considered his main rival. Security forces are on high alert due to threats from the Taliban to attack polling stations.

Voter turnout was low in certain parts of Afghanistan amid lingering concerns over security threats and logistical challenges. "In the city of Jalalabad [the capital of Nangarhar provincial], the turnout was low in the morning, until

at least 10am. In the districts there are also fewer people than in previous elections," Nabiullah Baz, a member of parliament from the district of Chapliyar, told Al Jazeera.

Voters complained that lists were incomplete or missing and biometric identification machines intended to reduce fraud were not working properly or people were not adequately trained on how to use them. "I couldn't vote because the voting sticker I have on my ID is not registered in the polling station I went to. This happened to so many different people. This sticker was put on my ID in Abdul Shukoor Reshad High School by the election commission themselves."

Voters across Afghanistan cast their ballots

Election extended by two hours : The Independent Election Commission extended voting by two hours, with polls now set to close at 5pm (12:30 GMT). "They were due to be closed by now but they happen to be open for further two hours - it does seem as though it is giving people in other parts of Afghanistan a chance to vote if they have not already voted."

No contact with hundreds of polling centres : Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) said it had lost contact with 901 of the country's 5,373 polling centres. Habib-Ur-Rahman Nang, head of the IEC secretariat, said the commission was not able to communicate with polling centres in the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan, where telecom services were not active, local media TOLO News reported. In addition, 464 polling centers in 17 provinces were closed, including 33 centres which lacked election materials, election commissioner Mawlana Mohammad Abdullah said.

'In and out very quickly': Mustafa Azizi a voter said he did not face any problems voting at a school at Chelsetoon, in west Kabul. "Everything was orderly, I was in and out very quickly," he said.

Problems reported with biometric devices : Dozens of people were turned away or had to wait for hours to vote at Kandahar's Sayeed Jamaluddin High School due to problems with two biometric devices, according to reports. Some 600 people were registered at this centre. Similar issues were reported in Kunar province.

Afghan president hails landmark polls : Ghani cast his ballot in Kabul, hailing the election as a sign of strengthening democracy in Afghanistan. "It is a moment of pride for me that a major part of the election expenses have been paid by the Afghan government," he said.

Security tops voters' concerns: In the lead-up to the vote, the precarious security situation and the struggling economy seemed to be dominating voters' concerns. "In Afghanistan, from the moment you wake up to when you put your head down to sleep, you are in danger," Kabul resident Farooq Saidzada said.

Blast at Kandahar polling station wounds 15 : At least 17 people were wounded when a bomb exploded outside a polling station in the southern city of Kandahar, a hospital official said, hours after the polls opened. Naimatullah, the head of a regional hospital who only has one name, told AFP news agency that "15 people - all men - were injured and were brought to the hospital".  
(Source: Al Jazeera)

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### **'Large increase in anti-Bosnian, anti-Muslim bigotry'**

Serb and Croat politicians are increasingly using Islamophobic rhetoric with aim of dividing Bosnia, says new report.

Islamophobic rhetoric at the political level, which at its peak in the 1990s Bosnian War played a significant role in the massacre of thousands of Bosniak Muslims, is once again being used by Serbian and Croatian politicians - including those of Bosnian background - with dangerous aims, according to a new report. During the 1992 -1995 conflict, divisive and dehumanising language was used with the hope of splitting the country into "Greater Croatia" and "Greater Serbia".

According to the European Islamophobia Report 2018, which was published by the Ankara-based Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research think tank on Friday, politicians and some sections of the media are today attempting to falsely present Bosnia as a "radical Muslim haven" in order to undermine the country - again with the aim of dividing it territorially. "In 2018, Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb leader and newly elected Serb member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency, dehumanised Bosniak Muslims by referring to adhan (call to prayer) as 'howling' on a show on public Serbian television," wrote Hikmet Karcic, a researcher at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks who authored the report's section on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"In addition, the year 2018 saw a large increase in anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim bigotry by the Bosnian Croat and Croatian political establishments and also by regional political actors. These actors continue to present Bosnia and Herzegovina as a failed state which is harbouring extremists and which needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security."

Thirty-nine scholars and experts contributed to the EU-funded report, the fourth edition, which studies 34 countries. Abdussamed Podojak, 24, from Sarajevo told Al Jazeera that the rhetoric was being used to score political points.

"The consequences have already been deadly and can get even worse. "Because of all these [Islamophobic] statements and opinions [by politicians], I know a lot of people who don't feel safe to go to another part of our country, which is absurd ... the rhetoric promoting Islamophobia is more than a catastrophe."

Since the end of the war, from 1996 to 2017, an estimated 13 Bosniak returnees were killed and 20 were injured in hate crimes in Republika Srpska, according to the report. None of these murders have seen anyone prosecuted.

Source: Al Jazeera)

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### **Yemen's Houthis claim 'Senior Saudi Officers' among captured or killed in major operation near Najran**

(28 Sep, 2019) Houthis have launched a major operation against Saudi forces near the kingdom's southern region of Najran, capturing or killing a significant number of troops, their spokesman said. Riyadh has yet to confirm or deny the claim. In a televised address on Saturday, the group's spokesman said they'd inflicted heavy losses on the Saudi forces, capturing several high-ranking officers and a large cache of weaponry, including armored vehicles. He also claimed several hundreds of Saudi troops, including some high-ranking officers, have been killed or taken prisoner by the Houthis.

So far, no confirmation or denial of the major attack has been produced by Saudi Arabia.

The alleged casualties were inflicted on the Saudis during an operation dubbed 'Victory from Allah,' which was launched two days ago, the Houthis claimed. They added that three "enemy military brigades had fallen" in the attack that was conducted with the support of missile, drone and anti-aircraft units belonging to the group.

Footage has surfaced showing an entire caravan of supposedly captured vehicles, with shots ringing in the air and a man constantly shouting "Allahu Akbar." (Courtesy RT NEWS)

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### **Prime Minister Imran Khan historic speech at 74th UN General Assembly 2019**

PM Imran minces no words at UN, calls out Modi Govt. for oppression of Kashmir's

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday 27th October, 2019 addressed the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The highlight of his more than 45-minute-long speech was intense criticism of India for its annexation of occupied Kashmir and the continued restrictions imposed in the region.

The premier began his wide-ranging, at times apparently extemporaneous speech by saying he feels honoured to represent Pakistan at the world forum.

He said he would not have come to the UN if he did not feel that some "urgent issues" needed to be addressed. Kashmir oppression

The issue which the prime minister talked in most detail about was the oppression of the people of occupied Kashmir.

"When we came to power, we swore that we would try to bring peace.

"We went to fight the war on terror and we faced losses of thousands of people.

"I opposed the war because in the 1980s we joined the struggle against the Soviets funded by western countries.

"The mujahideen were trained by the Pakistan Army and they waged the freedom struggle. The Soviets called them terrorists and we called them freedom fighters.

"In 1989 soviets retreated; the Americans packed up and left. Here we had indoctrinated them in jihad against foreign occupation and now that the US had taken over, we were supposed to tell them it's no longer jihad.

"And so the US turned against us and it was a nightmare.

"Taliban were in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda was there; what did Pakistan have to do with it?

"When we came to power we decided we would dismantle what was left. I know India keeps alleging that these groups are there.

"I welcome UN observers, see for yourself.

"We now have a relationship with Afghanistan, Russia and then we wanted to mend fences with India.

"I have friends in India and I love going to India. So when my party came to power, we reached out to India and (said) let's resolve differences through trade.

"(Indian Prime Minister Narendra) Modi said there were terrorist attacks from Pakistan. We said well we have attacks in Balochistan from your end.

"Unfortunately we didn't make any headway. Our foreign minister was at the UNGA but they cancelled the meeting.

"Meanwhile a 20-year-old Kashmiri boy blew himself up at the Indian convoy. And India blamed us.

"I spoke to the Indian public on television. I said if you give us any iota of proof, we will immediately take action, because we have clamped down on these groups. They bombed us (instead), and we retaliated.

"We immediately returned the [captured Indian] pilot, saying that we do not want an escalation.

"Rather than taking that as a peace gesture, [Modi claimed that] he had taught Pakistan a lesson; that their jets had killed 350 terrorists.

"Complete lies. They just killed 10 trees of ours which was quite painful given that we are growing all these trees."

The prime minister pointed out that Modi's entire election campaign revolved around an anti-Pakistan narrative.

"In his election campaign, Mr. Modi used words like 'This is just a trailer. The movie is about to start' and 'I went into Pakistan and taught them a lesson'."

He said that at the time, Pakistan chalked it up to just "politicians making statements" and that they would get back to the normal relationship with India post-elections.

The premier said that India did not respond to Pakistan's overtures following Modi's re-election as prime minister and soon it was discovered that India was trying to push Pakistan into the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to bankrupt the country.

"That's when we realised that there was an agenda and that agenda became obvious on the 5th of August when India went against 11 United Nations Security Council resolutions which say that Kashmir is a disputed territory and the people of Kashmir have the right of self-determination," he said.

"They went against the Simla Accord which is about sorting out our differences through bilateral means.

"They actually went against the Indian Constitution. Illegally, they revoked Article 370 which gave Kashmir the special status and [stationed] an extra 180,000 troops there," said Prime Minister Imran, providing the backdrop to India's actions in Kashmir.

He said that the total number of security forces in Kashmir are 900,000 and they put eight million people of occupied Kashmir under curfew.

He said that the answer to how anyone can do something like this lies in the RSS ideology followed by Modi.

"Now I must explain what RSS is. Modi is a life member (of RSS).

"It is an organisation inspired by Hitler and Mussolini. They believe in racial purity and superiority. They believe they are an Aryan race.

"They believe in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims. They believe a golden age of Hindu rule was stopped by Muslims and then the British occupation.

"What kind of people bring in 900,000 troops for eight million people? These are human beings," said Prime Minister Imran to applause from the audience.

"What comes with Aryan superiority is arrogance and it makes people commit mistakes and do stupid, cruel things like what Modi has done.

"It is arrogance that has blinded Modi. Has he thought about what will happen after the curfew in Kashmir is lifted?

"What will he do? Does he think the people of Kashmir will quietly accept the status quo?"

"(Nearly) 100,000 Kashmiris have died in the past 30 years because they were denied their right of self-determination. Eleven thousand women were raped.

"The world hasn't done anything.

"What is going to happen will be a blood bath. The people will come out.

"Has he thought it through what happens then? Has anyone thought what happens when there is a bloodbath?

"What do you think they (Kashmiris) will think of the way they have been boxed in?"

He noted that even pro-India local leaders were taken out of Kashmir as part of the crackdown and 13,000 boys were picked up and taken to unknown locations.

"What will the people do then? [They will] take to the streets. The soldiers will then shoot them. They have already used pellet guns.

"And so Kashmiris will be further radicalised. There will be another Pulwama. And they (India) will blame us.

"They are already blaming us. They said we have 500 terrorists lined up to go in.

"Why would we send 500 terrorists when there are 900,000 troops?

"There will only be further cruelty on Kashmiris. It will give them the excuse to chant on the mantra of Islamic terrorism.

"The whole world then turns away.

"How do we (Pakistan) benefit from further increasing cruelty on the people of Kashmir?"

Prime Minister Imran said there is no other narrative left for India. "Whatever happens we will be blamed.

"What does Modi think the 180 million Muslims of India are thinking? Aren't they watching these Kashmiris stuck in?

"Don't you think they too will be radicalised? Then there will be blame on us again.

"What about the 1.3bn Muslims watching this who know this is only happening because they are Muslims? What do you think they would think?

"What would the Jews of Europe think if 8,000 Jews were stuck? Are we children of a lesser God?

"Among the 1.3bn (Muslims) someone will pick up arms," he said, citing the analogy of a Hollywood film.

"Muslims will become radicals because of this, not because of Islam. Because they see no justice.

"I have pictured myself locked up for 55 days. There are rapes, soldiers going into rooms.

"Would I want to let this humiliation continue? I would pick up a gun."

"You are forcing people into radicalisation," he said, addressing the Indian leadership.

"This is one of the most critical times. There will be a reaction to this and Pakistan will be blamed.

"Two nuclear countries will come face to face.

"Before we head there the UN has a responsibility; this is why the UN came into being in 1945. You were supposed to stop this from happening.

"I feel like we are back in 1939 [when] Czechoslovakia was annexed.

"Is the international community going to appease or stand up for justice or humanity?"

"If a conventional war starts between the two countries, supposing a country seven times smaller is faced with a choice to surrender or fight to the end.

"When a nuclear country fights till the end it has consequences far beyond the borders.

"This is a test of the UN. You are the one who guaranteed the Kashmiris the right (of self-determination).

"This is the time not to appease but to take action."

He said the very first action that India needs to take is to lift the curfew in occupied Kashmir and then release all detained prisoners.

"And then the world community must give the Kashmiris the right of self-determination," the prime minister stressed.

'Humans facing huge catastrophe'

The first issue addressed by Prime Minister Imran in his speech was climate change. "So many leaders spoke about climate change but I feel there is a lack of seriousness (to tackle the issue).

"Perhaps some of the leaders who can do a lot do not realise the seriousness of the situation. There are a lot of ideas but they are nothing without funding," said the premier.

He noted that Pakistan is in the top ten list of countries who are most affected by climate change.

"We depend on our rivers and 80 per cent of our water comes from glaciers. The glaciers are also in India in the Himalayas, Karakorum and the Hindu Kush.

"If nothing is done, we are scared humans are facing a huge catastrophe.

"In my country where I came into power in KP we planted one billion trees and plan to plant 10bn to counter global warming effects.

"One country cannot do anything, it has to be a combined effort of the world."

He said the countries contributing to greenhouse gas emissions must be pushed and the UN must take initiative.

Money laundering 'devastating developing world'

Prime Minister Imran said the second issue he was speaking about is even more critical that of illicit financial flows.

"Every year billions of dollars leave the poorer countries and go towards rich countries, siphoned off by the ruling elites of the western world.

"This is devastating the developing world. It is impoverishing them. The rich-poor gap is growing because of them."

He regretted that the seriousness with which money from drugs or terror financing is treated is not accorded to money laundered from poor countries.

"In my country, when I took charge of our government a year back, our total debt went up four times in the ten years preceding that.

"As a result, the total revenue we collected in one year, half of it went into debt servicing. How are we going to spend money on our human beings 200 million people if half the money is going into debt servicing?"

"Our country was plundered by the ruling elite. And they could easily get their money out. And when we locate properties in western capitals bought by this money through corruption and money laundering by these corrupt leaders, we find it so difficult to retrieve it."

He said that if the money was retrieved it could be spent on human development.

"But it is so difficult [owing to] the laws protecting these criminals. We do not have the sort of money to have expensive lawyers and spend millions and millions of dollars. We need help from the rich countries.

"It is critical. The rich countries must show political will. They cannot allow this to happen.

"How can the poor countries spend money on human development when this money can easily leave our countries?"

"Unless the rich countries intend to build walls to stop economic refugees [from] coming as we see right now, they must take action. They must take action now.

"Corrupt elites must not be allowed to park their money (abroad). Why do we have these tax havens?"

"Why shouldn't rich people pay taxes? Why are they legal, these secret accounts?"

"Sooner or later there will be a crisis if the rich keep getting richer and the poor poorer.

"I hope the UN takes a lead on this. The IMF and ADB must find a way."

'Islamophobia is creating divisions'

Addressing the prevalence of Islamophobia, Prime Minister Imran said it has grown at an alarming pace. "Islamophobia is creating divisions, hijab is becoming a weapon; a woman can take off clothes but she can't put on more clothes. "It started after 9/11 and it started because certain western leaders equated Islam with terrorism. He questioned the use of the term 'radical Islamic terrorism' saying: "There is only one Islam. "What message does this (the term) send? How is a person in New York going to distinguish between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims? "This radical Islamic terrorism used by leaders has caused Islamophobia and has caused pain for Muslims. "In European countries it is marginalising Muslims, and this leads to radicalisation. "Some of the terrorists were from marginalised Muslim communities. We Muslim leaders have not addressed this issue. "The basis of all religions is compassion and justice which differentiates us from the animal kingdom." He said religion was viewed differently in the west, which was why the reaction in the Muslim world to content maligning Islamic personalities was not understood. "I hear such strange things that Islam is against women and minorities. "In the first state of Islam, Madina, the state took responsibility of the weak, taxed the rich, spent money on the poor [and] announced that all human beings come from Adam hence they were equal. "The Prophet (Muhammad PBUH) lives in our hearts. The holocaust is treated with sensitivity because it gives them (Jews) pain. "That's all we ask. Don't use freedom of speech to cause us pain," he concluded.

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### **63rd IAEA General Conference-Vienna, Austria**

16-20 September 2019

Statement By Mr. Muhammad Naeem (Chairman, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission)

Leader of the Pakistan Delegation

Madam President,

Excellency, Ambassador Alicia Buenrostro Massieu, I would like to congratulate you and other officers on their election at the 63rd Session of the IAEA General Conference. I would also like to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

I wish to convey the deepest sympathy and condolences of my delegation to the Agency and the family of His Excellency Yukiya Amano. His leadership role in steering the Agency in accordance with its Statute and in pursuit of the agenda of Atoms for Peace and Development will always be remembered.

Madam President,

Pakistan continues to utilize the enormous potential of nuclear technology for the socio-economic development of the country and to realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nuclear technology applications are being used in diverse areas of electricity generation, health, agriculture, hydrology, industry, environment and basic sciences.

This year during the General Conference, Pakistan is holding an exhibition in the Rotunda to show-case the work it has undertaken in peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. Many developing countries, including Pakistan, remain vulnerable to adverse impacts of Climate Change. The IAEA should continue promoting the development and use of nuclear technology in mitigation, monitoring and adaptation.

Faced with a severe energy crisis, the decision to expand nuclear power programme was hardly a matter of choice for Pakistan. The nuclear power generation provides a cleaner, cheaper and more sustainable alternative for energy security. Pakistan has been reaping the benefits of nuclear power since 1972 in a safe, secure and safeguarded manner.

Currently, five nuclear power plants are in operation and two 1100 MWe each near Karachi are expected to be connected to the grid in next two years. All civilian nuclear facilities in Pakistan are under IAEA safeguards without any exception.

Our national goal is to expand our nuclear energy capacity to 40,000 MWe as envisaged in our National Nuclear Energy Vision 2050. In order to meet this target, Pakistan looks forward to the removal of the barriers for gaining equitable and non-discriminatory access for the international civil nuclear cooperation.

In the vital area of nuclear medicine, eighteen Nuclear Medical Centers focusing on Cancer treatment are working under Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and two more are under construction. These hospitals serve nearly one million patients each year. We continue to believe that the choice of nuclear technology rests with the Member States and the IAEA's facilitation role is extremely important in this regard.

Madam President,

We appreciate IAEA's Technical Cooperation Program, in which Pakistan has always participated actively for mutual benefits and continues to remain a major beneficiary of the Programme.

Pakistan strongly supports ensuring sufficient, assured and predictable resources to carry out Agency's statutory responsibilities "to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world". The Agency can play a unique role in promoting nuclear technologies for pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Madam President,

IAEA continues to play its due role in coordinating international efforts to strengthen nuclear safety and security. Nuclear security is a 'State Responsibility' and In Pakistan, we have developed a comprehensive nuclear safety and security regime. It is regularly reviewed and updated in the light of IAEA guidance documents and international best practices.

The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA), set up in 2001 enjoys complete independence. PNRA continues to review and update its regulations in light of extensive National experience and IAEA standards. During preceding year three additional regulations were issued to this effect. In pursuit of safe use of nuclear technology, PNRA is building capacity of other embarking countries, and has recently concluded an agreement with Nigerian Regulatory Authority under IAEA aegis.

Pakistan has also developed "Regulations on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Installation (PAK/925)", which are based on IAEA nuclear security recommendations contained in INFCIRC/225/Rev5. Pakistan's Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS) has grown into a regional and international hub for nuclear security training and has conducted various IAEA courses with participants from over 45 countries.

As a further demonstration of our commitment towards nuclear security, Pakistan has recently joined Nuclear Security Contact Group by subscribing to INFCIRC/899 and subscribes to IAEA's Supplementary Guidance on Management of Disused Radioactive Sources. Moreover, Pakistan is also actively considering undertaking an IPPAS Mission at the earliest opportune time.

Madam President

This year Pakistan had the privilege of welcoming Mr. Mikhail Chudakov, DDG Nuclear Energy. DDG NE visited the two nuclear power plant sites in Pakistan and highly appreciated the professional competence of our trained manpower and safety and security measures being taken at our facilities.

Madam President,

In conclusion, let me end by highlighting that Pakistan stands ready to further strengthen its partnership with the IAEA and will continue to contribute to the Agency's efforts to build capacity in other countries, inter alia, by providing experts and services.

I thank you, Madam President.

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## **The Illusion of National Security**

By Gen Mirza Aslam Beg

The intelligent machines like the drones and the cruise missiles that hit Saudi oil facilities, demolished the myth of Security, which the multi-billion dollar US 'Iran-dome' air defense system was to provide. With one stroke it has

exposed the vulnerability of eight military bases of America in the Middle East region, and all the oil producing facilities of Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Arab countries.

That is the reason that "locked and loaded", threat of Trump, was rejected by the saner elements, who didn't want 'American forces acting as mercenaries to Saudi Arabia.'" Iran is equally vulnerable, facing the "economic war" sanctions and more sanctions.

The Israel-Hezbollah war of 2007 is one such example, where the American Iron Dome air defense system was defeated by free flight rockets of Hezbollah. Israel lost the war. Such is the tyranny of high-tech expensive weapons defeated by very simple and inexpensive anti-weapons. It is reported that the Houtis fired 22xdrone and cruise missiles from a distance of about 1000 kms.

Abqaiq was struck 18x times while nearby Khumrais was hit four times, that triggered multiple explosions and towering flames that took hours to extinguish. I remember, President Clinton in 1998 fired cruise missiles from a distance of 1200 km, targeting Osama Bin Laden hide-out in Afghanistan.

Seventy of these missiles hit the target area, while the remaining hundred fell over Pakistan territory, many of them in good condition, were picked-up by Pakistani technicians, who did the reverse engineering, to develop the prototype of the Toma Hawk Missiles. It's the Americans, the Iranians and the Pakistanis who have this technology. Pakistan is now working to increase its range to the last limit of Indian territories.

Now Pompeo says "our mission is to avoid war with Iran. We are sending more troops to the region to deter aggression," which is meant to fool the Arabs, with a false sense of security. Iran warns "we have stood tall for the last forty years. If any country attacks Iran, that country will become the battle ground." The situation is explosive. On the other hand, our soft diplomacy has emboldened the Indian Army Chief, threaten hitting strategic targets in Pakistan, and we are seeking clarification of such out-bursts.

The Arabs have no hope of getting any reliable defense of their vulnerable assets. They should fight their own wars. The United States after pulling-out of the 2015 nuclear deal, appears ready to reach-out to Iran to accept a more restrictive agreement.

The Iranians suffering from the sanctions of the economic war, "have, no doubt, orchestrated threat to the flow of the Gulf oil causing pain to United States and their Arab allies. Now it would be foolish to counter this escalation with an escalation that would mean choosing between an unwise escalation, or a humiliating climb-down."

The defensive measures would continue to be taken by the adversaries such as, the US military cyber command carried-out strike against military computer systems used by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, to control rocket and missiles launchers. Any miscalculation in this explosive situation would blow-up the entire region into a conflagration of uncontrollable dimensions. For sure Israel would jump into the fray inviting strong retaliatory actions by Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

And the weapons of war would be missiles, rockets, drones and suicide bombers in thousands, to break the will of the adversary. Israel would be the main target, whose very existence may be threatened. Trump appears to take the risk of such an expanded conflagration that would signal "a catastrophic situation for the region that may be his long-term objective." The Israeli defense analyst, Uzi Rubin and Eran Etzion, say Iran has development long range missiles and drones with precision guidance systems, capable of hitting strategic targets.

Has deployed them close to Israeli borders and at several places in the Middle East, which has so fundamentally altered the regions strategic balance that no nation can take-on Iran, including the United States" whose eight military base in the region, are vulnerable.

"Hezbollah alone can destroy part of Tel Aviv." "That's called a game changer. They would need only two hundred such systems to stop Israel's ability to wage its own war. This is the reason that Trump now is trying to meet Mr. Rouhani to find peaceful solution of this complex situation.

Trump best friend Modi would be facing similar challenges, as well as the Jehadis of the world reaching-out in support of the Kashmiri freedom fighters. Decision will be sought here and not at Washington. Better sense appears to have prevailed. "US want to give diplomacy, every chance to succeed" Pompeo.

The days of strategic domination over West Asia are over. On the other hand, Mr. Rouhani has decided to attend the General Assembly Session, to unfold his "Hormuz Peace Endeavour" (PEACE)." A sagacious and timely move.

The stark realities of the recent past must be remembered:

The Stinger Missiles, in 1987, made the Soviets pull-out of Afghanistan.

The Green Arrow Anti-Tank missiles in the hands of the Bosnian Muslims, in 1995, forced the Serbian killers retreat.

The Free Flight Rockets of Hezbollah in 2007, forced defeat on Israel.

The Precision Guided Missiles and Drones, now in the hands of Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and perhaps the Houthis of Yemen also have changed the strategic balance of the entire Middle East Region. Pakistan has clear options of maintaining the Strategic Balance in its favour, than relying on the atomic prowess. General Mirza Aslam Beg, the writer is Pakistan Former Chief of Army Staff (SCOAS).

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## **Effects of strategic nuclear exchange**

Between Pakistan and India - Brief Review

By Brig (R) Agha A. Gul

A Pakistani TV anchor explained effects of a likely nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India. It was limited to giving out likely causality figures only and thus was misleading. Nuclear weapons are not like any other explosive. They are a totally different arsenal. This Paper aims at elaborating the effects and the dynamics of the detonation of a nuclear bomb on urban target over a few hours, only.

I wish to point out some critical effects which are beyond the usual counting of the dead and wounded. However, to assess the full impact over short and long term, indeed for several years, a much lengthy study is required. Even my comments are thus limited in scope. These comments are Not Pakistan's official stand, which incidentally I do not know.

To start with, I have been noticing that Indian politico-military leadership for years now has been given nuclear-war related statements in a cavalier style, creating a strong suspicion that they are ignorant of the peculiarities of a nuclear weapon and strategic impact of a nuclear exchange. Are they?

At least the Indian military should know what it implies. The result of this cavalier attitude can be a repeat of Balakot type attack on Pakistan, albeit nuclear this time. The Indian Air Chief knew what was being asked of him by his political master. It seems, as a professional, rather than refuse, he directed the attack at an empty ridge. If this is not true then the Indian Air Force is grossly incompetent as it failed to hit the ordered target.

There was a statement by PM IK that India was planning to launch a missile attack on three cities of Pakistan in retaliation to its two intruding jet fighters which were shot down by PAF. The attack was cancelled, presumably when Pakistan informed the US that it will immediately retaliate.

Does Indian politico-military leadership not realise that Pakistan's air defence will presume any Indian missile in the air directed against it as a nuclear missile? There will be no time to waste in ascertaining the nature of missile after its impact. Consequently, it will inform the National Command Authority that Indian missiles are flying towards Pakistan. The NCA will have only minutes to retaliate, of course with nuclear missiles.

The nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India will not follow the erstwhile doctrinal models of NATO-Warsaw Pact gradual escalation from counter force to counter value targets.

In our peculiar operational environment, and given the cavalier attitude of Indian leadership on record towards use of Nuclear weapons, India will start by attacking counter value targets and Pakistan will be forced to retaliate in kind. In matter of minutes, at best hours, the two countries, with conventional forces more or less still intact, will settle down to grapple with an operational environment without nuclear weapons.

But the situation on ground will not allow any grappling by the conventional forces. The leadership in all probability would have been decapitated. The left over armed forces and public will be like headless chickens. War will almost immediately come to an end with millions of dead and millions more wounded on both sides.

Millions will be blinded by the nuclear flash in a micro second, millions will be burnt instantly by the heat wave, millions will be crushed by the over-pressures, and millions will be lifted and thrown away to their death by the tremendous nuclear blasts. Localities around ground zero for miles will instantly catch fire and then within 3 minutes the invisible radiation will start spreading circumstantially followed by nuclear fallout driven by gravity and the winds.

Besides normal winds, the nuclear detonations will create their own stormy winds for several miles. Electromagnetic Pulse will instantly burn all electronic circuits for several miles, crashing flying machines, stopping all transport, killing all communications and making all medical equipment having any electronic parts unserviceable. Electricity and gas supply will stop. Tube wells will stop functioning and there will be soon no drinking water, no fuel to cook.

Those who die within 3 minutes will be very lucky. They rest will have no medication, no doctors, no water for decontamination due to radiation and radiation dust. They will not be able to move if they are seriously wounded and no medical evacuation will be possible. Those away from ground zero and not-wounded or walking-wounded will have to go on foot where ever they may wish to go.

Those trying to flee away from ground zero will choke the roads, left over facilities and start fighting for the meager logistics left to survive. Lack of drinking water and lack of food will go on killing all around. Looting and murder for food and water will start. Police and government will cease to exist all around ground zero. Nuclear detonations on ports or near them will stop all imports and exports, possibly for several months if not more.

Possibly after weeks, local governments will start emerging. Provincial and central governments will be non-existent for quite some time. US will dust off its voluminous contingency plans waiting for this day, how to now rush aid to the two belligerents incapable of even providing basic necessities to its survivors. It will decide to wait. Never mind Trump's affection for Modi!

UNSC will hold an emergency meeting, not for helping hapless citizens of these crippled countries, but on how to limit the nuclear radiation, massive dust cloud spreading fast all over the globe and beyond the stratosphere, the aftereffects of the pulse of tremendous heat released by possibly two hundred nuclear bombs, with a collective might of at least some 4000 KT explosive! I hope Modi and his military commanders understand it? Never mind if the Indian public does not, because they are not the ones talking about attacking Pakistan by nuclear weapons in the First Strike. So far as Indian Defence Minister's latest Don Quixote type statement is concerned that India has given up on the doctrine of No First Use.

He should know that Pakistan now has Triad Response Capability. Pakistan armed forces also know about Nuclear Decapitation Strategy. India can employ Nuclear Weapons in a first strike, it will be responded in kind faster than India can imagine. Pakistan, confronted with a bully which is 7 times bigger, is imbued by Masada mindset since long. It is not afraid of confrontation and being destroyed while it will destroy the bully all the same. India, especially its politico-military leaders needs to educate themselves on the science and dynamics of nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear exchange, or else, it will end up making its 1.3 b population experience it.

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## **Role of Pakistan navy and security of sea lines of communication in Northern Indian Ocean**

Dr. Maliha Zeba Khan

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has been significant since ages due to its geographical connectivity with land masses. In its entirety, IOR adjoins three continents, Asia (South and Southeast Asia), Africa (East Africa), and Australia (Western side of continent). Yet all these adjoining regions make IOR strategically important. Particularly Northern Indian Ocean is hub to economic, strategic, and political activities, and heavy global flows transit through this part of Indian Ocean.

These global flows need uninterrupted and secure Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) for maximization of gains as well as utility for the stakeholders. The SLOCs are principal maritime connectivity routes between ports and harbours established over long time for maritime trade, logistics, defence and strategic purposes. The SLOCs are considered jugular veins for states as global flows of commerce, energy, technology; means of communication, humans, and even illegal/irregular economy are solely dependent on SLOCs.

Historically Northern part of Indian Ocean is considered quite vulnerable due to its littorals being situated closer to three significant choke points; Strait of Hormuz, Babul Mandeb further connecting to Suez Canal, and Mozambique Channel with rather common feature of coastal states having identity of developing and under-developed states.

The backwardness of these countries causes serious issues for security and stability of the region mainly due to illegal activities and non-traditional security threats like piracy, abduction for ransom, theft, hijacking, illegal fishing and coral harvesting, gun running, smuggling and trafficking of humans, narcotics, goods, arms, and even resources like sand and gravel.

The SLOCs are not jugular veins for global flows only; but lifeline for security, peace, and stability of the region which is highly dependent on smooth flow of maritime activities. In case if these SLOCs get disrupted somehow, that will impact global flows causing grave implications for international system; even putting the region on verge of violent conflict or limited war which might have spillover effect and could seep into littoral states using their regional conflicts. As matter of fact, these SLOCs have no alternative options or routes; that is why these SLOCs need to be protected by and large.

The regional conflicts, patterns of convergence and divergence, mixed with interests of great powers, regional and extra-regional both can cause traditional security threats. Constantly shifting maritime balance of power and clash of interests in IOR is another factor which can become driver of rising insecurities and can be instigated into conflict.

Maritime build-up by regional and extra regional actors have emerged as big reason of fluctuating balance of power in Northern IOR particularly as the US and China are establishing naval bases and commercial ports. These powers in strategic partnership with regional actors are making current situation further vulnerable.

Pakistan is situated in North of Indian Ocean with coastline stretch of more than 1000 kms, and seaward is Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Pakistan which is about 240,000 sq. km., with additional area of Continental Shelf which is about 50,000 sq. km., making maritime zone of Pakistan 30% bigger than the land mass according to National Institute of Oceanography, Pakistan.

Not only maintaining peace, security, and stability in SLOCs passing through that region is responsibility of Pakistan's Naval Force and law enforcement agencies, but being guardian of maritime frontier of Pakistan, Pakistan Navy (PN) performs several responsibilities assigned with reference to cooperative and collaborative security arrangements.

Pakistan Navy has always been following the principle of freedom of navigation as well as performing duties to maintain peace and security to Northern IOR. Pakistan Navy's commitment to peace and security in the region is quite evident through its strong role and vanguard performance making it pioneer contributor to joint efforts for regional security, peace, and stability.

At regional level, PN was first to join US-led Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan (CMCP) and Counter-Piracy Deployment as part of Combined Maritime Forces in 2004 which was aimed at checking illegal activities including potential threat of maritime terrorism in the wake of War on Terror. Under that initiative, Pakistan Navy has been performing its responsibilities by being part of Combined Task Force-150 (CTF-150) and Combined Task Force-151 (CTF-151) meant to control and curb maritime terrorism, and piracy respectively. Several successful operations have been launched to secure SLOCs in Northern Indian Ocean which has mitigated these challenges quite remarkably.

Pakistan Navy has led these task forces several times which has not only helped in maintaining security and peace in the region but provided Pakistan Navy with extensive opportunities to increase its operational capabilities as well as to excel in maritime-based "blue diplomacy".

In the year 2018, Pakistan Navy initiated Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) in Indian Ocean which was aimed at curtailing terrorism, maritime crime, trafficking, smuggling, and piracy. It was an independent initiative which was appreciated by the regional and extra-regional actors. The core concept behind RMSP was to enhance cooperation at regional level making the region strategically autonomous.

Pakistan as a state acts according to UN Charter as policy guidelines, and observes international law. Pakistan Navy participates actively in international forums related with maritime domain. Particularly Pakistan Navy represents the state in events like Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and Western Pacific Naval Symposium. Similarly different collaborative ventures, and exercises aimed at enhancing operational skills and technology and information sharing are conducted.

Such an exercise is called "AMAN" which is biennial exercise and works on the common grounds and shared objectives among states. Not only operational excellence and technological advancement are the goals of this exercise, but academic aspect is not overlooked. Therefore seminars, conferences, exhibitions, and field visits are tailored to needs of research and development.

Pakistan Navy is one of the world navies with higher levels of professional competence, operational capabilities, and dedication not to serve its own country, but to help mankind when and wherever required. Nonetheless the professionals of PN always stay on forefoot if some disaster occurs in the ocean and help strangled people in anyways.

Indeed Pakistan Navy is not a force only meant to extend state's policies through coercive means, but it believes in peaceful coexistence in the region and to maximize relative gains in form of economic security, strategic stability, and regional peace by and large.

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## **The changing face of Indian Ocean**

Islam and the Indian Ocean

By Arshad Rahim

Islam spread to the east and west with amazing speed following its advent in the Arabian Peninsula in early seventh century. Its influence since then on international politics and culture has been profound, widespread and lasting. The westward thrust of Islam along and across the Mediterranean challenged the Roman Empire and dislodged it from its capital Constantinople in 1453.

More important, however, than the conflicts and conquests that ensued was the transfer of Islamic ideas and knowledge to Europe which rescued it from centuries long dark ages and laid the foundation of the development and prosperity of the present day Western World.

Our focus presently is on the eastern drive of Islam and its consequences on the Indian Ocean region. Fanning out to the east and south from its center in Mecca the message of Islam in course of time reached each and every country located on the Indian Ocean rim. The immense impact of Islam on the region can be gauged from the preponderance of Muslim population on the rim and its hinterland that in all probability exceeds the Muslim population of the rest of the world.

The key role in the spread of Islam in the region was played by Arab seafarers, traders and settlers on the rim. Arab coastal trade in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea dates as far back as several centuries BC. After the advent of Islam it increased extensively.

With the conquest of Spain in 711 AD and Sind in 712 AD Arabs acquired control over the east-west sea trade route which they exercised through bases and settlements at key points along the rim this resulted in Arab domination of the entire east-west trade as the control over the land route was already with them.

It was precisely to break the Arab monopoly of this trade that the Iberian adventurers began to look for another route to the east from Europe. Their efforts culminated in the two great voyages of discovery: the one to west resulted in the discovery of two great continents; the other to the east ushered in the colonial era which changed the political fate of virtually every country on the Indian Ocean rim.

The Indian ocean in the Colonial Era

The first to arrive on the scene following the discovery of the route around the Cape of Good Hope were the Portuguese. They followed the same strategy as Arabs of establishing bases and settlements along the Asian rim from Hormuz to Malacca straits with their capital at Goa on the west coast of India.

It appears that the Arabs were not well prepared to deal with the Portuguese onslaught. There is no evidence of the establishment of shipyards or the formation of a proper fleet as the Arabs had done in their western thrust towards the Mediterranean. In the Indian Ocean they put up a valiant fight with the help of Ottomans and Egyptians but failed to repulse the Portuguese attack.

The colonial era was initially characterized by rivalry among the Portuguese, Dutch and the English trading companies for monopoly over eastern spice trade. In the process, however, all of them acquired bases and established small colonies along the rim for the logistic support of their ships.

But with the Arabs gone and the Moghuls offering no resistance at sea their growing rivalry turned into a race for colonies which peaked with their rush to grab the spoils of the unraveling Ottoman Empire after the defeat of

Germany and Turkey in the First World War. The English eventually emerged victorious not only in the Indian Ocean region but also elsewhere in the world presiding over an empire on which the sun never set.

Cold War and Post-Cold War Era: From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics

The Second World War signaled the end of classical colonial era. What followed was nearly half a century long period characterized by crumbling empires and emerging regional states under the shadow of cold war confrontation between the two super powers of that era. The stunning collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and its dissolution into its component states spelled the end of cold war and ushered in the post-cold war era.

What actually materialized after the end of cold war was neither 'The clash of Civilization' nor 'The End of History' forecast by Samuel p. Huntington and Francis Fujiyama respectively, but a shift of emphasis from geopolitics to geo-economics. It is not that domination is no longer the goal of international politics, only its mode has changed. While China has moved on to the Twenty-First century, India is still stuck with the Nineteenth century colonial model dragging the subcontinent also with it into the quagmire.

Incidentally, in the current crisis created by Indian unilateral steps in Kashmir the stances of most countries including those of United States and Russia are primarily based on the nature and extent of their economic interests in India.

With the Chinese announcement of the Belt and Road initiative in 2013 we stand at the threshold of yet another phase of the Indian Ocean region, very different from the previous ones in which, for the first time, China is poised to play the primary role in the development and prosperity of the region

The writer is a retired Commodore of Pakistan Navy.

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## **Subcontinent's leaders face the enemies within**

By Bernard Weinraub

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan rarely goes to bed before 2 or 3 in the morning, and sometimes he hardly sleeps at all. He prowls his official residence, reading documents, leafing through American news magazines, writing statements, abruptly phoning foreign diplomats about food imports or arms supplies or aid. Within the past few weeks, Mr. Bhutto has been particularly busy. He has stepped up his pleas to the United States to relax the ban on arms sales to coincide with the visit this week of Secretary of State Kissinger to India and Pakistan. Mr. Bhutto visited Baluchistan, the most troubled province in Pakistan, and announced that "organized" resistance by anti-Government rebels had, ended.

He has expressed readiness to hold talks with India over the perennial Kashmir issue. At the same time he has been exultant over a quiet but significant breakthrough in Indo-Pakistani relations: the resumption of telephone and postal links between the two nations after a break of nearly three years. Mr. Bhutto's activity he makes pronouncements and calls news conferences with the abandon of a New York City Mayoral candidate is a measure of the style and pace of Pakistani politics. After three years in power, and after taking over a divided and undisciplined nation, Mr. Bhutto has thrust Pakistan forward and sought to shape a new identity for the country of 70 million. The results are mixed.

Pakistan's internal problems are glaring. The nation, with an annual per capita income of about \$110 and illiteracy that totals nearly 80 per cent, is impoverished and riven with despair. One out of every four babies dies before the age of five. Nevertheless, Pakistan's economic position seems surprisingly bright, compared with that of her neighbors. Inflation is running at 25 per cent annually, but the Government subsidizes such essentials as wheat, flour, vegetable oil and sugar.

Pakistan says she needs to import about a million tons of wheat, but this is because the current record crop of about 8 million tons was below expectations. Pakistan does not suffer from the large-scale food problems of India or Bangladesh. Even the oil price increase has been less damaging to Pakistan than to her neighbors: The cost of Pakistan's oil imports will reach \$385-million next year, but loans from two fellow Islamic nations, Iran and Saudi Arabia, will help.

Although the economy has proved surprisingly buoyant, Pakistan is weighted down by internal troubles. Rebellious tribesmen in Baluchistan resent Mr. Bhutto's efforts to gain firm central control in the state, which could be a

potential source of oil. There are troubles along the Afghan border, persistent Pakistani fears of being swallowed up by India, and a consistent need by Pakistan to feed her own military machine.

Without American arms, Mr. Bhutto relies on China for weapons as well as support. The relationship is based on the mutual feat of Soviet involvement on the subcontinent and the anxiety, on Mr. Bhutto's part, that Moscow is stepping up its role in the area. As an independent magazine, Outlook, commented last spring in a discussion that dealt with the enduring angers on the subcontinent that trap India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: "It is a bizarre setting in which cupboards full of poverty - stricken skeletons are rattling with the din of sophisticated and outdated armaments. Countries which cannot afford to provide two square meals a day to their teeming millions are wrapped up in visions of hegemony, spheres of 'peace' and their 'manifest destiny.'" The magazine, like several opposition newspapers, has since been banned.

Bhutto supporters assert that the 1971 Bangladesh war, when Pakistan lost her eastern wing, still affects the nation, Bhutto critics point out that several assassination attempts have been made on his key opponent, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, leader of the National Awami party, whose strongholds are Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier province. Lesser opposition figures have been "bullied" and tough security police generally forbid large public gatherings. Defenders of Mr. Bhutto, however, and even some of his critics, maintain that the Prime Minister is adept and pragmatic, and his singular achievement remains impressive: He has restored some self-respect to a nation that was an object of scorn three years ago.

The pivotal figure

She has been called the Empress of India and the most powerful woman in the world. In New Delhi, she is known as "Mrs. G." or "Mataji," Big Mother. Whatever the title, Indira Gandhi remains the pivotal figure in the nation of 580 million, a woman who has plainly decided to move in new directions at home and abroad. To Prime Minister Gandhi, the changes are necessary because India's economy is in a shambles, food scarcities, are growing, the mood in the cities where inflation climbing annually at 30 per cent, seems bleak and uneasy.

India is hardly on the verge of revolution, but the nation does face a deepening crisis. To avert it, Mrs. Gandhi has reshuffled her Cabinet, cracked down on smugglers, sought to fragment her political opposition and in foreign affairs, seems bent on easing relations with the United States. Beyond these shifts, and intertwined with them, is a persistent and melancholy criticism that the idealism and adventure in democracy of the 1950's has turned cynical, that too many people are going hungry, that there are too many allegations of corruption and manipulation and police activities. Government allocations to maintain law and order have doubled in the past five years, and climbed by 52 times in the last 24 years, a figure termed "alarming" by a parliamentary committee.

"The nation is adrift," said one columnist. Jayaprakash Narayan, an ailing figure whose prominence dates to the time of Mahatma Gandhi, has abruptly emerged politically to frighten the Congress party. He said the other night that Jawaharlal Nehru "was one hundred times more democratic" than his daughter, Mrs. Gandhi, who has served as India's Prime Minister since 1966. Mrs. Gandhi's problems at home are immense. The nation needs anywhere from 5 to 10 million tons of food imports to avoid widespread starvation. The population is growing by 13 million each year, and per capita food consumption is steadily declining. Industrial growth is negligible, despite sizable assistance. Land reforms have failed. Shortages of water, seeds and fertilizer have throttled the "green revolution." Mrs. Gandhi's critics place much of the blame for the nation's faltering policies on radical and unkept promises such as "Garibi Hatao," or "Abolish Poverty." "The appeal of the Garibi Hatao promise was based on the fact that it articulated the vast needs of society," Rajni Kothari, a prominent political scientist said. "The violence that is engulfing the country is the result of the Government's failure to even make a start in fulfilling that promise."

Perhaps the key criticism of Mrs. Gandhi is that the Government has twisted its priorities and has concentrated on the development of heavy industry despite, the fact that India is an agrarian nation: 80 per cent of the populace lives on farms. To critics, the symbol of India's distorted priorities was the nuclear blast on May 18. Indians insist that the blast was "for peaceful purposes" but the Government obviously weighed the propaganda and military impact of the surprise move. As the Economic and Political Weekly said recently: "Deaths from starvation are taking place. No famine is going to be declared. But officially the country will continue its 'progress.'"

"This year it was the first nuclear implosion followed [the takeover of] Sikkim. Next year, perhaps, it will be an Indian version of the sputnik, and we will have arrived space. Once you have attained such heights, people and their need for food must indeed seem remote and trivial." The annual outlay for agriculture has dwindled. Last year, for example, it was about \$1.03-billion. This year it amounts to \$850-million. In fairness to Mrs. Gandhi, who remains an aloof and chilly figure, the task of dealing with India's poverty is extraordinarily difficult. "I think that the only reason I'm able to survive this with equanimity is that I'm just myself, regardless of the situation in the

country," she has said. "I know the condition of the people. There's nothing I can see that I don't know about already. It's not that you don't feel it but it's like a nurse and illness. You see it in perspective."

To Mrs. Gandhi's numerous critics, however, the recent steps taken by the Prime Minister are cynical gestures to cope with India's emergency. Yes, critics say, Mrs. Gandhi has finally reshuffled her Cabinet and placed Jagjivan Ram, a tough and powerful figure, in the key post of Food Minister, a position that has too often been held by inept figures. But the Cabinet, the critics add, consists of merely the same old faces in new jobs.

Even critics have welcomed the crackdown on smugglers, whose illicit trade threatened to damage the economy. But there is resentment that the pay-offs by the smugglers, and the alleged involvement of government officials, is ignored. Moreover, the seizure of the smugglers under emergency measures coupled with the increased use of such laws to arbitrarily arrest strikers, students and terrorist suspects as well as the dismissal of an anti - Government newspaper editor, B. G. Verghese, have spurred debate about the quality of India's democracy. The nation remains an open, free-wheeling society, with a lively press, but recent events have left Indian intellectuals uneasy.

In recent months, Mrs. Gandhi has managed her foreign policy with some success. Relations with Pakistan, always fragile, are still so but India's friendship with Iran has deepened, with the recent visit here of Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlevi, Now Secretary of State Kissinger's visit is expected to lift relations between Washington and New Delhi whose friendship soured during the 1971 Bangladesh war when the United States sided with Pakistan over India.

"It's a question of Kissinger and Mrs. Gandhi meeting again and, hopefully, hitting it off after three years," said one American source here. "If they do, that's fine, and if they don't, well. ..."

Source: The New York Times.

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## **Daesh looks to gain foothold in Balochistan under ex-Karachi cop**

By Roohan Ahmed

The Islamic State militant group has named a former Karachi police constable Daud Mehsud the leader of its newly created Wilayah Pakistan, after separating Pakistan from its Khorasan province, two counter-terrorism officials have confirmed to newsmen.

Mehsud was a munshi or constable at Karachi's Quaidabad police station, one of them said, requesting anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to reporters. "Previously, he was based in Afghanistan," he added. It is believed that he has moved to Balochistan after Daesh formed its Wilayah Pakistan in May 2019.

The official said that there is no direct link between Daesh's Pakistan group and the group's central leadership in Iraq and Syria. According to him, the decisions are made in Syria or Iraq and conveyed to Pakistan through Khorasan (Afghanistan).

Mehsud has a history. He started out with the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan group led by the group's slain leader Hakimullah Mehsud and rose in the ranks to its Karachi chief under Mullah Fazlullah. He had to leave Pakistan after law-enforcement agencies geared up an operation against militant groups.

In 2017, Mehsud left the TTP and pledged allegiance to the then Daesh's Khorasan group. Aqeel Yousafzai, a Peshawar-based analyst who extensively covered militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, described Daud Mehsud as "energetic" and a "hardliner" and said that he was an influential figure in the TTP.

"TTP's leadership is based in Afghanistan so there is a connection break between the group and its foot soldiers," the analyst said. "The hardcore commanders of his former group may decide to join Daesh after seeing his face." Targeting Balochistan

DIG Aitzaz Goraya, an official of the Balochistan counter-terrorism department, explained that there is no foreign terrorist working under the flag of Daesh. However, local terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jaish-ul-Islam had pledged their allegiance to Daesh. "That's how Daesh emerged in Balochistan," he added.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an offshoot of the proscribed Sipah-e-Sahaba, is a militant group which has been targeting Shia Muslims in Pakistan, including Hazaras in Balochistan. At least 509 Hazaras have been killed in attacks against the community between 2012 and 2017, according to a 2018 National Commission for Human Rights report.

In the last few years, Daesh has claimed responsibility for several attacks in Balochistan, including one on an election rally in Mastung that left at least 128 people dead. In April, over 20 people, including eight Hazaras, were killed in an attack in Quetta's Hazarganji.

This attack too was claimed by the ISIS through its 'Amaq news agency'. In recent months, security forces have killed over a dozen Daesh militants in and around Quetta, according to police officials. On September 4, at least six militants, including a female suicide bomber, were killed in an operation near Quetta's eastern by-pass.

They were involved in several attacks, including the Hazarganji one. The black flags of the Islamic State and weapons were seized from the compound. The very next day, Daesh confirmed through Amaq that its fighters were involved in a gun battle with the Pakistani security forces in Quetta. A police officer was also killed in this exchange. In May, nine Daesh militants were killed in an operation near Quetta.

According to DIG Goraya, Mastung, Quetta, Kalat, Khuzdar and Lasbela were the most affected parts. These areas are used as a "transit, lodging and boarding point," he added. "Some presence was also reported in Bolan and Dera Murad Jamali," the CTD official said. Daesh has lost the areas it used to control under its 'caliphate' in Syria and Iraq.

But Goraya said that Daesh is "still effective and lethal" in Balochistan because the "LeJ brand" still supports the group. He said that the group's influence is likely to increase after the creation of Wilayah Pakistan. Other security analysts have been watching these developments. "The group is a permanent threat to the people of the province," a Balochistan-based analyst told SAMAA Digital. He confirmed that regional anti-Shia groups, including Jaish-ul-Adl, Jundullah and Jaish-ul Islam have transferred loyalties to Daesh. The motive

After losing its 'caliphate' in Syria and Iraq, Daesh wanted to be seen as growing rather than shrinking, Raffaello Pantucci, the director of International Security Studies at RUSI, told SAMAA Digital. "More provinces is evidence of growth and success," Pantucci said. "An additional benefit of creating more of these more specific and local provinces is to attract more local interest."

At various moments, they have considered moving key leaders to new provinces, but this is a dangerous exercise, and the model is rather to show they have lots of global presence, he said. "[B]ut the heart of the group will always remain in Syria and Iraq as long as the current leadership is in charge," he explained.

According to Amarnath Amarasingam, an assistant professor at Queen's University, who researches extremism, added that the creation of smaller 'Wilayah' or provinces indicates that the group is foreseeing a lot more operations in India and Pakistan. "I think the AfPak (Afghanistan-Pakistan) region in particular will be their focus until conditions are ripe in Syria or Iraq again," he said.

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## **72 years of Pakistan gone wasted!**

By Saeed Qureshi

The religious zealots contend that Pakistan is a citadel of Islam, although most of the religious parties opposed the creation of Pakistan. Pseudo nationalists gloat that it is a nuclear power. I say Pakistan cannot be the second country after the United States to use the atomic bomb under any circumstances as it would receive the same in return.

Which Pakistan are we talking about and proud of? The one with barricades and barriers all over the land as if the whole country is a jail or a concentration camp! Religious denominations and cults take pride and self-entertaining divine blessing for massacring each other. The more this nation is getting into the religious mindset the more barbaric, backward looking and intellectually marooned it is becoming.

In every locality or street, there are loudspeakers blurring sermons and Azan (summoning for prayer) five times a day causing a lethal sound pollution. The people defecate in the open or in manual home latrines, all the members taking turns. The meagerly paid sweepers from scheduled castes carry away the heaps of human excretion on a weekly basis and dump it in an open filth depot or dumpster (I am not talking of Islamabad) where it rots for days till the rain washes it away. The municipality trucks come once in a blue moon.

In a sanitation and sewerage deficient country, if you find human refuse running into open drains outside the houses, don't take it seriously. If swarms of mosquitoes and flees surround you all the way to your destination: be it market, mosque and work place, take it as indifferently as part of a decadent civic order. If the worms and bacteria cause deadly epidemics, don't panic.

Don't mind the mind-boggling traffic jams on the narrow roads as we are destined to endure those and that by our faith, we are goaded to thank God in every affliction. The puzzling and ear-splitting sound of smoke emitting rickshaws and run-down buses are not eye sores because that is how Pakistan is supposed to be. If the whole landscape, roads, footpaths, market places, grounds are littered with garbage; such gory spectacles should not incense you as we have been living under these abominable conditions since the inception of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947. And Islam ordains cleanliness is half faith (Iman).

A culture of dishonesty and deliberate delinquency pervades and sprouts in every office: from presidency to make shift kiosks (khokhas). In offices burdened with red tape and inefficiency and nepotism, the five times praying Muslims prey upon the visitors and customers with full vengeance to pay for what they were doing for them as public servants. It is called bribe or graft is simple terminology.

The permits and licenses are for sale. If you need a connection for electricity or water or gas or phone, don't go straight to the concerned department with only an application. Along the official fee take a service fee exclusively for the official doing the needful. But still your name will be placed in the waiting list. A letter from a political heavyweight or powerful bureaucrat would also be helpful. Be aware nothing is done on merit.

After 72 years of Pakistan's creation, it takes 90 minutes to cover a distance of 10 miles to and from Islamabad and Rawalpindi: the so-called sister cities in the Potohar plateau. The police pickets, the road barriers, the para-military contingents stop you to find if you are a suicide bomber. The social life in the most protected cities has come to such a dreadful pass. I remember, as a student, it would take maximum 45 minutes to reach Rawalpindi from Wah cantonment by bus. Now this time is no less than three hours and one has to pay toll tax at many places.

Go to the Bara or Landi Kotal (tribal Business enclaves) to buy a 12-bore pistol for a pittance. Come back to your city, get into a house for robbing or forcible sex with a teenage girl or boy. One may also use it to kill his enemy or opponents at will. The police would not know and would not like to probe who committed such a heinous crime because these have become commonplace daring daily occurrence. But if you want to indulge or watch a combined spree of robbing, killing, raping and extortion, go to Karachi. And take care that you could also be targeted.

Pakistan is the most ideal place to witness murders and massacres for reasons ranging from ethnic, sectarian, tribal, clannish, honor to land grabbing or just for show off in streets. The poor raped young girls have to produce four eyewitnesses to prove that they were raped. Is it possible? Law and order have become razor-thin and no one cares who is killing and who is being killed.

It is a tall order to explore who is raping whom, who is kidnapped and who kidnaps. These are signs of doomsday but the prophesied doomsday has already descended on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Ironically Islam is a religion of tolerance and peace as it commands that killing one person is killing the whole humanity. Just imagine how many humanities have been killed and are being killed in Pakistan.

The new generations of Pakistan boys, girls, toddlers, adolescents, are living in an atmosphere of persistent fear, insecurity, bomb blasts, rape, arson, loot and plunder, in filth, in dark and dingy streets, in a nauseating environment of sound and filth pollution. They come out of the homes with a lurking fear of being blasted or kidnapped and targeted for unspeakable heinous crimes.

The food is costly and adulterated, the drugs and medicines are spurious, and the water is contaminated. The meat could be of a dog, a pig or mad cow. Who cares and scrutinizes for such infringements! We never ponder how many young children are forced to work with sex maniacs at auto workshops, restaurants or hotels or in private homes as servants? How alarming the level of molestation of the underage males and females is: no one bothers.

The country is in the grip of Thana and Patwari culture: the symbols of corruption and vehicles of obsolete, moribund institutions started by Mughal emperor Akbar the great, or the British colonialist. Caring a fig of what the law or the religion obligates, invariably everyone from the president to a police constable seems to be obsessed with making money through fair and fouts means alike. The whole nation seems to have fallen into a morass of moral sleaze.

The contracts are given in wrong and delinquents hands. The newly laid-out roads are washed off in one shower of rain, the bridges dash to the ground not long after being commissioned. If rental power generation units are purchased from foreign sellers, it brings hefty commissions to buyers (Raja rental scandal) and crooks are elevated

to the higher positions. Pitiably such leased power units do not produce a watt and are paid in advance to the tune of billions of rupees.

When poverty grinds and inflation ruins the household, the crimes and prostitution sprout and rob the people of modesty, honor and religious penchant. That is what is happening in Pakistan and that country created in the name of Islam may turn into another Thailand in due course.

The army was there at the helm for half of Pakistan's existence, a drunkard and lewd military president held the first free elections and then equaled this good deed by truncating Pakistan. Cessation of East Pakistan and surrender of a Muslim army are those calumnies that cannot be washed off ever unless the river Ganges starts flowing in the opposite direction and the sun starts rising from the west.

And during those crippling moments (surrender) several generals, politicians and bureaucrats were reported drinking in five-star hotels with their concubines. This is the story of a nation that claims that it ruled the sub-continent of India for a thousand years. If there was no obscurantism until 1980 notwithstanding Bhutto turning Pakistan into another Saudi Arabia. So, Pakistan an economically feeble and socially torn apart country has to put-up two-pronged war: one with the enemy across the eastern border, the other against Islamic militants rampaging the length and breadth of Pakistan.

Why in 65 years, the sermons and preaching of Muslim pontiffs failed to turn Pakistanis into good citizens not to speak of good Muslims? Yet the dreary and ineffectual sermons continue to foster sectarian hatred, reinforcing warnings of hellfire. Alongside, the construction of new mosques remains apace uninhibited. If there could not be one single model Islamic state in 1400 years, how one would hope for that in the present times when old taboos and gospels are losing their relevance.

Which war is for Islam and which one to safeguard the territorial integrity of Pakistan? Pakistan is doomed as the menace of Taliban abetted and supported by external abettors would not die nor surrender so soon. There is a noose of Islamic militancy around the neck of Pakistan that is tightening by way of proliferation of bomb blasts and violence.

Can one dream for the day when a true and patriotic leadership would take the reins of Pakistan? Will that day dawn when the citizens would travel with a relief that their lives would be safe and they won't be molested, kidnapped or killed on the way?

Can we visualize a society when law and order would prevail and dispensation of unhampered justice would be possible by nabbing the highest culprits in government, aristocracy and from the elite classes? Would our judges be upright and strong to uphold the law and not selling the justice? Can our institutions, government departments and bureaucracy function even by a fraction of other civil societies?

Can Pakistan generate enough electricity that the word "load shedding" becomes obsolete? Can everyone have access to schooling, medical facilities, drinking water and job? Can we integrate the Islamic teachings into the established curricula and syllabi and close the ghost schools imparting hatred and spurious Islam to the students who come to Islamic nurseries due to poverty or ignorance?

Can we limit the number of religious institutions and affiliate them with the national educational system from the primary to the university level? Can we bring about a national reconciliation? Can we eliminate the thugs, the crooks, the public enemies, briber takers, the goons, and all those who have turned Pakistan into one of the most dangerous and debased places to live?

Can our roads be widened, railways modernized, bridges built, hidden natural resources tapped and stalled projects such Kalabagh be undertaken? Can the whole country be washed off the glut of dirt and mounting debris and trash? Can the cities be embraced with centralized sewerage system? Can we check the burgeoning population so that the resources can be better utilized?

Can we elect a leadership that is visionary, selfless, imbued with nationalistic spirit, progressive and dedicated to promote a democratic culture and liberalizing the society? Can a stable, democratic, economically prosperous and socially liberal, and civically a modern Pakistan be rebuilt? The list of challenges is endless. It primarily depends upon the quality of the leadership that we choose.

The writer is a Senior Journalist and a Former Diplomat.

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**Attempts at defanging Pakistan Defense pacts with China imperative**

By Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad

Grounds for a Great War, possibly a Third World War, are being laid very systematically, by India, Israel, and the Western Secular world. The strategic situation that has now developed after the brutal Indian annexation of Kashmir and the Afghan peace talk failure has all the signs to escalate out of all proportions. Pakistan is being bated and trapped. Pakistan needs to tread the situation very carefully because one false step and the consequences for Pakistan can be horrific.

The geostrategic situation that Pakistan now finds her in is as follows:

Indian Annexation of Kashmir

Indian blatant aggression in Kashmir through its illegal annexation is grounds enough for triggering a full-scale war between India and Pakistan. But who are Indian supporters? It is quite clear that President Trump and the US probably gave a green light to India to start this confrontation that has all the markings to escalate into a catastrophic war.

**Afghan peace talks failure**

In the Afghan peace talks, one can now surmise that the American negotiations were not sincere at all. The US was buying time to establish a stronger position in Afghanistan while it indulged in strategic talks with the Taliban.

The objective was to infiltrate Afghanistan with ISIS, or Dahesh, or Blackwater, or Boko-Haram proxy armies (all these outfits are proxy armies of the Anglo-American-Israeli alliance).

Yemen war escalation into Saudi Arabia

We are now told that highly sophisticated drones flew out from Yemen and destroyed the Saudi Oil fields, causing the Saudi oil output to drop half of its original capacity. If this is not a false flag operation, then nothing else can be. Whom are they fooling? Yemen has no drones let alone capability to fly 1000km of Saudi territory to destroy the oil fields.

Poverty and desperation in society are not just visible but those are evident. On top of that, we are not holding back on alienating the two major political forces in the country.

Israeli annexation plan for West Bank

Israel has now publicly stated for the first time that it plans to annex the West Bank or parts thereof. That is initial feelers have been quietly disclosed by Israel, that the time is not far off when Israel will start its greater Israel plan, by capturing and annexing additional Arab territories.

American aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea

Pakistan not only has to contend itself with the Indian belligerence in Kashmir and the former LOC, the ISIS-Dahesh-Blackwater proxy armies in Afghanistan, but also the American aircraft carriers with hundreds of planes and missiles in and around the Arabian Sea.

In summary, the ground has been systematically laid very carefully and through great planning by India and the Anglo-American-Israeli axis on how to trap Pakistan from both the Western border and the Eastern border. Their initial objective is to defang Pakistan and strip it of its nuclear capability. The second objective is to encircle China by depriving China and Pakistan of CPEC.

Pakistan and China are fully aware, that once Pakistan loses its nuclear capability, and the CPEC corridor is eliminated, both India and Israel will play havoc with the remaining Muslim World. Israel will establish a greater Israel by destroying any remaining remnants of the Arabs. And, India will establish its Akhund Bharat by committing its hegemony and genocide of the Muslims of South Asia and Central Asia.

In other words, Pakistan must establish defense pacts with China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia at the first opportunity before tackling Indian annexation of Kashmir. Pakistan must imprison and hang all the internal enemies of Pakistan without any further delay. In this situation can we handle the serious security threat around us?

What's wrong with our establishment and Leadership? Not only Modi but Trump also gave a very clear signal that they will stand by India and not Pakistan. This show is not only "India against Pakistan" it's "Hindu and Christians against Muslims". Look at the way Trump says Islamic radical terrorist and the sing of release and satisfaction on Modi's face.

After this show, if still, the country leadership think they will get any help or support from the US against then only Allah can save us from disaster

**What's going on Pakistani establishment what's our narrative**

It's about time we open our eyes to the engulfing realities. Indo-US collusion has taken a definite shape while we are failing to even build upon our trusted relationship with the Chinese. We have let them down on CPEC and they had to turn towards Iran. Despite all snubs from the Saudis, we keep pestering them for a free ride on special plane.

We are failing to cement our relationship with Turkey and are constantly ignoring Iran. We are not using our leverage with regard to the situation in Afghanistan.

Domestically we are not taking bold steps to revive our economy and initiate a major program to generate business activity and expand employment opportunities. Poverty and desperation in society are not just visible but those are evident.

On top of that, we are not holding back on alienating the two major political forces in the country. Besides the political, the social divide is emerging as the biggest threat. Dreams of national unity and harmony have faded into oblivion. And lastly, poor governance is promising to take us nowhere.

The author analyzes how Pakistan has been cornered by the Indo-US alliance that wants a defanged Pakistan that poses them no threat. Pakistan must establish defense ties with countries that are its allies and should reconsider its friends and foes.

Kunwar Dilshad is the former federal Secretary to the Election Commission of Pakistan and worked in the constitutional institution for over 30 years. He is currently the chairperson for the National Democratic Foundation. He can be reached at [kmdilshad@hotmail.com](mailto:kmdilshad@hotmail.com). The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Global Village Space.

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## **The Indian troll army's obsession with rape**

By C J Werleman

If you're a writer active on social media then you probably fight off 'trolls' every day. But if you question the Hindu nationalist government of India, you find yourself dealing with an entirely unique breed of a troll. Armed militias carry out the dirty deeds of an increasingly fascistic state in the streets, and trolls carry out its communications operation in the online world.

Trolls swarm their targets with counterpoints, challenges, and also rhetorical abuse. They overwhelm their replies and comments in a way that makes the views expressed by the individual in his or her social media posts to appear as though they are unpopular, inaccurate or wholly out-of-touch with reality.

During my more than a decade-long career in journalism, I've been mobbed by the most relentless and ruthless trolls that inhabit the orbits of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. From ultra-Zionists to Assadists to New Atheists to the MAGA crowd, I've had my replies and private message inboxes overwhelmed by them all.

One particular group of an online troll stands out above all others, however, at least in my experience. I'm referring to Modi and BJP/RSS-supporting Hindu nationalists.

Last week, I published two articles with two respective news outlets, and also a podcast episode on India's revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir, which, in turn, has brought what feels like an avalanche. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of Hindu nationalist trolls, lie in wait in my replies on my social media accounts, and in my private message and email inboxes.

Look, trolls come with the territory, especially when you write about highly contentious and impassioned subjects, but what makes the Hindu nationalist troll unique is his viciousness.

Most online trolls will challenge your arguments, post disinformation, deflect via whataboutery or call you names. Hindu nationalist trolls are collectively obsessed with wanting to rape my wife, daughter, and mother.

I'm not exaggerating. If I had a \$1 for every rape threat I've received in the past 72 hours, I'd have more than \$100. This is not normal behaviour. That this specific kind of threat is received over and over again and exclusively from Hindu nationalist trolls speaks to a real sickness.

When I spoke with Carin Fischer, a German-born civil rights activist who lived in Indian Administered Kashmir for ten years, she told me, "We [pro-Kashmir independence activists] receive the most vile threats online from Indians. I don't even want to repeat what they are saying, but it is beyond misogynistic and involves rape and even beheading. Kashmir is such an emotional issue that you never know if there's some Hindutva nut even in the West who may go after you."

Swati Chaturvedi, author of the book "I am a Troll Inside the BJP's Secret Digital Army," describes in a great detail how India's ruling party has organised an army of paid workers and unpaid volunteers to attack journalists and anyone else who is critical of the party, Modi, or the nation.

"These trolls are mostly anonymous, though some as shown in the examples aren't. The latter tend to lead the charge, and as soon as they abuse you, a swarm of anonymous trolls follow in their wake, either repeating the original abuse or adding more to it," writes Chaturvedi.

"The more high profile the victims are, the worse the abuse gets with women often facing the brunt. Apart from rape threats, the anonymous swarm often send sexually explicit messages such as images of pubic hair to women with vulgar messages attached to it."

Translate to 'in real life'?

The use of sexual violence as a means to intimidate and suppress opposition voices is not only deployed by faceless and near-anonymous online trolls, but also by members of India's ruling party - the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In fact, since the moment New Delhi announced it was doing away with Kashmir's 'special status' as an autonomous territory, Indian politicians, pundits, and online users have been threatening or encouraging the kidnapping and rape of Kashmiri women.

A remark by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar captures what has become a widely shared sentiment in India towards Kashmir:

"Anyone, young and old alike, can understand how this [poor sex ratio] would create a problem in the future...that there will be fewer women and more men. So our [Minister OP Dhankar] Dhankar ji said we will have to bring girls from Bihar. Now some people are saying Kashmir has been opened, we can bring girls from Kashmir also. Jokes aside, if [sex] ratio is fine, then there will be balance in society."

There was also a BJP legislator who proclaimed that single BJP members were now free to go to Kashmir and marry "fair skinned" Kashmiri women. It's almost as though frighteningly mainstream Indian society views the colonisation of Kashmir as one great rape-and-rescue fantasy, insofar as seeing itself set on a divine mission to liberate Muslim women from Muslim men.

Various Indian news media outlets, including India Today and Hindustan Times, have subtly emphasised this meme, by publishing proven to be fake stories about Muslim women sending "rakhis to brother PM Narendra Modi" for saving them from cultural and Islamic practices.

It's also worth bearing in mind that a recent survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation found India to be the world's most dangerous country for women, ahead of even war-torn Afghanistan and Syria. Is it any wonder then that millions of Muslims in Kashmir are panicked and paralysed by fear with the prospect of a Hindu nationalist settler-colonial project?

The Indian military has already demonstrated its willingness to use rape, sodomy, and torture as an "instrument of control" in Kashmir, as documented in a 560-page report submitted to the United Nations. With India scrapping Article 370, it won't only be the military that persecutes the Kashmiri people, but also ordinary Indian citizens if threats made by Indian politicians and Hindu nationalist online trolls are carried out.

We must do all we can to mobilise the international community into pressuring India to reconsider its anti-democratic move in the valley, despite the number of vicious trolls it might invite. I can already imagine them lining up after this article is published.

The viewpoints expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the opinions, viewpoints and editorial policies of TRT World.

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## **SOLIDARITY WITH FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF INDIAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR**

An All Parties Conference was organized by Rabita Forum International in collaboration with SuchTV on 5th September 2019 on the occasion of Defense day.

The Event was attended by Muslim League N, Jamate Islami, Nizame Mustafa Party, Tehrik e Insaf, Karachi Press club, Karachi Bar Association, Nazaria e Pakistan Foundation Sindh and Others.

Those who spoke were Mian Abdul Majid Nazaia e Pakistan Foundation

Naeem Qureshi President Karachi Bar Association

Imtiaz Khan Faran President Karachi Press Club  
Haji Hanif Tayyab Nizame Mustafa party  
Nusrat Mirza Rabita Forum International  
Haji Muzafar Shajra Pakistan Tehrike Insaf  
Nasiruddin Mahmood PML N  
Younus Barai amate Islami  
Molana Abdul Khaliq Afridi  
Zafar Imam Advocate Rabita Forum International  
And Others

The conference unanimously resolved that

1. The people of Pakistan and all the parties show complete solidarity with the people of Kashmir and demand that issue of Kashmir be resolved through plebiscite as per UN Resolution and the occupation of India be ended Kashmir immediately.
2. India has chosen the path of Nazism and Fascist rule that led to Second World War. Indian Prime Minister has decided to go against peace and chosen the way of war and destruction. Eight Million Kashmiries have been made captive through curfew, the world should take the notice of this inhuman action of Indian government.
3. India has abolished the clause 35 A and 370 in its constitution that gives special status and rights to the people of Indian held Kashmir. Those rights and that status should be retored.
4. This conference appeals to the world countries to help the people of Kashmir, materially, politically, diplomatically and morally as India has departed from the UN charter, UN Security Councils Resolutions and all bilateral agreements.
5. This conference rejects any move of India to change the demography of Kashmir in any way
6. This conference rejects any move of American role in Kashmir for mediation as USA is a bias country and helping India in different ways by supplying sophisticated arms and would like to create hurdle in China Pakistan Economic Corridor.
7. This conference condemns the terrorist Hindu Organization RSS which is involved in the massacre of Muslim and Christians and appeal to peace loving people of the world to help the people of Kashmir
8. This conference appeals to the world community to compel India to lift the Curfew in Indian held Kashmir.
9. This conference considers that imposing Curfew over people of Kashmir is tantamount as plebiscite that Kashmir has given verdict to join Pakistan.

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## No help from USA

When President Trump met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Houston, we heard much about the friendship between the American and Indian peoples. However, there was a deafening silence when it comes to a human rights crisis in Kashmir unfolding right before our eyes and that is unacceptable.

The Modi-Trump rally is happened at a moment when the state of Kashmir remains under lockdown. In early August, Modi's government unilaterally revoked Kashmir's longstanding autonomy, has cracked down on dissent, jailed political leaders and instituted a communications blackout.

The lockdown has also blocked Kashmiris' access to basic medical care. In a letter in the British Medical Journal on Aug. 16, a group of doctors from across India asked their government to ease restrictions on communication and travel, saying they were "a blatant denial of the right to health care and the right to life" because they made it difficult for patients and staff to get to hospitals.

A recent Human Rights Watch report notes that, "From chemotherapy to dialysis, patients are struggling to access lifesaving treatment on time." President Trump has voiced no criticism of these troubling moves. He should be demanding that these restrictions be lifted and communications be restored immediately.

To be clear, Pakistan has positive role in Kashmir. But I believe the U.S. president must speak clearly in support of international humanitarian law and in support of an UN-backed peaceful resolution between India and Pakistan that respects the will of the Kashmiri people. Unfortunately, Trump has chosen to abandon the United States'

global leadership role. He is remaining silent on the Kashmir crisis while planned to hold a public rally with India's prime minister for his reelection as president of USA.

Trump's silence in the face of India's Kashmir crackdown is consistent with his broader failure to speak up for human rights across the world. It is no secret that I disagree with President Trump on virtually every major policy issue today. I believe that health care is a human right, and should be available to all regardless of income.

He wanted to throw 9 million off the health care they had. I believe that, at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, the wealthy and large profitable corporations should begin paying their fair share of taxes. He provided huge tax breaks to billionaires like him.

President Trump has an apparent affection for authoritarian regimes; He is not promoting democracy and human rights. When a president stays silent in the face of religious persecution, repression and brutality, the dangerous message this sends to autocratic leaders around the world is:

"Go ahead, you can get away with it." This is the message US president is sending to the India. Pakistan should take the notice of it and has to act in accordance with this behavior as there is hope of any help from USA but American are going to help India in human rights violation and atrocities it is committed the people of Kashmir.

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## **You can threaten Kashmir's**

But you don't have the courage to look them in the eye

By Apoorvanand

While taking a decision, if you keep in the dark those very people whom it is going to impact the most, it cannot by any logic be described as a step aimed at their welfare. August 5, 2019 was Kashmir's Rowlatt Act moment. What that date signifies for India one can't exactly say at this juncture. But if the reactions of politicians and the public at large are any indication, it has divided India into two parts once again.

It may appear somewhat inappropriate to ask this question but ask one must about those rejoicing over the Indian parliament's move to read down Kashmir's special status and partition it is it mere coincidence that those who claim to be celebrating as Indians happen to be Hindus?

At the same time, a considerable section of Indians in this country is unable to muster any enthusiasm to be part of this jingoistic euphoria a section comprising not just Muslims but Christians, Sikhs, Parsis... If the people of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram were to hear the approaching steps of the state's jackboot in this decision, would it be so surprising?

Kashmir's demand was for greater autonomy. Instead of deliberating over it, the move to straightaway change its status from that of a state to a union territory, under Delhi's direct control, has inflicted terrible psychological trauma on the people of Kashmir. Apprehension about their reaction to this step is what spurred the Indian government to impose a lock down in Kashmir and arrest its political leaders. Clearly, a regime takes a step of this kind only when it is not equal to the task of facing the people.

While taking a decision, if you keep in the dark those very people whom it is going to impact the most, it cannot by any logic be described as a step aimed at their welfare. To assume the status of guardianship on the strength of your military might cannot lend your claim any legitimacy whatsoever. This was not the reasoning of Gandhi alone; every votary of freedom thinks thus:

'You cannot bring me to my knees and profess to be my friend and well-wisher. No one has given you the right to be my occupier; I simply cannot accept such a state of affairs.' Among those who are against terrorist violence in Kashmir are some who do not subscribe to Gandhi's ahimsa either.

If they think that Khudiram Bose and Chandrashekhar Azad's method of violent struggle were valid, then they need to pay attention to the fact that every one of those freedom fighters was well aware that they might not win against the British rulers. But the thought that they might not emerge victorious did not prevent them from waging their struggle. It is not the assurance of success or even the thought that freedom will open the door to worldly happiness that bequeaths validity to the idea of freedom. The source of the validity of the idea of freedom lies within itself, not outside.

Is the fact that the Kashmiris want to remain free so nonsensical or strange that it is beyond our comprehension? The question is this why did their aspiration for autonomy seem so natural to those who played a leading role in

shaping the contours of our nation? How is it that Gandhi, Patel, Nehru and others considered their demand for self-determination to be valid? Why does their desire seem unjust to us?

To even talk about the idea in India today is a dangerous proposition. The argument goes, 'How can Kashmiris talk about azadi even as they reside, study and work in India?' Those who think so conveniently forget that people like Savarkar and Shyamji Krishna Varma were staying in London when they were making plans for armed revolt against British rule in India.

Those who angrily ask why Kashmiris take up jobs in the Indian police force or government service forget the number of Indians who worked for British India's colonial police, army and government establishment.

What percentage of the Indian population was actively involved in the freedom struggle, after all? For that reason, was the idea of fighting for India's freedom wrong? Moreover, there were many among Britain's own who were staunch advocates of India's freedom.

It took some courage to be in Britain and protest British rule in India, for it was an unpopular view. But it cannot be denied that it was the only moral and appropriate stand to take. It was difficult for the people of Britain to understand why India should be independent, but did their view make the desire for India's independence a wrong aspiration?

To the people of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan the idea of the Indian nation seems eternal and utterly natural. It did not seem so to the people of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya, and even Punjab and Tamil Nadu at different points of time. Even for the Adivasis spread across the country, the nation seemed an alien notion.

And, if one were to recall the Ambedkar-Gandhi debate, it would become clear that it was never an easy task for the Dalits to feel a sense of belonging to the nation. The task was to make the idea of the Indian nation attractive for these different populations, make it seem like home.

The history of India in the last 70 years, however, is witness to the fact that the meaning of the Indian nation was never the same for all these different populations, due to which India has been engaged in violent conflict with several of them. If India proved to be stronger, it was less on account of the lofty idea of the Indian nation and more due to the fact that it was backed by the state's power of violence.

The state's use of violence is considered legitimate. Those states which act thus more often than not receive the support of the international community, which dissociates itself from the issue on the grounds that the state's use of violence against its own people is an internal matter. However, the fact that no 'civilised' country questions China about its brutal campaign of the Chinafication of the Uighur Muslims does not prove that China is right.

Once the idea of India had a moral force to it, because it held out the promise that every community/group would be able to live in the country with its own chosen identity; no matter how insignificant their numbers, every group's voice would be heard. That idea was what made India seem more trustworthy than its neighbour, Pakistan. What gave that idea its moral force was not just the aspect of belief in diversity but also the principle of non-discrimination.

That is why many groups who feared that their identity would be destroyed the instant they joined the all-encompassing nation at the time of India's independence were given assurances that it would not be so. Before them were examples from other parts of the world it was a time when Stalin was engaged in the Russiafication of Ukraine, and the Palestinians were being driven away, their land taken by Israel.

So what guarantee did those groups have that in the name of having a uniform set of rules, the Indian nation would not impose north-Indian, Hindi-based, 'upper'-caste Hindu symbols on them? What assurance did they have that the distinct identity of the Adivasi areas of Nagaland, Manipur and the region that is Himachal would not be erased?

The ambition of Indian nationalism at that time was to be superior to the Western conception of the nation. The question before it was this would it be able to avoid the pitfalls of being reduced to an entity furthering the self-interests of just one community?

It was in response to this question posed by Tagore that the Indian constitution put forth the idea of friendly cooperation between diverse communities and groups, which would start their journey of realising freedom, equality and justice, keeping in step with each other. Implicit in this resolve was an acknowledgement that there was discrimination, inequality and injustice in Indian society and that friendship was the stated goal. In fact, it would be in the journey undertaken together that this friendship would be forged.

However, as witnessed, the journey has not turned out to be as romantic or uplifting. The story of the Indian nation in many places is stained with blood. How much blood must have been spilt to ensure such a ruddy glow to

the idea of this nation! India's relationship with Kashmir has to be understood in this context. It was the sole state in India in which the Muslim's political voice could not be ignored; besides, Kashmir had its distinct cultural identity.

Such a situation was not to be found anywhere else in India. There is one sole objective behind the move to partition Kashmir and that is to make its voice ineffective and irrelevant. The nature of BJP's politics is such that it cannot tolerate Muslim influence in any part of the country. Witness the way it sought to instil fear in the hearts of Assam's Hindus by saying that if they did not vote for the BJP (in the 2016 state election) they would have Badruddin Ajmal as their chief minister.

During the 2017 Gujarat state election the party communicated to Hindu voters that voting for the Congress meant having Ahmad Patel as the chief minister. Nobody bothered to ask why the prospect of these two becoming chief ministers was a fate devoutly to be missed. Instead of confronting the BJP on this issue, the other parties started saying that all that was part of the BJP's disinformation campaign.

Kashmir was the last stumbling block in the BJP's political agenda obliterating it was an ideological imperative. The move had nothing to do with the ostensible purpose of making an 'incomplete' India whole again. Across the country, the kind of reactions that followed the decision to divide Jammu and Kashmir, have finally succeeded in ensuring the Kashmiri people's permanent estrangement from India.

The hatred for Kashmir's Muslims that has marked India's Hindutva proponents has now bubbled up to the surface of Indian society, visible in all its crudity, toxicity and violence. From all corners of the country, they have made triumphal pronouncements about going to Kashmir and buying a house there, finding new avenues to end their unemployment, and marrying Kashmiri girls. This is what the Kashmiris are enduring. Simultaneously, the old anti-Muslim hatred has found a new opportunity to fan out in all its virulence.

The deputy chief minister of Bihar, no less (he happens to be from the BJP), has unequivocally stated that the parliament's decision has opened the way for the people of Bihar to look for employment opportunities in Kashmir. Clearly, this decision was not aimed at helping the people of Kashmir; it was to provide avenues for people from the rest of India to plunder any and every opportunity for their advancement, without the fig leaf of any pretence to the contrary.

The decision to change Kashmir's special status and divide it is not aimed at giving Kashmiris the same rights as those enjoyed by Indians, but to exert complete control over them as occupiers. Kashmir's cry for azadi has been legitimised by the Indian parliament's move and the reactions of the BJP's followers. There is no space left for those who until yesterday may have supported India. This is precisely what the BJP has accomplished.

If the party's supporters cannot comprehend this, it is not their fault. But what about the other political parties which lent their support to the decision on Article 370 in parliament? That decision has made it clear to the Kashmiris that the bulk of the Indian political class has no sympathy for them. Henceforth, they will not be able to repose any faith in them.

Kashmir's separation from India is complete, for Kashmir signifies the people of Kashmir. You may have occupied their land, but their hearts and minds are forever alienated from you. Right now you're the victor, you can threaten them. But you no longer have the courage to look them straight in the eye and talk to them.

Apoorvanand teaches in Delhi University.

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## **The 'bulldozed earth' policy will not work in J&K**

By Lt Gen. (R) Zameer Uddin Shah

I have culled the term 'Bulldozed Earth' from the 'Scorched Earth' Policy followed by USA in Vietnam and which ended in dismal failure and the victory of the Viet Cong over the greatest military and economic giant amongst nations.

The similarities are not total but repressive measures, a part of the 'Scorched Earth' Policy won't work when you have 100% dissatisfied populace in an area. You don't use a bull dozer to plough a field where you wish to plant seeds of harmony, peace and progress. The parched earth can only be made ready for ploughing by pre-watering.

J&K is an integral part of India and not occupied territory. It needs the soothing flow of love and understanding before the plough share is applied.

We should have learnt from the American experience in Vietnam. They followed the 'scorched earth' policy, killing non-combatants, using 'Agent Orange' to deforest the 'Ho Chi Minh' trail and curbing free movement and speech. A rag tag guerrilla force, with the overwhelming support of the local population forced the greatest military defeat in America's history. We did, indeed, follow this policy in Nagaland in the early 1950s.

At the peak of the insurgency whole villages were burnt, in reprisal, if they were suspected of harbouring Naga insurgents. Human right violations were not uncommon. There was constant irritation of checks on the movement of the local population. The insurgency was also provided much required sustenance from erstwhile East Pakistan and China.

Naga women would quickly assemble whenever the Army was near habitation to impede operations of the army. The Nagas constantly used the derogatory term 'You Indians'. The result was that the Naga Insurgency continued unabated for 7 decades.

We took advantage of the fact that we played each of the 20 major Naga tribes against each other. The birth of Bangladesh and China's internal problems deprived the Naga Insurgency of the much needed oxygen to sustain the movement and we turned tables by recruiting their battle hardened core to operate with us.

It was only in the 1970s we realized we had to change tack. We decided to concentrate on winning 'Hearts and Minds'. There was a shift towards 'Civic Action'. The Army cut steep hill slopes and created football fields. New schools were opened in remote villages.

Surrendered Naga insurgents were drafted in newly raised BSF Battalions. Strict orders were issued not to treat Nagas with contempt and a hand of friendship was extended. Despite provocations and constant demands for Naga Independence, for the last 70 years we did not falter in our policy of following the policy of the mailed fist (against armed Insurgents), inside the velvet glove (civil population).

The Nagas reciprocated and finding Anti-Indian sentiments abating amongst the populace, began serious negotiations for ending the insurgency. In J&K, we easily lost our patience. The velvet glove is in tatters and seems to have been thrown in the face of the Kashmiris. It is apparent that of late we have been following a 'Bull Dozed Earth' policy in J&K.

Religious sentiments have played an important role. If we don't treat the Kashmiris as Indians but as 'Muslim adversaries' this insurgency is unlikely to end in the near future. Prolonged deployment in the Valley will communalize a first rate Army and other Para Military Forces.

There had, earlier, been blatant use of fire power, much applauded by hard liners, who did not realize the long term adverse effect of strong arm tactics. When an insurgent barges into a house, uninvited, there are other ways of flushing him out rather than blowing up the house. Remember a destroyed abode means a destroyed family and only fans the flame of hatred for India. All members of that family turn anti-Indian.

The tactics of using pellet guns is abhorrent. It is our own countrymen we are firing at, not the enemy. Nor is it game or sport. Recall the success of 'Operation Black Thunder' in Amritsar in 1988 and the dismal effects of, short sighted, Operation 'Blue Star' of June 1984.

Let us adopt the method we adopted in the North East. It won't be easy. Things are a lot different in Kashmir. They are one unified community and cannot be splintered on tribal lines as happened in the North East where inter-tribal friction was exploited by us. External support is available to Kashmiri Insurgents from Pakistan. That support will not dry up easily. Let us consider making a onetime offer of amnesty and recruitment of surrendered insurgents of Kashmiri Insurgents into the BSF. IT IS A RISK BUT WORTH TAKING. The situation must gradually be handed over to the J & K Police. The state of siege must end at the earliest.

Kashmiris must be treated as Indians not as enemies. Some of them harbour separatist tendencies, similar to sentiments in Nagaland. But they are still not enemies to be 'defeated' and 'destroyed'. The Kashmiri Pandits must be cajoled back to the areas they had vacated and security provided to them. India cannot and must not try and destroy 'Kashmiryat' or follow a 'Bulldozed Earth' policy in Kashmir. It's our own countrymen we are dealing with.

My views may be anathema to some - so be it, if it can help to end the Kashmiri imbroglio.

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## Ground Report

### **Kashmir's blackout is triggering a new wave of mental health issues**

On average, an adult living in the Valley has witnessed or experienced more than seven traumatic events during their lifetime, an MSF survey found

By Swagata Yadavar & Athar Parvaiz

She sat in a corner, beside the door of the doctor's office, hidden by papers and medicine boxes on the compounder's table. "I feel frustrated thinking about the future, I feel there is no future for us," 24-year-old Zahra, told India Spend. Zahra is a law graduate, who is now preparing for the state civil services (judicial) examination.

A patient of depression, she had not required medicines for three years until the removal of Article 370 marked a return of anxiety. "I can't focus on my studies anymore," she said. Zahra was one of 15 patients waiting to see neuro physicist Akash Yusuf Khan at his clinic in Baramulla, 55 km from Srinagar. Housed in a poorly maintained municipal complex, the clinic is open only on Sundays; on other days, he consults at the district hospital.

Doctors predicted a rise in the number of cases presenting with stress and anxiety, as a consequence of the removal of Article 370 and the accompanying communications blockade that has prevented many from talking to their families, or stepping out of home for fear they will be unable to contact their families when out. India Spend reported on the health crisis that has ensued, as well as the impact on Kashmir's economy, of the events following August 5, 2019.

The blockade has also resulted in fewer people accessing mental health care in August 2019. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors without Borders) has shut down mental health services in four districts of Kashmir valley as they are unable to reach their staff.

As a conflict-torn region, Kashmir has historically reported widespread prevalence of mental health issues. Nearly 1.8 million adults in Kashmir Valley 45% of the population showed symptoms of mental distress, a 2015 survey by the humanitarian organisation MSF said. The survey found that 41% of the population showed signs of depression, 26% showed signs of anxiety and 19% showed probable symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Unemployment, conflict

Currently, people are unable to resume work and there is little distraction or entertainment. Many Kashmiris we spoke to said they did not mind the civil strike the shutdown of shops and businesses but were anxious about the uncertainty of what lies next. Many said they felt hurt and humiliated, their sense of identity taken away.

Even outside of times of peak conflict, the unemployment rate in Jammu & Kashmir has been high in 2015 it was 22.4% in the 18-29 years age group, almost double the India average of 13.2% for this age group, according to the 2016 Economic Survey.

Patients reluctant, unable to access healthcare

Since August 5, 2019, it has been difficult for people to access health facilities, and hospitals have reported a drop in patient numbers, as India Spend reported on September 6, 2019. Even in a normal situation, few people access mental healthcare, in particular. About 44.5% fewer patients visited the Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (IMHANS), Srinagar, in August, when compared to July, but this data is inconclusive as the number of patients was even lower in May.

On the other hand, in recent weeks, more patients have been visiting general out-patient departments (OPD) with symptoms of anxiety and reporting palpitations since August 5, said a general physician working at the Baramulla district hospital, who did not want to be identified. Such patients are referred to the psychiatric OPD. Chemists outside the hospital said there was an increase in the demand of antidepressant and anti-anxiety medicines, especially in the 16-30 years age-group.

Srinagar's old town, where IMHANS is, has more restrictions on movement than other areas, which has led to a fall in the number of patients. Patients find it easier to reach district hospitals, such as the one in Baramulla. The exact impact of the communication blockade and the political decision on people's mental health will only be known after a few years, said a senior psychiatrist at IMHANS, who wished not to be named. "The average lag between people facing mental health issues and seeking treatment is about 3-5 years."

This gap is now reducing but people still take a few months before they ask for psychiatric help, the IMHANS psychiatrist said, giving the example of the 2016 unrest in the Valley when Indian security forces had killed the

militant Burhan Wani, causing the state to suffer an estimated loss of more than Rs 16,000 crore between July and November that year.

Patients had started coming in only after a year of that incident, the IMHANS psychiatrist said. People prioritise their basic needs and not mental health during periods of turmoil and seek help after things normalise, he explained, "Also a very minuscule proportion of people seek help, rest find other ways to cope. Human beings are very resilient." Kashmiri adults use prayer as a coping strategy, as well as talking to a family member or friend, and "keeping busy", the MSF study said.

On average, an adult living in the Valley has witnessed or experienced more than seven traumatic events during their lifetime, the MSF survey had found. Exposure to traumatic events is associated with depression, anxiety and PTSD. The MSF survey had found that the most common problems faced by Kashmiris are financial issues, poor health and unemployment. Because of the constant political conflict and violence, Kashmir has also seen a rise in drug addiction, as India Spend reported in November 2017.

Children stuck at home are upset, angry

All that Sadiya, 13, has done over the past month is sit at home and visit three relatives' homes in the neighbourhood. "I feel suffocated, being indoors all the time but what can we do?" said Sadiya, dressed in a yellow salwar-kameez and black headscarf, sitting in an open courtyard near her house.

Sadiya lives in Rainawari, a neighbourhood in the old town area of Srinagar, which is heavily guarded by security forces and faces constant restrictions and curfews. She is prone to fainting spells and headaches, she said, attributing them to constant worrying for her father's safety. "I am always worried whenever my father goes out to buy vegetables or to the masjid (mosque) to pray, I want him to be safe," she said.

Sadiya has not been to school since August 4, though the government said August 19 that schools had been reopened. Parents are not sending children to school due to the uncertain security situation. "We were supposed to have our exams now... but now we are stuck where we were," Sadiya said, adding that her fainting spells and headaches had worsened ever since she had been housebound.

If her father, a washer man, did not go to work, he could not support her education, Sadiya said, adding, "I want to become an engineer so that my papa doesn't have to toil anymore. I don't think I can fulfil my dream anymore." Most children we spoke to were aware of the removal of Article 370 as they had read the newspapers and watched TV news. Among the children we spoke to, muted Eid celebrations and no news of loved ones were frequently cited as factors that had left them disturbed, fearful and anxious.

Swagata Yadavar is a special correspondent with India Spend and Athar Parvaiz is an independent journalist based out of Srinagar.

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## **What the last month has looked like for the media in Kashmir**

In their heart of hearts, every journalist fears that this process of silencing Kashmiri voices may be irreversible

By Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal

Finally, after a month-long siege on communication, the landline phones in our Srinagar office have begun to ring. In a digital age, this is not a relief it's a privilege. If that sounds ironic, check again. We're dealing with Kashmir, where even the basic phone connectivity has become a luxury. Since September 5, thus, it is a privilege to speak to my bureau chief and other staffers for longer than just the minute-long call that they could occasionally manage to make from the media centre set up by the government at a hotel, a few kilometres from the office.

A few stories, with little information, have been hurriedly filed from there since August 18 that is, if they were lucky enough to get a space at the computer to be able to do so, and the internet connectivity was good enough for them to send an email. All this was done under complete surveillance; names and details of callers and the called were duly noted, names of senders and receivers registered.

From the complete silence between August 5 and August 18 to September 5, the 18 days were reduced to the daily grind of uncertainty about whether staffers would be able to file their stories by the end of the day, keeping the Jammu head office hands full throughout the day. Apart from managing the region's regular beats, the Jammu newsroom has had to fill in the gaps of silence by scavenging for Valley related news published in different

publications across the country and the world, sifting information and compiling reports based on stories already in the public domain, just in case we didn't hear from our Srinagar-based reporters. There was no way to call back and get clarifications or verify anything.

One step forward, a month on. Now, I can finally dial the Srinagar bureau's landline numbers and if I'm lucky to get through, before I've wearied-out my fingers while trying each number several times, I can now hear a voice at the other end and make some meaningful conversation, even if there is the dread that the phone lines may be tapped. The tribulations at the Jammu office are enhanced by weak internet connectivity and the trickle of information from five districts (Poonch, Rajouri, Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban), after month-long silence, where phone communication is now restored but internet is not. Some reporters and stringers have managed to send e-mails from government officials' connections, but these stories are restricted to official statements.

Other than that, things remain where they are. On September 5, when landline phone lines opened up, the working at the media centre came to a grinding halt as the internet connectivity went kaput for the day. No stories were filed. On September 8, in view of protests over the ban on Muharram processions in parts of Srinagar, the security restrictions were re-imposed, making it difficult for staffers to reach the media centre.

It, thus, remains business as usual as we continue to struggle with how voices from Kashmir can be heard and how the printing of the Srinagar edition of Kashmir Times can be resumed. In striking contrast to this reality, the government refrain remains: All is well. A more realistic response is that "things are improving bit by bit". As far as media industry is concerned, "nobody is stopping them from publishing" or "some newspapers are being published".

And yet, as basic concerns of journalists remain unheard, despite these minor "improvements in situation", the Kashmir media seems to be not just caught in a static situation but is also standing on the precipice of a disaster, virtually being strangulated.

Kashmir's media has operated under severe stress and strain in the last three decades of conflict, negotiating the challenges and threats of novel methods of gags, censorship and physical intimidation from state and non-state actors. Newspapers have been banned from time to time by both the state and militant groups. Media persons have been jailed, physically attacked and killed.

But today, the challenges exist at multiple levels of logistical impediments and the lack of freedom to operate, bringing all voices to an unprecedented freeze and pushing information into some kind of black hole from where its recovery is becoming an irreversible journey. Poor resources and limited budgets, in view of the various advertisement bans that have hit media houses badly in the last decade, further limit their power of negotiating with the present challenges.

The Media Centre, under constant surveillance, remains the sole method of sending and receiving stories, though some may have been lucky in managing to steal some more moments in the cyber skies by borrowing connectivity from other privileged places where internet connectivity has not been disrupted. Journalists reporting for publications outside the Valley are also finding innovative ways to send their stories on pen-drives sent through passengers traveling out of the Valley. The reliability and regularity of any of these mediums remains inconsistent. In this situation, the efforts of those managing to print newspapers with regularity are brave, especially considering that in the first few weeks, the mobility of staffers and the to-and-fro travel from newspaper offices in the Lal Chowk area to printing presses in the Rangreth industrial area, 11 km away, often without 'movement passes', was almost an impossible task to accomplish. With restrictions on mobility decreasing, more papers have been added to the list of those being printed.

In a land-locked region like Kashmir, the newsprint and most printing material supplies are well stocked for over a month. With the situation prolonging and movement on the national highway still disrupted, how will these be replenished in a few days or weeks from now? If they can't, will the newspapers being printed be brought to an abrupt halt, even if temporarily?

More importantly, in their present form, the publications are reduced in size and quality. Giving space to very few local voices, which are cautiously worded, much of the space is dedicated to government handouts and news downloaded from different news agencies outside the Valley. The comment articles, other than some mediocre pieces on inane things completely disconnected from Kashmir and the present situation, are virtually missing. No editorials appear, other than some occasional ones skirting any serious issue. How does one engage with these new rules of 'press freedom'?

In this scenario, the challenges before our newspaper are also augmented by the fact that unlike other Valley-based newspapers, its head office is in Jammu. Many of our questions become even more difficult to find a

response to. With minimal connectivity, how does one transfer the editorial and opinion pages, how does one arrive at major editorial decisions to be taken in tricky situations in the face of poor connectivity between the Jammu and Srinagar offices?

The logistical unfeasibility of publishing is only one issue at stake. A larger and more vital question is of the difficulty faced by every Kashmiri journalist working for local or outside publications in getting information and gathering news. While rumours multiply, the channels of verifying them have begun to shrink. Landline phones (though the weak connectivity remains a little debilitating) helps only minimally in getting stories verified. While only some officers have telephone facilities, ordinary civilians still do not have them and it becomes impossible to physically investigate each and every detail.

Besides this, most officers are unwilling to speak and pass on the buck to the officers holding the daily press conference are authorised to speak. The 'daily press briefings', which are not held as daily as they are made out to be, remain a farce. Two or three questions are entertained and none are answered without being reduced to ridicule.

Sample this: a journalist asked about the restoration of phone connectivity and the senior official addressing the press conference responded, "Why, do you have to talk to your girlfriend?" Such retorts illustrate how the question-and-answer session after every press briefing has been turned into a non-serious and farcical exercise. Questions and concerns are either unanswered or answers mock and trivialise the issue.

Last week there were 'inputs' on five people being killed in Soura. With officials inaccessible, there was no way to verify. Our Srinagar staffers thankfully used their own sense of discretion and avoided the story. The next day, it turned out to be a rumour. It is not only state officials who are shying away from responding to media queries.

Many people are hesitant to share any details with journalists. The reporters in the districts, where the situation is still not well known, are yet to find a way to communicate. Some Srinagar-based journalists working for publications outside the state have walked the extra mile to make few voices audible to the world. There are voices, however, that are still silenced behind an invisible wall. Within the Valley, the voices have virtually disappeared.

The silence of information is not born in a vacuum, it is linked to the local conditions and the widening domain of fear that exists between the might of the government that can detain anyone without a charge and some faceless non-state actors, suspected to be militants, who sometimes paste intimidating posters or use the gun against hapless ordinary civilians. The highly volatile and embittered young generation that has begun to take charge of a counter state narrative may also soon become an intimidating force to reckon with.

Media persons are exposed to greater vulnerability. In the run-up to August 5, one web portal editor, Qazi Shibli, was arrested. Another journalist, Irfan, working with a local paper, was picked up and released few days later. Senior journalist Gowhar Geelani was barred from leaving the country at the airport, before he was flying out for a training course. At least three journalists have been served notices to vacate government accommodation in the middle of abnormal conditions in the Valley.

Last Saturday 7 Sep. 2019, four photojournalists were beaten up by security forces while covering an attempt by Shia community members to take out a Muharram procession. One of them received pellet injuries. On Sunday, a woman journalist working for The Tribune, Rifat Mohidin, had her car rained on with police batons and she was verbally abused. Earlier, a woman journalist working with an international TV channel was abused by security forces while reporting an incident in Nowhatta.

In normal circumstances, such incidents would have inspired the outrage of local press bodies, they would have gathered at the Press Enclave for sit-ins and protest marches, journalist deputations would have met high level delegations in the government. Right now, there is hardly a whimper. The world of media in Kashmir has changed like never before.

When it becomes a choice between life and professionalism, truth becomes a casualty and speaking out becomes an unthinkable blasphemy. Amidst the increasing fear, there is a helpless surrender that stems from hopelessness. The present situation may be temporary and may improve by notches, yet it renders everything permanent. In their heart of hearts, every journalist fears that this process may be irreversible.

Intolerance to dissent at the highest echelons of power is deepening and unlike the rest of India, the Kashmiri journalist is also grappling with two extra phenomena first, the threats of militants and angry mobs; and second, the demonisation of Kashmiris in the nationwide imagination of what is "anti-national". The month-long information vacuum has fuelled rumours, myths and untruths to take firm root, enhancing the sense of intimidation and fear.

In a month or so, or perhaps more, there is the likelihood that more communication networks could by and large be restored. And finally, so may the internet facility eventually return, depending on the situation in Kashmir. Reporters will be able to file their stories and local publications will be able to print easily. But what voices will we get to hear? Will publications resembling publicity pamphlets suffice as newspapers?

A newspaper is not measured by the length of columns it can print but by the words and images it offers. That kind of a commodity may soon become extinct in Kashmir.

Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal is the executive editor of Kashmir Times.

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## **The Largest Curfew in the known - history of human beings**

By Zamir Awan

No one knows exactly, what is happening in Kashmir. How many people have been killed, how many have been arrested, how many detained, how many women raped, etc. Since the 5th of August, Kashmir is under curfew. Maybe not the longest, but the largest curfew in the known history of human beings is imposed in Kashmir. Around 8 million people are under this curfew. One million Indian troops are deployed to implement this curfew. The whole Kashmir has been turned into jail and people of Kashmir are treated as a prisoner. It is the largest prison on earth and largest curfew. All foreigners and visitors were evacuated, the leadership of Kashmir was arrested, and Journalists were bared to cover Kashmir, Mobile service and Internet service was suspended, to keep Kashmir isolated from the rest of the world. Complete isolation and blackout of Kashmir from the rest of world.

The source of information is very limited and International media is getting very limited access to actual ground realities. People to people contacts are the only sources of information leaked out. Satellite images can be explained to the situation in Kashmir only. Kashmir was disputed territory between India, Pakistan, and China, well recognized by the UN. There exist resolutions on Kashmir passed by UNSC. According to the resolutions, Kashmir people were given the right to self-determination by plebiscite. Kashmir is the only a state occupied by India, having a Muslim majority, up to 87% population is Muslim. That is why, India, was escaping to implement the UN resolution of the plebiscite.

It is obvious, by plebiscite, India has to leave Kashmir. Since its illegal occupation of Kashmir in 1947, India was engaged in changing the demography of Kashmir and tried its best to inhabitant Hindus from other parts of India to settle in Kashmir to change the Muslim majority into a minority. Unilateral action of the Indian Government in Kashmir is a violation of the UN, Simla agreement and against all norms of the civilized world.

For 7 decades, India used all tactics to suppress the spirit of Kashmir for joining Pakistan through a plebiscite. Indian teachers were deployed in the schools to change the mindset of kids, intellectuals were engaged in changing the mindset, preachers were engaged in brainwashing, civic societies and social workers were trying to change the mindset. Police and local government were used to suppress the local movements for self-determination. India used excessive force by deploying almost one million troops to suppress the Kashmiri right of self-determination. Draconian laws were introduced, where troops can shoot at the spot on suspicion only. Security forces were raiding any house without giving any reason.

Detention, arrest were routine matters. Indian forces were using rape as a weapon. Young girls were raped in front of their parents and brothers to humiliate their families. Kids were tortured and even killed in front of their parents. India has crossed all limits of human rights violations. UN Secretary-General, Human Rights Organizations, Amnesty International, International NGOs, and all peace-loving nations and individuals have raised their voice against the Indian crimes against humanity in Kashmir. Worldwide protests, agitations, rallies, and demonstrations were witnessed anger of the general public throughout the world.

International media, what so ever access is available, is trying to cover the situation in Kashmir, almost all the mainstream media has condemned India for its crimes in Kashmir. The exact number of killings, detentions, arrests, torture, rape, etc. are unknown, maybe the only fraction of what has been reported in the media. India should learn that if in spite of all dirty tricks, could not suppress the high spirit of people of Kashmir for their struggle of self-determination, provided by the UNSC, it may not succeed in the future. India must leave Kashmir, the sooner the better.

It is appealed to all peace-loving nations and individuals with human conscious, to condemn India for its illegal occupation of Kashmir and severe violations of Human rights. Lift the curfew immediately, respect the UN Charter, and Hold the plebiscite according to UNSC resolution.

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## **Screams in the night in Indian Kashmir**

The soldiers came after midnight, Abid Khan says, his hands trembling, one of around two dozen young men in just one part of Kashmir who say they have been tortured by the Indian army. The alleged abuse, residents say, is aimed at creating a climate of fear after India stripped the long-restive, blood-soaked Himalayan region of its autonomy on Aug. 5. Khan, 26, from Hirpora village in Shopian district, says he was dragged out and blindfolded along with his brother, who has learning difficulties, on Aug. 14. "They gave electric shocks to my brother right on the road outside. I heard him scream painfully," Khan said, showing marks on his arms, legs and buttocks.

Once inside the nearby Chowgam army camp, Khan said soldiers stripped him naked, tied up his legs and wrists, suspended him and beat him with rods. The camp major, Khan said, accused him of inviting Riyaz Naikoo from Hizbul Mujahideen one of several militant groups fighting Indian rule to his recent marriage. An uprising in Indian Kashmir backed New Delhi says by Pakistan which since 1947 has controlled the other part of the region has killed tens of thousands since 1989, mostly civilians. "I kept repeating that was not true," Khan said. "Then they gave me electric shocks again on my genitals and wounds. One of them said 'I will make you impotent'."

After being released at dawn and barely able to stand, Khan says he kept vomiting for 10 days and only managed to start moving around again after 20 days. "I can't eat properly anymore," he said. "I don't go into the room my wife sleeps in anymore... It's better to die with a bullet than undergo such torture." New Delhi says its Kashmir lockdown since last month, with mobile service and the internet still snapped in most areas, is to prevent "terrorists" backed by Islamabad from stirring up trouble. India's national security adviser has denied that the military has committed any atrocities, a statement echoed by Col. Rajesh Kalia, an army spokesman in Kashmir.

"All counterterrorist operations are conducted in the most professional and people-friendly manner. Allegations of manhandling leveled against the army are completely baseless," Kalia said. But people in Hirpora say they often hear screams from the army camp at night. Three other villagers said they were also tortured. In total, around two dozen young men in the villages of Shopian told similar stories. "The army is making examples of two or three young men from each village," said one resident of Shopian who has compiled a list. The pattern is often of soldiers raiding homes, taking identity cards and mobiles and telling young men to report to the camps to retrieve them.

One 21-year-old, who declined to be named but shared with AFP photos of his wounds, said he has reported to the Pahnoo camp three times since Aug. 27 and was abused each time. An officer accused of him of giving food to rebels and then offered him money for information, he said. Another time, he was grilled about a former classmate who is now a militant. "They gave me electric shocks inside a dark room for about two hours," the man said, showing scars on his forearm. Obaid Khan, also 21, from Gugloora village said he had to go to the same camp to retrieve his ID and phone on Aug. 26.

"Eight soldiers kept beating me with rods for a long time. Before they let me go, they asked me to come back with names of stone throwers in my village," he said, referring to protesters who clash with security forces. Sajjad Hyder Khan, a local official in Pinjoora village said he has seen a list of 1,800 people detained by police and soldiers from Shopian alone, one of the four districts in the southern Kashmir Valley.

Not far from his home in Shopian town, five soldiers in black with "COMMANDO" on their sleeves and carrying assault rifles were going house to house, seeking details of residents. "In my humble subdued voice, all I can say is that the pressure is there in order to prevent people from protesting," said Khan, the Pinjoora official. And it has worked.

The official added: "There has been no stone pelting on the soldiers since Aug. 5."

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## **Afghan Taliban are stronger than ever after the US spent \$900 billion to finish them**

The Taliban are growing more confident of returning to power, 18 years after US launched its war on terror in which more than 147,000 people died

By Eltaf Najafizada

For many Afghans like Zohra Atifi, whose husband was killed under Taliban rule, the American invasion in 2001 marked a chance to start over after living under an oppressive regime. Yet 18 years later, after the U.S. spent nearly \$900 billion and more than 147,000 people died, the Taliban are growing more confident of returning to power.

The militant group controls or contests half of the country, more territory than any time since they were toppled in 2001. And they've come close to a deal with the U.S. that could give them even more power, even after President Donald Trump abruptly put the talks on hold.

What's worse for the U.S. and its allies: Many Afghans are growing disillusioned with the American-backed regime in Kabul and its inability, along with its foreign allies, to contain not just the Taliban but another deadly insurgent group the Islamic State. One of Atifi's sons was killed by IS extremists two years ago.

"The collapse of their brutal regime by the Americans once gave us a hope a cheerful hope that we will all again be free of fears and violence like other countries," Atifi, 45, said at her stone-made house in the capital's Kart-e-Sakhi neighborhood. "But that didn't happen."

The high cost of the war, and the lack of clear gains on the battlefield, have contributed to a growing argument that it's time for the U.S. to cut its losses and move on. Trump himself has signaled a determination to withdraw from what he's described as an "endless war," even as concerns mount in Afghanistan that such a move could lead to an all-out civil war.

"We've spent over \$30 billion a year in Afghanistan for decades now," Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said on Sunday. "That's not a sustainable model. We've got to get it right."

**High cost**

Since ousting the Taliban, the U.S. alone has spent about \$877 billion dollars until March 2019 to restore stability, rebuild the country and fight the Taliban and other insurgents, according to a report by Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a Pentagon Watchdog.

About 14% (\$121 billion) was for the reconstruction costs in both the civilian and security sectors. Despite the sacrifices and significant financial costs, the U.S. efforts have failed to produce a secure or developed Afghanistan, said Afghan lawmaker Breshna Rabi.

"The Taliban are stronger than at any time and are capable of spreading violence everywhere in the country, even under the nose of foreign forces' headquarters," said Rabi, who represents Balkh province in the lower house of parliament, and was one of more than 60 women elected in the 2018 poll. "Some of the U.S. billions have been lost to corruption," she said. "The U.S. money never reached the remote areas to improve the living standards of the poor people."

The U.S. now has just 14,000 of the 22,673 foreign troops in Afghanistan, down from a peak of 100,000 in 2011. More than 2,400 U.S. soldiers and 1,144 NATO coalition soldiers have been killed, according to tracks U.S. and NATO fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan, while more than 20,500 American soldiers were wounded, it said.

Afghans have suffered even more. More than 32,000 Afghan civilians have been killed and about 60,000 wounded since 2009 by Taliban bombings, Afghan and foreign airstrikes and in the crossfire, a UN report found. A separate 2018 report by Brown University says a total of around 140,000 Afghan forces, civilians and Taliban militants died in the conflict. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani told a summit in Davos the toll was far higher: his government estimates more than 45,000 Afghan forces were killed just since he took office in 2014.

**liver of hope**

Still, Afghanistan has come a long way since the Taliban's brutal regime was ousted. The media sector is thriving, with more than 1,800 print, broadcast and digital news outlets now operating in the country. Art and music scenes are flourishing, more than 3.5 million Afghan girls have enrolled in schools and many women have entered politics, now accounting for almost a third of 250 parliament seats. All these activities had been previously banned by the Taliban.

Over the years, the conflict has been both positive and negative for the Afghan economy, Tamim Asey, a former deputy defense minister, said by email. U.S. contracts and development aid has boosted incomes, but the ongoing violence had inflicted a heavy human toll.

“The life of the Afghan people is definitely better their living standards have gone up and at least they have a functioning government and a local economy,” Asey said. “But due to the war economy nothing is sustainable. Everything could fall apart once the U.S. cuts off its aid and withdraws its troops from Afghanistan.”

The agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban would've allowed the U.S. to withdraw about 5,000 troops out of total 14,000 from five bases 135 days after the signing of the deal. More than 10,000 Americans military contractors and more than 8,600 military personnel from 40 NATO allies and non-NATO partners are also in the country to train and advise Afghan forces.

But even as the peace talks were coming to an end, the Taliban intensified its campaign of violence. Trump questioned whether they could negotiate a meaningful agreement: “How many more decades are they willing to fight?” he asked on Twitter.

He received the answer late Thursday the Taliban addressed the president directly on Twitter, saying he has “yet to grasp the type of nation he is dealing with.” Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed went on to refer to Afghanistan by its infamous epithet, the “graveyard of empires.”

Deadly attacks

Adding to skepticism that any deal with the Taliban would improve security on the ground, Islamic State among 20 other terrorist groups active in the country has continued to cause carnage, mainly targeting civilians. The group emerged in 2015 after the U.S. handed over the security responsibility to the Afghan forces, and has since made significant inroads in the north. It is responsible for carrying out deadly attacks such as the bombing of a wedding party last month that killed 80 people.

Safety aside, food security and shelter also top the country's challenges, according to a survey conducted by Gallup. Ninety percent of 1,000 interviewed Afghans say its “difficult” to get by on household income and 57% have struggled to afford food in the past year, the report says.

Atifi, whose husband was killed in 1998, now supports her family of seven on just \$27 per week. Her second-oldest son died in 2017, one of 20 others who perished in an Islamic State suicide bombing at a wrestling club in Kabul. She doesn't see much difference no matter who takes power in Afghanistan.

“You tell me what the difference between the Taliban regime and now is?” Atifi said, her voice cracking as tears rolled down her cheeks. “They're all murderers and they killed my beloved son.”

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## **Collapse of Afghanistan peace talks spotlights internal Trump administration divisions**

By Karen DeYoung

Plans for U.S. troop withdrawals from Afghanistan, in keeping with President Trump's pledge to end the war there, were thrown into confusion Sunday, following Trump's decision to call off a secret meeting he planned with Afghan and Taliban leaders to secure a peace deal. Competing versions of what led to the cancellation of the meeting and, at least temporarily, any further U.S.-Taliban negotiations, exposed internal administration tensions that have flared as a deal seemed near in recent weeks.

Those tensions have pitted Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, whose chief negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, said a week ago that agreement “in principle” had been reached after 10 months of talks with the militants, and Trump national security adviser John Bolton, who opposed the talks.

“I hope not,” Pompeo said in response to questions about whether the initial drawdown of at least 5,000 troops more than a third of the total currently in Afghanistan planned for early next year would be delayed, along with a subsequent full withdrawal tentatively planned to take place by the end of 2020. In exchange, the Taliban were to pledge to cut ties with al-Qaeda and support counterterrorism efforts.

But “any reduction in our forces will be based on actual conditions” on the ground, Pompeo said on NBC's “Meet the Press,” one of five Sunday television interviews he gave after Trump's surprise announcement, made late Saturday on Twitter, about the planned Sunday meeting at Camp David.

The Defense Department, Pompeo said on "Fox News Sunday," has "full authority to do what they need to do" to protect U.S. forces and prevent another terrorist attack like the one on Sept. 11, 2001, the 18th anniversary of which is Wednesday. Asked whether U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan at their current level of more than 14,000, Pompeo told CBS's "Face the Nation" that "I can't answer that question. Ultimately, it's the president's decision."

But others said that Trump was likely to move ahead with the planned initial withdrawal, regardless of the apparent collapse of negotiations. One official familiar with White House deliberations cast Trump's cancellation of the meeting which the president said was in response to the death on Thursday of a U.S. soldier in a Taliban attack, one of 16 killed since the beginning of this year as part of a broader victory for Bolton.

Trump was the main person pushing for the Camp David meeting, according to a senior administration official who, like others who discussed the sensitive issue, spoke only on the condition of anonymity. Comparing the initiative to Trump's personal meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and his stated desire to meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, this official said Trump thinks his personal style can persuade anyone, and that he has seen the possibility of a substantial Afghan withdrawal as a major plus for his reelection campaign.

While many in the administration have questioned the Taliban talks, Pompeo and Bolton have been at loggerheads over this issue and others, with Bolton, a well-known hawk, charging that Pompeo was trying to "box him out" of decision-making on Afghanistan. Bolton had expressed his reservations about the deal at the time Khalilzad briefed Trump on its terms in late August, according to the official familiar with White House deliberations.

While State Department officials said that Trump indicated during that meeting that he was provisionally satisfied with the deal, and authorized Khalilzad to move forward, this official said the president had not approved a final agreement, and that Bolton had continued to advocate another path. Bolton, the official said, had been in direct communication with Khalilzad, the White House chief of staff, and the president outside of Pompeo's presence.

Bolton has not opposed reducing the current U.S. troop level to 8,600 about the number in Afghanistan when Trump took office but rejects any deal with the Taliban. His view is that the president can meet his campaign promise of withdrawal without a deal, and can simply decide on a reduction.

An official familiar with the State Department approach declined to address those remarks but noted that Pompeo is careful to never allow daylight to appear between him and the president. This official pointed out that Pompeo was designated to represent the administration on all five major Sunday morning talk shows. That feat is known as "the full Ginsburg," a reference to William H. Ginsburg, the lawyer representing Monica Lewinsky during the Bill Clinton sexual scandals, who was the first to achieve it.

There was little disagreement that events of the weekend will probably lead to increased violence in Afghanistan. Pompeo denied extensive reports that the Taliban had made significant battlefield gains in recent months. "If you're the Taliban, conditions have been worsening. And they're about to get worse," he said. "You should know in the last 10 days we've killed over a thousand Taliban," Pompeo told CNN's "State of the Union."

"And while this is not a war of attrition, I want the American people to know that President Trump is taking it to the Taliban in an effort to make sure that we protect America's interests." The Taliban said that the decision to end the U.S.-Taliban peace process for now would "lead to more losses for the United States," spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement. "Its credibility will be affected, its anti-peace stance will be exposed to the world, losses to lives and assets will increase."

In tweets sent Saturday evening, Trump said that he had canceled the arrival of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and "the major Taliban leaders" after the death of Army Sgt. 1st Class Elis Angel Barreto Ortiz, 34, who was killed on Thursday in a Taliban attack. "If they cannot agree to a cease-fire during these very important peace talks. . . they probably don't have the power to negotiate a meaningful agreement anyway."

"What kind of people would kill so many in order to seemingly strengthen their bargaining position?" Trump asked. U.S. officials said the decision to cancel the Camp David meeting, which had been in the planning stages for more than a week, was made on Thursday. The senior administration official said that Trump decided to tweet about its existence, and its cancellation, on Saturday evening to "control the narrative."

As controversy about the status of the Taliban talks swept Washington and Kabul on Sunday, the president, who spent the day playing golf, did not mention it again amid tweets about presidential adviser Ivanka Trump's travels in South America and his planned political rally in North Carolina on Monday.

The Afghan president apparently was not informed about the cancellation decision until Friday. His office said that morning, without giving details that Ghani planned to travel to Washington over the weekend for consultations. Later in the day, officials said his travel had been "postponed." It was also unclear when Khalilzad, who had left

Kabul for final talks with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, on Thursday, was informed, or whether the militants had ever actually been asked, or agreed, to come to Washington.

In his statement Sunday, Mujahid said that “the American negotiating team was satisfied until yesterday about the progress made so far and we ended the talks in a good atmosphere. Both sides were prepared for announcing the agreement and for signing it.” An “intra-Afghan meeting and dialogue” had been scheduled for Sept. 23, “after the announcement of the signing of the deal,” the statement said. Direct Taliban talks with the Afghan government were demanded by Ghani, and were part of the agreement Khalilzad negotiated. Those talks were also to include discussion of a cease-fire in the war.

Officials involved in the negotiations have long said that the Taliban's position during the talks was to continue fighting until a cease-fire agreement was reached, and that they had expected violence to increase in the lead-up to a deal. In his Sunday interviews, Pompeo defended the initial decision for Trump to meet with the Taliban at Camp David and argued that the president had been willing to take a political risk to achieve a deal on reducing the U.S. troop presence.

“If you're going to negotiate peace, you often have to deal with some pretty bad actors,” he said on ABC News's “This Week.” But others have sharply criticized the negotiations, including a group of former U.S. ambassadors to Afghanistan who said it could make things worse. And some Republicans quickly dismissed the Camp David idea.

“Camp David is where America's leaders met to plan our response after al Qaeda, supported by the Taliban, killed 3000 Americans on 9/11,” Rep. Liz Cheney (Wyo.), the No. 3 Republican in the House, tweeted after Pompeo's TV appearances. “No member of the Taliban should ever set foot there. Ever.”

Josh Dawsey and Felicia Sonmez contributed to this report.

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## How India secretly armed Afghanistan's northern alliance

Former envoy has a word of caution on Delhi's role in a post-U.S. Kabul

By V. Sudarshan

India must not commit the error of placing Indian troops on Afghan soil, says the diplomat who coordinated New Delhi's secret military assistance to Ahmad Shah Massoud, the military commander of the Northern Alliance, who fought the Taliban and U.S. forces till his assassination in 2001. For four years, between 1996 and 2000, till he left the Tajik capital Dushanbe to take up his new posting, Ambassador Bharath Raj Muthu Kumar coordinated military and medical assistance that India was secretly giving to Massoud and his forces.

It all began, says Mr. Muthu Kumar, exactly a week after September 26, 1996, when the Taliban, backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), took over Kabul, shot former President Najibullah dead, castrated him, and hung his body from a lamp post. Just hours before, Indian Embassy staff had scrambled into the last plane out of a country that had begun its descent into hell. Amrullah Saleh, who looked after Kabul's interests in the Tajik capital, called Mr. Muthu Kumar to inform him that the “Commander” would like to meet him.

“Commander” was a reference to Massoud, the Lion of Panjshir, who made his name guerrilla-fighting the Soviets when they occupied Afghanistan for 10 years. The Indian ambassador sought instructions from New Delhi on what was to be done. The response: “Listen carefully, report back faithfully, and play it by ear.”

Over chai and dry fruits

Massoud maintained a house on Karamova Ulitse in Dushanbe. He had his own staff and Mohammed Saleh Registani looked after the affairs of his house. It was here that the Indian ambassador regularly began meeting Ahmed Shah Massoud, discussing, over endless chai and dry fruits, the bewilderingly shifting fortunes of the battles in Afghanistan where money was enough to swing fighters. The Commander did not speak English and Amrullah, who would later go on to become Intelligence Chief, interpreted for him. The Indian ambassador subsequently had his number two in the mission, Dr S.A. Qureshi on hand for interpretation.

At the first meeting, the Commander had dramatically thrown his trademark cap down on the table, and declared, that was all the space he required the circumference of his headgear to stand and fight for his country. He put it simply: “I need India's support.” He then set out a list of items he needed. What is in it for us? Delhi queried. Mr. Muthu Kumar explained, “He is battling someone we should be battling. When Massoud fights the Taliban, he fights Pakistan.”

**Expanding list**

The Commander's wish list kept growing, and when once, New Delhi agreed to send only a fraction of the requirement, Mr. Muthu Kumar sent a message explaining Massoud's predicament with an Ajit joke: "We have thrown him in liquid oxygen: the liquid won't let him live and the oxygen won't allow him to die." Jaswant Singh, a former soldier, and then BJP leader, who had become External Affairs Minister, read the cables the first thing. He directly called Mr. Muthu Kumar and gave him a message to deliver to the Commander: "Please assure him that he will have his requirements."

Short of sending heavy equipment, India provided extensive assistance to the Northern Alliance uniforms, ordnance, mortars, small armaments, refurbished Kalashnikovs seized in Kashmir, combat and winter clothes, packaged food, medicines, and funds through his brother in London, Wali Massoud. Assistance would be delivered circuitously with the help of other countries who helped this outreach.

Mr. Muthu Kumar does not recall the quantities and the detailed itemisation. The logistics of procurement and delivery was handled by the Military Intelligence wing in New Delhi. The supplies arrived regularly at Dushanbe, and the Tajik customs ensured the smooth transfer to Farkhor, at the border between Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan, where Massoud maintained around 10 helicopters for his war efforts. New Delhi also helped maintain the helicopters with spares and service. Between 1996 and 1999 India gifted two Mi-8 helicopters.

### **Front line hospital**

The wounded arrived incessantly from the battlefield in helicopters at Farkhor. Those requiring sustained treatment were sent to Delhi via Farkhor and Dushanbe, the visas furnished in double-quick time. Also, at Farkhor, where the embassy had scouted for a hospital, an isolation clinic had been refurbished with two operating theatres, twenty-four beds for the convalescing and an ICU of between six to eight beds, depending on the requirement. Five doctors and twenty-four paramedics ran the hospital, which also had an OPD for locals. The medical outreach project had been valued at that time at \$7.5 million.

When Ambassador Muthu Kumar wanted to build a helipad right next to the hospital for the convenience of the wounded, New Delhi jokingly admonished him, "Now you are getting carried away!" He found a convenient solution. Farkhor was in the cotton belt and for ginning cotton, they used reinforced concrete slabs seven or eight inches thick and large enough to comfortably land an Mi8. So the medical facility had a helipad as well. Indian officials began flying up to Dushanbe to meet Massoud and also have themselves photographed with him.

The policy grew more substantial when President Emamoli Rahmon indicated he would like a technical halt in New Delhi on his way back from Vietnam, on January 22, 1999. Prime Minister Vajpayee invited him for lunch at his residence and ways were discussed to deepen the ties. New Delhi was interested in an airbase in Aini to maintain forward presence in the area. It had been used by the Russians who maintained Su-25 aircraft, subsonic, heavily armed.

After they withdrew, it fell into disuse, and India lengthened the runway, upgraded the airbase, did a ferry run, and flew a flag there too and stationed a Commandant with the rank of a Group Captain with four officers under him. The Aini airbase has no IAF aircraft on ground but is a part of India's well-equipped training mission in Tajikistan. It was to the Farkhor medical facility run by India that Massoud was brought when he was assassinated on September 9, 2001. Registani, who had become a general, called Mr. Muthu Kumar who had been posted to Minsk in Belarus, to say that the Commander had been attacked, and was beyond help. The date coincided with the diplomat's wedding anniversary, and he was throwing a dinner; he promptly cancelled the event without assigning any reason.

It was days later that Massoud's death was announced. The first military attaché arrived after the RAW man in the embassy had arrived towards the end of Mr. Muthu Kumar's tenure. Almost as soon as the first American military boot hit the Afghanistan soil, the hospital in Farkhor was ordered to be wound up and shifted to Mazar-e-Sharif.

### **Echoes today**

This nearly hidden chapter in New Delhi's relationship with Afghanistan grows in salience as the talks between Taliban and the Americans veer around to formulating a way forward, combined with the repeated and open American request to India to participate more robustly in the security matrix in Afghanistan. Barely three months before he died, towards the end of May, Commander Massoud visited New Delhi. He was there for four days, at New Delhi's invitation. Jaswant Singh records, in his book, *A Call to Honour*, "This had to be a closely guarded visit, as any number of terrorist groups from Afghanistan and Pakistan were vying to take his life." He noted that, "India's co-operation with the Northern Alliance is still largely an untold account. A more complete narration of it has to wait."

Is there a take-away from India's experience that is relevant now? Mr. Muthu Kumar quotes Massoud as saying in August 1998, before the U.S. launched cruise missile attacks on Kandahar and elsewhere, says, "I recall Commander Massoud telling me in August 1998 before the U.S. launched cruise missile attacks on Kandahar and elsewhere that "The problem in Afghanistan more than the Taliban is the presence of foreign forces. So I am also fighting these forces who are with the Taliban.

After the massacre of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e-Sharif this summer, Iran massed more than 2,50,000 soldiers on our border to punish the Taliban, so I advised the leadership in Iran, do not invade Afghanistan as I am fighting foreign forces, so just give me material assistance to defeat the foreign forces and the Taliban."

Given his experience, Mr. Muthu Kumar says, "Taking note of Masood's exchange, my thinking is that we must not commit that gross error of placing Indian boots on Afghan soil. What will Indian troops do? What could we achieve and who will we fight and defend? The leaders of the present Government and the Taliban are only two major facets of Afghan politics they have to resolve their differences for that elusive peace and stability."

Source: The Hindu.

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## **USA has no Intension to leave Afghanistan**

Any sensible analyst never believed that USA will leave Afghanistan as it has built 9 sophisticated under grounded bases to check Pakistan, Iran, China, Central Asian countries and Russia. He has earlier, nourished Al-Qadaida and now ISIS or Daesh. The ultimate goal ISIS is against Islamic countries and Russia and China.

It has started a drama of negotiations in Doha that it wants peace in Afghanistan to win the second term for President Donald Trump. USA accepted many demands of Talibans, releasing their commanders, lifting sanctions but with the promise that Taliban would let their bases untouched. Talibaan did not agree to it.

So USA finally asked for two bases Kandhar and Hilmand but Taliban rejected this request considering that after winning the election President Trump will change its point of view and leave Afghanistan so why to give Trump a chance to use Taliban for his election campaign. Taliban captured or rule seventy percent of Afghanistan.

Further, in an air strike, Afghan Taliban's Amir's brother was killed in a mosque. Further USA is protecting Daesh hiding in mountain areas whosoever goes are attacked by USA air Force as it did on 19th September 2019 killing 30 farmers by saying it missed the target. The attack was against ISIS but peasants were killed by US drone.

Afghanistan's defense ministry and a senior US official in Kabul confirmed the drone strike but did not share details of civilian casualties. According to the United Nations, at least 3,812 Afghan civilians were killed or wounded in the first half of 2019 in the war against militant groups, with a big increase in the number of casualties caused by government and foreign forces.

Air strikes by US and government forces killed 363 people and injured 156 others, and of those casualties 150 were children, according to the UN report. Of those 519 casualties, just over four of every five were caused by the international forces. The United States under the counter-terrorism operation in Afghanistan continues to conduct air strikes against the Islamist Taliban insurgents and the Islamic State group fighters. Separate attacks claimed by the Taliban killed scores on 17th September 2019, including a blast at an election rally for President Ashraf Ghani that left 26 people dead. A second attack targeting an army base in central Kabul killed 22 People.

Taliban Commanders very well understand that USA is not sincere to get out from Afghanistan but to remain there as it is a strategic position which USA has gained after a conspiracy and bloody war. Thousands of Afghans have been killed and the thrust of blood has not yet over. Taliban has the resolve to fight against USA till the last man of force leave Afghanistan. Afghanistan Taliban feels that there is a solid reason to fight an occupational force.

On the other side, Pakistan that helped to carry out the negotiations between Afghan Taliban and USA also is in awkward position that it has been pressurized by IMF and FATF. Taliban are pointing out the attitude of USA. Pakistan's position also weaken so far negotiations are concerned.

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## **Iran's CPEC - parallel pipeline plans (E-CPEC+) could ruin India's regional vision**

By Andrew Korybko

The Iranian Ambassador to India shocked his host nation by announcing that his country was considering building a CPEC-parallel LNG pipeline to China in response to New Delhi's submission to the US' unilateral sanctions regime, which could completely ruin India's regional vision if this ambitious plan comes to pass and especially if Russia decides to actively participate in it.

### **Exciting news about E-CPEC+**

India's zero-sum plans of using its reinvigorated strategic partnership with Russia to “balance” China in the region of “Greater South Asia” are at risk of being ruined if Iran goes through with its recently announced interest in building a CPEC-parallel LNG pipeline to China (E-CPEC+, with the “E” standing for “energy”) and receives Moscow's world-class support in constructing this game-changing piece of integrational infrastructure.

The Iranian Ambassador to India shocked his host nation by declaring that “Iran is now discussing an LNG pipeline to China along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as India is not expected to retain its prior interest in LNG imports from Iran”, according to The Hindu's report about his comments made to members of the Indian Association of Foreign Affairs Correspondents on Monday.

His words are especially significant for the fact that they represent his country's first public recognition that India submitted to the US' sanctions regime and also signify a bold endorsement of the Belt & Road Initiative's (BRI) flagship project of CPEC that India is adamantly against because of its maximalist claims in the Kashmir Conflict.

### **The meek shall rise**

India already humiliatingly made a fool out of Iran on the world stage by complying with the US' sanctions demands, victimizing its partner through blowback from the Hybrid War on CPEC, and entering into informal military alliances with its hated American and “Israeli” enemies, but the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back and got Iran to stop behaving as India's “junior partner” and finally become serious about changing its approach to it was likely the brutal use of force that was inflicted earlier this week upon the Kashmiris who were commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

Publicly funded Iranian international media outlet Press TV extensively covered the wanton human rights abuses committed by the occupying Indian forces during this time and specifically pointed out to anyone who was unaware that Imam Hussein was also the third Shia Imam as well as the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, which is exceptionally important because the Islamic Republic of Iran is first and foremost an ideologically driven state constitutionally beholden per Article 154 to “support the struggles of the oppressed for their rights against the oppressors anywhere in the world.”

It is therefore absolutely unacceptable for Iran to not at the very least respond in an asymmetrical way while its co-confessionals are being visibly oppressed by occupying forces while attempting to commemorate the martyrdom of such an important Islamic figure, which explains why Tehran decided to cross the Rubicon and have its Ambassador to India publicly talk about its plans to construct E-CPEC+ despite knowing that his words would indelibly alter the dynamics of the Iranian-Indian Strategic Partnership.

The Ambassador wisely referenced India's decision to discontinue purchasing his country's resources as the reason for his government exploring such a game-changing move, thereby ensuring that it can't be interpreted as anything “hostile” or “anti-Indian” and indirectly laying the blame for any repercussions it could have on the regional balance of power solely at the feet of India's political leadership. This is crucial to mention because the outcome could very realistically ruin India's regional plans if the pipeline is ever constructed.

### **“Energy diplomacy”**

Not only would it naturally strengthen China and Pakistan's joint regional position, but it might also do the same for Russia's as well if Moscow decides to get involved in this promising project by bidding to construct it and then pairing its offshore gas reserves in Iran with the rest of the Islamic Republic's available reserves in order to ensure that the pipeline is truly transformational in the geopolitical sense.

Russia already signed a \$10 billion memorandum of understanding with Pakistan last October to build an undersea pipeline connecting Iran and India via that nation's territorial waters, but with New Delhi no longer buying Tehran's resources, it makes sense for Moscow to modify the proposed project to end in the People's Republic instead.

While India might have thought that it bought Russia's eternal geopolitical allegiance through the multibillion-dollar deals that were struck in exchange for its full support on Kashmir during Modi's visit as the guest of honor at the recent Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, it could very well soon find out that there are limits to its influence.

Russia and India are indeed on the same page as regards their grand strategic interest in jointly leading a new Non-Aligned Movement (Neo-NAM), which was elaborated upon by the author in his latest piece about Moscow's "New Detente" with the West and importantly given an indirect endorsement by the Valdai Club in its latest publication about "The Eurasian Chord and the Oceanic Ring:

Russia and India as the Third Force in a New World Order", in which Moscow's top think tank toyed with rebranding this concept as the "Peaceful Development Movement". That said, Russia is sincere in its desire to become the supreme "balancing" force in Afro-Eurasia and isn't hiding behind euphemisms to disguise any zero-sum ambitions like India is, so it's entirely feasible that Moscow might seriously consider resuming the original "balancing" intentions of its "Return to South Asia" (prior to them having been offset by its partisan support of India on Kashmir).

### **Back To "Balancing"?**

By doing so, not only would Russia prove its neutrality in the New Cold War, but it would also be advancing the "Golden Ring" geopolitical concept of strengthening ties between itself, Iran, Pakistan, and China, as well as preempting the possibility of becoming too strategically dependent on India (seeing as how its "Pivot to India" in Vladivostok was due in part to similar concerns vis-a-vis China).

These interconnected outcomes would reassure Russia's partners that its joint leadership of the Neo-NAM isn't against any of them but is instead intended simply to maintain "balance" in the hemisphere. The resultant goodwill that Russia would receive from them, and especially the global pivot state of Pakistan, might even give it the edge over India in this nascent "balancing" structure that it's jointly building with it and therefore enable Moscow to keep New Delhi's pro-Western leanings towards the US' so-called "Indo-Pacific" strategy of "containing" China in check.

In other words, although Russia's leading participation in E-CPEC+ would be driven mostly by economic interests, it would nevertheless also have a strategic impact in maintaining the intra-Neo-NAM "balance" between itself and India, which would in turn allow it to avoid becoming the latter's "junior partner" in this informal organization by providing it with the possibility of leveraging its future regional influence with other partners through this project's successful completion in order to "re-balance" their relationship if the need ever arose.

The very thought of this happening would hang over the head of Indian strategists like a Damocles' sword in a way that's impossible for India to ever reciprocally do to Russia even if it throws its full weight behind the US' "Indo-Pacific" vision since that decision wouldn't have any direct impact on Russia like its partner's growing relations with the "Golden Ring" and the global pivot state of Pakistan would have on India.

### **Concluding thoughts**

The balance of power in the trans regional space between West, Central, and South Asia was on the brink of being redefined had Trump not unexpectedly called off his country's peace talks with the Taliban, but while the scenario predicted by the author in his recent analysis on the topic could still unfold if a deal is ultimately struck sometime in the future, it might have to be greatly modified to account for Iran's abrupt change of approach towards India after its Ambassador there just announced his country's interest in exploring the possibility of building E-CPEC+.

The unforeseen timing of this development could change the grand strategic calculus at play by providing Russia with the much-needed opportunity to show the rest of Eurasia that it wasn't "bought off" as India's "junior partner" for "balancing" China through the jointly pursued Neo-NAM after the outcome of last week's Eastern Economic Forum.

Russia can put to rest any suspicions about its long-term intentions by actively participating in the construction of E-CPEC+ and strengthening its ties with each of the three other involved countries as a result, which could also enable it to keep India's pro-Western leanings in check too.

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## Iran laments Indian apathy to cooperation

The frank remarks to the media this week by Iran's ambassador to India Ali Chegeni on the dismal state of his country's relations with India betray frustration and despondency that the Modi government succumbed to US pressure and relegated the Iran ties to the back burner without batting an eyelid. Tehran is pitching hard for reviving the relationship with India. The ambassador lamented that Delhi's decision to "zero out" oil purchases from Iran and meekly submit to the US sanctions does not behave a country like India, which has a proud history of freedom struggle.

What is really intriguing is that although the US exempted Chabahar Port from its sanctions regime, Modi government dragged its feet in the construction of the Shahid Beheshti terminal and in the execution of other affiliated projects such as the railway line connecting the port with Zahedan on the Afghan border. Did the Israel-Saudi-Emirati axis prevail upon our ruling elite to atrophy India-Iran relations? There are no easy answers. Of course, the shocking part is that Iran is now discussing with China the link-up of Chabahar with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), including an LNG pipeline, and is proceeding with the construction of the railway line to Zahedan with or without Indian input.

The Modi government, which claims to prioritise regional connectivity as a top priority in its foreign policy, was only bluffing? PM Modi himself once described Chabahar as the "golden key" for India to access Afghanistan and Central Asia. He even put one of the few dynamic ministers in his cabinet, Nitin Gadkari, as the point person to expeditiously complete the Chabahar project.

Can it be that Gadkari lost interest after an initial bout of enthusiasm, seeing the writing on the wall? According to Ambassador Chegeni, India's trade relations with Afghanistan are "much lower" than what they ought to be. Simply put, India seems to lack a vision in regard of its Afghan policies. The one-dimensional men who drive the Afghan policy are apparently as obsessed with the "great game" Afghanistan as "second front" against Pakistan, etc. that they have no interest in anything beyond spooky pastimes in the Hindu Kush. Such short-sighted approach toward Iran, a major regional power, can come to haunt India. In geopolitical terms, Ambassador Chegeni's disclosure that Tehran is discussing with China and Pakistan a link-up with the CPEC has profound implications. The emerging regional scenario is extremely worrisome.

In a recent article in New York Times, the noted American strategic thinker Robert Kaplan wrote, "Iran is the key to China's plans, just as China's plans are key to Eurasia's destiny." Succinctly put, the wholesale Chinese bailout to rescue Iran from the claws of the Trump administration stems from a long-term strategy drawn up by Chinese planners who have identified Iran as one of the most important countries in connecting Asia to Europe through the BRI. During Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Iran in January 2016, the two countries agreed to expand trade to \$600 billion over a 10-year period and to build stronger cooperation as part of a 25-year plan. According to a recent report in Petroleum Economist magazine, during the visit by Iran's foreign minister Javad Zarif to Beijing in end-August, a "road map" was discussed and the central pillar of the new deal is that China will invest \$280 billion developing Iran's oil, gas and petrochemicals sectors, apart from another \$120 billion investment in upgrading Iran's transport and manufacturing infrastructure.

Within a fortnight of Zarif's visit to Beijing, the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri began an official visit to China at the invitation of Gen. Li Zuocheng, Chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission. His itinerary includes visit to a Chinese naval base. On the second day of the visit, Gen. Baqeri addressed the faculty and students of China's National Defense University in Beijing where he was highly critical of the US' hegemony and military interventions.

Meanwhile, a highlight of the third China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue held in Islamabad on September 7 has been the agreement to explore ways to advance trilateral cooperation under the framework of BRI cooperation.

The three countries will enhance connectivity, extend the CPEC to Afghanistan, and work with global partners to construct a motorway connecting Kabul and Peshawar. The "big picture" is that China, Pakistan and Iran are drawing close like at no time in their common history, and Afghanistan becomes a BRI hub.

China is already Iran's largest trading partner and is a leading investor in the Iranian market. Around 100 major Chinese companies have invested in Iran's key economic sectors, especially energy and transportation, construction of dams, power projects, and railway construction.

According to Iranian reports, Ambassador Chegeni also said, "If India wants energy security, it should look at a stable source like Iran because of its resources, a strong government-to-government relationship, and the friendship between the two countries."

Referring to China's massive investment plans (as outlined in the Petroleum Economist report quoted above), he added, "We are ready to have the same agreement as with China, with India, maybe even more than that."

Ambassador Chegeni's remarks should be a wake-up call. Without a stable, strong and dynamic partnership with Iran, India may soon face the spectre of retrenchment in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The saddest part is that US President Trump is open to relaxing the oil sanctions against Iran and may offer a bailout of \$15 billion (roughly half of Iran's annual income from oil exports) to coax Tehran to come to the negotiating table.

In sum, the US' maximum pressure strategy against Iran has unravelled and PM Modi is ending up as more loyal to it than Trump himself.

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It's our territory

### **China on Ladakh area where Indian & Chinese soldiers had a standoff**

Beijing said it has been "exercising effective jurisdiction" on the banks of Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh. Two-thirds of the water body is controlled by China. Beijing: China claimed that the Pangong Lake area in eastern Ladakh, where Indian and Chinese troops had a standoff, is "entirely located" in its territory and under its "effective jurisdiction".

According to Indian military sources in New Delhi, a scuffle broke out between India and Chinese soldiers on the bank of the Pangong Lake on Wednesday but the matter has been resolved through talks. The incident took place after Indian soldiers patrolling the area did not heed to objection to their presence in the area by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops, the sources said on Thursday.

Two-thirds of the lake in eastern Ladakh is controlled by China. Reacting to the incident, the Chinese Foreign Ministry in a written reply to queries from the media here said that "the areas mentioned in the relevant reports are entirely located in China" and Beijing has been "exercising effective jurisdiction".

"The Chinese border troops have always strictly followed the relevant agreements and consensus between China and India, carried out regular patrol activities on Chinese territory," it said. The statement expressed hope that "India and China would take no action to complicate the situation and ensure harmony and peace in the border areas of the two countries".

The standoff between the troops of the two countries in Ladakh is the first such incident after India revoked special status for Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into two union territories Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. China has objected to the formation of Ladakh as union territory, saying that it undermined its territorial sovereignty. The statement evoked a sharp reaction from New Delhi, which asked Beijing to refrain from commenting on India's "internal affairs".

The Indian military sources said after Wednesday's scuffle, both sides called for reinforcements. However, the face-off ended following a delegation-level talks between the two sides. Both sides disengaged fully after the delegation-level talks, the Indian Army sources said, adding that the incident took place due to differing perceptions of the Line of Control (LAC) between the two countries.

"There are established mechanism to resolve such incidents," said an official. This is not the first time that a standoff has been reported between Indian and Chinese troops in the Pangong Lake area. In August 2017, a major scuffle took place between the troops of both the sides. During that face-off, soldiers from the two countries scuffled and pelted stones.

After that incident, China had claimed that its troops were conducting normal patrol around the lake area. The latest reports of tensions between the two countries came at a time when both the sides are preparing for a possible visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to India next month for an informal summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met Xi in Wuhan last April.

The first informal summit at Wuhan significantly improved the military ties between the two countries after the Doklam standoff. India and China are currently in talks to hold the 22nd round of Special Representatives (SR) talks to resolve the border issue.

Chinese Foreign Ministry said earlier that dates are being worked out for the meeting to be held in New Delhi. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi are the Special Representatives for the talks. India and China have held 21 rounds of SR talks so far to resolve the boundary dispute. The India-China border dispute covers 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC). China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet, while India contests it.

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Money bomb

## **Trump flirts with \$15 billion bailout for Iran**

By Erin Banco (National Security Reporter) & Asawin Suebsaeng (White House Reporter)

Trump says he hates the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran. But he's toying with a French proposal to get the Iranians to comply with it: a \$15 billion line of credit to Tehran. President Donald Trump has left the impression with foreign officials, members of his administration, and others involved in Iranian negotiations that he is actively considering a French plan to extend a \$15 billion credit line to the Iranians if Tehran comes back into compliance with the Obama-era nuclear deal.

Trump has in recent weeks shown openness to entertaining President Emmanuel Macron's plan, according to four sources with knowledge of Trump's conversations with the French leader. Two of those sources said that State Department officials, including Secretary Mike Pompeo, are also open to weighing the French proposal, in which the Paris government would effectively ease the economic sanctions regime that the Trump administration has applied on Tehran for more than a year.

The deal put forward by France would compensate Iran for oil sales disrupted by American sanctions. A large portion of Iran's economy relies on cash from oil sales. Most of that money is frozen in bank accounts across the globe. The \$15 billion credit line would be guaranteed by Iranian oil. In exchange for the cash, Iran would have to come back into compliance with the nuclear accord it signed with the world's major powers in 2015.

Tehran would also have to agree not to threaten the security of the Persian Gulf or to impede maritime navigation in the area. Lastly, Tehran would have to commit to regional Middle East talks in the future. While Trump has been skeptical of helping Iran without preconditions in public, the president has at least hinted at an openness to considering Macron's pitch for placating the Iranian government a move intended to help bring the Iranians to the negotiating table and to rescue the nuclear agreement that Trump and his former national security adviser John Bolton worked so hard to torpedo.

At the G7 meeting in Biarritz, France last month, Trump told reporters that Iran might need a "short-term letter of credit or loan" that could "get them over a very rough patch." Iranian Prime Minister Javad Zarif made a surprise appearance at that meeting. To Robert Malley, who worked on Iran policy during the Obama administration, that visit indicated that "Trump must have signaled openness to Macron's idea, otherwise Zarif would not have flown to Biarritz at the last minute."

"Clearly, Trump responded to Macron in a way that gave the French president a reason to invite Zarif, and Zarif a reason to come," he said. The French proposal would require the Trump administration to issue waivers on Iranian sanctions. That would be a major departure from the Trump administration's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign to exact financial punishments on the regime in Tehran. Ironically, during his time in office, President Barack Obama followed a not-dissimilar approach to bring the Iranians to the negotiating table, throttling Iran's economy with sanctions before pledging relief for talks. The negotiations resulted in the Iran nuke deal that President Trump called "rotten" and pulled the U.S. out of during his first term.

Trump's flirtations with if not outright enthusiasm toward chummily sitting down with foreign dictators and America's geopolitical foes are largely driven by his desire for historic photo ops and to be seen as the deal maker-in-chief. It's a desire so strong that it can motivate him to upturn years of his own administration's policymaking and messaging. And while President Trump has not agreed to anything yet, he did signal a willingness to cooperate on such a proposal at various times throughout the last month, including at the G7 meeting in Biarritz, France, according to four sources with knowledge of the president's conversations about the deal. Several sources told The

Daily Beast that foreign officials are expecting Trump to either agree to cooperate on the French deal or to offer to ease some sanctions on Tehran.

Meanwhile, President Trump is also considering meeting Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September. "I do believe they'd like to make a deal. If they do, that's great. And if they don't, that's great too," Trump told reporters Wednesday. "But they have tremendous financial difficulty, and the sanctions are getting tougher and tougher." When asked if he would ease sanctions against Iran in order to get a meeting with Iran Trump simply said: "We'll see what happens. I think Iran has a tremendous, tremendous potential."

Spokes people for the State Department, White House, and Treasury did not provide comment for this story. A spokesperson for the National Security Council simply referred The Daily Beast to Trump's Wednesday comments on Iran. Bolton didn't comment on Wednesday, either. "By the end he viewed Bolton as an arsonist hell bent on setting fire to anyone's agenda that didn't align with his own including the president's." Trump's willingness to discuss the credit line with the French, the Iranians and also Japanese President Shinzo Abe frustrated Bolton, who had for months urged Trump not to soften his hard line against the regime in Tehran.

Bolton, who vociferously opposed the Macron proposal, departed the Trump administration on explicitly and mutually bad terms on Tuesday. On Bolton's way out of the door, Trump and senior administration officials went out of their way to keep publicly insisting he was fired, as Bolton kept messaging various news outlets that Trump couldn't fire him because he quit. The former national security adviser and lifelong hawk had ruffled so many feathers and made so many enemies in the building that his senior colleagues had repeatedly tried to snitch him out to Trump for allegedly leaking to the media. On Tuesday afternoon, Bolton messaged The Daily Beast to say that allegations about him being a leaker were "flatly incorrect."

At a press briefing held shortly after Bolton's exit on Tuesday, neither Secretary of State Mike Pompeo nor Treasury secretary Steve Mnuchin showed much sympathy for Bolton's falling star in Trump world. "There were many times Ambassador Bolton and I disagreed," Pompeo told reporters. "That's to be sure, but that's true with a lot of people with whom I interact."

According to those who know Pompeo well, the secretary's public statement was a glaring understatement. "By the end he viewed [Bolton] as an arsonist hell bent on setting fire to anyone's agenda that didn't align with his own including the president's," said a source close to Pompeo who's discussed Bolton with the secretary in recent weeks.

Pompeo "believes him to be among the most self-centered people he's ever worked with. A talented guy, no doubt, but not someone who was willing to subordinate his ego to the president's foreign-policy agenda." Whether or not the president follows through with supporting Macron is unclear, as Trump is known to consider or temporarily back high-profile domestic or foreign policy initiatives, only to quickly backtrack or about-face. Courtesy The Daily Beast.

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## **The economy is India's most potent weapon, but it's losing its power**

A red-hot economy was India's greatest strategic strength. It's now diminishing and damaging India's stature, as reflected in responses to the Kashmir crisis

By Shekhar Gupta

India is facing a rising, new strategic threat. It isn't another brigade the Pakistanis moved to the LoC, or another overly dramatised missile test. It isn't even some new incursion by the Chinese. Three things this new threat isn't. It isn't military, it doesn't come from our traditional adversaries, and it doesn't lurk from across our borders.

And here are the three things this new threat is. It is economic, it comes from within, and it threatens to ruin our greatest asset of the past two decades: Global goodwill, the rising 'good guy' image in the post - 9/11 world, only partly because of our stability and democracy, but predominantly because of our rising economic strength.

For simplicity of understanding, see it this way: When your economy is growing at 8 per cent or above, it is a case of what you might call *saat khon maaf* (you can get away with seven murders). At 7 per cent, it becomes *panch (5) khon maaf*. But once your growth is 5 per cent, you are in a dodgy zone.

This is when a rising global power becomes just another flailing Third World economy with a per capita income in that lowly \$2,000 ballpark (Sri Lanka is twice this). For about 25 years since economic reforms were launched in the summer of 1991, India had risen to be the favourite of the world, in the West, the East and in the Middle-East.

India's unique socio-political attributes, its ability to flourish with its diversity when large parts of the world were struggling with it, democracy and strategic restraint had enhanced its global stature. It reflected in the support India received during Kargil, Op Parakram after the Parliament attack, and 26/11.

The bigger strength was, however, economic. India was not only the second fastest growing major economy even in a world growing at express speed, it was grabbing global attention for its rising tech prowess, innovation, friendliness to foreign capital, stable markets and tax regime. India also drew global admiration for the way it shepherded itself out of the 2008 global downturn.

Over these years, India rose as a moderate, predictable and stable continent-sized growth island in a turbulent world, a magnet for global portfolio and direct investment. It gave big powers including China and their corporations a stake in India's stability and security.

This is how a red-hot economy became India's greatest strategic strength in a period when its military spending lagged and modernisation lost pace and direction. A growing GDP was now more powerful than all the megatonnage of nuclear weapons.

If a big power invested in your sovereign or corporate bonds, the last thing it wanted was to be party to any action or policy that destabilised you. Even for the Chinese, the trade surplus rising up to \$60 billion depended on a booming Indian consumer economy.

Sure, they sell India a lot of machinery, power-generation equipment and engineered goods. But which other economy had the size and hunger to swallow tens of billions of dollars worth of low-quality, almost no-tech junk they produce: Toys, slippers, furniture, parasols, gaudy veneers, agarbattis, plastic bangles, trinkets and much other junk that fills the shop shelves in middle and rural India.

This Chinese dependence on India's capacity to import in volumes that no other economy could, vicariously became a strategic asset for India as well. Check out, therefore, China's responses when war-like crises rose between India and Pakistan: Kargil (1999), Parliament attack (2001-2) and 26/11 (2008).

Each time, these were qualitatively better and more helpful than lately. Even the 2009 tensions over the Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang, when Manmohan Singh's considerably less muscular government bravely stared down China, were calmed down uneventfully.

For much of the first term of the Modi government, the growth momentum was not only maintained, but accelerated after the 2012-14 stall. India benefited from it, as did Narendra Modi. His image and stature rose greatly in the community of global leaders. But he broke his momentum himself with demonetisation. India's economic growth has been downhill since.

The big decline has come in the last four quarters and, at this point, nobody is expecting any recovery soon. This is now diminishing and damaging India's global stature. And it reflects in many of the responses over the abrogation of Article 370.

It was indeed a turning point and provocation much greater than any from India since the launch of the 1971 war. But the first indication of this strategic downside of our declining growth had come even before this when Donald Trump talked casually of mediating between India and Pakistan, in Imran Khan's presence.

Trump will be Trump, but it is unlikely that he would have taken such a chance if India's economy was as vibrant as earlier, his companies were investing and making profits rather than coming to him, complaining about Indian tariffs and loss of policy predictability. Walmart, Amazon, medical and drug manufacturers were all crying to him as India made sudden changes to its set policies, including taxation.

Today, a broken Tory government in Britain is talking down to India almost admonishingly on Kashmir, besides acting in a hostile manner at the UN Security Council. Even Tony Blair's Labour had shown greater respect for India in the booming past. Between 2002 and 2013, there were six prime ministerial visits to India. You did, of course, expect goodwill for India to cut across party lines when an Indian conglomerate (Tata) acquired Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Corus for \$14.3 billion and became Britain's largest private sector employer.

All analysis is ultimately hypothetical, but you can't just toss it because you don't like it. Not when it is based on facts. When Trump sat with Imran at that press conference, in his uncluttered mind, India wasn't a strategic ally, but a pesky trade warrior and irritant. On the pure strategic side, India wasn't willing to annoy China, and its interests in Afghanistan conflicted with Trump's.

Some repair work was done at Biarritz last month and a new trade deal can calm things down there. We will know later this month in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) week. The meeting to watch, more than Modi-Trump, will be between Piyush Goyal and his American counterpart Robert Lighthizer. And if it does restore some calm, as it probably will, our point about economy and trade being the new megatonnage of strategic clout would be made.

While the situation in Kashmir looks bad today, it isn't the worst ever. We tend to forget even our recent past, especially if it was pre-Google. In 1991-94, popular anger, state response, repression and violence in the Valley was the worst yet. Torture centres flourished, foreign journalists were barred, encounter killings were common. Punjab was on fire too, with multiple killings daily.

This also coincided with an angry international response and India was friendless. The Soviet Union, our only ally, had just disappeared. America, driven by human rights and non-proliferation groups close to the Bill Clinton administration, was targeting India relentlessly.

There wasn't one public event in Washington where a stellar team of Indian diplomats didn't have to field attacks over allegations of mass murder and rape as a military tactic in Kashmir. P.V. Narasimha Rao was dealing with all this quite mercilessly at home despite being friendless in the world.

The BJP will give him his well-deserved Bharat Ratna in the course of time, and please do remind me then that I had said so. But maybe not for what remains his biggest achievement: Showing us how economics is the biggest post-Cold War strategic asset. He started economic reform in the summer of 1991, markets, GDP and trade boomed, and India's friends appeared in unlikely global capitals.

Note the contrast between the first Clinton Administration (which included Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel who questioned the Instrument of Accession), and the second term when Clinton declared that lines on the subcontinent's map could no longer be redrawn with blood. If a fast-growing economy was a decisive strategic asset even in the early 1990s, a slowing one is bound to be a liability in 2019.

Source: The Print.

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## Israel's Arms sales to India

Bedrock of a strategic partnership analysis

By Harsh V. Pant & Ambuj Sahu

Bilateral relations between India and Israel today stand at a unique juncture. The paradigm shift occurred two years ago, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi in July 2017 became the first Indian PM to embark on a state visit to Israel and the two countries elevated their ties to a strategic partnership. In January 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reciprocated the signal with a visit to New Delhi.

It is clear that both New Delhi and Tel Aviv are according priority to strengthening bilateral ties, a pillar of which is defence. This is driven by their respective national interests i.e., India's long-sought goals of military modernisation, and Israel's comparative advantage in commercialising its arms industries. India was the largest arms customer of Israel in 2017 with sales worth US\$715 million.

To be sure, the ambit of India-Israel defence cooperation has widened to include other domains like space, counter-terrorism, and cyber security; however, the cornerstone remains Israeli arms sales to India. This brief surveys the arms trade between the two countries over the last decade (2009-2018), explains the specifications of the imported defence technology from Israel, and examines their applicability to India.

The first section summarises the origins of arms sales from Israel against the backdrop of wider crests and troughs in India-Israel relations. The brief then looks into the defence imports data of India over the last two decades (1999-2018) and scrutinises the trends vis-à-vis the country's arms trade with Israel.

The third part analyses the defence technologies imported by India from Israel in the past ten years (2009-18) and highlights their relevance. The penultimate section explores the reasons for Israel's emergence as a key arms supplier to India. The brief concludes by making specific policy recommendations for taking the strategic partnership between the two countries beyond arms transfers.

India-Israel relations: a tortuous course

Israel has always been an outlier in India's foreign policy. Both India and Israel emerged as independent states around the same time, in August 1947 and May 1948, respectively. Although India recognised Israel in 1950, it took both countries a long time to establish formal diplomatic ties.

In India's pursuit to mobilise the support of Arab states after independence, it voted against UN membership of Israel in 1949. Relations between the two countries have vacillated for years, primarily because of India linking its ties with Israel to the question of Palestine.

For the next four decades, three broad factors would shape India's Israel policy. First, successive Indian governments were wary of establishing links with the Jewish state because of the country's having a large Muslim population, which has implications on its domestic politics. Second, it may be said that any early potential of India-Israel ties, was sacrificed on the altar of Cold War politics.

The Jewish lobby in France and the United States (US) supported Israel in its mission of defence modernisation, which was crucial for the state to survive in a hostile neighbourhood. New Delhi's commitment to the non-aligned cause implied freezing relations with Israel that was increasingly seen as leaning towards the Western bloc.

Third, India's dependence on Arab states for oil imports led to a pro-Arab tilt in its West Asia Policy, further constraining the country's options in the region. The Palestinian question had also played an important role, and it was hardly surprising that India began normalising its relations only when Israel-Palestine peace negotiations showed progress (eventually culminating in the Oslo Accords of 1993).

Israel has underscored two main motivations for India seeking to normalise relations with Israel in January 1992. First, the goal of self-reliance in producing military equipment was essential to achieve strategic autonomy in Indian foreign policy. Israel was an embodiment of a state that managed to nurture an indigenous military-industrial complex from scratch using state-of-the-art technology.

It had a singular reputation in the defence sector and was keen on its commercial expansion to other countries. Israel was a ripe market for buying new weapons, transferring technology and upgrading the existing machinery. Second, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, India was devoid of a benevolent great power acting as a strategic partner.

Since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship with the USSR in 1971 up until its dissolution in 1991, it was India's largest arms supplier and contributed to 72.46 percent of the Trend Indicator Values (TIV) of total arms imported. As the Cold War ended, New Delhi recognised the need to diversify its sources of arms imports.

It also sought partners for developing joint research and development (R&D) projects to indigenise the defence sector. For the first time in many decades, India's outlook towards Israel was being shaped by pragmatism rather than ideology, leading to a thaw in their bilateral ties.

Defence relations between India and Israel are longstanding. The strategic communication between the two countries began during the Sino-India War of 1962 when PM Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his Israeli counterpart David Ben-Gurion for shipments of arms and ammunition.

In 1965, Israel supplied M-58 160-mm mortar ammunition to India in the war against Pakistan. It was one of the few countries that chose not to condemn India's Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998. It continued its arms trade with India at a steadily increasing rate even after the sanctions and international isolation that followed the nuclear tests.

For India, the credibility of Israel as a reliable defence partner was reinforced during the Kargil War of 1999 when it supplied the Indian Air Force (IAF) with the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) 'Searcher' and surveillance systems for Jaguar and Mirage squadrons. It also upgraded the MiG-21 combat aircraft for the IAF. The Indian Army also received Laser Guided Bombs (LGB) and 160-mm mortar ammunition.

In the 2000s, the India-Israel arms trade mostly involved surveillance and intelligence-related equipment notably Super Dvora-class patrol vessels and the airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) system EL/M-2075 Phalcon. India also purchased 98 Searcher and 50 Heron UAVs. Israel supplied Barak surface-to-air missile system with the Vertical Launching System (VLS) module for the modernisation of the Indian Navy during the period 2003-2006.

India's defence imports (1999-2018): key trends

India has been the world's largest arms importer for decades now; its top suppliers are Russia, the US, Israel, the United Kingdom (UK) and France. Figure 1 summarises the country-wise distribution of arms imported by India in the two decades of 1999-2008 and 2009-2018, respectively. Despite having diversified its arm imports after the Cold War, India still buys the most volumes of arms from Russia.

Overall, in the last decade, Russian share in the Indian defence market was 68.28 percent. It was followed by the US at 9.66 percent, which showed a steep rise from the last decade's 1.13 percent. This can be attributed to

increasing strategic proximity between the two countries in the last few years, especially as Washington started viewing India as integral to the changing balance of power in the Asian region.

Israel has remained among the top arms suppliers to India in the past two decades. Figure 2 shows the TIV values of the arms exported from Israel to India between 1999 and 2018. This is the period when, as briefly discussed earlier, Israel established its reliability following the Kargil War in 1999.

The arms trade between Israel and India was brisk despite US sanctions following the Pokhran nuclear tests. This is evident in the increasing trend in Fig.2 throughout the years 1998-2003, after which the US lifted most of its sanctions on India. Israeli arms exports saw a sharp fall after 2006, when India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a corruption case against Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Rafael Advanced Defence Systems in relation to the procurement of Barak missiles.

Both companies were placed under restricted procurement categories and debarred from filing tenders except in extraordinary circumstances such as during a threat to national security. The Modi Government lifted the ban on both the companies in April 2018.

Source: Observer Research Foundation.

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## **1984 Punjab was the Template for 2019 Kashmir**

By Andrew Korybko

The draconian controls imposed in contemporary Kashmir and the slow-motion ethnic cleansing taking place there in response to its indigenous people's popular self-determination movement were first pioneered by what India did in Punjab 35 years ago when attempting to suppress the Khalistan movement, and a remembrance of those terrible times could prove informative for predicting what might happen next in Kashmir.

India's unilateral "Israeli"-like moves in Kashmir are being described as unprecedented, and in the administrative-territorial sense, they certainly are because an internationally recognized disputed territory hasn't ever had one of the parties partition the area under their control.

That said, the draconian controls imposed in Indian-Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and the slow-motion ethnic cleansing taking place there in response to the indigenous people's popular self-determination movement were actually first pioneered by what India did in Punjab 35 years ago when attempting to suppress the Khalistan movement.

What's being referred to here isn't the increasingly well-known "Operation Blue Star" when Indian forces attacked the holiest site of the Sikh religion and slaughtered both separatists and civilians alike who took shelter within that shrine, but the much lesser-known "Operation Woodrose" that took place soon thereafter and terrorized the region's inhabitants through arbitrary arrests and even extrajudicial executions, with these human rights abuses being kept hidden from the world by India's prohibition on independent journalism in that part of the country during those events.

There was one notable exception, however, and that was Brahma Chellaney, a reporter for the Associated Press news agency whose story was referenced in the online Indian information outlet Live Mint's 2014 article about "Operation Blue Star, when the army controlled Indian media".

The authors rightly raised awareness about his plight at the time by pointing out how he was charged with "violating Punjab press censorship, two counts of fanning sectarian hatred and trouble, and later with sedition" for accurately reporting on the extrajudicial execution of several Sikhs during "Operation Blue Star" and his conclusion that at least twice as many people were killed during that siege than the government officially admitted.

All charges against him were later dropped the year afterwards, but the example that the state made out of him had a chilling effect in deterring other journalists from reporting about the truth of what happened during that attack and the subsequent "Operation Woodrose" that followed.

This is very similar to what's happening in modern-day Kashmir where the occupying authorities won't even allow opposition members of the government to visit the region, let alone international journalists. Just like Kashmiris are nowadays "disappeared" by the government without a trace, so too have Sikhs been experiencing this terror for the past three and a half decades. The Indian government in both regions selectively targets minorities in order

to instill fear within those communities at large, wantonly killing those who are supposedly suspected of harboring separatist sentiments even if some of the victims never had such a thought to begin with.

While the state-sponsored violence in Punjab has died down since its climax in the 1990s (which represented the unofficial continuation of the "Operation Woodrose" modus operandi throughout that period), the region is once again at risk of destabilization as the state prepares to crack down more forcefully against all Sikhs as part of its brutal plan to prevent them from participating in the Sikhs For Justice's (SFJ) peaceful Referendum 2020 campaign for an independent Khalistan.

Interestingly, whereas in the past it was the rebellion in Punjab that eventually spread to Kashmir (although due to completely different triggers but nevertheless sharing the same commonality of being responses to Indian state oppression), now it might be the one in Kashmir that spreads to Punjab (again, due to different triggers but sharing the same commonality).

A better understanding of these sister struggles can help inform observers about what to expect next, which if the Punjabi case is relied upon as the precedent, then it suggests that the government might turn a blind eye to the spread of narcotics into Kashmir in order to accelerate the slow-motion genocide there.

In addition, it can be expected that the ongoing cultural genocide in Kashmir will speed up just like it did in Punjab against the Sikhs. With no independent journalists allowed in the region to document what's really happening there, the risk is extremely high that many Kashmiris will be killed and their culture put under unprecedented pressure just like what's been happening for years already with the Sikhs.

Going a step further with this comparison, any high-profile retaliations by the Kashmiris (whether objectively occurring or false flags) could trigger nationwide pogroms against their diaspora in India and even against Muslims more broadly just like the assassination of Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards led to similar horrific violence being committed against that community at the time.

Whatever ends up happening, it shouldn't be forgotten that India's atrocities in Punjab from 1984 onward set the precedent for its current actions in Kashmir, proving that India has always carried out crimes against its non-Hindu minorities regardless of whether Congress or the BJP were in power.

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

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## **US, France, Britain may be complicit in Yemen war crimes**

UN investigators have also compiled secret list of 160 'main actors' among Saudi, Emirati and Yemeni top brass. The United States, United Kingdom and France may be complicit in war crimes in Yemen by arming and providing intelligence and logistics support to a Saudi-led coalition that starves civilians as a war tactic, the United Nations has said. A UN panel announced on Tuesday that investigators compiled a secret list of possible international war crimes suspects, drawn from their latest report into violations during the four-year conflict between a coalition of Arab states and the Houthi movement that controls Yemen's capital.

Investigators found potential crimes on both sides, while also highlighting the role Western countries have played as key backers of the Arab states and Iran has played in support of the Houthis. The report accused the anti-Houthi coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates of killing civilians in air raids and deliberately denying them food in a country facing famine. The Houthis for their part have shelled cities, deployed child soldiers and used "siege-like warfare", it said.

The Houthis drove Yemen's internationally-recognised government out of the capital Sanaa in 2014. The Saudi-led coalition of Sunni Muslim states intervened the following year to restore the ousted government in a conflict that has since killed tens of thousands of people. The prospect of famine has created what the UN describes as the world's biggest humanitarian crisis.

Secret list of suspected perpetrators

The UN report said its independent panel had sent a secret list to UN human rights Chief Michelle Bachelet, identifying "individuals who may be responsible for international crimes". Its appendix lists the names of more than 160 "main actors" among Saudi, Emirati and Yemeni top brass as well as the Houthi movement, although it did not specify whether any of these names also figured in its list of potential suspects.

Saudi-Led forces launch air attacks against Houthis

"Individuals in the Government of Yemen and the coalition, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, may have conducted air strikes in violation of the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and may have used starvation as a method of warfare, acts that may amount to war crimes," it said. "The legality of arms transfers by France, the United Kingdom, the United States and other states remains questionable, and is the subject of various domestic court proceedings," it added. Commenting on the report, Noha Aboueldahab, a fellow at the foreign policy programme at the Brookings Institution told Al Jazeera that developing a list of perpetrators was within the UN's mandate. "It is part of the UN's mandate to try to identify violations and humanitarian law crimes and, where possible, to identify those responsible for those violations. In terms of developing this list of potential perpetrators is within the UN's mandate. "Although it is difficult to say who is on the list, it would be interesting to see if there are any individuals on this list from the US, France and UK," she added.

Failed accountability

The report also said that it found that a Joint Incidents Assessment Team set up by Saudi Arabia to review alleged coalition violations had failed to hold anyone accountable for any strike killing civilians, raising "concerns as to the impartiality of its investigations". Houthis: Saudi-led coalition bombs Yemen prison, kills dozens. The UN panel said it had received allegations that Emirati and affiliated forces had tortured, raped and killed suspected political opponents detained in secret facilities, while Houthi forces had planted land mines. Air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition in southwest Yemen hit a prison complex, killing scores of people, the Houthi movement and a Red Cross official said on Sunday.

Aboueldahab said that while justice could take time, the UN report was essential for building a case against suspected perpetrators. "The statements coming out of the UN and multiple reports calling for accountability will probably not led to immediate prosecution, the information in these reports is absolutely crucial to build cases in the future."

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## Trade wars are a fool's game

By Eric S. Margolis

According to the great military thinker, Maj. Gen. J.F.C. Fuller, 'the object of war is not victory. It is to achieve political goals.' Too bad President Donald Trump does not read books. He has started economic wars against China, Russia, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela without any clear strategic objective beyond inflating his ego as the world's premier warlord and punishing them for disobedience.

Trump's wars are economic. They deploy the huge economic and financial might of the United States to steamroll other nations that fail to comply with orders from Washington. Washington's motto is 'obey me or else!' Economic wars are not bloodless. Imperial Germany and the Central Powers were starved into surrender in 1918 by a crushing British naval blockade.

Trade sanctions are not making America great, as Trump claims. They are making America detested around the globe as a crude bully. Trump's efforts to undermine the European Union and intimidate Canada add to this ugly, brutal image. Worse, Trump's tariff war against China has damaged the economy of both nations, the world's leading economic powers, and raised tensions in Asia. The world is facing recession in large part due to Trump's ill-advised wars. All to prove Trump's power and glory. Trump and his advisors are right about China's often questionable trade practices. I did 15 years of business in China and saw a kaleidoscope of chicanery, double-dealing, and corruption. A favorite Chinese trick was to leave imports baking in the sun on the docks, or long delaying them by 'losing' paperwork.

I saw every kind of craziness in the Wild East Chinese market. But remember that it's a 'new' market in which western-style capitalism is only one generation old. Besides, China learned many of its fishy trade practices from

France, that mother of mercantilism. China indeed steals technical and military information on a mass scale. But so does the US, whose spy agencies suck up information across the world. America's claims to be a victim are pretty rich.

What Trump & Co don't understand is that China was allowed into America's Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by the clever President Nixon to bring it under US influence just as Japan and South Korea were in the 1950's. China's trade surplus with the US is its dividend for playing by Washington's rules. If China's trade bonus is stripped away, so will China's half-hearted acceptance of US policies. Military tensions will rise sharply.

In China's view, the US is repeating what Great Britain did in the 19th century by declaring war to force opium grown in British-ruled Burma onto China's increasingly addicted people. Today the trade crop is soya beans and wretched pigs. Trump's ultimate objective, as China clearly knows, is to whip up a world crisis over trade, then dramatically end it of course, before next year's elections.

Trump has become a master dictator of US financial markets, raising or lowering them by surprise tweets. No president should ever have such power, but Trump has seized it. There is no telling how much money his minions have made in short or long selling on the stock market thanks to insider information. America's trillion dollar markets have come to depend on how Trump feels when he wakes up in the morning and watches Fox news, the Mother of Misinformation.

It staggers the imagination to believe that Trump and his minions actually believe that they can intimidate China into bending the knee. China withstood mass devastation and at least 14 million deaths in World War II in order to fight off Japanese domination. Does the White House really think Beijing will cave in over soya beans and semi-conductors in a daft war directed by a former beauty contest and casino operator? China's new emperor, Xi Jinping, is highly unlikely to lose face in a trade war with the US. Dictators cannot afford to retreat. Xi can wait it out until more balanced minds again occupy the White House.

Trade wars rarely produce any benefits for either side. They are the equivalent of sending tens of thousands of soldiers to be mowed down by machine guns on the blood-soaked Somme battlefield in WWI. Glory for the stupid generals; death and misery for the common soldiers. This fool's war of big egos will inevitably end in a face-saving compromise between Washington and Beijing. Get on with it.

'Courtesy Eric S. Margolis'.

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