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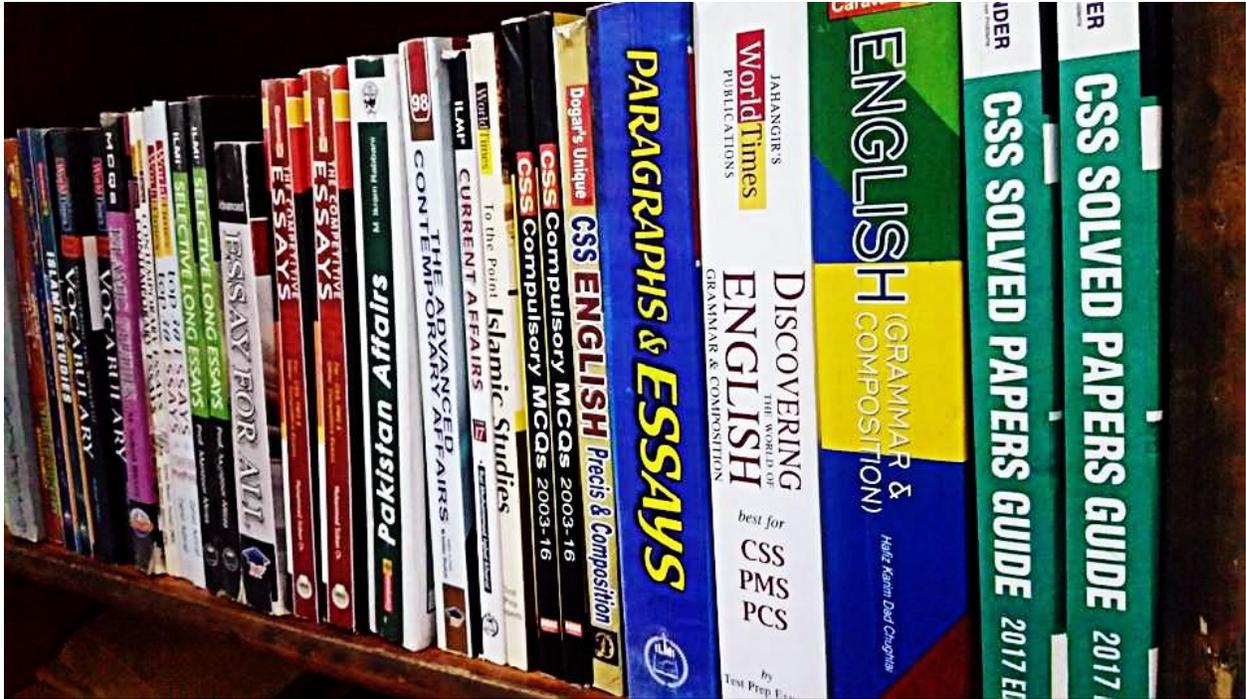
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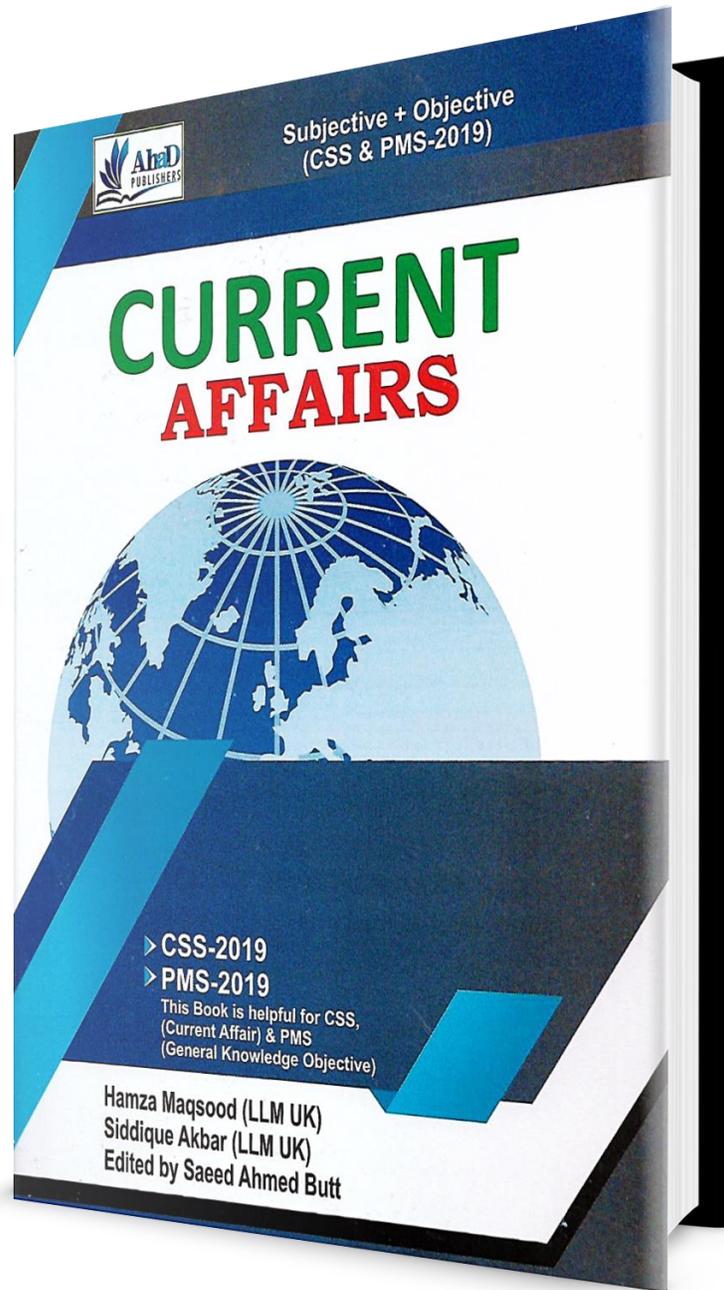
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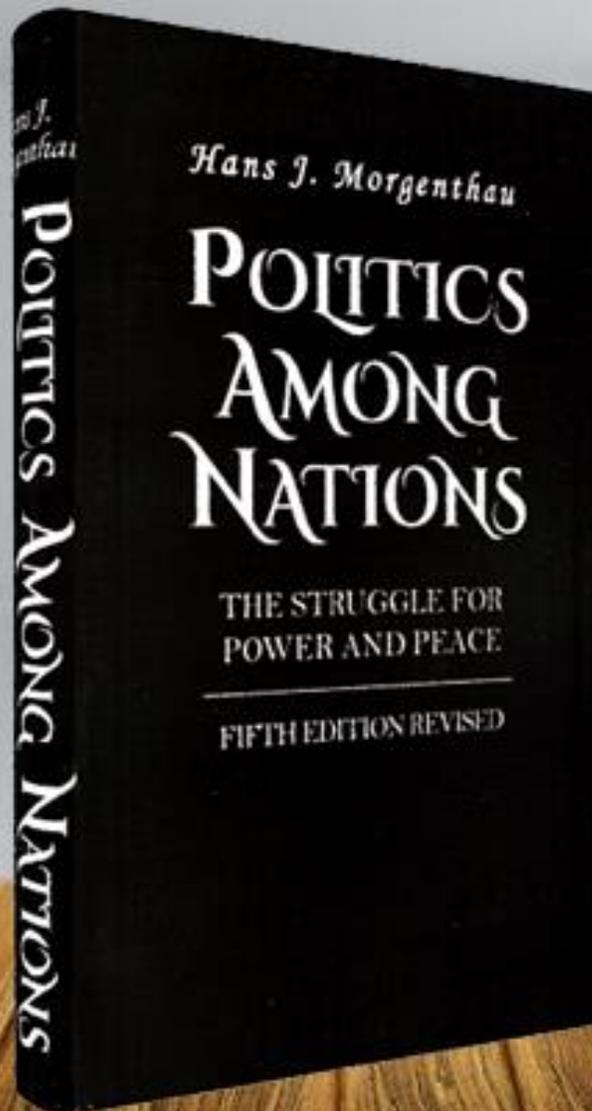


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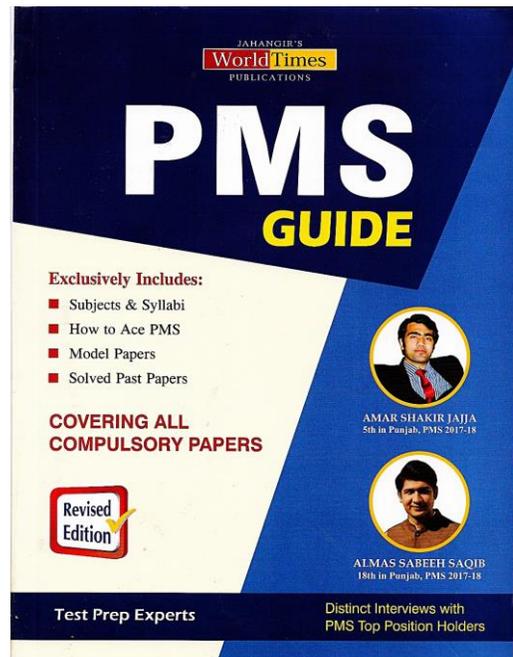
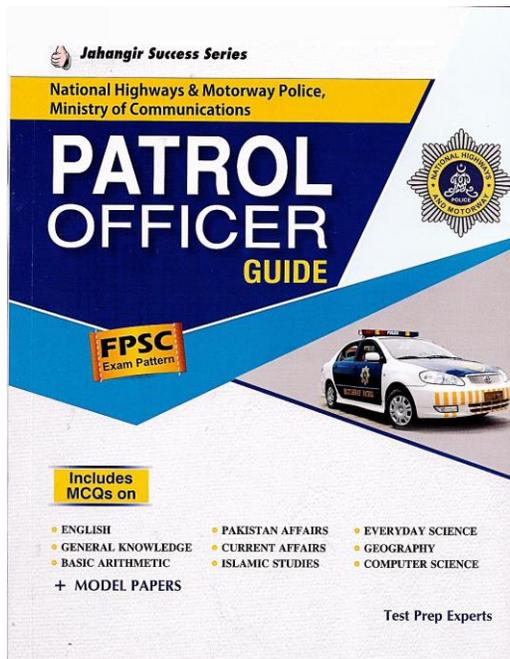
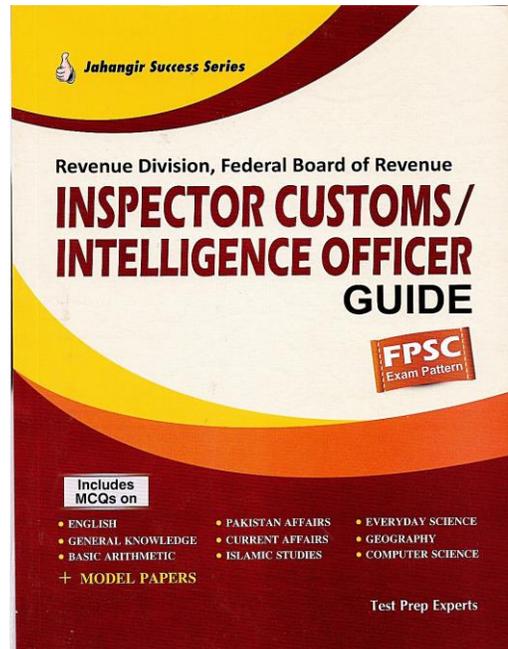
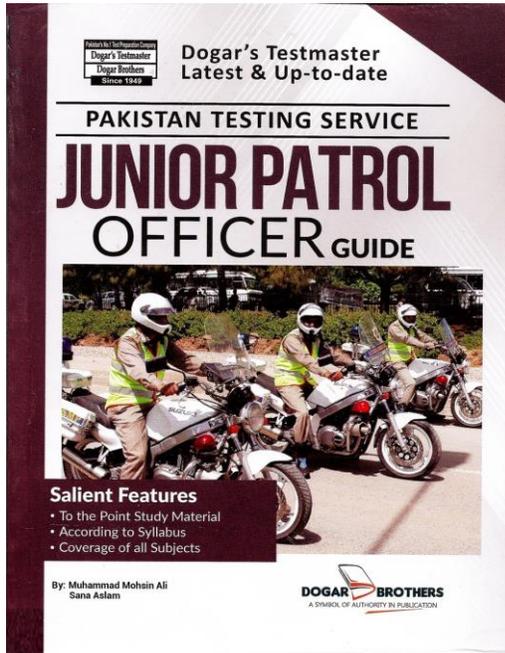


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PAKISTAN

Robust Change in Pak Foreign Policy By Abdul Rahman Malik

THE Robust Change in Foreign Policy has started bearing fruit for Pakistan since the countries like the US and Russia have appreciated Pakistan's role in peace process as well as in the War on Terror. The recent request from US President Donald Trump to bring the Taliban to negotiating table heralds that Pakistan's Foreign Office has done a tremendous job in bringing the diplomatic relations with the US to normalcy. The Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his team has played a pivot role to melt the ice between US and Pakistan to pave the way for regional cooperation especially in US' planned phased withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, in the previous PML-N Government, a great vacuum was created due to non-appointment of Foreign Minister that led to the isolation of Pakistan. The current PTI government has been successful in realignment and redesign of External Policy as well as internal policy.

The World has started to appreciate the positive image projected by PTI Government under PM Khan. Undoubtedly, a new chapter of peaceful Pakistan has been unfolded where the peace has a central role to play. The opening of Kartarpur Corridor, peace efforts for Afghanistan quagmire and propagating peaceful settlement for IoK on the basis of UN resolutions will certainly bear fruit and carve the way of progress and economic boom for crises-ridden Pakistan. The Foreign Policy of any country can play a great role in building the relations of nations on the basis of equality, friendliness and mutual cooperation in the hours of need. The history is stalled with several instances of diplomatic stalemate that led the countries to the hostile decisions and the poor people of the respective countries bear the brunt of hostile rulers or the leaders.

It is ironic that Pakistan's Foreign Policy has never been crafted as per the national interests or mutual interests rather it was driven by individual priorities

which were never fruitful for the country or for the countrymen. The First Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan's refusal to the invitation extended by Russia and preferring US visit echoes that how diplomatic relations have rise and fall in the history of Pakistan. During the political transition, especially during the Bhutto regime, we can ascertain that Bhutto's legacy was to influence the Muslim world and aimed at uniting the Islamic countries against the bipolar world. The foreign Policy during last PML –N Government remained worst since there was no Foreign Minister for almost four years and Sartaj Aziz who was inducted as Advisor to PM on Foreign Affairs, failed miserably since he could not perform effectively owing to his limited authority for engagement with the world powers.

India had outplayed Pakistan by propagating Foreign Policy options and Americans' inclination towards India was witnessed apparently by the world because of the vacuum created by weaker foreign policy. Luckily, the diplomatic relations in the existing circumstances have been very effective due to PTI's effective implementation of External Policy to engage with world powers including the all-weather friend China. The Prime Minister's visits to Saudi Arabia, China, UAE and Turkey have painted a positive image of Pakistan globally and even in his poll victory speech had drawn the attention of World that Pakistan intends to enjoy friendly and peaceful relations with the world especially China, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, US, Central Asian States, Middle and the Far East.

Imran Khan's speech was also welcomed by India since he had offered India to initiate strategic dialogue to restart the stalled talks. The gesture received positive welcome throughout the world especially from the Sikh community of India. The Indian response was disappointing as the Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj went on to say that do not link the Kartarpur Corridor with peace talks since it has nothing to do with diplomatic engagement and she categorically rejected the possibility of dialogue leaving the PTI leadership in dismay. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has so far played the instrumental role by visiting Kabul and holding the meeting with President Ashraf Ghani to ensure Pakistan role in peace building process especially the US phased withdrawal plan and influencing the Taliban to come to negotiating table. With Russia taking lead in hosting the Afghan Taliban moot after almost 30 years of Afghan invasion with an aim to find a peaceful political solution to the Afghan mess. Historically, the Soviet Union was disintegrated after sustaining a

humiliating defeat at the hands of Afghan Mujahedeen and insurgent groups. The US has fought the longest war ever in Afghanistan but consequently lost the war morally that prompted it to pull out its forces out of Afghanistan in phases so that civil administration may take the charge of Security. That is really a tragic and dismal end to US-Afghan war since the US mission remained impossible due to strong Taliban. Trump Administration followed the aggressive policies that led them to isolation. Trump's request was welcomed by the Civil-Military Leadership of Pakistan as Pakistan has always advocated political solution to the Afghan conflict. Pakistan has also played an effective role in so-called War on Terror and will continue to play its part in bringing peace to Afghanistan. Pakistan will use its all resources to bring Taliban on negotiating table given the request from President Donald Trump.

Pakistan will keep on playing its role for peace in Afghanistan since it's in the best interest of the country to secure its borders especially the trade routes of CPEC. Pakistan's surging balance of Payments issue was resolved with the assistance of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and China which is the result of the robust and reshaping of Foreign Policy making it independent based on equality. Pakistan's recrafted and redesigned Foreign Policy serves its interests in the best manner and all credit goes to PM Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Foreign Office team for projecting the positive image of Pakistan in the world.

— The writer is freelance columnist, based in Sindh.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/robust-change-in-pak-foreign-policy/>

Pakistan's Energy Mix By Maryam Sarim

As the demand for energy continues to grow around the world, countries are using diverse resources to produce and distribute power to consumers. Recent figures indicate that countries meet as much as 80% of their energy requirement from fossil fuels i.e. oil, natural gas and coal. The remaining 20% needs are met by nuclear (5.8%), hydro (2.5%), wind, solar, biofuel, wood and biogas (10.8%). This use of different sources to generate electricity is referred to as “energy mix”. Over the last five years there has been a strong shift from use of fossil fuels to renewable sources for power generation with nearly two-thirds of new generation investment going in renewables.

There is now a broad consensus that in order to have sustainable energy supply and curb environmental damage caused by traditional power generation methods, it is imperative to have a well-proportioned energy mix. Today one-fifth of energy produced globally (165 gigawatts) comes from solar, wind and hydro-power. This is attributed to technological innovations that have led to improved efficiencies with decreased costs, improved policy support and affordable financial solutions.

China, India and the US are leading the global revolution for renewable energy, currently accounting for two-thirds of expansion whereas most EU and Scandinavian countries are meeting more than 20% of their energy needs from renewables. Pakistan is far behind in renewable race as only 2% of its energy comes from renewables and 64% from thermal (fossil fuels), 27% hydro and 7% nuclear. Relying on pricey fuel imports to meet this 64% need puts a huge burden on the country's ailing economy whilst also increasing perilous carbon emissions. Some are of the opinion that hydro-based power plants may offer the best possible solution with lowest variable cost. These projects, however, are heavily capital-intensive and require massive upfront investments and fixed capacity payments. Growth in such plants has been slow due to funding arrangements and political disagreements between provinces.

Experts around the world are advocating use of renewable sources for power generation. Pakistan enjoys an ideal location for installation of solar systems with the highest irradiation levels. The government has taken a series of steps to

attract investment in projects relating to renewable energy set-ups. These include concessionary financing, net metering options (i.e. selling excess generation to the grid), etc. With slow progress financial institutions have been unable to extend financing for renewable projects whereas businesses and household users lack awareness and trust in technology for adoption. While some utility scales and distributed solar and wind power projects have been initiated with government support, these are limited and most have yet to reach their full potential.

The Pakistan government needs to reassess its current energy mix and devise the country's energy policy based on a cost benefit ratio as well as sustainability and optimal utilisation of indigenous resources. The environmental impact of different components making up the mix needs to be looked at critically as it can help the country curb the growing menace of pollution while reducing imports for energy. Lessons may be learnt from China which has surpassed its 2020 solar installation targets and is expected to increase wind generation target by 2019. India too is leading the renewable revolution and is expected to double its renewable capacity by 2022, with 90% of renewable growth coming from solar and wind. Pakistan must harness the abundance of renewable resources including sun, wind and other renewables to produce clean energy at much lower cost. These steps will help the government efficiently meet its energy and CO2 emission targets.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 2nd, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1879268/6-pakistans-energy-mix/>

Pakistan's Population Challenge | Editorial

A mere glance at population statistics shows that Pakistan is not headed in the right direction. While the country stands at the sixth spot in the list of most populous countries, it is all set to move up by two notches by 2030 if no measures are taken to bring down the annual growth rate of 1.43 percent.

Experts at a recent conference held at Dow University in Karachi have stressed the need for urgent measures, and with good reason since all five countries with populations greater than Pakistan's have brought down their growth rates. The population is growing in China, United States, Brazil and Indonesia at a rate less than a percent. Though India's growth rate is higher than a percent, it is still lower than ours.

Since the federal government has yet to announce any specific measures to bring down the growth rate, now is an appropriate time to remind Prime Minister Imran Khan of the resolve expressed in his party's election manifesto to tackle the population challenge. The PTI manifesto has acknowledged that Pakistan has one of the lowest contraceptive prevalence rates in the world. This, coupled with poor maternal and neonatal health facilities, needlessly puts the lives of many young women in harm's way.

While a concerted effort is needed to make contraceptives and reproductive healthcare more accessible, the state also needs to instill in medical professionals a progressive approach. Those serving in the public sector must have no business asking couples or young women who approach them for a range of medical needs about their marital status. Abortion is a disputed issue and a controversial component of Pakistani state – the Council of Islamic Ideology – permits it within the first 120 days of pregnancy. However, it needs to be said that this is a regressive provision endorsed by a body that is quite needless in the first place. Since women carry the brunt of a pregnancy, it has to be their decision to keep it or abort it. The state must uphold this principle in its legal codes to give respect and dignity to its women citizens.

While these changes will be helpful, the country urgently needs a comprehensive family planning programme. The state will have to take the lead, but efforts will

need to be coordinated not just with civil society actors but also economic actors. This point is crucial because family planning can simply not go about successfully if it doesn't take place alongside prudent management of the economy. This means that state institutions must recognise that social and economic background of a household plays a very significant role in people's decision to have children. In economic terms, the elites and the upwardly mobile middle classes can afford to invest in their children's education and upbringing. However, for many a household living below or around the poverty line in the country, children are potential bread-earners who are sent to the labour market in a very early age to add on to the family meagre earnings. The purpose of highlighting these class differences is not to reinforce them through state policy. On the contrary, the point is that the family planning policy must be integrated with the economic policy to eradicate poverty and promote equity in terms of opportunities for socio-economic advancement. We will only need to lift all the households in the country to a certain income level where they don't think of newborns as potential bread-earners. Once that is done, we would have tackled much of our population challenge. *

Published in Daily Times, January 8th 2019

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/341680/pakistans-population-challenge/>

The Year 2018: Was it Good or Bad For Pakistan? By Shahid Javed Burki

To many in Pakistan, the country did not look well as the year 2018 ended and 2019 began. The rate of economic growth had slowed down, the level of external and internal debt as proportions of the gross national product had increased. Investment as percentage of national income had declined. The production of cotton, the mainstay of the country's industry and exports had, declined by a significant amount, threatening to dampen exports.

The international community did not favour Pakistan. One indication of this was the way the country's passport was treated at entry points across the globe. According to the Henley Passport Index, the Pakistani passport was fifth from the bottom in the respect it received. The country was not in good company: the bottom five included, in addition to Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

One way of describing the way the world looked in 2018 is to quote at some length from a column by Nicholas Kristof, a regular contributor to The New York Times. "The world is, as everyone knows, going to hell, but there is still the nervous thrill of waiting to see which dark force will take us down. Will the economy collapse first, the ice sheets melt first, or chaos and war envelop us first?" Kristof could have added more items to his list of negatives. For instance, would the United States and China go to war as the Asian nation was on its way to becoming the world's largest economy. If that happened it would be in line with the thinking of Thucydides, the Greek sage, who centuries ago predicted that when a power that is rising challenges the power that has remained at the top, the result inevitably is military conflict. He had come to that conclusion after watching the rise of Athens that led to a war with Sparta.

This way of reading the world is not different from the way many in Pakistan look at their country. There were troubles brewing closer to home in Pakistan. The year 2018 saw Donald Trump, the American president, lose interest in Afghanistan and Syria. As the year was coming to close, he threatened to pull out his country's troops from these two areas of conflict, arguing that their

presence there did not reflect the “America first” approach he had adopted to the making of public policy.

But there are antidotes for the world as well as Pakistan that don't enter the thinking of people. First, let us look at the world. According to Max Roser of Oxford University and his Our World in Data website, every day 295,000 people across the world gained access to electricity for the first time; another 350,000 were able to access clean drinking water; each day 620,000 people were able to get online for the first time. Only about four per cent of children worldwide died by the age of five. Every day in the year 2018, as many as 15,000 children died but the number in the 1990s was 30,000. Until about the 1950s, a majority of humans had always lived in absolute poverty defined as income of less than \$2 a day. The proportion now is less than 10 per cent. Worldwide, 86 per cent of all one-year-olds have been vaccinated against major diseases.

To go back to the column by Kristof, “it is of course true that there are huge challenges ahead. The gains against global poverty and disease seem to be slowing and climate change is an enormous threat to poor nations in particular... So there is plenty to fret about. But a failure to acknowledge global progress can leave people feeling hopeless and ready to give up. In fact, the gains should show us what is possible and spur greater efforts to improve opportunity worldwide.”

What is true for the world is also true for Pakistan. With 210 million, we account for three per cent of the world's total population. I visited Pakistan twice while working on a book that focuses on two developments: first, the elections of 2018 and how they are likely to strengthen Pakistan's political system and second, Pakistan's evolving relations with the world outside. During these visits, I found an increase in feeling of despair and despondency. I am about to publish an edited book on Pakistan's first 70 years. In my own contribution to the volume, I took a long view; looking at the country from the time of its birth to the year 2017.

During this time the country's population increased more than eightfold. At the time of country's birth, about a million people lived in large cities; there are now 30 million people in cities with more than one million people. Of the 24 million who lived in what is Pakistan today — not counting the eight million who came in as refugees from India — 60 per cent, or 15 million, were absolutely poor. The

number of poor is now about 35 million or less than 17 per cent of the population. Looking at these numbers in a different way, had the incidence of poverty remained at the level of 1947, 120 million people would have been in that state at the end of 2018. In other words, Pakistan has managed to keep 85 million people out of poverty.

It is on the political front that Pakistan made the most progress in 2018. The country's youth — those below the age of 30 numbering 125 million — voted overwhelmingly to install in power a new kind of politician and a new kind of political party. Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is not a dynastic political party drawing its strength from patron-client relationships as did the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. Not a single member of Imran Khan's large family has been placed in a senior position either in the party or in the government he heads. That cannot be said about the PPP or the PML-N.

A lot of good things happened in Pakistan in 2018. These should be taken note of in order to develop a more positive view of the country in which we live. Only with a positive outlook by the citizens will the world outside begin to view the country differently.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 14th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1887734/6-year-2018-good-bad-pakistan/>

Core Issue Between Pakistan and India By **Khalid Saleem**

In alluding to what has come to be known as the 'core issue' between India and Pakistan, one recalls the assertion of the Quaid-e-Azam that Kashmir represented the jugular vein of Pakistan. The Quaid was not given to making rhetorical pronouncements. As a pragmatist and a jurist, he chose his words with care before uttering them.

Let us then apply our minds to what his assertion about Kashmir implied. The jugular vein and the body are mutually inter-dependent. Pakistan's life-blood — water — passes through Kashmir. Kashmir's life force — its commerce, its people's very livelihood, its cultural heritage — all lay through its contacts with what is now Pakistan. Both Kashmir and Pakistan have suffered all these years because of artificial man-made barriers between the two entities.

Regrettably, the Quaid did not live long enough to influence the course of events that followed. The question that presents itself begging for an answer is: had he survived for a few more years would he have allowed this issue to linger on? Regrettably, the succeeding leadership failed to live up to his ideals. Several issues (among them the Kashmir dispute) — that should have been tackled betimes but were not — bear testimony to this. Suffice it to state that after the Quaid, successive leaderships appear to have missed the bus, so to speak!

The struggle of the people of Kashmir predates the partition of what was then British India. Even before the British called it a day, the people of the State had already asserted, through a valiant struggle, their inalienable right to decide their own future. When the matter landed in the Security Council of the UN, the world body went on to put its stamp of approval on the fundamental right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Certain misconceptions and cobwebs — that have clouded the issue since — need to be clarified and swept away. Firstly, this is by no means a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. While there may be no bar on bilateral discussions or negotiations between the two countries, any decisions taken by them bilaterally are not legally binding unless they are formally endorsed by the

remaining two parties: the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the international community through the UN.

More importantly, this is not an issue of religion or creed. The decision of the UN is based on the fundamental human right of self-determination of all people of Jammu and Kashmir, irrespective of their religious denomination. The universal right of self-determination is a secular concept and it must be accepted and recognised as such. India has tried to present to the world that the Kashmiri resistance is being waged by so-called 'Islamic fundamentalists'. This is not borne out by the facts. If the lid of Indian state military occupation were to be lifted, it should become evident that the Kashmiri resistance has a much wider base in the disputed state than what India would have the world believe.

One other point needs to be clarified. The Indian establishment has tried off and on to confuse the international community by drawing a comparison between the Kashmir issue and the India-China border dispute. The two are not open to comparison. The India-China border dispute is about territory, while the Kashmir issue is about the fundamental human rights of over 10 million people. You can freeze disputed territory, but how can you freeze the genuine aspirations of millions of people?

It is imperative that the two countries resolve to equitably settle all the contentious issues between them, foremost among them the Kashmir issue. The longer these issues remain unsettled, the more the chances of their developing into festering sores, eating into the very vitals of the region. The world has moved fast. Options are shrinking by the day. There is no time like the present. The leaderships of the two countries should do well to grasp the moment.

Insofar as Pakistan is concerned, an equitable settlement of the Kashmir issue should help repay part of the debt this country owes to the Father of the Nation.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 14th, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1887736/6-core-issue-pakistan-india/>

New Pak Envoy in Washington: Challenges and Opportunities | Editorial

Dr Arshad Majeed Khan has presented his credentials as Pakistani Ambassador to US President Donald Trump in Capitol Hill, Washington. He was earlier appointed as ambassador to Japan and has experience of working at different diplomatic positions in the US. He is a career diplomat, which is both his strength and weakness given the nature of challenges and opportunities that are laid in front of him.

Consider. Mediatization of international relations has reduced role of envoys in the fast changing world. The incumbent government heads of both the countries – US President Donald Trump and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan – have a knack for thinking aloud on Twitter. When leaders are prompt in publicizing their actions and reactions, diplomats are reduced to just draw in the lines that have already been set off. Their moves are well predicted and countered. Hence, why would they be taken seriously in foreign capitals where decision-makers know that they are just modern postmen!

In this scenario, need for powerful personalities to shape bilateral ties arises more than ever, which is why Pakistan has had non-career diplomats in Washington. Such personalities are self-driven and find out-of-the-box solutions instead of digging themselves deep in routine file work. But they are bent over under the political baggage they have to carry and the processes they set in motion hit controversies when they step down. True, many of these controversies are born out of the officialdom e.g. leakage of documents and creation of bureaucratic bottlenecks.

However, from the perspective of Pakistan, boosting bilateral business will be a challenge for Ambassador Khan. The Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has stated in public that economy is among its top priorities. On December 27 and 28, 2018, the PM himself chaired a conference of ambassadors of Pakistan in Islamabad in which they were told to boost international trade.

Importance of this conference can be also be assessed from the fact that top diplomats like Pakistan's permanent representative (PR) for the United Nations

Dr Maleeha Lodhi, envoys to China, Russia, UK, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and UAE were all in attendance. But just a couple of days before this moot, Ali Jehangir Siddiqui, whom the outgoing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government had appointed as the US ambassador in its last leg, was let go. Siddiqui was given the task to explore business avenues in the US and being a successful banker he had the right ingredients for this task. This one single episode is enough to judge seriousness of the government to do the job.

From the US perspective, the key challenge for Ambassador Khan is to achieve a peaceful settlement of conflict in Afghanistan. The US president is not hesitant in hammering Pakistan for doing more in Afghanistan. His statements on the need for stability in Afghanistan run contrary to his action of pulling out the US troops from that country. Pakistan has brought Taliban on table with the US and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi is convincing them to also engage with the Afghan government.

There is a clear consensus in Islamabad that stability in Afghanistan is needed for peace in the region. This conviction at home will be an opportunity for Ambassador Khan to avail while securing good business deals and financial packages from Washington. We also hope that the new Ambassador will mend ties with a historic long term ally that have gone sour in recent years. *

Published in Daily Times, January 15th 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/344279/new-pak-envoy-in-washington-challenges-and-opportunities/>

What Challenges Will The Government Face in 2019? | Editorial

THE new year begins on a note that is somewhere between hope and apprehension.

Nearly six months into its tenure, the PTI federal government is now surely as well prepared as it will be for the enormous governance challenges ahead.

The PTI's stuttering start may have been undesirable, but worse would be to continue the policy indecision that has characterised much of the government's term so far, especially in the economic arena.

The new year is on track to be one of the toughest economically and financially that the country has witnessed in recent times.

While politically, the PTI, PML-N and PPP can argue over their respective performances in office, what is undeniable is that the PTI now has full stewardship of the economy.

The decisions Prime Minister Imran Khan's finance team led by Asad Umar makes will be enormously consequential — the margins between survival and disaster are small for great swathes of the population.

Decades of economic mismanagement should not obscure the fact that the PTI government has an enormous responsibility to the people of Pakistan.

On the accountability front, the PTI will to a greater degree be master of its own fate. With PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif in prison, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif in the custody of NAB and PPP boss Asif Zardari set to face intense scrutiny, the ongoing accountability drive seems likely to perpetuate political uncertainty.

But much of that uncertainty stems from a perception that the accountability exercise is selective and politically motivated.

In the new year, the PTI will have an opportunity to demonstrate that not only is accountability across the board but that the political opposition to the PTI is afforded a fair and transparent process.

If the PTI fails to deliver a more balanced accountability process, political turmoil will likely intensify.

Certainly, the allegations against Mr Zardari are serious and he will need to provide adequate explanations.

Similarly, the legal process against the Sharif brothers must continue as per the requirements of justice and due process. There ought to be no turning back from the exercise — but accountability for all and fair accountability ought to be ensured.

Finally, while much has been made of the PTI government and state institutions having managed to avoid the familiar civil-military and inter-institutional friction that has blighted the terms of previous governments, if all national institutions are to be on the same page that page must be a lawful, constitutional one.

With civil liberties under attack, a free media imperilled and the space for constitutionally protected and legitimate dissent eroded, there is a risk that the same-page mantra may lead to the destruction of democratic norms and a return to authoritarian tendencies in the state.

Pakistan must remain a constitutional democracy with the highest protection afforded to the fundamental rights of its people.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1454788/challenges-in-2019>

Addressing Multiple National Challenges By

Talat Masood

It has been experienced that countries have succeeded when their leaders have consistently pursued policies weighing all major internal and external factors. Pakistan has faced multiple problems ever since its inception and this approach has seldom been applied. We have mostly looked at national challenges through a narrow lens and tried to address them piecemeal. The most glaring example of this flawed approach is that we have viewed security, or economy or politics through a linear prism. Military and civilian governments have more or less suffered from this weakness, including the present one.

The serious threat Pakistan faced from India since its inception, subsequent events that followed Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and later the catastrophic incident of 9/11 and to date, the focus has essentially been on security. This led us to join military pacts and be part of major global alignments for a significant part of our brief history. It had its monetary benefits in the form of loans and aid and we were recipients of modern military hardware. This placed Pakistan in a better position to balance India's military prowess. But as nothing comes free it had a price, a price that we continue to pay right up to date. We were part and at times at the very centre of major power rivalry that came with a heavy cost.

This is not to say that during these years the military and civilian governments did not focus on human and infrastructural development but mostly through loans and foreign assistance and at a slow pace. And each of these agreements with foreign countries had strict conditions the consequences of which we continue to suffer.

The damaging aspect of this lopsided national approach has been that successive governments and the people have lost their sense of pride and dignity about their country. A classic demonstration of this is the cavalier manner in which the present government is portraying the recent loans and deferred oil payments from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and China. Indeed, this is an invaluable assistance from allies at a time when the country is facing a critical financial crisis for which we are most grateful. It also cannot be overlooked that the COAS

played a major role in facilitating this assistance. The reliance of these countries on our military for ensuring the integrity of their projects in Pakistan, or in case of Saudi Arabia the safety and protection of holy places is a manifestation of this unique relationship.

At the same time, it is a moment for serious reflection when a country of 220 million people, the fifth largest in terms of population, a nuclear power and fielding one of the biggest professional armies is not financially self-reliant. One is tempted to ask how is that we compare ourselves in every major aspect of national power with our adversary but not so when it comes to having a self-sustaining economy or while measuring national pride. Financial dependence results in subservience and compromise on sovereignty and self-respect. It is not that the country is incapable of being self-reliant and economically viable. What is required is to have the national resolve to widen the taxation base, focus on improving the industrial and technological areas while simultaneously addressing educational and infrastructural development. Experience of other rapidly developing economies like South Korea and China indicates that progress requires an educated polity and a reasonable health cover for its citizens so that they are in a position to earnestly endeavour to achieve national goals.

This would also require close coordination with provinces, as some of these subjects lie in their constitutional domain. And this demands a more cooperative relationship with the opposition that has been grossly lacking. The opposition is up in arms against the government and parliament practically paralysed with hardly any legislation or serious business being undertaken. There is an endless mantra on corruption by ministers and government spokespersons. It has value provided, it does not lean towards witch-hunting opposition leaders and the quest for its eradication remains universal.

The internal reformation should be accompanied by a serious reappraisal of foreign policy and its compatibility with national goals. This would require a serious effort to improve relations with Afghanistan and seeking a working relationship with India. This can only occur if there is a major reassessment of our policies in terms of how we deal with the Afghan Taliban and the role we play in bringing them to the negotiating table. With India, the situation is more complex but essentially both countries will have to come to an understanding to desist from undermining each other. And try to resolve their political differences

through dialogue and mutual give and take. The irony is that India and Pakistan have failed in their Kashmir policies. Modi government's policy of brutally suppressing the Kashmiris has reignited their resolve to stand steadfast in their pursuit for self-determination. In the same context, Pakistan's sincere efforts to arouse the world's conscience against Indian brutalities has not been successful. It is indeed reprehensible that the Western world that claims to be the champions of human rights looks the other way when it views the happenings in Kashmir. Consequently, it has given India a cover to hide its atrocities under the guise that Pakistan is promoting terrorism. Sadly, Afghanistan too has been able to sell its side of the story that Pakistan provides haven to its enemies.

For any country to make progress, it should have a functional society and an internal and external environment that is peaceful. No one expects that Pakistan would achieve these goals soon but at least our trajectory and resolve should be in the right direction. Unfortunately, one does not see that happening so far. I could add a few more prerequisites for progress, but those listed should suffice to illustrate that Pakistan is weak in most of the basic attributes that demand a nation to transform itself and be counted.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1888954/6-addressing-multiple-national-challenges/>

Increasing Urbanisation By Murtaza Talpur

/ Iftikhar Ahmed

Urbanisation is a key global challenge. During the 1950s, two-thirds of the world population lived in rural areas and only one-third in urban areas. Now, approximately five per cent of the world's continents are occupied by city centres. They make 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emission and global energy consumption.

For those who are searching for a better quality life, urbanisation is a great opportunity. Therefore, people from rural areas migrate to cities to escape poverty and lack of opportunities. Urbanisation, no doubt, means transformation, globalisation and graciousness, if managed and planned properly.

The major historical discoveries, innovations and technological developments have been initiated in cities. The city phenomenon has given birth to these ideologies: democracy, neoliberalism, capitalism, industrialism and many other political, socio-economic and cultural. A large amount of fiscal and monetary undertakings materialise in cities. The metropolises are the centres of social flexibility and commercial marketisation.

Pakistan is a poor country. It stands at number six on the world's growing population index. For the last two decades, millions of people from rural areas have migrated to cities in pursuit of decent and dignified life. The intensifying urbanisation peril has made cities stunted, overcrowded and devoid of basic amenities. They are not planned properly in sanitation and sewerage, giving way to air, water, noise and plastic pollution at large. This has also led to challenges of resources distribution and management.

As cities grow, slums proliferate that set off a plethora of water, sanitation and health problems. Thus, industrial waste and sewage contaminate water sources further leading to high fluoride and arsenic contents, which trigger off epidemics. Recent studies have revealed that high levels of nitrates and chlorides are found in water sources of Karachi and in many other urban centres that trigger water-borne diseases.

It seems too hard, for the government, even to manage a small town with a maximum of 0.3 million population. Then, how is it possible to plan and manage big urban cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Quetta? Karachi's population alone has grown by 9.3 million since the 1998 census to 14.9 million in 2017, while Lahore grew by 75.3 per cent.

The urban population of other main cities of Pakistan are — Hyderabad's total population is 2.2 million out of which 1.83 million live in urban areas; Peshawar 4.3 million of which 2.23 million people reside in urban settlements; and Quetta 2.23 million of which 1.3 million people live in urban areas.

It is a common notion that economies rarely grow without their cities growing. But urbanisation has its 'dark side' too. According to a UN survey, a vast majority of policymakers resists urbanisation rather than welcome it. They are of the idea that the increasing urban tide should be stopped and people may return to rural areas. This disaffection with urbanisation reflects more than just nostalgia for simpler times.

To control escalating urbanisation, the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government needs to boost Pakistan's rural economy, bring high efficient irrigation system, reform the agriculture sector and manage water scarcity. Besides, in towns and cities, small industrial units should be promoted to generate additional economic activities.

At the level of union councils and tehsils, people should have opportunities to venture into profitable businesses. Entrepreneurship and vocational education need to be provided and promoted, especially for females. Sharecroppers and farmers of rural areas need to be linked with markets to sell their produce at profitable rates.

In addition, schools for farmers ought to be opened to give information about contemporary irrigation and agriculture practices and methods. The rural youth should be engaged in skills-based training such as plumbing, driving, tailoring, carpentry, masonry, mobile repairing, and motorbike and car repairing.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1889819/6-increasing-urbanisation/>

The New CJP | Editorial

Justice Asif Saeed Khan Khosa has taken over from Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, now retired, as Chief Justice of Pakistan. In his speech during a full court reference held in the honour of the outgoing CJP, Justice Khosa unfolded his to-do list that prioritises putting own house in order. The new CJP said he would 'also' like to build dams — the dams against undue and unnecessary delays in judicial determination of cases and frivolous litigation; and against fake witnesses and false testimonies. He said he would 'also' try to retire a debt — the debt of pending cases which must be decided at the earliest possible. Justice Khosa's words can easily be traced to an announcement by his predecessor, Mian Saqib Nisar, that he was left with only two ambitions in life — to build dams and to retire the national debt. In a further break from the policy of his predecessor, Justice Khosa has made it clear that suo-motu powers of the top court will be exercised very sparingly.

Justice Khosa sees the time to restructure the judicial system and make it simple and effective. He believes the four-tier judicial hierarchy in the country should be replaced with a three-tier system consisting of the district judiciary as trial court for all civil and criminal cases, the provincial high courts as the courts of appeal in all cases, and the Supreme Court as the last resort. Justice Khosa has the will and the vision to bring revolutionary reforms in the justice system. However, no reform can be successful in isolation, and can only be achieved with the cooperation of the bench, the bar and the government.

The CJP's call for an inter-institutional dialogue — involving the top parliamentary leadership, top judicial leadership and top executive leadership, including the military and the intelligence agencies — suggests a workable way out of the various crises the country is grappling with.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1891448/6-the-new-cjp/>

Pakistan's Place in AI and Computing By Dr Arif Alvi

In the world of science and technology, it is being said that we are at the beginning of the fourth industrial revolution. The first brought in the age of mechanised production from iron, steel, coal and steam. The second was the result of internal combustion engine and electricity. The third was the digital revolution of information technology brought in by silicon, personal computers, cellphones and the internet. With the exponential ability to store data, the skillset required to analyse it has been left far behind.

The fourth industrial revolution has now begun. It is marked by emerging technology breakthroughs primarily in the following 10 areas, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Internet of Things, 5G Broadband, 3D printing, Autonomous Vehicles, Cloud Computing, Blockchain like Distributed Ledgers Technology, Biotechnology and Precision Medicine, and Augmented Reality.

Klaus Schwab in his book *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* states that previous industrial revolutions liberated man from animal power, made mass production possible and brought digital capabilities to billions of people, but the fourth is fundamentally different. It is characterised by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human.

Reasoning has been the biggest strength of humankind but now it can be relegated to machines. Raw, brute crunching of data was done earlier by super computers like the IBM Deep Blue that defeated Gary Kasparov in 1997. Deep Blue was tutored in the basics of chess and had in its memory the strategy employed by grandmasters in thousands of games previously played.

This year AlphaZero made by Alphabet came up with a unique Algorithm for learning of chess. It started with no knowledge of the game beyond its basic rules, but then it played against itself millions of times and learned from its mistakes. In a matter of hours, it taught itself enough to take on the biggest computational beast that exists in chess called 'Stockfish'. The latter was doing

60 million calculations per second while AlphaZero examined only 60,000 but beat Stockfish hollow. In a nutshell this is AI and machine learning. AlphaZero thought smarter not faster.

The convergence of data with massive storage and analytical abilities when applied to available genomic and health data will be creating phenomenal change in human health. A US health service provider 'Epic' has health data of more than 100 million individuals. The analysis of such mega data can exponentially improve diagnostics and treatment. ReLeaSE, another algorithm-based programme, comprises two neural networks that can be thought of as a teacher and a student. The teacher neural network knows the rules behind chemical structures of about 1.7 million known biologically active molecules. By working with the teacher, the student neural network learns over time and becomes better at proposing molecules that are likely to be useful in new drugs. Combining CRISPR the gene sequencing and editing technology with AI drug development programmes, can dramatically revolutionise healthcare.

Augmented reality and virtual reality will overlay data-related information on the real world for example in surgery where layers of tissue shall not have to be dissected in search for diseased foci as the surgeon would be able to see the whole thing in 3D before dissection. Increasingly machines, for example autonomous vehicles, are making decisions with little intervention by humans. Some understanding of this new reality has enabled seven out of top 10 largest companies of 2018, Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, Microsoft, Facebook, Ali Baba and Tencents to become economic powerhouses.

The economic footprint of this emerging revolution is enormous. Augmented reality alone currently valued at \$2 billion is expected to grow to \$200 billion in two years. According to Gartner Inc, in 2020 AI will create 2.3 million jobs. Global business value derived from AI will increase from \$692 billion in 2017 to \$1.2 trillion in 2018, and it is forecast to reach \$3.9 trillion by 2022. Out of this huge chunk, the Pakistani diaspora in Silicon Valley believes that if the right decisions are made, Pakistani software exports may even reach \$30 billion by 2023. Optimistic it may be, but we should accept this challenge as it does not require brick and mortar investment but only intellectual upgradation of our educated youth.

Pakistan needs to be well placed for this great revolution knocking on our doorsteps. Rather than be a consumer that makes us totally dependent, we must become a player and manufacturer of the new systems ensuring phenomenal economic dividends.

There is a consensus in Pakistan that the software engineers we produce are not what the market demands. This mismatch needs to be corrected by a responsive, dynamic curriculum in our universities. For this I would be working with the vice-chancellors of the universities that come under the patronage of President as chancellor. However, for our immediate needs, as this software world is changing too fast, we have decided to top up the knowledge of existing software engineers and to train newcomers also, in a crash course for 100,000 youth this year, under the President's Initiative on Artificial Intelligence and Computing. The programme can be viewed at www.PIAIC.org

John Dewey, the American philosopher-educationist, appropriately said, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." Let us give tomorrow to the Pakistani youth 'today'.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1892350/6-pakistans-place-ai-computing/>

Towards a Polio-Free Pakistan | Editorial

Anti-polio vaccine workers are once again in the field as part of nation-wide efforts to eradicate the disease. Pakistan, which joined the nuclear states' club in 1997, the year when the deadly virus affected 1,200 children in the country, is among the last three countries, besides Afghanistan and Nigeria, still unable to eradicate the disease entirely.

The first half of the last year had a bright outlook in terms of culling the virus, for only a few cases were reported. The second half, however, brought the number to 12. In the month of December, terrifying reports emerged of the presence of polio virus in the sewage samples collected from Quetta, Qila Abdullah and Pishin (Balochistan), Karachi (Sindh), Peshawar and Bannu (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Lahore and Rawalpindi (Punjab). Frantic drives were launched overnight to minimise the danger. Strain analysis states the virus is transmitted from western border hot-spots and Afghanistan to other parts of the country leaving accidental under-immunised children vulnerable.

In some cases, resistance from parents to the administration of the vaccine has also left children crippled forever. Last year, 400,000 children reportedly missed vaccinations in multiple drives. What is perhaps a slightly bright side of this dark picture is that the polio programme is under able hands, which maintain transparency and have been able to register a massive decline in polio cases.

Apart from the programme managers, the real heroes of the huge success, however, are the front-line polio workers who have braved terrorism, harsh weather, overworking, shamelessly low wages and social taboos to purge the country from polio virus. Since the launch of the first vaccination drive in 1994 when then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto administered the vaccine to her daughter Assefa Bhutto-Zardari, to till date these workers have written a shining chapter in the country's history. In 1994, Pakistan saw 18,000 polio cases, and with the first drive, the number fell to 1,400, which was 12 in 2018. In the fresh drive, 260,000 workers are going door to door regardless of rain and snowfall. In some pockets, armed security guards have to accompany the workers. That is a tragedy. Militant outfits seem to have figured that polio is a big political and

economic issue. They have been attacking workers for years only to damage Pakistan's political and economic standing.

Parents' cooperation is the most vital element to make the polio culling drives a success. Instigated by rumours and propaganda, several parents refuse to welcome polio teams at their doorsteps. Last month, polio teams saw a 25 per cent increase in vaccine refusals in Islamabad, and majority of the cases involved seemingly educated families. The government has engaged scholars, bloggers, social media managers, and opinion makers to stem the tide. But more efforts are needed in the polio virus-infested sections – Karachi, Quetta block (Quetta, Pishin and Qila Abdullah districts), Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Peshawar districts. In these pockets, certain clusters see polio vaccination abhorrent. All stakeholders, mostly the parents, need to realise that unless even a single child with polio virus is present in their surroundings, no child is safe from the virus. Collectives efforts are required to make 2019 a polio-free Pakistan. It is time to keep fingers crossed and chip in our share to make the polio virus history from Pakistan. *

Published in Daily Times, January 23rd 2019.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/347105/towards-a-polio-free-pakistan/>

How Imran Khan is Reforming Pakistan's Place in the World By Shahzaib Khan

“We’re gonna have a more transactional relationship...I’ll leave it up to the experts to decide if we should escalate [military action against Pakistan].” That’s US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham in 2011 as he advocates US military action inside the sovereign territory of Pakistan.

“Earlier our (Pakistan-US) relations were transactional that if you give us this we will give you that and if you don’t give us this we will take that away from you.” That’s Lindsey Graham in Islamabad last week as he advocated replacing this transactional relationship with a strategic relationship based on free trade relations.

Now, Lindsey Graham is not the most consistent of critics. Graham fiercely opposed Trump before his election and is currently one of his most influential supporters. But this movement in the outside world’s perception of Pakistan is not limited to the Senator from North Carolina. Pakistan is reforming its place in the world.

“Prime Minister Khan is the agent of change I’ve been looking for,” says Graham. Pakistan’s Prime Minister is making new friends and setting the record straight.

He’s dining with the visionary Mahathir Mohammad in Kuala Lumpur and driving Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nayhan in Islamabad as the Crown Prince of the UAE returns to Pakistan after 12 years. From there he’s off to Doha to meet the influential Emir of Qatar after flying off to Riyadh to meet the powerful Crown Prince, MBS. He’s receiving US diplomats and senators two at a time and signing deals in Beijing. When he’s at home in Islamabad, he schools the President of the USA on Twitter telling him to brush up on his history.

His detractors call it a stunt. That the Prime Minister is flying on state resources when he should be flying commercial to what they consider to be inconsequential dinners and curated photo-ops.

They’re wrong.

Imran Khan's foreign policy is arguably the most dynamically-effective foreign policy from a Pakistani leader perhaps since Bhutto tilted towards Moscow and sought to unite the Muslim world in Lahore.

A big part of his reformist push has been what the Prime Minister calls economic diplomacy. The previous government's foreign policy, or the lack thereof, which was illustrated through the fact that for the greater part of their five-year tenure, the government functioned without a full-time foreign minister, led most noticeably to Pakistan alienating its traditional allies in the Middle East. As Riyadh and Abu Dhabi broke off ties with Doha, and the Gulf Cooperation Council went into meltdown, Islamabad froze. Haunted by a decades-old rudimentary thought process that viewed multi-faceted foreign relations through a one-dimensional "friendly or unfriendly" lens, Islamabad's ties with Abu Dhabi and Doha both went into recession, as Islamabad played it safe, and cautious to offend either by reaching out to the other, retreated from the Middle East altogether. For all intents and purposes, the last government's foreign policy was little more than a reactionary Beijing policy, which involved little exchange of ideas as Islamabad relegated itself to the receiving end.

As part of Imran Khan's economic diplomacy though, Pakistan has reached out, effectively, to the Middle East, rebuilding decomposing bridges between Islamabad and the Middle East. More so, the Prime Minister has done that while the crisis of the Gulf Cooperation Council continues to deepen without compromising Islamabad's position with either Doha on the one side and Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on the other. And it's not just photo-ops either, the diplomatic frenzy is paying dividends. Billions of dollars' worth of dividends. Riyadh has already shored up Pakistan's dwindling reserves with an impressive \$6 billion, only to be matched by Abu Dhabi, while a \$10 billion refinery is reportedly on the way. Nothing, however, illustrates the well-thought-out, dynamic nature of Khan's foreign policy than the fact that while Abu Dhabi and Riyadh shore up Pakistan's economy, it is not at the expense of Islamabad's relations with Doha, as the Prime Minister cemented his warm welcome in Doha with reportedly significant LNG concessions.

Washington is the Prime Minister's next big challenge, and soon to be his next big achievement. Trump's arrival in the White House spelled disaster for Pakistan

as he called out the US-Pakistan relationship for its dysfunctionality. That was expected. What was not expected was Islamabad's awkward response to the aggression. With no Foreign Minister to state Pakistan's case to DC, Pakistan geared up to listen to the damning sentence from Trump without having presented its defence. Trump had come to the White House with a flamethrower directed towards Islamabad and a small note hanging from the tip saying "change my mind". The previous government's reaction was to borrow Trump's flamethrower, turn it on its own face and pull the trigger. Not only was billions of dollars of aid cut off but Pakistan's immense sacrifices in the war on terror were squandered and its reputation devastated, as the ally for which Islamabad had fought a decades-long war turned on it to claim that it had gotten nothing from Islamabad, except "lies and deceit."

It is in this context that Imran Khan has gotten Ashraf Ghani, who previously refused to engage with Islamabad, to thank Pakistan for trying to bring peace back to Afghanistan, and a hawkish republican US senator who previously called for military action against Pakistan, to recognise Pakistan's role in fighting and ending the war on terror.

Imran Khan has argued Pakistan's case, and through his charisma and sustained efforts, has gotten the world to listen. The previously raging American diplomats and officials are now swarming Islamabad to thank it for playing its role in bringing peace to Afghanistan, and the leaders of Doha and Riyadh alike, once again warming up to Islamabad — all while the strategic relationship with Beijing is not comprised in any way. Pakistan's place in the world is forcefully moving towards it being recognised not as a dormant, unreliable and dysfunctional member of the global community, but as an important, serious player in global foreign relations playing an active, and most importantly, internationally recognised role, in building socio-economic bridges and promoting peace in its region.

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Kashmir's Struggle For freedom By Sajjad Haider

The 1948 United Nation's Resolution clearly states that accession of Jammu and Kashmir will be decided through plebiscite; however, India has remained consistent with use of force to dictate its unlawful occupation. As the Kashmir solidarity day approaches, Kashmiris are again hopeful that international community will consider the sacrifices they have made, the carnage they survived, the bloodshed they suffered and pressurize India to discontinue its human rights violation in Kashmir along with its decades' long illegal occupation. With every passing day, the bloodshed of the Kashmiris by the hands of Indian forces makes the Kashmiri people more determined and resolute to attain their long-standing right of freedom from Indian forces. India deceptively projects itself as the world largest democracy, on the contrary, such proclamation seems absurd when the same country disregards the international laws, continues its illegal occupation over Jammu and Kashmir and subjugates its minorities.

India under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule has increased the intensity of vicious atrocities and violence in Kashmir. The current ruling elite in India are those who earlier carried out inhumane massacres of Muslim in Gujrat and are likely to continue the same in Kashmir. Mass defiance against the repressive Indian regime is becoming more and more frequent since the brutal killing of Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Ahmed Wani. An army of more than 600,000 armed soldiers is permanently deployed in Indian Occupied Kashmir, making it world's most militarized zone. The international Human Rights bodies have failed to understand the bloodbaths faced by the Kashmiris in demanding their right of freedom. Their silence over the brutal occupation in Kashmir is depressing which shields the Indian aggression.

Figures speak for themselves, where thousands of Kashmiris killed, millions wounded, children orphaned and love ones lost, yet the violence from occupational forces continues. Kashmiris have suffered permanent eye damage and many have been blinded by pellet guns during protests, yet the human rights organisations remains silent. A Kashmiri journalist rightly pointed out that if the year 2010 was remembered as "year of killing youth" for Kashmiris, the year 2016 will be reminisced as "year of dead eyes". However, the violence never

subjugates, neither will it suppress the Kashmiris to demand for their independent identity. The expression of freedom reverberates in the valley as a deafening roar, indoctrinating fear to the Indian illegal occupation over Kashmir, defying the customs built on the narrative of subjugation and burnishing the forlorn hope of luminous liberty.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan has always supported peaceful resolution of Indian held Kashmir according to the wishes of the Kashmiri people, and as per the UN resolution. Furthermore, the new government in Pakistan has taken bold steps in engaging with India at bilateral level and offered to resume comprehensive dialogue to address all outstanding issues along with the Kashmir dispute. However, the Indian belligerent attitude towards Pakistan and Kashmir never guaranteed any optimism.

Hostile aggression of Indian forces over the Muslim Kashmiris, especially in a disputed territory, also questions the UN efficacy to implement its resolution. UN has failed to implement its own resolution in Kashmir, which shows signs of its failure against aggression on oppressed. The international community must realize that India remains fixated with its use of illegal force, denying any peaceful resolution of Kashmir or bilateral engagement with Pakistan. Rather India continues to carry out the border violations in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, killing innocent Kashmiris living along the peaceful border areas in Pakistan. While engaging in dialogues with Pakistan, the Indian administration cannot fulfil its belligerent mantra against Pakistan; a pre-requisite for winning elections in India. Considering this, there exists no hope that the current governing elite in India will respond to any peaceful settlement of issues with Pakistan.

The writer is a Assistant Research Officer (ARO) at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

The current ruling elite in India are those who earlier carried out inhumane massacres of Muslim in Gujrat and are likely to continue the same in Kashmir.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/25-Jan-2019/kashmir-s-struggle-for-freedom>

PAKISTAN & WORLD RELATIONS

India and Pakistan Need to Engage By Talat Masood

Ever since PM Imran Khan has assumed office he has made several statements and sincere overtures to normalise relations with India. The previous PML-N government was equally keen to improve relations.

In fact, PM Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore on his way back from Russia and a stopover in Afghanistan in December 2015. It was significant that it was the first trip to Pakistan by an Indian leader since 2004, even, if it was in response to an invitation of then PM Nawaz Sharif for a family wedding. It augured well for both countries and the region. But the goodwill was not to last too long. An attack on a base in Pathankot in Punjab state in January 2016 and on an army base at Uri in Indian-Occupied Kashmir in September of the same year gave PM Modi an opportunity to blame Pakistan.

Since then the Indian government has taken a highly antagonistic stance against Pakistan. The more troubling aspect is that PM Modi exploited Pakistan-bashing as a means for gaining support during last year's Indian state elections. Most analysts are of the view that his hostile attitude would persist at least until the forthcoming general national elections due in April-May this year. And Pakistan should wait it out until then. PM Khan in some of his recent statements has voiced similar views.

However, policy of demonising and keeping pressure on Pakistan may continue even beyond. For it is also closely linked to the mass unrest in Kashmir that the Indian government is unable to handle with casualties on the rise. What is worse, the Indian leadership is in denial of the reality that its policy is not working. In fact, it has given a new life and energised the uprising. By accusing Pakistan of supporting the freedom movement in Kashmir India tries to deflect attention from the genuine nature of the revolt and its gross human rights violations.

Contrary to the understanding between the two countries for upholding the ceasefire, the Line of Control remains volatile with each side blaming the other for having initiated it. Frequent firing incidents and occurrence of casualties further aggravate tensions.

The Indian leadership is also uneasy with the China-Pakistan strategic partnership and with CPEC progressing it finds Pakistan's position and role in the region expanding. In opposing this project tacitly it has the support of the US as well.

Furthermore, India loses no opportunity to exploit the grievances of the Baloch people.

India's hostility towards Pakistan has its genesis in the very character of the BJP that traces its roots to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. It believes in the supremacy of the Hindu upper castes and is considered to be prejudiced against not only Muslims but also Dalits, Christians and other minorities. How far it is still relevant or selectively applied probably is weighed against other factors.

Unsurprisingly, there are similar apprehensions on the Indian side that Pakistan has an identity crisis and thus it has to cast India in the frame of an enemy in search of its own identity. So unless that struggle is over the anti-Indian stance will not go away. How far this hypothesis is valid is a moot point.

Whereas Pakistan-bashing by India may be an expedient tactics in the short term, but is it a good strategy? The answer to this question rests primarily what PM Modi's motive is and what exactly is he trying to achieve. His primary aim is to isolate Pakistan, deny its rightful regional role as it is one South Asian country that stands up to India. More importantly, it challenges its position on Kashmir and has become the foremost champion for the rights of Kashmiris.

Pakistan makes every effort to counter India's military advantage, even if it is at a huge cost, by maintaining a modern conventional tri-service military force and a matching nuclear and missile capability. Of course, there are long-and medium-term implications of it to which Pakistan cannot remain oblivious.

Our military leadership's willingness to improve relations with India is not taken seriously by the Modi government. There is a prevailing view in India that the Pakistan army realising that it is being financially squeezed due to the country's current predicament would like to reduce tension along the border. They also maintain as long as the military remains in control of Pakistan's foreign policy and especially as related to India there is unlikely to be any fundamental change in relations.

The impact of adversarial relations with India has implications for our relations with Afghanistan and most of the other South Asian neighbours. In recent months Pakistan has been working hard to develop a strong trust based relationship with Afghanistan independent of India.

Moreover, Pakistan has taken definite measures to tighten control on militant organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba that is accused by India of attacking military and civilian targets notably the 2001 Indian parliament attack.

The use of non-state actors to supplement military capability has led to destabilising society and inviting serious international strictures. No doubt, of late Pakistan has enacted laws and ensured that these organisations are banned and their activists do not remerge under new names. But India would still try to keep the episode alive for propaganda purposes.

Opening of the Kartarpur corridor was a good initiative. It has generated considerable goodwill among the Sikh community in India and globally. Similar initiatives should be taken for other religious communities. And the visa regime should be more relaxed for businessmen, tourists and academics from India.

Despite all the hurdles it is still in the interest of Pakistan, and we believe for India as well, that both countries work seriously toward reconciliation and a cooperative relationship.

Better relations will contribute towards attracting investment, improving trade opportunities and above all enhancing international image. It will give greater leverage while dealing with major powers. If in spite of Pakistan's sincere efforts, India fails to respond then the onus would rest on it.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1899593/6-india-pakistan-need-engage/>

Remaking a Regnant Pak-Russia Partnership

By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

WHILE seeing in retrospect, it is the American-Indian strategic partnership which has clearly dominated the South Asian region yet it may have set off the chain reaction of altered South Asian power dynamics of recent years—thereby having the potential to bring non-traditional partners together in a different paradigm, foreign relations do have a ripple effect. Against this backdrop in recent years, there have been remarkable developments between Moscow and Islamabad that have reshaped a new power — balance in South Asia. Today Pakistan and Russia remain poised to develop a strong partnership — based on commonality of interests and convergence of views on important global and regional issues.

At the end of Cold War, Moscow's influence and interest significantly declined in South Asia. However, after almost two decades there is an obvious change in Russian policies both at domestic and international levels. Changing patterns in Russia's Asian foreign policy will be directly affecting the regional security environment of South Asia. Cementing Indo-U.S. strategic partnership against China, historical India-Pakistan rivalry and conflicting interests of great powers collectively made South Asia one of the most vulnerable regions.

In view of Moscow's capabilities, its reorientation to South Asia will have significant implications for regional security complex in general and Pakistan in particular. The relationship between Pakistan and Russia has been described by many as a tale of misunderstandings and lost opportunities. Pak-Russia relations have been just like a roller coaster ride with many ups and downs and most of the time they have perceived each other in a deleterious mindset. Pakistan's foreign policy has been mainly focused on Western world while Russia has been strengthening its ties with India. In the past, the two countries missed opportunities to cooperate with each other due to minor difference.

The underlying interests of Russia and the US in South Asia, especially after the initiation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have made Pakistan an attractive partner for any power interested in the South Asian region. The policy-makers in Pakistan must realise its political, economic, strategic and geographic significance and make the best of this opportunity. More importantly,

however, the significant shift in Russia's policy in South Asia particularly with reference to the US presence in this part of the world, also builds a persuasive case for warming up of relations between Pakistan and Russia'

Russian strategists and decision makers conceptualize their country's 21st-century geostrategic role as being the supreme balancing force in the Eurasian supercontinent, owing both to Russia's opportune position on the landmass and its history of leadership. This role can't be fulfilled if Russia has problems with any of its counterparts in Eurasia, hence the urgent need to rectify any existing issues and enter into rapprochement with those parties. It certainly helps if there's an overlap of contemporary interest in doing so, such as there is with Pakistan nowadays concerning the War on Afghanistan and the CPEC, the latter of which is understood more broadly by Russia as advancing the trend of Eurasian integration and is therefore in alignment with the country's grand strategy. On the eve of the recently held Shanghai Conference, PM Imran Khan said the CPEC would serve as a vital link for the two countries to the Middle East and Central Asian Republics and open fresh investment avenues, new markets and vistas. PM invited his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev to visit Islamabad.

CPEC has the very real potential of turning Pakistan into the zipper of pan-Eurasian integration because of the prospects that it holds for linking together China, the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Iran, and SAARC and furthermore it's the flagship program of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) global vision of New Silk Road connectivity. OBOR has full strategic complementarity with the EAEU and SCO, and it represents the practical hard infrastructural manifestation of Russia's own Eurasian integration vision.

The Islamabad-Moscow security partnership has strengthened and expanded since late 2014, when the two former rivals signed their defense cooperation agreement. Russia sold four Mi-35M combat helicopters to Pakistan under the deal and both countries have since held two rounds of counterterrorism military drills on each other's soil. Navies of the two countries also recently participated in joint anti-drug exercises in the Arabian Sea. The latest naval collaboration took place last week in St. Petersburg where a Pakistani warship participated in the major Russian Navy Day parade. Russian-Pakistani third joint military drills "Friendship 2018" ended on November 04.

Though viewed from the US-India perspective, this growing strategic connect between Moscow and Islamabad might not be a good departure since it might be an antithesis to US-India regional power trajectory. Yet by all means this revived partnership — in the changing geopolitical imperatives of South Asian strategic culture where both China and Russia hold significant leverage — seems a vital strategy for peace and geostrategic stability. The Moscow-based political analyst Andrew Korybko has said that strong diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Russia will help keep balance of power in South Asia, which has very much been disrupted after the United States boosted its defence ties with India.

— The writer, an independent 'IR' researcher-cum- analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies, also a member of European Society of International Law (ESIL).

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/remaking-a-regnant-pak-russia-partnership/>

New Hopes For Pak-Afghan Relations in 2019 **By Syed Akhtar Ali Shah**

Bruised under the burden of history and geography the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, in general, and those living in the Pashtun belt, in particular, are watching anxiously the moves of multiple players in finding a peaceful solution to the decades-old Afghan conflict. Torn between hope and despair, the intelligentsia of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa underscored the importance of people-to-people contact in forging political and economic relations, in a recently held international conference hosted by Bacha Khan Trust Foundation Network. All the speakers, including this author, emphasised the need for strengthening socioeconomic relations as an integral part of the peace process.

The Pak-Afghan relation can be seen in the light of three interrelated perspectives. The first one is, the historical sociocultural bondages of the people living across the borders of the two countries. The land of Afghanistan, throughout its history has impacted the socioeconomic life of the Indian subcontinent. Our people are connected not only through geography but also by common folklore, heroes, literature and entertainment. In fact, much of the recorded history of India emanated from Afghanistan as most of the dynasties that ruled India were of Afghan origin. Both sides have common poets, writers and philosophers like Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi Balkhi, Jamaluddin Afghani, Rehman Baba, Hamza Baba, Ghani Khan, Qalandar Momand and Suleman Layeq, to name a few. Not only poetry, but music also touches the same chords as Khyal Mohammad, Rafiq Shinwari, Ustad Shahwali, Qamar Gula, Gulnar Begum Sardar Ali Takkar, Naghma and Nashanas are equally popular on both sides of the Durand line. Anthropologically, the identity of most of the ethnicities living in Pakistan is of Central Asian origin, of which Afghanistan is the most important component. In terms of people-to-people contact, perhaps one positive example in the field of sports is the Afghan cricket team that has established its name among the leading cricket playing nations. The assistance in the field of coaching provided by Pakistani cricketers is the kind of assistance that should govern the Pak-Afghan relations in all walks of life.

While we mention positive attributes like chivalry and hospitality as cultural heritage, it is also important to point out that both countries share a dismal record

in the area of gender equality and governance. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan regularly grab top positions whenever a ranking for poor governance or gender discrimination is carried out by international bodies. This even further necessitates candid acknowledgement of the deep-rooted shared problems and readiness for addressing such issues with clearer understanding, positive cooperation and mutual assistance.

The second important perspective is of the economic ties that have interwoven the two countries. Pakistan has remained Afghanistan's largest trading partner until 2015 and the volume of trade remained to the tune of some \$3 billion. But due to the growing political tensions between the two countries, the economic ties have also received a major brunt. Understanding and addressing challenges to the Pak-Afghan trade will also be helpful in establishing peace in the region. Both countries are bestowed with an abundance of natural resources and host some of the best scenic tourist spots in the world. These resources can be best utilised if Pak-Afghan relations are reconfigured along economic ties. Pakistan with its grand projects like CPEC can benefit fully if Afghanistan is also on board. Like many other regional economic groupings, such as, Nafta, EU, Asean, Pakistan and Afghanistan would benefit enormously if they cooperate in mutual trade. Unfortunately, this is a neglected area and has largely been left to political expediency.

The third perspective is of regional peace and stability which also determines progress and prosperity of the two nations. This has a wider role to play for peace, development and cooperation in the world especially in the context of South Asia. Intra-regional cooperation created catalytic impact in addressing the challenges of poverty, development and terrorism. Regional cooperation involved policy coordination through formal institutions for the welfare and for achieving collective vision for the development of the region. Both countries should be forthcoming in recognising the bitter fact that the policy of fomenting troubles by interfering in the internal affairs had only been mutually destructive. In the process both countries are engulfed by the spectres of radicalism and terrorism. The problem is a shared one and hence can only be remedied by mutual cooperation at the regional level. In the past efforts were made to tackle these problems, for instance the formation of Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity after meeting of the premiers of both countries earlier in 2018. However, the real breakthrough had recently been seen in the form of

Taliban-US talks with positive contribution by Pakistan. It is hoped that this will also not prove a mirage like many earlier moves in the past. All sincere efforts should be made for establishing a peaceful and stable environment in Afghanistan which in turn would also be ideal for Pakistan in general and Pashtuns in particular.

There cannot not be two views that both sides stand at a crossroads of history. It is hoped that 2019 would be the year of peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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Trump-Imran The cards Amid Pakistan-US

Thaw By Kamran Yousaf

Pakistan and the United States are discussing a proposal about arranging the maiden meeting between Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Donald Trump, officials said on Thursday, hours after Trump said he was looking forward to meeting the Pakistani leadership.

The proposal for a Imran-Trump meeting is being discussed between the two sides but the final decision hinges on the “positive outcome” of the ongoing efforts to strike a peace deal in Afghanistan, a senior official said on the condition of anonymity. Imran is likely to travel to the US if “all goes well”, the official added.

Trump himself dropped a hint of the possible meeting with the Pakistani prime minister on Wednesday when he told a cabinet meeting that “I look forward to meeting the folks from the new leadership in Pakistan [and] we will be doing that in not-too-distant future”.

Bring a less arrogant and hostile mindset: Mazari hits out at Khalilzad

When asked to comment on the Trump’s statement and whether there was any chance of the meeting between the two leaders, Foreign Office spokesperson Dr Muhammad Faisal said Pakistan looked forward to “positive engagement” with the US at the leadership level. “President Trump’s remarks are indeed a departure from his tweet of 1 January 2018,” Faisal told a weekly news briefing.

The positive vibes coming from the White House are attributed to the recent push for seeking a peace deal in Afghanistan. Pakistan recently brokered direct talks between the Afghan Taliban and the US in United Arab Emirates.

The next round is expected in Saudi Arabia, which suggests a positive movement of the talks. “If the process moves forward in positive direction, certainly there is a possibility of engagement between Pakistan and the US at the highest level,” another official said.

Some sources said that the proposal for Khan-Trump meeting first came from Pakistan. Not long ago, Prime Minister Khan issued a strong rejoinder to Trump over Twitter for his allegations that Pakistan was not doing enough in the fight against terrorism.

“Record needs to be put straight on Mr Trump’s tirade against Pakistan: 1. No Pakistani was involved in 9/11 but Pak decided to participate in US War on Terror. 2. Pakistan suffered 75,000 casualties in this war & over \$123 bn was lost to economy. US “aid” was a miniscule \$20 bn,” he had tweeted last month.

Officials here believe that engagement at the high level could help reduce the trust deficit between the two countries. While Trump sounded reconciliatory and expressed his desire to have “great relationship” with Pakistan, he at the same breath repeated accusation.

Khalilzad seeks Pakistan’s help for Afghan endgame

“I ended the \$1.3billion aid to Pakistan because they have not been fair to us. They house the enemy, they help the enemy. We cannot just do that. I ended the money we paid to Pakistan like water – we just paid.”

Meanwhile, Foreign Office spokesperson Faisal said that the recent visit of Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi to Kabul, Tehran, Moscow and Beijing was part of Pakistan’s efforts to evolve a regional consensus on Afghanistan.

During the visit, the foreign minister emphasised close and regular coordination among Afghanistan’s neighbours and the relevant regional countries to assist the ongoing efforts to achieve a broader regional understanding for long-term stability in Afghanistan and the region, Faisal told reporters.

Khalilzad seeks Pakistan’s help for Afghan endgame

“They agreed that such synergy is necessary to overcome common hurdles and to devise a consensus-based approach for wider regional peace, development and progress,” the spokesperson said, adding that Pakistan would continue its outreach to regional countries and important international partners for mutually-beneficial cooperation and to advance the peace and reconciliation process.

On the possible US troop pullout from the war-torn country, Spokesperson Faisal said that Pakistan, being the immediate neighbour of Afghanistan, was interested that any development in that country led to peace and stability of the region.

“Currently, efforts are underway for a political settlement in Afghanistan. Hence, the withdrawal of US troops should be part of a peace process with a view to ensuring that there is no power vacuum in Afghanistan,” he pointed out. “It is Pakistan’s genuine desire that peace returns to Afghanistan allowing the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and beginning of an era of prosperity and normalcy in the region,” he stressed.

Pak Turkey Relations | Editorial

And Imran Khan's Ankara visit

Despite being somewhat belated Imran Khan's Ankara visit was commendable. Like China, Turkey is one of Pakistan's closest and oldest allies. This explains why every government has worked hard to take Pak-Turkey relations to a new height. Turkey has all along supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir. It was the first country to come to the rescue after the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods. Ankara initiated Pak-Afghan-Turkey summit way back in 2007 on account of its clout among masses in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Turkey has been helping in the modernization of Pakistan army, airforce and navy. One will evaluate the PTI government's contribution to relations with Turkey in this formidable background.

Living through the 2018 Turkish currency and debt crisis, with Turkish lira plunging in value, high inflation, rising borrowing costs, and correspondingly rising loan defaults Turkey may not be in a position to help Pakistan financially. This must not lead the PTI to underrate the Pak-Turkish friendship. Turkey is still willing to help revive Pak-Afghan-Turkey summit. The PTI government has to realize that an over-reliance on Saudi Arabia and UAE would not be favoured by Pakistan's time-tested ally.

In his foreign tours Imran Khan tended to act like a child in a toy shop. When in China he sought to adopt the Chinese model of alleviation of poverty. After meeting Mahatir Mohmad, Imran Khan said he wanted to replicate the Malaysian model of good governance in Pakistan. While in Ankara, he wanted to clone the Turkish health care system. This shows lack of a clear vision.

It is in bad taste to malign Pakistan's past leaders when visiting foreign countries. Khan needs to realise that chanceries all over the world regularly update their governments about the policies and peculiarities of those in power as well as those who are likely to replace them in the countries where they located. Ankara was no place to condemn Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's 'socialist' policies or the mindset of Pakistan's bureaucracy. What was needed was to persuade them of efficacy of improvements he thinks he has implemented to facilitate the investors. Whether

Imran Khan succeeded in this will become clear from the amount of investments coming from Turkey.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/01/05/pak-turkey-relations/>

Pak, UAE to Boost Strategic Economic Ties

Imran, Sh Mohamed agree on long-term investment framework; Task force to be formed for trade; Both leaders hold wide ranging talks on bilateral relations; PM thanks for US\$3b support

Prime Minister Imran Khan and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Sunday underscored the importance of effectively pursuing the various initiatives taken for a strengthened strategic bilateral economic relationship, including working on a long term investment framework agreement.

They also resolved to take all necessary measures to deal with matters related to trade enhancement, and decided to form a task force to achieve the objective, the PM Office media wing said in a statement issued on the conclusion of the UAE Crown Prince's official visit to Pakistan.

The two leaders noted that the forthcoming Pakistan-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission, which would be co-chaired by the respective foreign ministers in Abu Dhabi in February 2019, could play a pivotal role in chalking out a comprehensive road map, and in fast tracking the approval of pending agreements and memorandums of understanding.

To counter white collar crimes, including money laundering, the two leaders instructed the authorities concerned to expedite the finalization of the Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement.

They also expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence and security cooperation, and resolved to explore further collaboration in the areas of training, joint exercises and defence production. On the invitation of Prime Minister, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan paid a state visit to Pakistan on Sunday. He was accompanied by a high level delegation comprising cabinet members and senior officials. The Crown Prince visited Pakistan after 12 years.

“The visit underscored the strength and substance of the Pakistan-UAE special relationship, which is based on the spirit of mutual affection and deep trust, and is rooted in age old civilizational, religious, cultural and commercial affinities,” the statement said.

Earlier, at the Nur Khan Airbase, the Crown Prince was received by the Prime Minister and accorded a ceremonial reception at the Prime Minister’s House, which was followed by a tete-a-tete and delegation level talks. The two leaders expressed their resolve that while building on the strong and proud legacy, they would continue to strive for progress, prosperity and stability of both the UAE and Pakistan. Both the leaders held wide ranging talks focusing on all areas of bilateral relations.

Taking note of the positive trajectory of relations, the two leaders expressed their determination to further strengthen the historic and mutually beneficial relationship. They also discussed various issues of regional and global importance, and noted that a complete identity of views on the issues serves as the basis of long-lasting and trusted friendship.

Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed his gratitude for the generous balance of payment support of US\$3 billion and noted that the financial support showed the UAE’s continued commitment and friendship that remained steadfast over the years. He also welcomed the UAE’s interest in investing in Pakistan’s oil and gas, logistics, ports and construction sectors. The Prime Minister briefed the Crown Prince on the situation in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the plight of Kashmiris.

They strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and expressed their resolve to work closely to root out the scourge. The Crown Prince recognized the efforts and unparalleled sacrifices made by Pakistan to eliminate terrorism and extremism. Prime Minister Imran Khan briefed the UAE leadership about his government’s people centric reform agenda, and the steps taken to promote transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

The Prime Minister briefed the Crown Prince about the efforts Pakistan was making to support and facilitate the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led reconciliation process.

He also appreciated the role the UAE was playing by hosting reconciliation talks in Abu Dhabi. The two leaders agreed to work closely for the lasting peace and stability of Afghanistan. The Prime Minister congratulated the leadership of UAE for declaring 2019 as the year of tolerance and noted that it was the best way to pay tribute to the vision and legacy of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The two leaders reiterated their strong belief that only by espousing the principles of tolerance, inclusivity, non-interference and focusing on a people centric development agenda, the region could attain sustainable peace and stability.

Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked the UAE leadership and its people for their continued commitment to Pakistan's socio-economic development in the shape of Pakistan Assistance Programme.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-uae-to-boost-strategic-economic-ties/>

A Review of Pakistan-China Relations By

Shahid M Amin

SUPERLATIVES are often used in both Pakistan and China to describe their mutual relationship. It is said that this friendship “is deeper than the oceans and higher than the mountains”. China is described as Pakistan’s “all-weather friend”. However, most experts agree that, in international relations, there are no permanent friends and no permanent foes: only permanent interests. So how do we explain this seeming paradox in Pakistan-China relations, the more so because these two countries neither have a common ethnic background nor a common political system? In actual fact, behind the emotional clichés, relations between these two countries have followed the same motivation that inspires international alliances elsewhere viz. mutuality of national interests. Over a period of decades, the two countries have found that working together brings them important benefits in diverse ways. They complement each other in geopolitical terms. In addition, relations are fortified by the immense goodwill that pervades between not only the two governments but also the two peoples.

Pakistan’s first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, must be given high marks for the strategic vision shown by him in extending a hand of friendship to the Communist regime in China soon after it seized power in October 1949. In the teeth of US opposition, on January 4, 1950, Pakistan became the first Muslim, and the third non-Communist, country to extend recognition to China. The two sides established diplomatic relations on May 21, 1951. The first Chinese Ambassador arrived in Karachi on September 3, 1951, just a month before Liaquat’s martyrdom. In late 1949, India had stopped trading with Pakistan on a dispute on devaluation and Pakistan found China a good market for the export of its cotton and jute as also import of coal. In strategic terms, Pakistan saw China not only as a big neighbour but also one which was expected to hold veto power in the UN Security Council. It made no sense to have bad relations with China, which would have seriously aggravated Pakistan’s security concerns.

Pakistan’s vulnerability vis-à-vis India obliged it soon thereafter to join the US-sponsored military pacts. SEATO was actually conceived by USA and its allies as a pact to counter China. Pakistan’s membership of pacts could have caused serious misgivings in China but for the fact that Prime Minister Muhammad Ali

Bogra reached a good understanding with Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai at Bandung Conference in 1955. After this meeting, Chou said that he had been “assured that although Pakistan was party to a military treaty, Pakistan was not against China.” Bogra received an invitation to visit China though it was Prime Minister Suhrawardy who became the first Pakistani leader to visit China in 1956. There was a return visit to Pakistan in December 1956 by Premier Chou.

Encouraged by these talks, Suhrawardy declared in 1957 that “I feel perfectly certain that when the crucial time comes, China will come to our assistance.” On the part of Chinese leaders Mao and Chou, there was also a strategic vision that Pakistan would be a long-term friend in the context of China-India rivalry, which started to take a concrete shape with border clashes in late 1950s. Moreover, since China’s relations with the Soviet Union came under serious strains around this time, Moscow’s strong ties with India caused misgivings in China. Under President Ayub Khan, China-Pakistan relations reached a high watermark. In early 1961, both sides agreed to demarcate their border in Kashmir, despite Indian protests. Tension between India and China erupted in a brief but deadly border war in October 1962. This gave a big boost to China’s relations with Pakistan: 1963 saw the signing of a border agreement, a trade accord and inauguration of PIA flights to China, opening China’s only air link with the rest of the world.

In January 1963, Foreign Minister Bhutto told Parliament that in case of Indian aggression, Pakistan would not be alone as such an Indian attack would involve “the territorial integrity and security of the largest state in Asia.” In February 1964, Premier Chou visited Pakistan and declared China’s open support for Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute. When President Ayub Khan visited China in March 1965, he is said to have been given the biggest ever public welcome in China to any foreign visitor. Soon thereafter, Pakistan-China relations reached their peak when China extended full support to Pakistan in 1965 India-Pakistan War and even threatened to attack India. Later in 1971, Pakistan played a key role in the rapprochement between USA and China.

But the setback suffered by Pakistan in the 1971 War also affected the upward trend in its relations with China. Moreover, China’s rapid economic transformation, beginning around 1980s, resulted in adoption of a pragmatic foreign policy. Ever since, China has sought to improve its relations with India

and with other countries. It has adopted a neutral position on Kashmir and wants India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir and other problems through bilateral dialogue. This has not meant any downgrading of its strategic ties with Pakistan and it stands solidly behind Pakistan on most issues. It supported Pakistan during the Afghan Jihad in 1980s against Soviet military intervention. It values Pakistan's role in the fight against terrorism.

China has established important joint ventures with Pakistan in the economic and defence sectors. Such collaboration reached unprecedented proportions under the Economic Corridor (CPEC) linking Gwadar with China. This holds great economic and strategic benefits for China. On the other hand, Pakistan will receive investment worth over \$60 billion that are transforming its infrastructure, energy sector and industrial development. CPEC is described as a game changer for Pakistan, but China will also derive long-term advantages from it. Such mutually-advantageous collaboration best ensures a durable and thriving bilateral relationship. It is important for both sides to do everything possible to ensure the speedy implementation of CPEC projects. China has some concern about the route's security, whereas some circles in Pakistan have concerns about the negative trade fallout and over-dependence on China. These concerns should be handled through candid dialogue. Pakistan-China relations are poised to go from strength to strength, particularly in the background of the strategic ties that have developed between USA and India.

— The writer served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Soviet Union, France, Nigeria and Libya.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/a-review-of-pakistan-china-relations/>

Towards a Comprehensive Saudi-Pakistan Partnership By Mohammed Al-Sulami

An understanding of political realities and historical analysis clearly confirms that the approach adopted in Saudi-Pakistan bilateral relations has always been of a cooperative nature since the two countries have common historical, religious, cultural and human relationships, which continue to embody the true principles of solidarity and brotherhood, as well as both countries standing shoulder to shoulder in the face of domestic and mutual global challenges. The official positions adopted by the two countries, highlight the significant and extensive coordination between the two countries whenever crises have occurred. There is a joint desire by both countries to advance their cooperation in all fields leading to a comprehensive partnership, which could help the two countries realize their common interests.

Relations between the two pivotal regional countries have grown deeper over time in light of their shared mutual visions and their commitment to moderate political systems, as well as their desire to promote peaceful coexistence and tolerance instead of narrow intellectual prejudices and sectarian fanaticism. The two countries share similar views on encouraging greater openness to the world based on common norms, laws, and cooperating closely in international forums and sharing concordant positions on regional and international issues.

Saudi-Pakistani strategic cooperation can be found in the religious, political, military, economic and cultural spheres. This cooperation is currently at a pivotal stage preceded by diplomatic cooperation, with the two countries expected to forge an ever closer strategic partnership to enhance joint coordination in addressing regional and global issues. This will help both countries to attain their mutual interests and improve their standing as heavyweights in their respective geographic spheres of influence: the Middle East for Saudi Arabia and South Asia for Pakistan. The scope of cooperation and bilateral relations between the two countries has been highlighted by their participation in a number of conferences and other events.

Economically, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosts about 2.7 million Pakistani nationals (according to statistics issued by the Pakistani Consul General to the

Kingdom, Shahriar Akbar Khan, in March 2018). These expatriates have formed a bridge between the two brotherly countries, playing a positive role in helping to advance the tremendous progress and development witnessed by both countries. The two countries jointly launched the Saudi-Pakistan Trade Mission on January 14, 2019, with some 116 Saudi-Pakistani companies participating. This comes at a time when the two countries have revived the Saudi-Pakistani Business Council to develop bilateral trade and investment relations. Meanwhile, April 2019 will see the Pakistani Investment Forum in Riyadh with around 300 Pakistani investors participating in the event, promoting greater interaction between the Saudi and Pakistani private sectors.

When Pakistan experienced financial turbulence recently, the Kingdom was the first country to help Islamabad, offering the country a \$ 3 billion bailout package to re-stabilize the country's financial situation and boost Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves.

Besides, Saudi Arabia offered other facilities by granting Pakistan a one-year grace period on payment for oil imports worth \$ 3 billion. Saudi Arabia also intends to set up a \$ 10 billion oil refinery at Pakistan's Gwadar port overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Strategic relations between the two countries date back to Pakistan's independence in 1947 when military cooperation and joint defence agreements were signed. This alliance advanced further when Islamabad joined the Riyadh led Islamic military alliance to fight terrorism, which was announced in December 2015. It is headed by one of the former best leaders of the Pakistani army Gen. Raheel Sharif. This alliance aims to fight all forms of terrorism and to support moderation, laying a foundation for deep-rooted ties between Riyadh and Islamabad in the face of regional and international challenges especially in light of Gen. Sharif's statement in 2016 that any threat to Saudi Arabia would provoke a strong response from Pakistan. The two countries also hold joint military drills, most notably the Samsam manoeuvres held in February 2018.

The deep-rooted bilateral ties resulted in the newly appointed Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan making Saudi Arabia his first point of call on his international tour in September 2018 shortly after he took office. The visit opened the door for further diplomatic exchanges between the two countries' senior officials, which

resulted in signing deals and protocols of cooperation in all fields. During one of these visits, on September 5, 2018, the Pakistani Information Minister, Fawwad Choudhary, announced, that Pakistan will never allow any party whatsoever to pose a threat to the Two Holy Mosques and to the Kingdom, adding that any attack on the Kingdom would be viewed as an attack on Pakistan itself.

Similarly, the expected visit by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) to Pakistan will see the two sides signing a host of commercial and investment agreements worth billions of dollars. The aim of signing these deals will be to strengthen bilateral ties and open up more horizons between the two countries. The visit will come at a time when the Kingdom is adopting a reformist vision to strengthen the key pillars of state and society. Pakistan is taking similar steps in introducing reforms to build a new state and society. The Saudi vision is based on promoting a moderate Islamic identity, which rejects extremism and radicalism. This vision is enhanced by Saudi society's pride in its Arab and Islamic identity, which it strives tirelessly to preserve.

Saudi Arabia seeks to boost ties with Pakistan based on all the aforementioned factors and to jointly strengthen regional peace and security in a way that ensures the territorial integrity of the countries in the volatile Middle East. The region is restive due to the reckless actions of some regional countries which aspire to revive their imperial past at the expense of regional states and their territorial integrity. These forces target regional nations and their resources, turning these countries into failed states plagued by corruption and terror.

The Kingdom also seeks to achieve regional integration based on reciprocal respect for a nation's sovereignty, non-intervention in the affairs of other nations, and forming bridges with regional countries and the world. This could be achieved by forging cross-border partnerships that advance development, promote security and stability, and combat all forms of terror and extremism.

The Kingdom, which has never had imperial ambitions or a colonial legacy, either historically or ideologically, does not seek to annex lands. Nor is it covetous of others' wealth, being one of the world's largest holders of foreign exchange reserves and ranking first in the Arab world and fourteenth globally in terms of gold reserves. It certainly does not need any more oil, having the second-largest

reserves globally. The point is not to boast by pointing out these facts, but to underline that Saudi Arabia's foremost priority is to bring stability to the region.

The Kingdom's desire to attain regional security impels it to provide near-limitless support to numerous Arab and Islamic countries in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres, with Pakistan receiving a considerable share of Saudi Arabia's direct and indirect support. The Kingdom also sends humanitarian aid to friendly countries regionally and globally when tragedies and crises strike. The Kingdom also works tirelessly to help resolve crises and restore security and stability wherever possible, regionally and globally; among other successes, Saudi Arabia contributed to ending the bloody 10-year military conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea, as well as coordinating with Pakistan and other friendly countries to resolve the Afghan crisis by encouraging direct dialogue between the warring parties in the hope of restoring peace to Afghanistan. Indeed, the Kingdom and Pakistan regularly work together to combat terror and extremism across the Middle East and South Asia.

In conclusion, Saudi and Pakistani citizens look forward to a new era of deep-rooted cooperation between the two brotherly countries that will boost political harmony, economic cooperation and security coordination as well as unifying their positions on regional and international issues. The upcoming visit of MbS will mark a quantum leap in the relationship between Riyadh and Islamabad.

The writer is the founder and president of Rasanah, International Institute for Iranian Studies.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2019/towards-a-comprehensive-saudi-pakistan-partnership>

Pakistan, Qatar Keen to Boost Bilateral Ties

Prime Minister Imran Khan and Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani Tuesday expressed their desire to enhance bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and discussed ways to strengthen partnerships in all areas of mutual interest.

This desire was expressed during a meeting between the two leaders here at Diwan-e-Emiri where they also discussed bilateral relations as well as the emerging international dynamics.

This one-on-one meeting was preceded by a delegation level meeting. Upon his arrival at the Diwan-e-Emiri, the prime minister – who was on a two-day (January 21-22) visit – was given the Guard of Honour.

The Emir of Qatar congratulated Imran Khan on his election as prime minister and assured him of all possible support for progress and development of Pakistan. The Emir also hosted a banquet lunch in honour of the prime minister and his entourage.

Prime Minister Imran Khan extended an invitation to the Emir of Qatar to visit Pakistan on mutually convenient dates which was accepted.

The prime minister thanked Qatar for its decision to import 100,000 Pakistani workers. He also requested the Emir for a greater share for Pakistani manpower in 2022 FIFA related large scale infrastructure development projects.

The Pakistani delegation included Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Finance Minister Asad Umar, Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Adviser to PM Abdul Razak Dawood, Special Assistant to PM Zulfiqar Bukhari, BOI Chairman Haroon Sharif, Task Force on Energy Chairperson Nadeem Babar and Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua.

Earlier on arrival in Doha on Monday, Prime Minister Imran Khan held a delegation level meeting with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser

Bin Khalifa Al Thani at his residence. He also hosted a dinner in the honour of the visiting delegation.

Apart from the high level meetings, the prime minister also held key meetings with top Qatari businessmen and investors and invited them to invest in all sectors of Pakistan's economy.

He invited Qatari public and private sectors to become partners in his government's drive for construction of 5 million low cost housing units over the next five years. Qatari business leaders expressed great interest in investing in Pakistan.

The prime minister also addressed over 15,000 Pakistanis at Wakra Stadium. The Pakistani community responded with enthusiasm and great interest.

In his address Imran Khan described the overseas Pakistanis as the country's "heroes" due to their hard-work abroad for their families as well as for the country.

He said his government would steer the country out of difficulties, ensure its economic uplift and bring in pride for the green passport. "Don't worry! Your country will become a country where there will be respect for green passport," he said.

He said he had better understanding about the Pakistani expatriates abroad as he himself went to the United Kingdom at the age of 18, where he studied and used to play cricket as well. He recalled how Pakistani workers at that time were ridiculed and even discriminated racially by some white people, but they used to tolerate and continued to work hard until they succeeded in securing high socio-economic status for them in the Western world.

"Whenever I see overseas Pakistanis working hard abroad, I think that they are special ones, who always think and worry about Pakistan," he remarked.

Imran also lauded the overseas Pakistanis for always supporting him in his fund-raising campaigns for Shaukat Khanam Hospital, NAMAL University and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. "You are the people, who work hard and send money

to your country. Our country is now being run on your remittances. You are heroes of Pakistan. There are also some villains, who steal the money from the country and launder abroad. My war is against those people,” he stressed.

He said the devaluation of rupee was also due to money laundering as it caused shortage of dollars in the country that also created the balance of payment problem in Pakistan.

Highlighting the economic problems of the country in cricket terms, Imran said when he came to power, there was a situation like he went to bat for Pakistan on 20 runs and four down. “But I know how to play in pressure,” he said and added the partnership of Imran and Miandad had started and they would bring the country out of hard time.

He said Pakistan was blessed with a lot of natural resources and opportunities and the only problem was of governance. “If there is bad governance, the rich countries can turn into poor ones.”

He said the Qatari businessmen, who met him during the visit, expressed their keenness to invest in Pakistan and also told him they were earlier shying away from investment due to corruption and heavy taxation in Pakistan. The present government had scaled down the number of taxes from 36 to 16 only and would further rationalise the tax regime, he added.

About corruption, he said his was the first government that during its first five months no corruption scandal had emerged and he was confident that none would emerge during the rest of its tenure.

He said Malaysia and Turkey were earning \$20 billion and \$40 billion per annum through beach and historical tourism, respectively. Pakistan with its beaches, highest mountain peaks, and historical and religious sites had a lot of tourism potential, he added.

Imran was confident that Pakistan would earn huge amounts of foreign exchange from tourism and the country would not require financial assistance from any country.

Earlier, representatives of Sikh community in Qatar called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and thanked him for the ground-breaking of Kartarpur Corridor which was the longstanding desire of the Sikh community globally. They said Prime Minister Imran Khan by laying the foundation stone of the corridor had won the hearts of Sikhs across the globe.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Jan-2019/pakistan-qatar-keen-to-boost-bilateral-ties>

ECONOMY

Pakistan Economy 2019: A Beacon of Hope!

By Hassnain Javed

Currently, Pakistan is recovering from a growth which was fueled by short term debt and declining investments. The economy was in a bad shape, and by the end of year 2018 Pakistan was almost on the verge of bankruptcy

After taking office, the new government was faced with the challenge of the devalued currency, increasing import bills and huge amounts of debt obligations. Therefore, there was a need for radical reforms in the economic policy of the county. The first agenda was to service the debt obligations of USD 9 B due in the year 2019 and second, to reduce current account deficit to USD 11-13 Billion from the current 19 Billion. Also the last government's fiscal deficit of 6.6% is not sustainable and needs to be revised.

Fortunately, the government has already began to set their plan in motion, by instructing the State Bank of Pakistan to adjust the exchange rates from 26% to negative figures and lowering regulatory duties on non-essential items. This move has dramatically reduced Pakistan's import bill but, some critics argue that the decline was a steady decline that might hurt the market sentiments. However, such a steep decline was essential considering that a real adjustment has not been made since four to five years. The exchange rate decline has also fuelled remittances to 12.5% and improved exports. The government is also planning to launch a program in 2019 to encourage overseas Pakistanis to send their remittances via a formal channel by promising them improved speed, security and reduced administrative issues that are surrounding the formal channel procedures at the moment. A good foreign policy has also supported Pakistan in securing fruitful bilateral relations like deferred oil payment facilities from countries like United Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Generally the focus of this government is to raise capital by encouraging foreign direct investment in the country, fostering exports and productivity rather than imports and consumption. An increase in exports would help Pakistan in gaining self-

sufficiency and reduced reliance on debt financing. Previously, the governments were funding their projects from the withholding taxes of the entrepreneurs, which had significantly hurt their business. Reducing exchange rates to actual rate has therefore enabled Pakistan to boost its export trade, and release tied up working capital of the businessmen.

In order to further encourage business in Pakistan the government has been making efforts to reduce the costs of energy. For instance, the LNG costs have reduced to a regional average rate of USD 6.5 per MMBTU and the electricity tariffs will be notified at 7.5 cents/KWH for the export sector

Moreover, in order to further encourage business in Pakistan the government has been making efforts to reduce the costs of energy. For instance, the LNG costs have reduced to a regional average rate of USD 6.5 per MMBTU and the electricity tariffs will be notified at 7.5 cents/KWH for the export sector.

Despite of these positive economic indications, the challenge is not over for the government yet. As mentioned earlier, the government has increased interest rate which is generally followed by a decrease in investment since the cost of borrowing increases. This effect will contradict the current government's agenda to boost investments. However, the action was a necessary evil, since inflationary pressures from the rupee devaluation made it inevitable in order to control prices. It should also be noted that the new 4% rate is approximately the average rate prevalent in the whole region. Moreover, since the move has been taken, there was a 400% increase in private sector's credit take off. This can be attributed to the fact that the overcrowding of the provision of loans from the previous government was cleared after the interest rate increase.

Other challenges currently looming over the administration are the excessive taxes and security problems. The security issue has been improved by the efforts made by the Pakistan Army in the mission 'Zarb e Azab'. However, the problem of taxes, still remain very relevant. According to recent statistics, Pakistan is ranked at the 136th position in the 'ease of doing business' index, and 173rd in terms of complicated tax systems. In order to cater to the tax problem, the government has set up a Tax Reform Implementation Committee in order to separate FBR duties from Tax Policy Division. This move would reduce costs of

doing business in Pakistan, and encourage businesses and SMEs to operate freely. The power of government departments are proposed to be redistributed in order to reduce redundant and precarious steps that businesses need to get through in order to get government approvals.

With the beginning of 2019, Pakistan would be entering into the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. This means that the government would focus on trade policies and industry development, moving on from infrastructure. Large multinational companies are already interested in setting up industries in the automobiles, telecommunications, energy and electronics industry, in order to tap the undiscovered potential of the people of Pakistan.

Conclusively, the prompt and timely measures taken by the new government has impeded the immediate crisis of the balance of payment however, much more effort is needed to bring the proposed plan to life. Not only macroeconomic indeed – microeconomic – indicators have to be stabilized in order to encourage steady foreign direct investment in Pakistan.

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Sabotaging CPEC: An Indo-US Ploy? By

Mohsin Raza Malik

Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman, during his last week's press briefing, made it just clear that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had no military dimensions. "The CPEC is a bilateral economic project, which is not against any country", he further clarified. He was commenting on a report published in a leading US newspaper alleging that the CPEC was not about economy and trade but had military dimensions as well. No doubt, there are strong military ties between China and Pakistan. The CPEC, however, has nothing to do with these ties. Both 'all-weather' friends have been enjoying close diplomatic, strategic and military relations for decades, independent of, and prior to, the CPEC project. China and Pakistan, being two sovereign states, have the right to foster strong economic and military relations in accordance with their national interests. Therefore, any regional or global power is by no means justified in unnecessarily objecting to this bilateral relationship.

Last week, Chinese embassy in Pakistan also refuted another media report which claimed that Pakistan would pay \$40 billion to china in 20 years in shape of repayments of debt and dividends on Chinese investment under flagship CPEC. The embassy issued a statement that the Chinese government provided concessional loans of \$5.874 billion for Pakistan's transportation infrastructure projects, with a composite interest rate of around 2 per cent in a repayment period of 20-25 years. The embassy also clarified that all the CPEC energy projects are investments in nature and the companies are responsible for their own profits and losses and repayments of loan. Therefore, both of the latest media reports on the CPEC are wrong and misleading, which appear to be only aimed at making the CPEC project controversial.

As a matter of fact, there has been a systematic and persistent propaganda campaign against the CPEC since this project was formally announced in April 2015. Ever since, this mega project has also been the subject of numerous conspiracies and controversies, both domestically and internationally. In order to dispel similar domestic controversies, Pakistan had to conceive and announced the idea of the "Western Route" of the CPEC in addition to some Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the CPEC route in different provinces in the

country. Noticeably, a section of national media, and various so-called nationalist political parties and pressure groups have also been the ardent critic of this mega economic project.

Terrorism has been a major tool to sabotage the 'game changing' CPEC project. We have observed a significant surge in the terror attacks across the country following the formal launch of this project. The province of Balochistan, which occupies a pivotal position in the entire CPEC project owing to deep-sea Gwadar Port, instantly became the hotbed of terrorism, militancy and insurgency. This troubled province has experienced most of the worst terror attacks in Pakistan during the last couple of years. According to official statistics, there have been some 1860 terrorist incidents in Balochistan during the last 7 years, leaving more than 2300 people dead and many more injured. In this respect, Quetta, Mastung, Awaran, Khuzdar and Dera Bugti were the worst affected districts in the province. Gilgit-Baltistan, which hosts another important segment of the CPEC route, has also been under attacks by the terrorists. This region experienced the unfortunate 2013 Nanga Parbat massacre where 10 foreign tourists were shot dead. A large number of schools have also been torched by miscreants in this region. Many Chinese nationals, engineers and workers, who were working to complete various CPEC projects in Pakistan, have also been attacked and killed. The recent terror attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi is also being viewed as a conspiracy to sabotage CPEC.

The United States and India, the two strategic allies in the post-9/11 era, are particularly known for their strong opposition to the CPEC as well as an anti-CPEC hostile propaganda. Both countries have launched a proactive diplomatic and media campaign against the CPEC for the last few years. We have noticed Indian PM Modi's persistent anxiety over the CPEC project. He has openly hinted at supporting the separatist elements in Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. In May 2015, he readily visited China to persuade the Chinese government to abandon this project by maintain that the CPEC route was passing through the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. During the G-20 summit at Hangzhou in China in September 2016, PM Modi had expressed India's concerns over the CPEC in his bilateral meeting with Chinese President, holding that the two countries needed to be "sensitive" to each other's strategic interests. In October 2017, the Trump administration told the Senate Armed Services Committee that CPEC was passing through a disputed territory. Similarly, a senior Trump administration

official has recently also remarked that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) “is a made in China, made for China” initiative.

Substantially shifting the focus of US foreign policy from the Middle East to the East Asia, the Obama administration ambitiously launched its ‘pivot to Asia’ regional strategy in 2012. Under this US foreign policy initiative, the US will endeavour to increasingly relocate its extensive military and economic resources in the Asia Pacific region, realising the utmost economic, political and military significance of this region in the twenty-first century. This US regional strategy includes actions like engaging with regional multilateral organisations, strengthening bilateral security alliances, forging an active broad-based military presence, deepening relationship with emerging powers, expanding trade and investment, and advancing democracy and human rights in the region.

There is a general perception that the US pivot to Asia strategy is nothing but another important tool of its so-called China containment policy in this region. It only aims at minimising or undermining the rising economic and political influence of China in the world. At present, the US economy is in trouble on account of the current global financial crisis and a number of domestic economic constraints. The long-term viability of the US economic model is also being questioned. Therefore, the US is wary of the rapidly growing Chinese economy, which already has become world’s largest economy in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). China has also become the global hub for manufacturing, and the largest manufacturing economy as well as the largest export of goods in the world.

Besides the East Asia, the South Asian region has also become the primary hub of US extensive strategic manoeuvring in Asia over a period of time. Therefore, notwithstanding its typical ‘pivot to Asia’ strategy, South Asia is now playing a pivotal role in articulating and realising US strategic goals in the region. Bordering China, Iran, and Central Asian Republics, South Asia is bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean, which provides the major sea route connecting the Middle East, Africa, and Europe to East Asia and Australia. Thus this region is central to the so-called One Belt, One Road plan. The flagship OBOR project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also located in this region. Therefore, South Asia is by no means strategically less important to the US than East Asia.

India and Afghanistan have occupied a central position in the US 'pivot to South Asia' strategy. On the pretext of fighting its War on Terror, the US has been staying in Afghanistan since 2001. Ever since, it has spent its enormous economic and military resources apparently to stabilise the volatile Hindukush state. However, its broader strategic interests demand its active presence in the region. The US has greatly helped India consolidate its position in Afghanistan. Now India is ambitiously desirous of replacing the US in Afghanistan as its 'successor in interest' in the region after the US exits Afghanistan. India, Afghanistan and Iran have also signed a tripartite agreement to develop Iranian Chabahar port and a linked trade corridor. Many believe that the primary objective of this project is to undermine the strategic importance and relevance of Pakistan's Gwadar port.

At the moment, Pakistan's strategic, security and economic interests observably converge with that of China in this region. Both countries will certainly benefit from the CPEC. Therefore, both countries are currently determined to actively protect their shared interests. To provide security to Chinese nationals working on the CPEC project in Pakistan, Pakistan Army has already established a Special Security Division (SPD), comprising some 15 thousand security personnel. Indeed, Pakistan and China need to be more active, vigilant and cautious to counter all CPEC-related controversies and conspiracies being hatched in the region and beyond.

The writer is a lawyer and columnist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/02-Jan-2019/sabotaging-cpec-an-indo-us-ploy>

Microsoft To Explore Investment Opportunities in Pakistan: Bill Gates By Sohail Chaudhry

Billionaire Bill Gates has said that his multinational technology company, Microsoft Corporation, could explore the investment opportunities in Pakistan.

Gates expressed the desire in a letter delivered to Prime Minister Imran Khan by Dr Christopher Elias, President of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Development Division, in a meeting on Tuesday.

He was accompanying WHO's Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari.

Elias further said that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation would continue to invest in Pakistan for the eradication of poliovirus and improvement of healthcare system.

The prime minister said Pakistan continues to tackle polio eradication as a national public health emergency.

K-P sees a rise in parents refusing polio drops

"Polio vaccination activities are well organised in close collaboration with the provinces and are directly overseen by the national, provincial and divisional task forces," he said.

Imran welcomed the WHO director general and his delegation to Pakistan, saying Pakistan appreciates the role of WHO in the healthcare system. "The government is determined to implement a transformative social and economic agenda for a 'New Pakistan'", he added.

He reiterated his commitment to move forward on sustainable development agenda. He expressed his government's commitment for eradication of polio from the country.

The prime minister expressed his hope that the WHO would continue as a reliable partner in our efforts to improve healthcare system for all in Pakistan.

Dr Adhanom congratulated the prime minister on his victory in the recent general elections.

Microsoft teams up with Sindh govt to digitise classrooms

Separately, the delegation also called on Foreign Shah Mehmood Qureshi where they briefed him on WHO's enhanced focus on public health, country-level impacts, ongoing programmes/projects in Pakistan aimed at improving people's access to health related matters.

WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also shared that WHO had intensified its activities in coordination with the government of Pakistan for polio eradication.

As a result of enhancement efforts, polio from Pakistan would likely be eliminated by end of 2019. He reiterated that the WHO would continue its support to the efforts of government of Pakistan to improve healthcare in the country.

The foreign minister said the WHO had been playing a very important role in the health sector of Pakistan. With regards to polio eradication efforts by the government, the foreign minister emphasised that collaborative efforts at national, provincial and local levels would help in elimination of the disease and make Pakistan a zero polio country.

The foreign minister reiterated that the government remains committed to ensuring provision of quality health facilities to all people at all levels. He assured the delegation of full support in polio eradication and implementation of other health programmes in Pakistan in the days to come.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1884045/1-microsoft-explore-investment-opportunities-pakistan-bill-gates/>

FATF Progress | Editorial

THE latest consultations between the Financial Action Task Force and Pakistani officials have, according to claims made by the Pakistani side as reported in the media, resulted in reasonable progress towards the country being removed from the FATF grey list later this year. If that is true, if the FATF does pronounce Pakistan's efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing to be adequate, and therefore deserving of removal from its grey list, the current PTI-led government would have achieved a notable success. The months of February, May and September will be crucial for Pakistan quickly re-exiting the FATF grey list, where it was previously placed between 2012 and 2015. The concern has been that because Pakistan was put on the grey list again relatively soon after last being removed from it, FATF could take a harder line against Pakistan and perhaps even nudge the country towards the black list.

A report prepared by the Pakistani side ahead of the consultations with FATF in Australia this week have indicated the complexity of the task involved in meeting FATF criteria. Particularly emphasis was put on measures along the Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders to curb money laundering and terrorism financing. In addition, nearly 1,200 transactions were identified in 2018 relating to terror financing and money laundering — that may appear to be a large number, but it is minuscule compared to the overall financial transactions in the country in any given year. Akin to finding a needle in a haystack unless sophisticated systems are put in place, the identification of suspect financial transactions requires the commitment of adequate resources, the building of institutional capacities, and vigilance and coordination. Similarly, Pakistan's extensive borders with Iran and Afghanistan have historically been minimally governed spaces, a reality that has changed somewhat for the better in recent times — but what the state is combating along its borders with Afghanistan and Iran are entrenched smuggling, criminal and militant networks.

It is clear that the FATF demands in terms of combating money laundering and terrorist financing are significant. It is hoped that the organisation will evaluate Pakistan fairly and consistent with its approach to other countries. What is somewhat reassuring at this stage is that the Pakistani side appears to have finally grasped the gravity of the situation and is assembling a professional

response. FATF demands require Pakistan to coordinate its action against a range of federal and provincial agencies and bodies. That onerous task has been potentially complicated by the arrival of a first-time federal governing party that is mired in political fights with the opposition. However, if the most recent consultations are an indication, the Pakistani side appears to have a greater grasp of the issues than before. Smart policy and continuity could help Pakistan achieve a quick turnaround with FATF.

Published in Dawn, January 12th, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1457017/fatf-progress>

Tricky IMF Talks | Editorial

MINISTER for Finance Asad Umar on Thursday said that the government was still negotiating the bailout package with the International Monetary Fund and as soon as any suitable programme for the betterment of the economy finalised, the agreement with the Fund would be signed. Talking to newsmen, he said the government was making use of other available options for fulfilling financial requirements of the country and taking different measures for economic development and social prosperity of the country.

There is no doubt that financial woes of the Government have mitigated to some extent because of its successful negotiations with friendly countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and China that have provided monetary assistance besides making commitments for short, medium and long term investment in Pakistan. However, the situation is still far from satisfactory and this is evident from dwindling foreign exchange reserves in the backdrop of repayment of loans and their interest. It is also alarming that government borrowing increased by Rs.2.24 trillion in the first five months of the fiscal year which is indicative of lack of required progress in mobilizing domestic financial resources, which the present Government had pledged with the people before and during election. Whatever tax measures so far taken have led to increasing of the burden on the common man while those who have the capacity to pay remain untouched as before. The very fact that we knock at the doors of IMF despite repeated claims by successive governments that the country would not do so is also reflective of lip-service to the cherished objective of reforming the economy and enabling the country to stand on its own feet. As pointed out by the Prime Minister, whether it is IMF or bilateral donors, no one lends money without getting some concessions. The assurance of the Finance Minister that the Government would sign an accord with the IMF as per national requirements is welcome but the fact remains rates of gas and electricity have already been increased significantly besides massive devaluation apparently in fulfilment of the IMF conditions in advance. Based on the lofty claims made by the leadership, people expect prudent approach on different policy issues by the present Government.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/tricky-imf-talks/>

Welcome Focus on CPEC and Housing |

Editorial

TWO important meetings that the Chief Executive of the country chaired on Friday and their decisions indicate growing focus of the Government on accelerating the pace of implementation of the projects under the umbrella of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and kick-starting the mega housing projects augur well for economic growth and resolution of problems of the people. He prioritised four key areas under the CPEC for the next couple of years and ordered the groundbreaking of at least three special economic zones (SEZs) before end-June this year. The PM also directed the authorities concerned to inform the public on progress on Naya Pakistan Housing Project.

At a time when investment from other sources was negligible, the logic demands that the Government lays focus on CPEC projects especially those which have the potential to change the destiny of the country but are not moving ahead at the desired pace mainly because of lethargy and lack of interest on the part of authorities concerned. We have been hearing since long about establishment of special economic zones but practical steps are non-existent and in some cases even land has not been identified or acquired. Then availability of necessary infrastructure in these SEZs is a big question mark as without this we cannot expect entrepreneurs to launch ventures there. The Prime Minister has also shown leniency by giving six months for ground-breaking of three SEZs and his desire might remain unfulfilled even then if he did not take due interest in the intervening period. Gwadar port is also somewhat dormant due to absence of required infrastructure and its air, rail and road links with the rest of the country. Chinese have provided grants for some of the key projects for the city but here again the pace of implementation leaves much to be desired. Similarly, Naya Pakistan Housing project can help stimulate the economic activity but its launching too is taking too much time and so far even legal framework has not been completed. Though the meeting was informed that work on construction of 25,000 houses in Islamabad and Lahore would begin 'soon' but no details were available whether the ground work including acquisition of land has been undertaken or not for the purpose. The Prime Minister may like to hold frequent follow up meetings on CPEC and Naya Pakistan Housing Project to ensure time.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/welcome-focus-on-cpec-and-housing/>

Innovating Trade Policy's Transformation

By Salman Sheikh

Pakistan has shown the largest percentage (over 20%) increase in overall research output in 2018. However, this research increase was mostly based on basic research output instead of more proportion of applied research that could have immense applications for the local Pakistani economy.

It is one of the core reasons of our dwindling exports for many years. According to prestigious WEF's Global Competitive Report 2018, Pakistan ranked 107th out of 140 countries. Likewise, in terms of Global Innovation Index 2018, India stood as the first best country while Pakistan followed far behind at the 8th rank in the South Asia.

There are additional factors contributing to low innovation capability. Our firm level competitiveness is too minute and our exporters' or industrialists' mindset is too outdated and rent seeker as quoted by a former governor of the SBP.

We need exporters and industrialists, who are young, dynamic and entrepreneurs. Moreover, we need to adopt innovative and competitive import substitution strategy. The HEC and universities should encourage applied research programmes along with significant funding and change scholars' mindsets towards applied research. For that very reason, our industry/agro-businesses should collaborate with academia (private sector) for applied research projects for firm level competitiveness and innovative import substitution industrialisation. The federal government should create a position of a chief scientific officer, who devises comprehensive and sustainable international trade strategy in consultation with multi-stakeholders, local industry, importers, distributors, exporters, S&T Councils, the HEC and the Planning Commission, and most importantly with the Ministry of Commerce. Business is a dynamic playing field and our imperial but outmoded bureaucracy, whose members are working as trade officers abroad or as commercial section staff in different diplomatic missions of Pakistan, typically has no

capability to find innovative solutions for export performance within limited resources. They frequently complaint that Pakistan has no exportable surplus, that is true in a way, but if a competent trade officer with business development

aptitude (a missing link between sales and marketing) from the private sector is appointed in the right host country, he or she can identify inventive solutions to solve the complex issue of export by keeping up spot-on liaison among all stakeholders for the market development of sustainable export. The Ministry of Commerce should recruit more private sector candidates at lucrative market-based packages to attract top talent. In this regard, the Export Development Fund of the Ministry of Commerce should get training for this international trade section from private business schools such as IBA and LUMS, for recruitments, performance evaluations, export marketing (finding untapped markets for our exportable surplus and improving Index of Export Market Penetration) and liaison offices

for comprehensive and sustainable export market development under technocrats instead of inefficient bureaucracy. Besides, we should appoint host country-based local commercial personnel for export promotions who speak in their own languages, network with local people and realise dynamics of the markets. For example, AusTrade has recruited local commercial section officer in Lahore for Australian dairy cows' export to Pakistan. The officer is Pakistani, speaks Urdu and Punjabi, and fully understands the mindset of local business people. This success story clearly depicted that the company was highly successful in sustainable export market development of their Dairy Livestock Programmes in Pakistan. Similarly, the Ministry of Commerce and the TDAP should adopt innovative strategy for these must do's. If holistic approach is not supposed to be applied in collaboration with each stakeholder, we cannot significantly increase our exports of goods and services substantially and sustainably.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 21st, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1893017/6-innovating-trade-policys-transformation/>

Investment by Saudi Arabia | Editorial

AS Saudi Arabia is opening up to make billions of dollars of investments abroad, Pakistan is at the verge of receiving the most which again manifests love and affection that Saudi King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman al Saud have for people of Pakistan who also hold them at high esteem for always standing by Pakistan in difficult economic times.

Saudi Arabia initially extended a financial support package worth three billion dollars to Pakistan to shore up its foreign exchange that were fast depleting due to foreign liabilities along with agreeing to provide oil on deferred payment. Such Saudi assistance has always been forthcoming whenever Pakistan found itself in difficult economic situations. However, this time Saudi Arabia also came up with an investment package, which will go a long way in addressing the country's economic woes. It will be unfair not to appreciate the role played by Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf Saeed Al Malki in putting the matters pertaining to investment on fast track. Following two important visits of Prime Minister Imran Khan, several Saudi delegations came to Pakistan and firmed up the investment portfolio and now these will be inked as agreements when the Saudi Crown Prince will visit Islamabad next month.

The most significant investment is establishment of \$10b oil refinery in Gwadar. The refinery, with a capacity of 100,000 barrels per day, will represent one of the most modern and largest refinery plants in Aramco's international portfolio. In addition, Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power, a developer, investor and operator of power generation plants that has assets in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Tunisia, is also in advanced planning to enter Pakistan's renewable energy sector. Also Saudi Arabia has evinced interest in setting up petrochemical complex near Karachi which has its own significance as such a complex will build capacity of Pakistan to convert natural resources such as crude oil, natural gas, ores and minerals into products for a wide of applications including building blocks for industry processes such as ethylene, propylene, butadiene and aromatics. The establishment of oil refinery alone will help Pakistan reduce dependence on imported refined fuel. We can reduce our \$16 billion petroleum import bill if we import cheaper crude oil instead of more expensive finished

products. Therefore, establishment of oil refinery in Gwadar will help Pakistan substantially cut its oil import bill.

Then such a mega Saudi investment indeed will also serve the factor of confidence building and encourage other countries and international companies to invest in different potential sectors of the economy including that of oil and gas exploration. This will also help realise the objective of making Gwadar real hub of economic and commercial activities at a fast pace and attract investment in the special economic zones being established under the corridor project. Thus the benefits of Saudi investment are manifold and this will also make Saudi Arabia an important partner in the CPEC. As Saudi Arabia has also expressed interest to invest in other sectors, authorities concerned should spare no effort and sit with Saudi friends to exploit more investment opportunities that are in the interest of both the countries. The way Pak-China relations have transformed into a long term strategic economic partnership ever since the launch of the CPEC, Pak-Saudi relations are also heading for same direction, which will be beneficial for both the countries.

This process of engagement between Pak and Saudi Arabia must go on with the same speed and vigour seen most recently. Ease of doing business is the slogan of Imran Khan's government and our authorities need to facilitate Saudi investors and remove any bottlenecks coming in their way. Our enemies will try to throw a spanner just like they are plotting to sabotage the CPEC but we along with our Saudi and Chinese friends need to stay firm and foil their nefarious designs by ensuring early completion of all projects. Then we also need to enhance our trade relations with Saudi Arabia. As the holy land attracts millions of pilgrims every year, we can produce and export such goods and commodities that are in great demand there. This will help take our exports to high levels and bring valuable foreign exchange to the kitty.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/investment-by-saudi-arabia/>

Sabotaging CPEC: An Indo-US Ploy? By

Mohsin Raza Malik

Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman, during his last week's press briefing, made it just clear that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had no military dimensions. "The CPEC is a bilateral economic project, which is not against any country", he further clarified. He was commenting on a report published in a leading US newspaper alleging that the CPEC was not about economy and trade but had military dimensions as well. No doubt, there are strong military ties between China and Pakistan. The CPEC, however, has nothing to do with these ties. Both 'all-weather' friends have been enjoying close diplomatic, strategic and military relations for decades, independent of, and prior to, the CPEC project. China and Pakistan, being two sovereign states, have the right to foster strong economic and military relations in accordance with their national interests. Therefore, any regional or global power is by no means justified in unnecessarily objecting to this bilateral relationship.

Last week, Chinese embassy in Pakistan also refuted another media report which claimed that Pakistan would pay \$40 billion to china in 20 years in shape of repayments of debt and dividends on Chinese investment under flagship CPEC. The embassy issued a statement that the Chinese government provided concessional loans of \$5.874 billion for Pakistan's transportation infrastructure projects, with a composite interest rate of around 2 per cent in a repayment period of 20-25 years. The embassy also clarified that all the CPEC energy projects are investments in nature and the companies are responsible for their own profits and losses and repayments of loan. Therefore, both of the latest media reports on the CPEC are wrong and misleading, which appear to be only aimed at making the CPEC project controversial.

As a matter of fact, there has been a systematic and persistent propaganda campaign against the CPEC since this project was formally announced in April 2015. Ever since, this mega project has also been the subject of numerous conspiracies and controversies, both domestically and internationally. In order to dispel similar domestic controversies, Pakistan had to conceive and announced the idea of the "Western Route" of the CPEC in addition to some Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the CPEC route in different provinces in the

country. Noticeably, a section of national media, and various so-called nationalist political parties and pressure groups have also been the ardent critic of this mega economic project.

Terrorism has been a major tool to sabotage the 'game changing' CPEC project. We have observed a significant surge in the terror attacks across the country following the formal launch of this project. The province of Balochistan, which occupies a pivotal position in the entire CPEC project owing to deep-sea Gwadar Port, instantly became the hotbed of terrorism, militancy and insurgency. This troubled province has experienced most of the worst terror attacks in Pakistan during the last couple of years. According to official statistics, there have been some 1860 terrorist incidents in Balochistan during the last 7 years, leaving more than 2300 people dead and many more injured. In this respect, Quetta, Mastung, Awaran, Khuzdar and Dera Bugti were the worst affected districts in the province. Gilgit-Baltistan, which hosts another important segment of the CPEC route, has also been under attacks by the terrorists. This region experienced the unfortunate 2013 Nanga Parbat massacre where 10 foreign tourists were shot dead. A large number of schools have also been torched by miscreants in this region. Many Chinese nationals, engineers and workers, who were working to complete various CPEC projects in Pakistan, have also been attacked and killed. The recent terror attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi is also being viewed as a conspiracy to sabotage CPEC.

The United States and India, the two strategic allies in the post-9/11 era, are particularly known for their strong opposition to the CPEC as well as an anti-CPEC hostile propaganda. Both countries have launched a proactive diplomatic and media campaign against the CPEC for the last few years. We have noticed Indian PM Modi's persistent anxiety over the CPEC project. He has openly hinted at supporting the separatist elements in Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. In May 2015, he readily visited China to persuade the Chinese government to abandon this project by maintain that the CPEC route was passing through the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. During the G-20 summit at Hangzhou in China in September 2016, PM Modi had expressed India's concerns over the CPEC in his bilateral meeting with Chinese President, holding that the two countries needed to be "sensitive" to each other's strategic interests. In October 2017, the Trump administration told the Senate Armed Services Committee that CPEC was passing through a disputed territory. Similarly, a senior Trump administration

official has recently also remarked that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) “is a made in China, made for China” initiative.

Substantially shifting the focus of US foreign policy from the Middle East to the East Asia, the Obama administration ambitiously launched its ‘pivot to Asia’ regional strategy in 2012. Under this US foreign policy initiative, the US will endeavour to increasingly relocate its extensive military and economic resources in the Asia Pacific region, realising the utmost economic, political and military significance of this region in the twenty-first century. This US regional strategy includes actions like engaging with regional multilateral organisations, strengthening bilateral security alliances, forging an active broad-based military presence, deepening relationship with emerging powers, expanding trade and investment, and advancing democracy and human rights in the region.

There is a general perception that the US pivot to Asia strategy is nothing but another important tool of its so-called China containment policy in this region. It only aims at minimising or undermining the rising economic and political influence of China in the world. At present, the US economy is in trouble on account of the current global financial crisis and a number of domestic economic constraints. The long-term viability of the US economic model is also being questioned. Therefore, the US is wary of the rapidly growing Chinese economy, which already has become world’s largest economy in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). China has also become the global hub for manufacturing, and the largest manufacturing economy as well as the largest export of goods in the world.

Besides the East Asia, the South Asian region has also become the primary hub of US extensive strategic manoeuvring in Asia over a period of time. Therefore, notwithstanding its typical ‘pivot to Asia’ strategy, South Asia is now playing a pivotal role in articulating and realising US strategic goals in the region. Bordering China, Iran, and Central Asian Republics, South Asia is bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean, which provides the major sea route connecting the Middle East, Africa, and Europe to East Asia and Australia. Thus this region is central to the so-called One Belt, One Road plan. The flagship OBOR project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also located in this region. Therefore, South Asia is by no means strategically less important to the US than East Asia.

India and Afghanistan have occupied a central position in the US 'pivot to South Asia' strategy. On the pretext of fighting its War on Terror, the US has been staying in Afghanistan since 2001. Ever since, it has spent its enormous economic and military resources apparently to stabilise the volatile Hindukush state. However, its broader strategic interests demand its active presence in the region. The US has greatly helped India consolidate its position in Afghanistan. Now India is ambitiously desirous of replacing the US in Afghanistan as its 'successor in interest' in the region after the US exits Afghanistan. India, Afghanistan and Iran have also signed a tripartite agreement to develop Iranian Chabahar port and a linked trade corridor. Many believe that the primary objective of this project is to undermine the strategic importance and relevance of Pakistan's Gwadar port.

At the moment, Pakistan's strategic, security and economic interests observably converge with that of China in this region. Both countries will certainly benefit from the CPEC. Therefore, both countries are currently determined to actively protect their shared interests. To provide security to Chinese nationals working on the CPEC project in Pakistan, Pakistan Army has already established a Special Security Division (SPD), comprising some 15 thousand security personnel. Indeed, Pakistan and China need to be more active, vigilant and cautious to counter all CPEC-related controversies and conspiracies being hatched in the region and beyond.

The writer is a lawyer and columnist based in Lahore.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/02-Jan-2019/sabotaging-cpec-an-indo-us-ploy>

NFC Reconstitution | Editorial

THE move towards the reconstitution of the National Finance Commission is an important step forward, though the real test will be in getting the provinces to agree to a new revenue-sharing formula. The seventh NFC award from 2009 is the last consensual award, and stands out as a rare moment when the federal and provincial governments were able to agree on a new revenue-sharing formula. The commission set up under Pervez Musharraf failed to reach a consensus, as did the one installed during the rule of the PML-N. Successfully navigating the politics of the finance commission is a test of political maturity, and the ninth commission, for which the government has sent a reference to the president, comes at a time when political maturity is needed more than ever.

Beyond the politics, the economics of the National Finance Commission will also present a unique challenge. The revenue-sharing formula that has held the field since 2009 awards 57.5pc of the federal divisible pool to the provinces, and since 2011 Balochistan has received further assurance that its share will be disbursed on the basis of revenue projections, not actual collections. The spirit of the 2009 NFC award was a belated acknowledgement of the federal structure of the state, and the important role of the provinces in the overall governance framework. The latest commission that is about to be constituted must not roll back these gains made by the provinces, nor should it seek a disingenuous path to cut provincial shares through other means. The Constitution prohibits rolling back provincial shares in national resources, and its letter and spirit must be respected as the commission prepares to meet. It is true that the devolution of these resources to the provinces has sharply narrowed the fiscal space available to the centre, but it would be better to address that issue through tax reform and strong efforts at documentation of the economy. One matter that the commission can discuss is how to incentivise the provincial governments to strengthen their own revenue-collection efforts, and particularly to do more in generating agriculture income tax, which lies squarely in the provincial domain. At the moment, the provincial government revenues have grown on the back of low-hanging fruit such as taxes on services. The finance commission would have the opportunity to craft a consensus around revenue mobilisation and sharing, and the opportunity must not go to waste.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1454962/nfc-reconstitution>

Global Economic Outlook For 2019: Chaos, Uncertainty And Turmoil By Shan Saeed

Markets are whistling past the graveyard

Pandemonium is a difficult word to fathom. Systematic risk is getting serious now and global investors are very nervous and baffled. Systematic risk, also known as “market risk” or “un-diversifiable risk”, is the uncertainty inherent to the entire market or entire market segment. Also referred to as volatility, systematic risk consists of the day-to-day fluctuations in a stock’s price. ... Systematic risk can be mitigated only by being hedged. History might be repeating itself after 86 years and US economy might be heading for deflationary recession in the coming quarters.

I have seen financial history very closely with my sinful eyes when two global banking giants [Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns] collapsed while I was studying for my MBA in USA at University of Chicago Booth [2007-2009]. In the last 10 after the collapse of Lehman Brothers on Sept 15, 2008, market is meandering around two non-economic variables in the macro equation; Confidence and fear. Wherever, economic confidence is strong and solid, economies are booming and GDP is growing at a faster pace. Both the governments and tech savvy labour force are leverage from productivity especially ASEAN and CHINA. However, there are many economies where fear has gone into the landscape and among people, economies have demonstrated abysmally low economic progression and sub-par growth rate in countries like Italy, Japan, UK, Australia and many countries in Europe. Macro stability drives the economic confidence in the economy.

Strategic market insight: opportunities with high price.

Markets have gone down by 20% meaning \$9Trillion wiped off the equity markets. Boots on the ground market intelligence reports are suggesting if markets go down by 50% next year, \$23 – \$25 trillion is expected to be flying off in the air like a bubble from the equity and bond markets. Tough call.

Sovereign currency risk——new headache for the market.

Sovereign currency risk is the new systematic risk coming back into the financial markets. Every currency has got 3 variables embedded in its value; structural, cyclical and political.

Fair market value of the currency encompasses these 3 variables and provides direction to its future outlook. In 2019, few currencies [Dollar, Euro and Pound Sterling] will go through some structured depreciation and might ride a wave of extreme uncertainty. Currency noise can quickly pass deep into the equity and bond market. Many sophisticated investors are caught off guard in the equity and bond market since they don't really hedge themselves against currency risk. Sovereign currency risk is becoming a new challenge for many policy makers in the advance economies.

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president Trump, fed and dollar: on a collision course. disharmony

We have witnessed nice discourse in front of camera [Nancy Pelosi, President Trump and Chuck Schumer]. Policy maker's fights are bad for the market and people in general. Economic policy confusion can create havoc for savvy investor's investment. Trump's back ground is real estate and people in the RE industry don't like higher interest rates. J Powell likes stronger dollar and higher discount rate to curb price inflation. Trump's is really crestfallen with Powell -FED Chair lately over higher interest rates and chaos in the equity and bond market. Since Jan 2017 after taking office, President Trump has looked to the stock market as a benchmark for his presidency. Trump is now pondering to dismissing Treasury Secretary Mnuchin. There are plenty of people inside the White House who are not fans of Mnuchin who are happy to throw him under the bus. He is protected by the fact that Trump liked him and he's been a loyalist. Political bickering will keep US dollar to be toasted further in 2019. On the US economic predicament; one of my Nobel Laureate Professors Milton Friedman from University of Chicago, Booth predicted 30 years ago in his book: MONEY MISCHIEF.

Gold, yellow metal shines again in 2019

Gold is trading at \$1250/oz right now——market intelligence reports are suggesting that gold will go up by 12-20% in 2019, we have calculated few scenarios. Premise: Base amount \$1250/oz, Dated: Dec 24-18

PERCENTAGE RISE PRICE HITS

12% increase \$1400 / ounce

16% increase [Average] \$1450 / ounce

20% increase \$1500 / ounce

The markets are in a mood and heading for pandemonium. Its difficult to fathom the trajectory in the equity market. There could be a panic selling globally. Markets will move from Quantitative Tightening to Quantitative Easing——If another crisis happens, the Fed will cut rates back to zero. But it won't be enough. Then they'll have to abandon QT and go back to QE4. Other central banks will follow the Fed's lead.

The market sees this coming, but the Fed does not. As usual, the Fed will be the last to know. Behind the curve most of the time. Investors should prepare now for the inevitable crack-up. There are 3 asset classes to start with to preserve your wealth. First cash, then real estate and then gold.

Most of the global investors are going long on tangible assets. We can expect lot of noise in the markets, uneasy times, opportunities and volatility in the coming months. In 2019, I can foresee CUT i.e. Chaos, uncertainty and turmoil hitting the market soon. Tempestuous times ahead of us and could be worse than 1933s. The signs are ominous. Sagacious and sophisticated investors must prepare themselves for 2019.

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Expectations From Energy-Rich Qatar |

Editorial

Prime Minister Imran Khan had a two-day visit of Qatar culminating yesterday. During the visit, Khan met Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Prime Minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, besides addressing Qatar's business community as well as the Pakistani community. Khan was accompanied by his economic team — comprising Finance Minister Asad Umar, Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan, PM's Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood, Chairman Board of Investment Haroon Sharif and Chairperson of the Task Force on Energy Nadeem Babar — besides his Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The composition of the visiting delegation shows that the agenda of the visit was heavy on business, economy and investment.

The prime focus of the talks with Qatari rulers, though, was on availing an assistance package for Pakistan to meet its energy needs, similar to the ones obtained from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. What's reportedly requested is a reduction in the price of LNG and its supplies on delayed payments under an existing 15-year supply contract that the previous Pakistani government, led by the PML-N, had signed with Qatar.

The contract — featuring the import of LNG by Pakistan at a price equivalent to 13.39% of the international benchmark crude oil price — had been bitterly opposed by the PTI while in the opposition, with Khan even calling it a mother of all corruptions, accusing the former Pakistani government officials of receiving kickbacks in the deal. Now leading the government, the PTI announced abiding by the 15-year contract before the PM's visit to Qatar, as well as another 10-year contract with another supplier that formed the basis of finalising the LNG price — in what is seen as yet another U-turn by the ruling elite.

Qatar is regarded as the most advanced Arab state with a high-income economy, backed by the world's third-largest natural gas and oil reserves. Besides, a 2.6 million-strong Qatar has a 2.3 million expatriate population which shows that the state is hugely dependent on foreign human resource and can help Pakistan with its unemployment woes. Pakistani rulers must not risk relations with such Muslim brotherly states for their petty internal politics.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1894379/expectations-energy-rich-qatar/>

Mini-Budget Aims to Revive Business Sentiment

Khaleeq Kiani

Withdrawing critical taxes on capital market and ban on purchase of vehicles by non-filers of income tax returns and facilitating industry, agriculture and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the PTI government announced on Wednesday the second supplementary budget in almost four months with overall net revenue loss of Rs6.8 billion.

Finance Minister Asad Umar delivered his second budget speech in the National Assembly amid exchange of name calling and taunts with opposition parties — unlike delivery of previous supplementary budget speech in September last year in a calm and peaceful environment.

Also read: A not so mini budget

While introducing the Finance Supplementary (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019, the minister claimed at the outset that it was not a new budget but “a package of investment and export promotion measures for industrial revival which addresses all the key challenges” facing the economy and would lay the foundation for macroeconomic stability and growth in the years to come.

- Tax collections to fall by Rs6.8bn, revenue target unchanged
- Large incentives for lending to SMEs, agriculture, housing
- Stock market is biggest winner
- Non-filers allowed to buy cars up to 1300cc

Finance ministry officials believed that the impact of loss in revenue arising out of facilitations and incentives to various business segments would largely be compensated by resulting economic revival and expansion.

Explore: Moved by the numbers

When contacted, Finance ministry’s spokesman Dr Khaqan Najeeb said that “there is no change in FBR’s target and in overall fiscal deficit” during the year. The Federal Board of Revenue target remained unchanged at Rs4.398 trillion, he added.

Another official said the government would lose some revenue on account of removal of withholding tax on banking transactions for tax filers and stock exchange trading, but this would be more than compensated by an end to the ban on purchase of vehicles of up to 1,300cc capacity by non-filers and increase in duties on luxury cars and other items.

Duties on import of cars and jeeps above 1,800cc would increase by 5-10 per cent — from 20pc to 25pc for up to 3,000cc and from 25pc to 30pc for above 3,000cc. Also, 10pc excise duty has been imposed on import of cars and jeep engines exceeding 1,800cc to discourage luxury imports.

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government had also announced the elimination of restriction on non-filers on purchase of vehicles in the Sept 17 supplementary budget but backed out later after widespread criticism, mostly from the opposition benches, for facilitating informal economy and non-filers.

The finance minister has a new justification this time, saying the decision will have a positive impact on the local automobile industry and remove a distortion between purchase of immovable property and vehicles.

Take a look: No impact, say most new entrants to auto sector about non-filer ban

Last time, Mr Umar had claimed that the restriction was interfering in the ability of overseas Pakistanis to do business and invest in Pakistan.

A curious insertion 1A in the finance act related to an amendment to section 123 of the income tax ordinance attracted a great deal of attention. The insertion says that “[w]here an offshore asset of any person, not declared earlier, is discovered by the Commissioner...the Commissioner may at any time before issuing any assessment order...issue to the person a provisional assessment order...for the last completed tax year of the person taking into account the offshore asset discovered.”

Some in the opposition seized upon this clause to argue that the government has introduced an “unannounced amnesty scheme”, but minister of state for revenue, Hammad Azhar, took to social media to clarify that the new clause simply

extends the powers of the tax authorities to go after undeclared assets once they are discovered.

“Now the demand and recovery of tax can be executed immediately after receipt of information in suitable cases. This will enable the FBR to recover tax provisionally and the regular proceedings (which take about a year or two) will follow. This will also ensure that that we can request for freezing offshore accounts from other countries by conveying our tax demand to them.”

Arguably significant support and facilitation packages were offered to almost the entire business sector, starting from SMEs to agriculture and from low cost housing to banking and from traders to industry and special economic zones and big businesses — apparently targeting the traditional support pockets of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz as the finance minister highlighted how the previous government kept squeezing them over the last five years.

For example, the minister said the tax rate was being reduced from 35pc to 20pc for income of banks arising out of additional SME financing, agricultural financing and low cost housing.

A seed money of Rs5bn would be offered as interest-free loan to the housing sector. Mr Umar described these areas as priority sectors to spur economic growth and create jobs. The additional financing will be worked out on the basis of average advances to these sectors in calendar year 2018 and the facility would remain in place from tax years 2020 to 2023.

The minister expressed the hope that the course of stabilisation coupled with structural reforms he was charting for the economy would usher an era of economic prosperity for people and promised to focus his attention on accelerating investment and domestic savings through an upcoming medium-term macroeconomic growth framework.

“Growth will come through expanding domestic supply and financed largely from domestic resources,” he said.

Another key move was the announcement for settlement of Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC) arrears against various industries that would come up

for approval before the cabinet on Thursday. The finance minister hinted at bringing down the overall rate of GIDC for all sectors to reduce the cost of doing business, besides a 50pc cut in these rates for the fertiliser sector that he believed would reduce fertilizer price by Rs200 per bag.

To facilitate businesses with minimum FBR interface, the minister announced that withholding agents were no more required to file monthly withholding statements, but only biannual statements.

The finance minister also announced steps cajoling the newspaper industry, small shopkeepers and owners of marriage halls in the form of reduction in tax rates. Also included in the reduced duty rates or removal of regulatory duty are import of raw material/inputs for 135 tariff lines meant for plastic, footwear, tanning, leather, home appliances, diapers and chemical sectors. Most of these steps would come into force on March 31. Regulatory duty was also announced for removal of input materials of around 200 tariff lines for manufacturing of automobile parts by local vendors.

Accepting the demand of big businesses and their chambers, the finance minister also announced abolition of super tax on non-banking companies with effect from July 2019, besides offering incentives to industries to set up Greenfield projects.

Mr Umar said the economic framework would ensure the economy to stay on an accelerating growth path, reduce current account deficit sharply and fiscal consolidation lead to reduction in the fiscal deficit. In addition, the government will continue to manage quasi fiscal deficit in the energy sector and bring the flow of this build-up to zero.

Through aggressive structural reforms, the FBR revenue is estimated to grow significantly in real term as a percentage of GDP, with the provinces expected to follow the same. The structural measures, the minister hoped, would affirm a positive trend in domestic savings, thus ensuring a substantial portion of higher investments financed through domestic resources and exports and remittances grow in double digits.

On top of that, the minister said that adequate foreign financing from bilaterals, multilaterals, launch of Pakistan Banao Certificates, Panda Bonds, Sukuk and Eurobond and commercial financing would keep flowing to help build foreign exchange reserves to a comfortable level of import in the medium-term.

Published in Dawn, January 24th, 2019

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1459459/mini-budget-aims-to-revive-business-sentiment>

WEF In Davos And Oxfam Issues Report: Is It Time To Tax The Super-Rich? – OpEd By Dr. Arshad M. Khan

The World Economic Forum met this week (January 22-25) for its 48th annual meeting since its inception. It costs \$60,000 (or Swiss Francs) to become a member and another 27,000 to attend. However civil society groups, NGOs, and UN and government officials can attend free.

It has been a difficult year: Emmanuel Macron received a standing ovation last year. This year the gilets jaunes (yellow vests) with their weekly Saturday protests in Paris have removed some of the veneer off the right-wing leader. Donald Trump is absent, citing his wall — ironic to be a prisoner behind it — and Theresa May is in the throes of Brexit.

Meanwhile the stock market has become erratic. From its October high of 27,000 for the Dow Jones Industrial Index, it has been down 20 percent in December before recovering to a current 10 percent under. It is now about the same as January 2018.

It doesn't stop the billionaires. Their fortunes increased by \$2.5 billion a day while the poorest half of the world saw their total wealth decline by 11 percent and 10,000 people die every day in developing countries from lack of healthcare. So elaborates the Oxfam 2019 report. A figure that has been dropping for some time, now only 26 top billionaires own as much as the poorest half (3.8 billion people) of the world.

In India, 4 billionaires own as much as the bottom half, and the richest, Mukesh Ambani, has more money than the country spends on public health, medical care, sanitation and water supply.

The Oxfam report also blames governments for underfunding public services while taxes on corporations and the wealthy are at the lowest in decades. With 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017 going to the top 1 percent, it is no surprise if a new billionaire is created every two days. Again according to Oxfam,

increasing taxes by just one-half percent on the top 1 percent would raise enough money for healthcare saving 3.3 million lives and educate 262 million children.

Tax rates for corporations in rich countries have fallen from about 62 percent in 1970 to 38 percent in 2013, with the average rate in poor countries at 28 percent. As of January 2018, the 2017 Republican tax bill under President Donald Trump cut the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent in the U.S.

Perhaps most shameful of all, in a relatively poor country like Brazil the poorest 10 percent paid more in taxes than the wealthiest 10 percent. Global inequality is not an easy struggle when with this backdrop Brazil elects Jair Bolsonaro, its own Donald Trump.

So while corporate chieftains schmooze with political leaders, and vice versa, and corporate jets cause a traffic jam at Davos airport, what can the rest of us do to alleviate the miseries of inequality. One answer is to elect people who will work to reverse the legislative excesses of the past half century. Coincidentally, these also tend to be sympathetic to combating climate change.

*About the author: Dr. Arshad M. Khan is a former Professor based in the US. Educated at King's College London, OSU and The University of Chicago, he has a multidisciplinary background that has frequently informed his research. Thus he headed the analysis of an innovation survey of Norway, and his work on SMEs published in major journals has been widely cited. He has for several decades also written for the press: These articles and occasional comments have appeared in print media such as The Dallas Morning News, Dawn (Pakistan), The Fort Worth Star Telegram, The Monitor, The Wall Street Journal and others. On the internet, he has written for Antiwar.com, Asia Times, Common Dreams, Counterpunch, Countercurrents, Dissident Voice, Eurasia Review and Modern Diplomacy among many. His work has been quoted in the U.S. Congress and published in its Congressional Record.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/26012019-wef-in-davos-and-oxfam-issues-report-is-it-time-to-tax-the-super-rich-oped/>

Is the World Prepared For the Next Financial Crisis? By Christine Lagarde

The world in 2019 is still reckoning with the legacy of the global financial crisis, which is hardly surprising given its scale and lasting impact. Ten years on from the Lehman Brothers collapse, one question about the financial system keeps coming up: Are we safer than we were in 2008? The short answer is yes—but not safe enough. While there has been marked progress, more needs to be done, including keeping pace with potential new risks from a rapidly evolving financial landscape.

First, the progress. Banks have bigger and better capital buffers and more liquidity. Countries have taken steps to address systemic risks posed by institutions seen as too big to fail. Regulation and supervision have been strengthened; many countries have stepped up their focus on monitoring financial stability, and many now also conduct regular stress tests to check banks' health. A substantial portion of trading in over-the-counter derivatives has shifted to safer central clearing systems.

For its part, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has improved its ability to analyze and monitor sources of systemic risk. The IMF has improved its ability to analyze and monitor sources of systemic risk. It has partnered with national authorities to help them identify potential trouble spots, such as excessive consumer or corporate debt; develop tools to curb risks; and strengthen analysis of their financial systems.

What about areas where progress has been inadequate or where new risks have emerged?

Let's start with debt. Globally, nonfinancial debt ballooned to a record \$182 trillion in 2017—224 percent of global GDP, an increase of almost 60 percent over 2007. In the United States, investor demand for debt issued by highly leveraged companies has led to worryingly loose underwriting standards, increasing the risk of default by weaker borrowers. In emerging markets, public debt is at levels last seen during the 1980s debt crisis. And if recent trends continue, many low-income countries will face unsustainable debt burdens.

[2019 could be a defining moment for U.S. trade policy, Douglas Irwin writes.]

Nonbank finance, also known as shadow banking because it takes place beyond the perimeter of traditional bank regulation, is another source of risk. Regulators must develop and deploy new tools to address it, particularly in those emerging markets where it has expanded rapidly.

At the same time, new challenges have emerged, including the danger of cyberattacks on banks and stock exchanges. Financial innovation and technology hold out the promise of better, cheaper, and more accessible services but also pose risks for consumers, investors, and the economy's overall financial stability—risks that are not always easy to understand or anticipate.

And for all the progress to strengthen the financial sector, the revamped architecture remains untested. If financial conditions were to tighten sharply—for example, via unexpectedly higher interest rates or a sharp drop in asset prices—this could expose areas of vulnerability that have built up during a decade of record-low interest rates. In the last year, we have already seen some investors pull money out of emerging markets in response to a stronger dollar, rising U.S. interest rates, and trade tensions. IMF calculations show that with an abrupt tightening, there is a chance—albeit a small one—that capital outflows from these economies (excluding China) could reach \$100 billion. That would broadly match outflows during the financial crisis.

Looking at the economic context, there are several sources of risk that could shake investor sentiment. Global growth, while still strong, is leveling off. Support is waning for the open, rules-based international system that has fueled global prosperity, and trade tensions could escalate. Support is waning for the open, rules-based international system that has fueled global prosperity. Uncertainty about fiscal policy in Europe is reviving worries about the self-reinforcing nexus of government and bank debt that shook the eurozone in the first years of this decade. Finally, central banks must navigate the end of an unprecedented monetary experiment. In the United States, the Federal Reserve may need to raise interest rates higher than currently anticipated if tax cuts combined with fiscal stimulus fuel faster-than-expected inflation.

So how should policymakers respond? First, they must complete financial regulatory reforms and, just as important, resist pressure to roll them back. Bank capital should be raised even further in places where buffers remain low. “Too big to fail” remains a problem as banks grow larger and more complex. More progress is needed on procedures for resolving, or winding down, failing banks, especially those that are active across borders. Regulators should encourage banks with weak business models and high levels of nonperforming loans to clean up their balance sheets.

[The world’s authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.]

Second, policymakers should rebuild their fiscal and monetary arsenals, which were weakened as they contended with the 2008 crisis and its aftermath. Doing so will require reducing budget deficits and gradually bringing interest rates back to normal levels as economic conditions permit. Governments should also work together to reduce excessive global imbalances in a way that supports sustainable growth. Flexible exchange rates can help absorb shocks. Steps to boost lagging productivity would counter demographic headwinds and raise growth, which in turn would support efforts to bolster fiscal and monetary room for maneuver.

Finally, as we consider the lessons of the crisis and the path forward, we must also recognize and confront more profound, longer-term risks to financial—and social—stability. Climate change is one that threatens all of us, low-income countries in particular. Advanced economies must ensure that prosperity is more widely shared, by dealing with rising inequality and stagnant wage growth. All countries need to educate and train workers for automation and the fast-changing workplace of the future.

Many of the measures that might make the world safer than it was before the last crisis depend on international cooperation—on matters of trade and finance but also on a number of global public-good problems, including the environment and refugees. The stakes are just as high as they were in 2008.

Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/gt-essay/is-the-world-prepared-for-the-next-financial-crisis-christine-lagarde-economy-recession/>

EDUCATION

Real Education Reform By Jamila Razzaq

On listening to the federal minister for education in meetings and at events, one gets the sense that he understands the fundamental issues facing the education system in Pakistan. His team in the ministry is also very experienced and committed to setting a policy direction and delivering on an education improvement plan for the country.

Individuals and organisations working towards educational development in Pakistan hope a positive outcome from the education policy roadmap of the current government. However, they are also aware that governments in the past have not failed on giving good policy documents. For instance, Pakistan outperformed other nations in presenting roadmaps for MDGs in 2000 and SDGs in 2015. But as far as successful implementation for achieving these global and national goals is concerned, it has been a valley of death for different policy frameworks and action plans.

The four pillars of the new policy framework: out-of-school children, quality education, skill development and uniform standards across the country respond well to the fundamentals of system improvement. After chalking out policy roadmaps and designing detailed implementation strategies with budgeted action plans, the government's education team will have to accelerate progress that reflects in better learning outcomes of all students. People who hope for change want to see solid actions and positive results.

One undeniable fact regarding the improvement of the education system in Pakistan is the enormity of the task. The large number of reported out-of-school children and the dismal learning outcomes of in-school children need equal and urgent attention. The education minister's team will need to avoid a sporadic, disjointed and reactive response. They will have to think beyond quick fixes and devise comprehensive, efficient and effective solutions that work in different parts of the country and with different groups of children. Before diving off the ledge, a serious review of previous policy roadmaps is crucial to identify promising

initiatives and to fix the missing links. Otherwise, the translation of vision into reality may face the same fate as that of other well-intended efforts in the past.

New policy roadmaps should not mean discrediting everything from the past. The new roadmap should rather build upon what has already worked well. One such positive example is the ongoing education sector reform programmes of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments, in partnership with the government of the United Kingdom.

Significant budgetary and technical support for system improvement has been utilised for comprehensive system reform programmes. Some miles have already been covered through establishing independent school monitoring systems in both provinces, improved infrastructure and facilities in Punjab and the teacher induction programme in KP. Attention and effort are required to accelerate progress on these and other similarly effective programmes. Equal attention is also needed to identify ineffective programmes and energise or discontinue them – depending upon their significance, need and relevance to the quality of learning at the school level.

The government's education team can move the needle in a positive direction only by ensuring the basic elements of quality of learning in schools. In 2016, the federal government developed the Minimum Standards for Quality Education (MSQE). However, mere development and dissemination of standards is not enough, especially in the absence of accessible pathways with clear milestones and proactive control by all stakeholders.

One clearly missing element in the MSQE is any consideration for quality in governance. The administrative heads of education departments at national and provincial levels get placed on these positions without tenure postings, and mostly for very short durations. They may also come to lead this specialised work of developing future generations of the country with a rather general background and experience, sometimes as irrelevant as that of leading the livestock or forest departments.

For any serious effort to improve the quality of education, the new policy framework should prioritise governance reforms. These reforms should create the possibility for the best and brightest from within the education sector to take

up the top managerial responsibilities in education departments with a clearly laid-out accountability structure and for a minimum tenure.

Similarly, mechanisms for reforms should not be confined to in-country or foreign exposure visits and lucrative training programmes for middle and senior managers in education departments. Unfortunately, these two features top the list of education governance reform initiatives designed with indigenous or foreign funds. These universally attractive but generally fruitless solutions for governance should be given more thought for the relevance of the proposed activity and the accountability of participants for some tangible outcome.

Governance reforms will need attention and time from policy and decision makers at the national and provincial levels. For a really consultative reform process, staff in management and administration positions of education departments will also need to be closely involved. Those of us who work with the education departments of different governments in Pakistan observe the way ministers, secretaries and their secretarial staff are under excessive demand to appear in events and meetings of foreign aid programmes and in educational institutions. This situation can be avoided and improved with better utilisation of the precious time of government functionaries.

Development partners and education departments should coordinate and hold joint thematic events instead of parallel events happening in different 3-5 star hotels or even different halls of the same hotels. Through an administrative order, one immediate step should be taken: all launch, close-out, dissemination of achievements, findings or policy seminars of education projects should be held in public colleges and schools of the respective cities in the afternoons or evenings. Identification of venue should be done in consultation with the relevant education office and rotated among different institutions, prioritising those requiring attention of authorities.

In this way, the minister and the donors will get to see the real schools they are working for and money will also be saved which can be donated to the school.

This small step may have symbolic significance for grounding policy frameworks, quality standards and development initiatives into the reality of schools. This exposure may also be unique for local politicians and bureaucrats whose children

study in private schools. Above all, it will demonstrate the government's priority for bringing schools to the centre of the education reform and improvement effort.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/416767-real-education-reform>

Education Emergency | Editorial

The crisis of our school education system is much deeper than is appreciated by state authorities in Islamabad. The good news is that there is realization of the extent of the crisis in concerned quarters, i.e. education bureaucracies in the Centre and provinces. Towards the end of 2018, a very well drafted policy framework was presented to the nation by the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) government. It detailed the urgent task of enrolling 22.84 million out of school children across the country, the bulk of whom should attend middle and secondary schools but cannot because there aren't enough such schools in the country to begin with. The framework also recognised the need to bring up the net-enrolment rates which are among the lowest in the South Asian region.

Another aspect, not stressed enough in the framework, is the gradual withdrawal of the state from provision of this key public good. A report compiled by Alif Ailaan has documented that almost 40 percent of the school-going children are enrolled in private schools. Only a fraction of this percentage attends schools that cater to the elites and the upwardly mobile middle classes, whose tuition fees have been a subject of concern for the executive and judicial authorities of the state for quite some time. After having ordered a flat 20 percent reduction in tuition fees of such schools in December last year, the apex court has now sought a report on the implementation status of its ruling.

While judicial activism of this sort can provide a temporary relief to the vocal elites and upper-middle classes, the underlying problem that has caused the mushrooming of private schools remains unaddressed. That has to do with the state's complete abdication of its responsibility to provide a good quality education to Pakistan's children. The role of the state in provision of education cannot be stressed enough given the public nature of the good. By surrendering this responsibility to the market, the state has become complicit in an apartheid of sorts where those with means can afford quality education for their children who get an advantage over children from poor and lower-middle class households for no achievements of their own. This means that there are next to no chances opportunities for upward social mobility available to children born into poor households or those born away from cities, and that our society has become deeply fragmented along the lines of economic class.

Therefore, the authorities in Islamabad will be best advised to be sincere to the Pakistani children and initiate a dialogue for ending this education apartheid. Temporary and ad hoc measures to cut down on tuition fees charged by private education institutes will address only the symptoms of the deeper crisis of school education. To address the crisis itself, the authorities will have to do some introspection, meaning they will need redo the public education system. Educating our children is too serious a task to be handed over to the whims of the market. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/342948/education-emergency-3/>

Promoting Literacy in Pakistan By Syed Jawaid Iqbal

Literacy is a right in itself and an instrument for achieving other rights. Literacy and numeracy skills are critical to economic development of a country as well as individual and community well-being. It is important to spread these skills by helping people of all ages to read and write effectively or acquire basic skills in mathematics. Early literacy and numeracy skills are the roots of career success — and it is never too early to plant these seeds. Improvement in these skills can contribute to economic growth, reduction of poverty and crime, promotion of democracy, increase in civic engagement, prevention of diseases through useful information, and enhancement of cultural diversity through literacy programmes in diverse languages.

The literacy rate is very low in Pakistan. It has declined from 60 percent to 58 percent, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan. There are multiple factors behind this. The most important is the lack of government funding for educational institutions. In 2017-18, the government budget allocated for education was Rs902.7 billion, which was rather low for Pakistan — a country of over 200 million people, half of whom are not above 35.

Other than this, the low income level in Pakistan is an important factor that contributes to low literacy rates. The feudal system is also a major player in Pakistani society which greatly influences the literacy rate.

In Pakistan's context, literacy is defined as the ability to read and understand simple text in any language from a newspaper or magazine and write a simple letter whereas numeracy skills refer to the ability to perform basic mathematical calculations (i.e. counting and addition/subtraction). Even under this definition, literacy and numeracy skills in Pakistan, both for the young and adults, need to be more widespread as these are important factors that would accelerate the country's development.

Literacy is a right in itself and an instrument for achieving other rights. There are many broad benefits that result from literacy, in human, economic, social and cultural terms. Since literacy is a key outcome of education, it is difficult to

separate the right to literacy from the right to education or the benefits of literacy from those of education.

It is for this reason that in a global environment where the culture of reading is diminishing, many publishers like Oxford University Press have succeeded in attracting more and more people towards the habit of reading and this is particularly pertinent in Pakistan's context

There is a strong belief among various quality publishers in Pakistan that the more children are able to read, the better would be their educational outcomes. Developing comprehension, language and literacy skills at the primary level can develop an enthusiasm for reading and writing, shape future educational success, and ignite a lifelong love of learning, and thereby lead to national development. By publishing for all audiences—from pre-school to secondary level school children, students to academics, general readers to researchers, and individuals to institutions, these publishers serve the need to promote literacy from the basic to the highest level of education.

Quality textbook publishing in Pakistan means that well-researched content is written in the local cultural context and resonates well with Pakistani students. These textbooks fulfill the country's vision of spreading education, meeting the learning needs of students, and raising educational standards.

It is for this reason that in a global environment where the culture of reading is diminishing, many publishers like Oxford University Press have succeeded in attracting more and more people towards the habit of reading and this is particularly pertinent in Pakistan's context. These publishers consider it as a part of their responsibility to affect change by enhancing the national level of literacy. Their mission is to spread literacy by providing better quality books and ensuring that these books are reasonably priced and readily available.

It is through the high standards of quality and production laid down by these publishers that they are promoting the mission to spread literacy in Pakistan. There is no doubt that education plays a vital role in the progress and development of a country. Pakistan's leading publishers realise this and are making all efforts at their end to play a positive role in promoting and improving

the future of Pakistan's educational system by spreading literacy and numeracy skills through quality books and the digital media.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/01/22/promoting-literacy-in-pakistan/>

Education For Growth By Hassan Daud

Socio-economic development and poverty alleviation are the key focus areas for our government. In the same spirit, the CPEC base has been broadened by promoting these sectors to facilitate residents in terms of employment and exchanges.

To give practical effect to these plans, China and Pakistan will make efforts to carry out vocational training and improve higher-education resources to carry out design and R&D activities besides ensuring cooperation in various sectors. The newly-established Joint Working Group (JWG) on Socio-Economic Development has been tasked to identify and ensure the implementation of pilot projects in education by setting up smart schools and knowledge-sharing in faculty development.

Our Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that we should seek knowledge, even if we have to go as far as China to gain it. Therefore, we ought to learn from China's journey to become one of the world's most influential economies. The same can be said about China's robust and evolving education system, which is the largest in the world.

As per China's national statistical yearbook for 2018, over 5,944,950 regular teachers are contributing to the most diverse education system in the world, with a focus on tertiary education. In the last 20 years, China has been able to build specialised higher-education institutions (HEIs). In order to give education and academia the respect that it deserves, Teachers' Day has been observed on September 10 since 1985.

I realised the gap in our education system when my two children faced enormous challenges in terms of creativity and technical knowhow in their Chinese school during my four-year stay in China. Therefore, I believe that as Pakistan embarks on the journey of industrial rejuvenation by encouraging foreign investment and joint ventures, there is an urgent need to reform the education system. This will enable us to produce human resources that are suitable for the envisaged industrial growth.

There is a growing need for a clear and correct diagnosis and the importance of education in economic reforms needs to be re-emphasised as it is believed that knowledge and the economy are closely interconnected. By narrowing down the causes and realising the long-term impact of such disparities, the process of reforming the education sector would be more effective.

We cannot expect to improve economic growth with an old education system as the increasing disparities would further delay development. Much has been said and written about the systemic issues in our education sector, with experts viewing it as a hurdle to sustainable economic growth. In order to cater to the needs of accelerated industrial development on an immediate basis, we need to reform our curriculum and increase accessibility to higher technical education.

Following in China's footsteps, we also need to start institutions such as a vocational technical college for the light industry, a petroleum college and a railways university on the basis of a public-private partnership. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (Navtec) also needs to be improved to maintain its quality and relevance, and must introduce online courses to provide technical training in rural areas. In the short to mid-term, specialised teacher education programmes in modern technical and vocational areas need to be introduced. The HEC must develop professional development centres (PDCs) in all HEIs across Pakistan to train faculty and students in specific knowledge and skill domains within the spheres of coastal and harbour engineering, tech textile, aerospace, supply chain, industrial and logistics zone planning, railways, tourism and urban planning.

The youth has been defined as an asset and the educational system is a means to leverage this asset. If we don't develop our educational system, we may fail to become the leading economic power, with a promised GDP growth rate of around seven percent.

Our regional competitors have prepared well in developing human resources. With growing connectivity and Pakistan's role in the region, we also need to capitalise on the increased demand for skilled workers in both domestic and international markets, especially in new technologies. However, this will require immediate measures at all levels from the government and private sector.

Thousands of years ago, Confucius said that: “education breeds confidence, confidence breeds hope, and hope breed peace”. To cultivate hope in our next generation, we must develop an education system that is tailored to face the storm of new technology while developing creativity as well as cross-cultural understanding and acceptance.

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Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/425265-education-for-growth>

WORLD

The Way For Peace in Afghanistan By Sahibzada M Saeed

Recurrent meeting sessions have started between Taliban representatives and US officials. In the Abu Dhabi session, representatives from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE were also present in the talks. The foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi termed the sitting in Abu Dhabi as “productive meetings” during a media talk in his three-day visit to Kabul, Tehran, Beijing and Moscow. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Qureshi travelled to Iran, China and Russia to take them into confidence on the Afghan peace process.

A policy shift is observed in Washington DC over Afghanistan. According to reports, after pouring about one trillion USD with no significant output, America wants to stop the Afghan mission and withdraw its troops. Initially, the United States is waiting for upcoming Afghan presidential elections, and then it will roll back with a claim that we have attained our goals here. However, in reality, Washington wants a respectable retreat from Afghanistan. That’s why President Trump wrote a letter to Pakistan for help in solving the problem, bilateral talks with the Taliban and above all the respectable retreat. Recent discussions are a part of this particular American plan.

All critical stakeholders including Pakistan are very much optimistic about these talks, but few of them are pensive about the fate of the negotiations as well. Now, it is necessary to not make the recent move a formality, but it should have a solid basis and action. In the realm of International Relations, it is vital to analyse political and strategic culture before examining any political as well as security situation. The values, norms and traditions which are widely shared by the inhabitants of a state have significant and vital effects on socio-political matters.

A book Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan written by Antonio Giustozzi a renowned author on Afghan sociopolitical affairs denotes that the

social structure and the ethnic composition of Afghanistan is the underlying driving force in the rise of warlordism and lack of power-sharing and fragile institutional mechanism pave the way for anarchy at the state level

Afghanistan is a country portrayed as Terra Incognita- the land of tribes, the home of warlords, and the graveyard of empires. Afghanistan is the society of multiple ethnic groups. Even the national Anthem and constitution of Afghanistan mention its 14 ethnic groups. Strong tribal spirit is rooted in Afghan social structure. The tribal system is often noticed as an agent to challenge contemporary governance system and political structure. As we had observed during the Afghan civil war when the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan in 1989, various tribal leaders including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum opened a front against the sitting government in Kabul.

The tribal system has its own values, a way of thinking and the conduct towards different societal developments. In the concept of tribalism, people are generally loyal to their ethnic groups. A famous Arab saying best defines the norms of the typical tribal system. It is said that “I against my brother; I and my brother against my cousin; I and my brother and my cousin against the world.”If we study the history of Afghanistan, we will see that tribal war remained a predominant feature of Afghan society for so many centuries. One of the reasons behind the unrest between different Afghan tribes is the nomadic characteristics of their culture.

Barren land and infecund mountains are not favourable for cultivation and do not offer any charm to inhabitants for clinging to a specific piece of land. So the people roam from one place to other to fulfil their food and water needs. Their primary source of livelihood remained hunting, and rearing cattle herds. Afghan warlords attacked the lands of the Indian subcontinent and grabbed as many resources as they can to carry them to Afghanistan. Tribal system has been practiced since centuries, and that’s why local tribes in Afghanistan consider the modern democratic system a challenge to their sovereignty and have always rejected the concept of central government.

A book Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan written by Antonio Giustozzi a renowned author on Afghan sociopolitical affairs denotes that the social structure and the ethnic composition of Afghanistan is the underlying

driving force in the rise of warlordism and lack of power-sharing and fragile institutional mechanism pave the way for anarchy at the state level. The fragmented and polarised nature of Afghan society is persistent which leads to various internal struggles. After the US withdrawal the primary challenge for peacemakers is to accommodate the members of the Afghan traditional elite, the religious establishment and the intelligentsia.

To craft a sustainable and peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem, it is necessary to engage all national and international stakeholders. Sudden withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan could create a vacuum and the country will be the battlefield of regional and global powers. Rushed peace talks with little or no tribal participation will not be fruitful. Priority should be to preserve single and undivided Afghanistan, in which all ethnic groups would live together in peace and harmony. It will be possible by accommodating Afghan tribes that will reduce ethno-politics. A consensus-based federal government with balanced ethnic representation is the dire need of the hour. Similarly, provinces should be restructured to follow racial boundaries at the maximum possible level and provision of provincial autonomy that will help to manage inter-ethnic tensions of the country. For peacemakers, an in-depth understanding of Afghan societal values and domestic politics will be a key for establishing peace in Afghanistan successfully.

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Rulebook For A Changing Climate – **Analysis By Elkanah Babatunde**

The UN Conference of the Parties on Climate Change ended with the adoption of a 133-page rulebook for the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement – culmination of three years of negotiations. Overall, while the rulebook is a step forward in ensuring global climate-change action, it makes little effort to ensure protection of those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The adoption of renewable energies and other forms of climate protections, especially in the developing world, is not a simple affair. Such action is anticipated to cost billions if not trillions of dollars. Obligations under the new rulebook are minimal – and COP24 portends developing countries taking on substantial obligations for climate change. Provision of climate finance is however a necessity both for protecting the world's most vulnerable populations and for achieving more ambitious temperature goals.

Negotiating blocs sought to address significant issues that pertain to global climate-change governance including implementation of nationally determined contributions, climate finance, transparency and accountability. While the Paris Agreement provides general rules rather than specific guidelines on these issues, the rulebook provides the operational details. Parties generally agreed on issues such as climate pledge guidance, Article 4 of the agreement; climate finance reporting, Article 9; global stocktake, or inventory, Article 14; and compliance. Still, other issues proved more contentious.

The rulebook does oblige developed countries to report on climate finance provided to developing countries and provides guidelines for this report. However, the rules on climate finance remain largely permissive. Developed countries retain the right to determine what is climate financing, and this may include funds not traditionally classified as climate finance such as concessional and non-concessional loans, guarantees, equity and investments, whether from public or private sources. This creates leeway for developed countries to include loans and other types of funding as climate finance, and thereby render the Paris Agreement's target of raising US\$100 billion annually by 2020 redundant as a wide range of funds are now considered climate finance. This seems to be a step

backwards from the framework convention, which requires that developed countries commit to “new and additional” financial resources in favor of developing countries.

The rulebook fails to provide clarity or specifics on how the existing climate fund target of US\$100 billion or the transfer of technology to developing states might be achieved. Provision of finance and technology to developing countries is not a new requirement under international climate change law, and the missing link has always been its implementation. Real success of the rulebook with regard to climate finance would have been specific rules that ensure developed countries carried out this transfer. The rulebook, for all practical purposes, has not enhanced provision of financial support for developing countries and merely provides for collection of data on finance when such funding is provided – it includes no guidelines ensuring that the funds are given in the first place. The rulebook requires a report, necessary only when there has been a transfer of finance or technology.

Another shortfall of the rulebook is an inability to provide obligatory rules on loss and damage suffered by vulnerable and often the least developed states due to climate change despite having contributed the least to its cause. The climate-change regime has yet to provide a system for supporting those suffering loss and damage from the effects of climate change. The Paris Agreement recognized the importance of addressing loss and damage, and the expectation was for the rulebook to flesh out this recognition into specifics requiring action on the part of wealthier nations to ensure the protection of smaller states. Island states such as Kiribati, Fiji, Solomon Islands and the Marshall islands may have to relocate all or part of their populace to a new locations due to climate change. Unfortunately, the rulebook merely states that parties “may take into account, as appropriate... efforts to avert, minimise and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.” Instead of creating an obligation, the rulebook again uses permissive wording in discussing the need to protect the world’s most vulnerable from climate change. The rulebook’s failure to create an obligation leaves small-island and other vulnerable countries without protection.

Differentiation was another issue in the rulebook, touching on the dichotomy between developing and developed nations in climate-change negotiations. While parties at the conference agreed on the need for transparency rules, there

were contentious debates on whether the principle of differentiation should apply to the application of rules. In the end, the conference decided that a single set of rules be applicable to all countries, permitting flexibility as necessary in the light of each country's capacity. This is a significant development. Prior to this time, only developed nations had an obligation to report on their emissions, and the new standard reveals both the heightened concern and the willingness of developing countries to take up legal obligations under international climate-change law.

Parties failed to reach agreement on implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which provides that parties establish a market mechanism for trading carbon emissions as had initially been set up under the Kyoto Protocol. This issue drove the conference into an extra day of meetings and was deferred for discussion until December and COP25 to be held in Chile. Brazil insisted, with quiet support from China and India, that carbon credits accrued under the Kyoto mechanism should be eligible for accounting by the new market mechanism adopted under the rulebook. Several parties resisted the plan, describing verification mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol as weak and ineffective, thus suggesting that credits under that system could not be trusted.

The rulebook also fails to set an ambitious target required to deal with the urgency of climate change as announced in the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. Certain countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait, opposed adoption of the IPCC report that noted the necessity for a 1.5°C emission reduction target before the year 2030. To achieve this objective, fossil fuels must be completely discontinued by 2050, and rejection of the IPCC report by these major oil producers must be understood in this context. The report's rejection reveals that lack of political will more than lack of scientific knowledge impedes climate-change action. Despite increasing consensus among scientists, urgent action remains subject to the willingness of political figures who lead these negotiations. Political leaders fear the costs and sacrifices required of constituents if new technologies are not found quickly. In developing nations, this entails convincing people that they cannot aspire to more lavish lifestyles while wealthy nations must curtail consumerism.

On the positive side, the rulebook's adoption helps reinforce confidence in multilateralism given the increasing growth of nationalism in various countries of

the world, especially the June 2017 withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement. The willingness of states to continue to come together to take joint actions for tackling climate change is commendable – yet the world is sorely in need of leaders who will invest in research, alternative fuels and protection of the vulnerable.

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Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/11012019-rulebook-for-a-changing-climate-analysis/>

Britain's Economic Future Depends On Brexit By Salvatore Babones

The British political establishment can't seem to make up its collective mind about Brexit. Meanwhile, the European Union's Jean-Claude Juncker says that he will offer "clarifications" to help British prime minister Theresa May push her Brexit deal through Parliament—but no "renegotiation." It seems unlikely that "clarifications" will do the trick.

The British economy may be on a go-slow in advance of Brexit, but with the Eurozone descending into recession for the third time since 2008, it's hard to understand why the British are so worried about their economic future outside the European Union. Looking beyond the quarterly results calendar, the EU has big structural problems too. Not least among them: an addiction to the old-economy manufacturing industries of the twentieth century.

When it comes to the new economy of the twenty-first century, the European mantra is "if you can't beat them, tax them." France rung in the new year with a new GAFA tax on digital revenues. That's "GAFA" as in Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon. France's Yellow Vests will surely celebrate the jobs created by further stifling Europe's moribund online economy.

The GAFA gaffe comes hot on the heels of last year's €4.34 billion Google fine for anticompetitive behavior. As a result, Europeans now have to pay a licensing fee to access Android apps. Come March 30, expect a brisk trade in Europeans picking up fee-free Android phones while passing through Heathrow.

That is if Heathrow is still open. Hard-core Remainers warn that all flights between the EU and the UK will cease with a no-deal Brexit. "Fog in Channel; Continent cut off"—indeed!

Brexit fearmongering tends to focus on the old economy of planes, trains, and automobiles. Will the UK and EU recognize each other's pilot licenses? (They will.) Will the French post adequate numbers of customs inspectors on their side of the Channel tunnel? (They won't.) Will Britain's foreign-owned automakers move some production overseas? (They might.)

The smooth flow of car parts from France to the English Midlands is hardly the stuff that economic dreams are made of. Power in automobile value chains is rapidly shifting away from manufacturers and toward online NetWare services like Uber and Lyft. Of course, the EU is working to shut them down , too. Whether or not it will succeed is another matter.

If long-term economic forecasting is a mug's game, then at least one thing is certain: the European Union's centralized, controlled, grant-subsidized, government-led approach to technology development virtually guarantees that the future will be made elsewhere.

Innovation and Independence

Twentieth-century industries required logical minds and rational thought processes to organize ever more complicated production systems. These played to European strengths. When it comes to disciplined mental training to perform well-defined tasks, the Japanese are their only rivals.

But the emerging networked technosystems of the twenty-first century require intellectual flexibility more than sheer rational thought. Logic is out; creativity is in. If you want to engineer a car, go to Germany; if you want to reimagine personal transportation, go to California.

For several decades, almost since it joined the EU in 1973, the United Kingdom has been balanced on the edge between the world of engineering and the world of imagination. The UK gave up on large-scale economic planning during the Thatcher era, but it has never quite embraced the wide open economic frontiers of the American West. Its atmosphere is more like that of the Northeastern United States: sensible, but not stifling.

With the EU pursuing an “ever closer (economic) union”—and with EU institutions like the European Commission and the European Court of Justice tacking toward an increasingly interventionist approach to economic management—the Brexit vote coincided with an important tipping point. “Remain” was a bet that the European Commission knew how best to plan Europe's (and Britain's) economic future. “Leave” was a leap of faith in the ability of individual

British people, companies, and institutions to create economic futures for themselves.

Anglo-American intellectual flexibility is reflected in the global dominance of U.S. and UK universities. The United States boasts thirty-one of the top fifty universities in the world, according to the widely-used Academic Ranking of World Universities . The United Kingdom has six, which is as many as the top universities in the rest of the EU combined. And not a single EU university scores in the top twenty-five.

Old Chains, New Links

In the early 1800s, Napoleon organized nearly all of Europe into a continent-wide trade embargo of the United Kingdom. Being cut off from England nearly destroyed the French economy. In the two World Wars of the first half of the twentieth century, Germany, with access to all the resources of Europe, was reduced to starvation by the Allied blockades. Today's talk of the EU "punishing" the UK by penalizing British trade is just as short-sighted as the last two continental systems.

It is all the more short-sighted because trade just doesn't matter like it used to. International trade as a percentage of global GDP has been declining ever since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008–09. The container ship is no longer an icon of the future. It is an emblem of the past.

The UK is already much more advanced than the EU in shifting from exporting old-fashioned goods to exporting new-style services, but even that doesn't truly capture the emerging impact of the innovation economy on trade. The value of goods themselves is increasingly driven by the intellectual property embedded in them. Steel is cheap. Ideas are expensive.

Membership in the European Union chained the United Kingdom to a goods-based economic future imagined in Brussels and Berlin. The UK might do well in that world, but it would never thrive. Britain will never again out-farm France or out-manufacture Germany. Britain's comparative advantage doesn't lie in goods. It lies in liberty.

A post-Brexit Britain may (or may not) suffer job losses in automobile manufacturing, or even in banking. It can only gain in freedom of thought and action. In the twenty-first-century economy, freedom is the key. Just look at Silicon Valley.

The twenty-first-century “innovation” economy won’t be planned by the European Commission. It will be imagined by the likes of Google and Uber. Brexit frees Britain to build on its strengths by aligning itself with the most dynamic economic actors of today’s networked world.

No wonder individual Europeans are rushing to get into the UK while they still can. They’re very rational people and they know which side of the Channel represents the future. No one is hiding on lorries to sneak into Calais. It’s Britain they want to be in come March 30.

Salvatore Babones is the author of *The New Authoritarianism: Trump, Populism, and the Tyranny of Experts* .

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/britains-economic-future-depends-brexit-41547>

Can Erdogan Fill Trump's Shoes in Syria? |

Editorial

The age of strongmen is coming fast back upon us. Turkey has a history of rule of strongmen and Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the democratic version of that rule. For seven years of his 17 years in power, he has witnessed Syria bleed. Now that the US President Donald Trump has announced gradual withdrawal of the US forces from Syria, Erdogan has not only endorsed him but also gave a future roadmap.

In a recent article in New York Times, Erdogan announced that “Trump is Right on Syria. Turkey Can Get the Job Done”. Though the US Congress, NATO allies and some Middle Eastern partners have apprehensions about President Trump's sudden decision for abrupt withdrawal of the US forces from war-ravaged Syria, Erdogan wrote that he had “made the right call” and Turkey is “the only country with the power and commitment to perform that task”.

He has seen off two US presidents – President Bush and President Obama – and standing by the third one in the latter's one of the most controversial decisions. He tried to convince the international audience that Turkey handled with the terrorists in Syria better than international powers did in Iraq.

Drawing a lesson from Iraq, he threw caution against “reckless actions” and “premature declaration of victory”, a clear reference to President Trump's tweets about victory over the IS in Syria. Counting his credentials for suitability to the task, he said IS called his “treacherous Satan” and his country is “the sole stakeholder” that can work with both the US and Russia.

However, things may not be as easy as Erdogan believes them to be. After all, shortly before writing his proposals for the US media, he had refused to meet the US National Security Advisor John Bolton. He did not meet the top-ranking US official and called a “grave mistake” the US demand that Turkey will protect Syrian Kurds after withdrawal of the US forces. Erdogan's reaction to Bolton almost scuttled the mission the latter was leading in the region for smooth withdrawal from Syria.

Strongmen used to humble those they think do not meet their stature. This is perhaps why that Erdogan felt it convenient not to meet Bolton. His Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu went one step further saying that Turkish operation against Kurd outfits has nothing to do with the US announcement about withdrawal of its troops. The US withdrawal or no withdrawal, Cavusoglu said they would continue operation against Kurd outfits for the sake of national security.

It was after that sharp reaction that Erdogan proposed that a force made up of all communities including Kurds will be formed to keep peace in Syria. He said that Kurd outfits, which have been declared terrorist both by Turkey and the US, will be defeated and the children they were using as fighters will be reunited with their families. He also said that he had no “argument” with Kurds living in the north of Syria, which is close to Turkey.

Some outfits of Kurds are struggling to acquire a separate homeland for them, carved out of the areas they live on both sides of border between Syria and Turkey. Turkey has already angered both the Russian regime and Russia by shooting down their aircraft. Erdogan’s claim that he is the only one to stop Syria from post-war mayhem will not go down well with Iran, a key stakeholder in Syria. Bolton had issued from Israel the statement about guarantee from Turkey for protection of Kurds, which carries a tacit message for Erdogan that his support for some Palestinian groups is unwelcome. Against this background, it is illogical for the US decision makers to trust Turkey with Syria after them. *

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/342949/can-erdogan-fill-trumps-shoes-in-syria/>

Importance of Next Indian Elections By Dr Raza Khan

The next national elections in India are scheduled to be held in April-May 2019 and these polls are profoundly significant in the sense that they would determine the future character of the Indian union as well as the nature of society. In the 2019 elections in India, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would be trying its utmost to return with a thumping win while the main opposition party, Indian National Congress (INC), would attempt to deny Prime Minister Modi's party continuity in the saddle and to win majority.

The most important aspect of the next national elections in India is that the central narrative of both the BJP and the INC along with other opposition parties be whether India would continue to exist as a Hindu-dominated state or as a secular country. In the last four and a half years of the BJP government under PM Modi, India has lost much of its whatever secular character as the most important religious minority Muslims and even other communities have been extensively mistreated. Modi ostensibly is attempting to contest the upcoming elections on a chauvinist Hindutva ideology whose believers find solace in hostility toward Muslims in India, as well as towards Pakistan. The fact of the matter is that PM Modi during his rule has largely been unable, if not failed, to fulfil the promises he and the BJP had made to the Indians to put in place a vibrant system of good governance and achieve higher levels of economic development. Over the years, the economic growth in India has slowed down. Resultantly, most of the Indians are quite disenchanted with the performance of the incumbent government and the prevalent circumstances. The BJP leadership is quite cognisant of the situation and is, therefore, trying to use the Hindutva ideology that is premised on Hindu revivalism. Because it is the only guarantee that the BJP would retain state power. At the same time the opposition INC and other political parties like the Janata Dal along with many regional parties would contest the national election to restore the secular character of the Indian state.

Having said this, it must be mentioned that Indian secularism since the birth of the country in 1947 has been confined to theory with no practical value. Yes as a value and a slogan, secularism has kept the Indian society to a certain extent intact. However, the religious, class and regional fault lines have been so

numerous in India that the mantra of secularism could not reconcile all segments of society. In fact, in the past the INC has been considerably responsible for negating the avowed secular character of the country. India is a great country with splendid religious, cultural and social diversity. However, the successive governments' failure to provide purpose and direction to the common Indian has prevented the state from achieving great power status. Today, the only gelling agent in India is Hindutva, which at least gives a sense of purpose to the dominant Hindu population. However, it comes at the altar of solidarity of Indian society where religious minorities are feeling increasingly disillusioned and disenchanting.

On its part, it is difficult to reconcile with the argument that the BJP has been in politics and seeking state power to establish the model of good governance, democracy and attain high levels of economic development. Rather the very raison d'être of the BJP has been to take the ideal of Hindu revivalism to its logical conclusion and same has been the very purpose of the party to be in politics and to get governmental power.

So in case the BJP would win a landslide victory in the 2019 elections, it would try this time decisively to transform the basic secular character of the Indian constitution and would take measures and steps to push the Muslims and even Christians and probably Sikhs to the wall in every field resulting in aggravating the communal and religious conflict in the Indian society.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 3rd, 2019.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1880084/6-importance-next-indian-elections/>

Future Of North Korean Nuclear Program – **OpEd By Beenish Altaf**

North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, recently showed his willingness to have a second summit meeting with the United States President Trump. However he conditioned the offer that he will only cooperate if the US will remove international sanctions against his country, otherwise the North Korea will be left with no choice then to return to the nuclear option.

The North Korean leader in his New Year Day's speech said that "he is willing to meet the United States president at any time for the betterment of our international community. However, if the United States does not keep its promise in our international community and misinterprets our patience and intention and continues with the sanctions, then we have no choice for the sake of our national interest and peace of the Korean Peninsula but to come up with new initiatives and new measures."

Previously, the same country that was once annoyed strongly against a state, cause of its nuclear buildup, was impressed from its diplomatic twist to the extent that it decided to change its decisions favoring it. At that time point in time, President Donald Trump reversed its decision of military exercises with South Korea by calling it as "waste of money". That happened in the backdrop of a Summit held-in between the US and North Korea on June 12, 2018 in Singapore. Since the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong welcomed the meeting open-heartedly, the role of the country, was fairly vital in carrying out parlays among both the leaders, North Korean Kim Jong-un and the US Donald Trump. Critically it was believed to be the first remarkable deal in many years among both the countries. Regarding its agenda, largely denuclearization was on the top most priority list in the summit.

Despite the fact, that some were anticipating the results of the deal quite positive as a step building good relationship between the US and North Korea, likewise others were apprehensive of it. Paradoxically, the country habitual of military solutions, is evidently foreseeing a "good feeling" for North Korea this time; with reference to the June's summit.

The Rodong Sinmun of Pyongyang on the other hand said that “broad and in-depth opinions would be exchange to establish a permanent and peaceful regime in the Korean Peninsula and to solve problems that are of common concern, including issues to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”

Formerly relationship of the US and North Korea has remained on the edge and tensed to the extent of transferring harsh and threatening statements to each other at the state level. It was followed by several missile tests from North Korean side, who up till now conducted six nuclear tests too (the latest of which was in September 2017). North Korea offered a frightening and alarming demonstration over the precedent months of its capability to deliver warheads, using missiles that could easily strike South Korea, Japan and the United States territory. It was actually exasperated by the US plan of installing anti-missile defence system in the South, which resulted in further evoked concerns in the North Korean.

Pakistan always condemned North Korean nuclear ambitions because it damages the global objective of making Korean a nuclear weapons free peninsula. More precisely, all that Pakistan wants is peace in Korean Peninsula. It was always desired that all the countries in the region including North and South Korea, Japan, China and the US, manage the situation diplomatically with utmost responsibility.

However, if look with the lens of a victory, several conclusions could be drawn including: a durable peace is anticipated as the best outcome as North Korea is now trying to develop good ties with South Korea. The top leader, Kim met President Moon Jae-In and discussed areas of mutual interests. Besides, the next summit could be a step-up for international community’s disarmament goal that is the denuclearization of Korean Peninsula, ironically, the time frame of which cannot be measured at this point of time. Another gain for North Korea could be the removal of sanctions from the American side that will be a further aid in the development of good bilateral relations. However, till present there is nothing substantial outcome as the US is stick to its military presence in and around Korea likewise the North Korea is also stuck to its condition of removal or lifting of sanctions first before any solid step towards dismantling its nukes.

Source: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/16012019-future-of-north-korean-nuclear-program-oped/>

Afghanistan: Peace Remains Elusive Despite US Drawdown Announcement By Saleem Qamar Butt

The sudden announcement on December 20, 2018, by President Trump of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in the next few months, essentially to the dismay of the US Department of Defence, is marked by the resignation of Secretary Defense General James Mattis, which either underscored the saying “Every exit is an entry somewhere else” or it might have simply meant for America “If you enter strong and you exit strong, and you’re going to be okay.” However, apparently under pressure from the US DoD and Langley, White House had to announce sooner than later that the drawdown from Afghanistan was being ‘re-evaluated’ as it might embolden Taliban, making reconciliation even harder. Although it may appear rather too early to write about “Afghanistan post US’ exit”, yet the intricacies involved and preparations needed to ward off potential devastating fallouts by the affected countries attach a sense of urgency for considering likely scenarios and reactions by each and every major and minor stakeholder. However, besides global rivals playing the new great game in Afghanistan, prospects of peace in Afghanistan remain largely dependent on three main actors which are the US, Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban.

Some American analysts believe that in deciding to withdraw from Syria and Afghanistan, President Trump is taking a political risk that George W. Bush and Barack Obama avoided after 9/11: being perceived as weak on terrorism. While Trump’s sudden announcement to commence a drawdown may have more to do with his pre-election promises to pull out from external wars to save money in order to consolidate internally under the rubric of America First; yet it has also given rise to many other speculations i.e. admission of defeat in Afghanistan, agreeing to Afghan Taliban’s demands, handing over of the Afghan mess to Pakistan along with some financial backbenchers like KSA, UAE and Qatar. And leaving the arena open for its old strategic rival Russia and now China, short circuiting India’s design to encircle Pakistan and contest China as US’ new strategic partner in the region, handing over the devastated war zone to regional players to settle on their own expenses and perils.

The third major actor in the Afghan conundrum are Afghan Taliban, who after the engagement by the US in UAE in mid December 2018, appear to have gained the visible upper hand, with US seemingly wilting under pressure and agreeing on some of their demands

However, Trump's differences with his own handpicked senior administration who regularly continue to resign or are fired is indicative of the internal widening gulf that has cast a shadow on Trump's presidency with even external ramifications. The second main actor in the Afghan quagmire is the incumbent Afghan Government itself that is visibly upset on Trump's withdrawal decision as also expressed by Afghan security bosses. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on December 23, 2018 replaced two of the country's top security chiefs with staunch anti-Taliban and anti-Pakistan officials, days after US President Donald Trump's decision to slash troop numbers in the country. Amrullah Saleh and Asadullah Khaled, both former heads of the Afghan intelligence agency, have been appointed to the critical posts of interior minister and defence minister respectively. Thus reconciliation with the warring Afghan Taliban has become even trickier and may result in heightened militancy, that is bound to undermine Pakistan's and China's conciliatory efforts. Needless to mention, the already frail Afghan Government's survival with or without presidential elections in second quarter of 2019 looks bleak.

The third major actor in the Afghan conundrum are Afghan Taliban, who after the engagement by the US in UAE in mid December 2018, appear to have gained the visible upper hand, with US seemingly wilting under pressure and agreeing on some of their demands. As a proof of that, during January 2019, Taliban refused to meet Afghan government's representatives in KSA and also refused to meet special US representative Zalmay due to a disagreement regarding the swap over of prisoners and the ceasefire demand made by the US. With almost a 50 percent withdrawal of US forces, Afghanistan is already under Taliban control and the public is largely disenchanted with the Afghan Government and unattractive Western promises, the US military drawdown will obviously result in a quick resurrection of Taliban who may not face much difficulty in defeating their new but relatively minor rival i.e. the much trumpeted proxy called Islamic State and other foreign proxies operating from their soil.

Pakistan will be well advised to remember that regional peace in Central Asia and South Asia (CASA) will remain hostage to the great power play in Afghanistan which is duly exploited by India. China may have to play a more proactive role in coordination with Russia to safeguard its strategic interests vis-à-vis India as well to address their common concerns with respect to the smuggling of drugs, spread of extremism, influence of ETIM, IMU and Islamic State elements. Iran being another affected country because of both instability as well as the presence of its arch foe the US in Afghanistan, will not only be better served by enhancing its strategic cooperation with Pakistan, instead of allowing itself to be exploited by India;s business charm through Chabahar port and new road and railway ventures. Turkey, KSA, UAE and Qatar are all expected to continue to play a supporting role to further the peace process instead of checkmating Iran to avoid another Syria like scenario. Pakistan may have to continue to fight on many fronts.

While the responsibility for success of the dialogue rests on the shoulder of the three main actors, it is opined that instead of just hosting delegation level talks, Pakistan should host the first summit for Peace in Afghanistan to let the ball roll which can then be followed by China and the other countries. The Afghan owned, Afghan led and all inclusive slogan for peace in Afghanistan, now needs to be updated and broadened to make it an all inclusive regional solution for sustainability and durable peace in Afghanistan and the region.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/347367/afghanistan-peace-remains-elusive-despite-us-drawdown-announcement/>

U.S. Foreign Policy in Free Fall By Jeffrey Stacey

The U.S. Defense Department has officially confirmed that the U.S. military withdrawal from Syria is under way. However, in actuality only an extremely limited form of withdrawal is occurring, and one that is hardly consequential—as indicated by the tragic loss of four Americans there this week. Rather, it comprises merely a cosmetic withdrawal, so meager in size as to amount to just enough to offer President Donald Trump a fig leaf for covering up the most significant foreign policy mistake of his young presidency in a long string of them.

The direct damage to the reputation of the United States, however, has been substantial, and is likely to get still worse. In fact, it is no exaggeration to describe America's global reputation—as well as its foreign-policy efficacy—as being in free fall. Other Trump administration factors have contributed to this, particularly the mistakes made by the president, his national security adviser, and the secretary of state. If the Syrian theater is Exhibit A, then last week's failed Arab League Summit is Exhibit B for demonstrating the divisiveness that results from the absence of American leadership.

NATO also features prominently in America's diminution. Were the United States to withdraw from NATO as Trump has openly mused about, then its collapse would follow rapidly thereafter. Mueller probe revelations in Washington are now dovetailing with the degradation of American leadership, as Trump is now being seriously accused of being a Russia agent. As it happens, NATO's disappearance is the top-ranking item on Vladimir Putin's geopolitical wish list. Lost on Trump is what is glaringly obvious to everyone else, including Russia—NATO is the very alliance that won the Cold War.

Then there is this administration's clumsy pursuit of a so-called Arab NATO. Right up there with the new U.S. Space Force, the Trump administration is actively failing at healing the rift in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and quixotically pursuing an Arab NATO to replace it, which would serve as some sort of Sunni state military alliance intent on confronting and containing Iran. Several countries in the Mideast have rebuffed the administration about an Arab NATO just this week. But when historians eventually write about this period of

world history, the inept Syria withdrawal decision will stand out as the most destabilizing.

Trump made his egregious Syria decision with zero input from U.S. diplomats or military leaders, based on nothing other than an initial conversation with Turkish president Recep Erdogan on the sidelines of the G20. Another conversation took place between the two leaders the day that Trump tweeted about his decision to withdraw troops from Syria. That plan has already been walked almost all the way back, not merely by senior U.S. officials but in particular by the Israeli prime minister, defense chief, and intel chief who emphasized to the president that his nemesis Iran along with Russia was going to be the chief beneficiary of this inane decision.

Directly thereafter, Mike Pompeo and John Bolton have added to the disarray and confusion, by insisting on the one hand that the United States is in the process of withdrawing from Syria, but not until all of ISIS is eradicated (in Bolton's case) and Iran is fully driven out of Syria (in Pompeo's case) and the Kurds are protected (in both their cases). They and U.S. Syria envoy Jeffries were forced to fan out across the region to try to contain the fallout from Trump's precipitous decision, as well as their own blatant contradictions. As a consequence, not only is there confusion among U.S. military ranks and the Pentagon, but in particular among America's allies and foes across the Mideast.

Remarkably, Turkey—so enraged by Bolton's comments about protecting the Kurds that Erdogan refused to meet with him in Istanbul—is also opposed to a complete U.S. withdrawal, as it merely wants the United States to stop assisting the Kurdish YPG and SDF forces. But the Kurds have little faith in the United States and are already busy seeking deals with Russia to the dismay of the Assad regime (which has massacred the Kurds in the past). Former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis could not countenance putting the Kurds in this position. Effectively, the Kurds fear they are being betrayed by the United States—again—when their memories of being abandoned by the Americans following the Iraq War are still fresh.

In a move that fanned fears of foreign-policy collusion with Russia, Trump's alleged Syrian pullout was applauded the very next day in a spontaneous speech in Moscow by Vladimir Putin as “the correct decision.” But while Russia is

delighted by this gift from Trump, even its military brass are concerned about the loss of Mattis and the ongoing need for coordination among Russian and American forces in the Syrian theater.

Iran, equally elated, castigated the United States and Trump when it claimed that the United States was retreating from a region where it did not belong. Iran was so buoyed by the pullout “decision” that it began setting up additional forward bases closer to the Golan Heights, which Israel promptly destroyed. Since then Israel has more openly attacked Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah capabilities, prompting legitimate concerns about a new escalation in violence in the Syrian War that could further spiral and draw in additional external powers.

ISIS is also likely to benefit from the non-withdrawal. At present there are only a couple thousand fighters under major military pressure from Kurdish, American, and French forces (and the air power of the British and others), but there are up to “five figures” of fighters spread throughout the region in remote areas of multiple countries, including a large swath of southern Syria.

Just as regrettable and harmful as Trump’s nondecision decision was Pompeo’s cringe-worthy speech in Cairo. Some people have described the speech as being—e.g. in the words of Tom Friedman—worse than those given by former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, which were pretty bad. Pompeo is highly overrated. The man was a Benghazi gadfly in Congress and then somehow became a pillar of probity and skill by way of his “legitimacy cloaked” stint as CIA director. Pompeo has also made a series of mistakes in his North Korea diplomacy, such as tying Trump’s potential re-election date to a request for the North’s compliance with U.S. denuclearization demands.

But Pompeo’s Cairo speech marked a new low for this plodding underachieving secretary of state. Rather than crafting a sound speech with messaging in mind for allies/foes in the region, all based upon a well-formulated strategy for achieving U.S. goals in Syria and the wider Mideast region, Pompeo spent most of the speech inappropriately and inaccurately bloviating about former President Barack Obama. Worse, there was almost a complete dearth of an articulation of a geostrategically sound U.S. strategy for the region, one matching excessive aims—such as defeating ISIS, protecting the Kurds, and removing Iran from the area—with meager means, a confusingly protracted non-withdrawal.

Pompeo could not even get the basic distinction between Sunni and Shia right. He seemed oblivious to the contradiction between laying all the blame for terrorism in the region at the doorstep of Iran, and then in another breath slamming Obama for retreating and creating ISIS.

Moreover, Pompeo once more contradicted himself on Syria by stating that the United States was pulling out but would remain deployed in theater until Iran left the country.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/us-foreign-policy-free-fall-42387>

India Stands Isolated in the Region and the Afghan Peace Talks By Col (R) Muhammad Hanif

It is good to hear that the Afghan peace talks between the US and the Taliban, facilitated by Pakistan are going well and both sides are about to sign an agreement covering the ceasefire and the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan. The Taliban will not allow the Afghan territory to be used against any other country. After this basic agreement, direct talks will be held between the Taliban and the Afghan government to resolve other issues related to the Afghan constitution, formation of the interim government and holding of the general elections etc.

In the above context, in the light of the request made by the US President Mr. Trump to the Pakistan's Prime Minister, Mr. Imran Khan, to help facilitate the talks between the US and the Taliban, Pakistan has played a key role as a facilitator to bring the Taliban to the table to hold talks with the US officials. In this respect, since Pakistan always advocated for building peace in Afghanistan through negotiations, its stance has been accepted by the US and the international community.

On the other hand, India has been totally isolated in the region and in these peace efforts, because of Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi's wrong regional policy. Modi only followed a rigid regional policy mainly directed at isolating Pakistan in the region, and in his anti Pakistan drive, he did not take into consideration the changing regional environment. India all along advocated against talking to the Taliban, which means that it wanted either the Taliban to be defeated, or the conflict to continue. Whereas, Pakistan was advocating for holding negotiations with the Taliban, to resolve the issues.

Pakistan's policy was in the interest of all the regional countries. The objective was to bring peace and prosperity in the region, by holding mutual talks to resolve contentious issues and by carrying out economic development through cooperation and connecting to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

India wanted that power in Afghanistan should remain with the present set up so that it could go on to use the Afghan soil for destabilizing various parts of Pakistan by sponsoring terrorism. It also wanted a government of its own choosing in Afghanistan, which would continue allowing India to increase its military footprint in Afghanistan, so that it could present to Pakistan, a two front war scenario, as and when it desired. Moreover, India wanted that conflict in Afghanistan should continue so that it could continue to use the conflict to spoil Afghanistan-Pakistan relations and isolate Pakistan in the region.

For example, for the last two years, India has been trying to deter Pakistan in holding the SAARC conference, by refusing to attend that, it is also influencing/pressuring Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan to also not attend the conference.. On the same pretext, India is refusing to resume the stalled bilateral dialogue with Pakistan. Hence, by following such negative politics and propaganda, India has been trying to tarnish Pakistan's regional/international standing to isolate it in the region.

In this context, Pakistan was pursuing a pragmatic foreign and regional policies, as it advocated peace with India, with Afghanistan and inside Afghanistan. Pakistan's policy was in the interest of all the regional countries. The objective was to bring peace and prosperity in the region, by holding mutual talks to resolve contentious issues and by carrying out economic development through cooperation and connecting to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

In following Modi's anti Pakistan policies, Indian policy wizards forgot to recognize the major changes in the regional environment. For example, in 2015, when the IS-Khorasan/Daesh entered Afghanistan, the scenario changed, which India probably intentionally ignored. Whereas other regional countries, such as China, Pakistan, Iran, Russia and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) correctly appreciated that IS-Khorasan was more dangerous for regional security and stability than the Taliban, because Taliban have only Afghan related agendas, and Daesh has international agenda. In this context, since the Taliban are deadly against the Daesh's presence in Afghanistan, all these regional countries started favouring having talks with the Taliban, and in the part, it was only India that was opposing any form of dialogue with the Taliban.

Now, when the US and all regional countries are in favour of bringing peace in Afghanistan by holding talks with the Taliban, because of its wrong foreign and regional policies, rather than isolating Pakistan in the region, India itself stands isolated. Therefore, now, it is advisable for India to change its anti Pakistan drive, to stop blaming Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism, and adopt a more pragmatic policy of creating regional harmony by resolving its disputes with Pakistan by resuming bilateral dialogue. Also to further enable SAARC to function and facilitate regional harmony, connectivity and economic cooperation.

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Time to Reform the NPT By Beenish Altaf

International politics has never been the same since the advent of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons changed the entire perspective of the international political system and since then a new era of politics termed as Realpolitik has just begun. Books in hundreds were written by prominent scholars, intellectuals, policy makers, academics, experts around the world to understand ramifications, implications and importance of nuclear weapons possessed by the states. The dominant realist perspective illustrates that state behavior has imprints of human behavior.

However, since the advent of nuclear weapons, the primary goal of international community was to obstruct the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) was one of the major outcomes of these efforts towards nonproliferation in this regard. NPT recognizes five legitimate states as nuclear weapons states (P5) with all the means to have these absolute weapons in their arsenal and became de jure states.

Besides NPT, other international regimes/treaties also came into being to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but, the efforts seemed adequately deal with states' aspirations to acquire nuclear weapons. In fact, states like Pakistan, India, Israel and nascent nuclear weapons state North Korea, due to their inherited security compulsion/dilemmas did acquire nuclear weapons to deal with the contrasts of insecurities from their adversaries and became de facto Nuclear Weapons states.

“If implemented, amendment of the NPT would represent a monumental modification in the nonproliferation structure that has governed the world for the last 50 years. Extensive, constructive and proactive deliberations will allow a reformed NPT to take shape, inspire confidence, build credibility and mature into a strengthened version of its previous self.”

The inclusion of de facto Nuclear weapons states and other aspirant states like Iran has forced researchers, policy makers and experts to re-evaluate/rethink the paradigms of nonproliferation. Nonproliferation efforts need to strengthen in order to prevent the further influx of nuclear weapons to other states, which are the

aspirants of these deadly weapons. In fact, the Grand Bargain Clause VI of NPT, which was the essence of the nuclear nonproliferation, still lacks solid footholds, since the aim of nuclear disarmament is yet to be achieved. The “more may be better” notion is the ghost which has bitterly followed many other states around the world. The Realpolitik of the de jure and de facto nuclear states is not letting them create any type of comfort towards even selective disarmament.

The anticipated withdrawal of the US from the US-Soviet Union Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty of 1987, the progress of Russian nuclear-capable hypersonic weapons and underwater drones, indefinite extension of the New START treaty, the progress of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) in South Asia and in the US (as stated in the 2018 US Nuclear Posture Review) along with the swift modernization of nuclear arsenals and up-gradation of new and sensitive technologies by all states possessing nuclear weapons – are some of the latest developments creating a potential threat to heighten tensions among these states.

In conclusion, the flowers of nonproliferation regimes and treaties still need to blossom. The discriminatory treatment in the nonproliferation regime, segregating states between haves and have-nots, coupled with aims of nuclear disarmament, need global efforts to reexamine and rethink about the foundation of nonproliferation in order to make it ever strong to deal with future challenges towards nonproliferation. In doing so, researchers in this particular area can play a crucial role to understand the existing challenges and to find solutions towards nonproliferation both at regional as well as global level.

Ironically, “Institutions that do not evolve to reflect realities of the time end up losing their relevance.” Notwithstanding the fact that reformation of such an institutional legacy is not an easy task to carry out perhaps, it will take a long time to agree to sit on a negotiation table. “If implemented, amendment of the NPT would represent a monumental modification in the nonproliferation structure that has governed the world for the last 50 years. Extensive, constructive and proactive deliberations will allow a reformed NPT to take shape, inspire confidence, build credibility and mature into a strengthened version of its previous self.”

Published in Daily Times, January 31st 2019.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/30-Jan-2019/time-to-reform-the-npt>

Slipping New World Order By Muhammad Asif

REEMERGENCE of Russia as a reckonable military power coupled with the rise of China as a formidable economic giant, from the second half of the last decade, seems to have disrupted the New World Order, envisioned by the US policy makers, after the victory of the US-led alliance in the World War-II. The term New World Order was used for the first time by the US President Woodrow Wilson after the World War-I in the context of reactivating the League of Nations. When the phrase reappeared after the World War-II, many analysts interpreted it as a plan conceived by the World War-II victors to dominate the world under the umbrella of the military might of the US and its allies.

The use of New World Order resurfaced shortly before the end of Cold War and Bipolar World towards the end of 1980s. The USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev and the US President George H. W. Bush used the term to define the nature of the Post-Cold War era and the spirit of greater worldwide cooperation. The dismemberment of the USSR that was shortly followed by the US victory in 1991 Gulf War, without any military or diplomatic maneuvers by Russia and China to support Iraq against the US aggression, prompted President Bush to remark; “Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a New World Order”.

Though the term “New World Order” was initially used to imply pooling the resources of the world community to collectively address the issues that could not be handled by individual states alone, the US and its allies operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, etc. after the end of the Cold War era have unfolded their real Global agenda. However, re-emergence of Russia as a global power, and the ever-expanding influence of China, because of its phenomenal economic growth, are perceived as threats to their unchallenged dominance in the unipolar world order by the United States and its allies.

The US policymakers mistakenly picked India for use as a bulwark to reverse the Chinese southwestwards march, and to insulate it from the Russian Influence. The biggest blunder committed by the Americans in this regard is; they failed to realize very visible differences between India and Pakistan. Right from Pakistan’s

creation in 1947, the US has been exploiting its economic vulnerabilities to achieve its strategic objectives in the South Asia. In response to the economic and military aid provided by the US, Pakistan leased an air base to the US in 1950s to keep an eye on Moscow. After the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in late 1970's, Pakistan willingly opted to play the role of a frontline state during the Afghan War that stripped the Soviet Empire off its status as a superpower. Following the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan once again chose to support the US in its War on Terror that has so far taken the lives of sixty thousand Pakistanis.

India-US relations were marked by distrust and lack of cordiality during the Cold War era. However, the end of Cold War led to a gradual improvement in India-US relations. After President Clinton's visit in March 2000, India-US relations developed at a quick pace. The US consented to a nuclear deal for civil use with India in 2015 that was heralded as the beginning of the strategic relations between India and the US.

While opting to develop strategic relations with India to advance their agenda of restricting the influence of both Russia and China through a nuclear capable world's biggest functioning democracy, having the potentials as well as plans to play its role as a global player, the US policymakers made countless miscalculations. The biggest of these miscalculations is/was that the US and India's strategic interests in the South Asia do not converge on a single point. Indian policy in this region is Pakistan-centric. India's military as well as diplomatic efforts revolve around coercing its nuclear powered smaller neighbour to submission. Indians lack the will as well as willingness to challenge China, because it is very well known to them that their military and economic standing is no match to that of Chinese. Contrary to Pakistan, China has never been perceived as a threat to their interests by the Indian military managers. Similarly, the Indians latest arms deal with Russia indicates that the US failed to realize that by consenting to a civil nuclear deal, and by closing eyes to human rights violations in Kashmir and use of Afghan soil for terrorist activities in Pakistan, it would be able to bait India to play its role to halt Russians efforts to re-assert themselves as a world power.

Even ideologically, the US and India have a little in common. Though India boasts of being a secular democracy, the on ground realities are quite different. Narendra Modi is a lifetime member of the radical Hindu nationalist group,

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Indian secular social scientists consider RSS a fascist movement, adhering to the concept of hegemony of a regimented majority. After Narendra Modi's election as the Prime Minister, Hindu fanatics have geared up their efforts to transform India into a purely Hindu state. The inaction of the US to the ill-treatment meted to the Indian religious minorities under the patronage of Modi government, does not endorse the US claims and reputation as the champion of secularism and human rights. Even if (despite these stumbling blocks on the road to highly unlikely India-US alliance for safeguarding the unipolar world order that took shape after the demise of USSR) the US succeed in luring India to side with it for maintaining the status quo, the New World Order might slip out of the US grip because of the re-emergence of Russia, if China and Pakistan opted to join the Russian camp.

— The writer, a retired Brig, is professional educationist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/slipping-new-world-order/>

Latest Current Affairs Solved MCQs

1. Which Country has surpassed its 2020 solar installation targets and is expected to increase wind generation target by 2019.
 - (a) Russia
 - (b) Canada
 - (c) China
 - (d) France

Answer (c)

Note: The environmental impact of different components making up the mix needs to be looked at critically as it can help the country curb the growing menace of pollution while reducing imports for energy. Lessons may be learnt from China which has surpassed its 2020 solar installation targets and is expected to increase wind generation target by 2019. India too is leading the renewable revolution and is expected to double its renewable capacity by 2022, with 90% of renewable growth coming from solar and wind.

2. Pakistan is among the last three countries, besides Afghanistan and _____, still unable to eradicate the Polio disease entirely.
 - (a) Cuba
 - (b) Sudan
 - (c) Mexico
 - (d) None of these

Answer (d)

Note: Anti-polio vaccine workers are once again in the field as part of nation-wide efforts to eradicate the disease. Pakistan, which joined the nuclear states' club in 1997, the year when the deadly virus affected 1,200 children in the country, is among the last three countries, besides Afghanistan and Nigeria, still unable to eradicate the disease entirely.

3. Pakistan-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission, which would be co-chaired by the respective foreign ministers in Abu Dhabi in
 - (a) February 2019
 - (b) March 2019
 - (c) April 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: The two leaders noted that the forthcoming Pakistan-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission, which would be co-chaired by the respective foreign ministers in Abu Dhabi in February 2019, could play a pivotal role in chalking out a comprehensive road map, and in fast tracking the approval of pending agreements and memorandums of understanding.

4. The two countries jointly launched the Saudi-Pakistan Trade Mission on _____, with some 116 Saudi-Pakistani companies participating.
- (a) January 14, 2019
 - (b) January 19, 2019
 - (c) January 21, 2019
 - (d) January 27, 2019

Answer (a)

Note: The two countries jointly launched the Saudi-Pakistan Trade Mission on January 14, 2019, with some 116 Saudi-Pakistani companies participating. This comes at a time when the two countries have revived the Saudi-Pakistani Business Council to develop bilateral trade and investment relations. Meanwhile, April 2019 will see the Pakistani Investment Forum in Riyadh with around 300 Pakistani investors participating in the event, promoting greater interaction between the Saudi and Pakistani private sectors.

5. The Finance Minister Asad Umar announced abolition of super tax on non-banking companies with effect from
- (a) June 2019
 - (b) July 2019
 - (c) September 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Accepting the demand of big businesses and their chambers, the finance minister also announced abolition of super tax on non-banking companies with effect from July 2019, besides offering incentives to industries to set up Greenfield projects.

6. The next national elections in India are scheduled to be held in
- (a) March – April 2019
 - (b) April – May 2019
 - (c) June – July 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: The next national elections in India are scheduled to be held in April-May 2019 and these polls are profoundly significant in the sense that they would determine the future character of the Indian union as well as the nature of society. In the 2019 elections in India, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would be trying its utmost to return with a thumping win while the main opposition party, Indian National Congress (INC), would attempt to deny Prime Minister Modi's party continuity in the saddle and to win majority.

7. Planning Commission of Pakistan was formed in
- (a) June 9 1951
 - (b) January 10 1952
 - (c) July 8 1952
 - (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: The Planning Commission (denoted as PC) was formed in July 8 1952, it is a financial and public policy development institution of the Government of Pakistan. The Commission comes under Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms. The Planning Commission undertakes research studies and state policy development initiatives for the growth of national economy and the expansion of the public and state infrastructure of the country in tandem with the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

8. Who is the current chairman of Planning Commission of Pakistan?
- (a) Sartaj Aziz
 - (b) Shah Mehmood Qureshi
 - (c) Ali Ameen
 - (d) Imran Khan

Answer (d)

Note: The commission's authoritative figures include a Chairman who is the Prime Minister, assisted by the deputy chairman, and a science advisor.

9. _____ went on to say that do not link the Kartarpur Corridor with peace talks since it has nothing to do with diplomatic engagement.
- (a) Arun Jaitley
 - (b) Jagat Prakash Nadda
 - (c) Sushma Swaraj
 - (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Imran Khan's speech on Kartarpur Corridor was also welcomed by India since he had offered India to initiate strategic dialogue to restart the stalled talks. The gesture received positive welcome throughout the world especially from the Sikh community of India. The Indian response was disappointing as the Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj went on to say that do not link the Kartarpur Corridor with peace talks since it has nothing to do with diplomatic engagement and she categorically rejected the possibility of dialogue leaving the PTI leadership in dismay.

10. 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev in
- (a) July 2019
 - (b) September 2019
 - (c) November 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer: (c)

11. Pakistan stands at the _____ spot in the list of most populous countries
- (a) Third
 - (b) Sixth
 - (c) Ninth
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: A mere glance at population statistics shows that Pakistan is not headed in the right direction. While the country stands at the sixth spot in the list of most populous countries, it is all set to move up by two notches by 2030 if no measures are taken to bring down the annual growth rate of 1.43 percent.

12. Who is the current minister of health?

- (a) Aamir Mehmood Kiani
- (b) Nouman Ahmed
- (c) Pervez Manzoor
- (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Aamir Mehmood Kiani is a Pakistani politician who is the current Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, in office since 20 August 2018. He has been a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since August 2018.

13. In 2018 The Henley Passport Index listed, the Pakistani passport _____ from the bottom.

- (a) Ninth
- (b) Thirteenth
- (c) Twenty-seventh
- (d) None of these

Answer (d)

Note: The international community did not favour Pakistan. One indication of this was the way the country's passport was treated at entry points across the globe. According to the Henley Passport Index, the Pakistani passport was fifth from the bottom in the respect it received. The country was not in good company: the bottom five included, in addition to Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

14. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Pakistan will present all evidence against Jadhav in ICJ on

- (a) February 19
- (b) March 19
- (c) August 19
- (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Friday said Pakistan would provide all the evidence of "sabotage activities" by former Indian naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on February 19.

Jadhav, 48, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on spying charges in April 2017. India moved the ICJ in May the same year against the verdict.

15. Who is the current Pakistan Ambassador to the United States?

- (a) Ali Jahangir Siddiqui
- (b) Dr. Asad Majeed Khan
- (c) Abid Hussain Soomro
- (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Pakistan's new Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, presented his credentials to President Donald Trump at a White House ceremony in Washington. Ambassador Khan has replaced Ali Jahangir Siddiqui, who relinquished his charge as ambassador earlier this month.

16. Pakistan elected as Vice Chair of UN Environment's Forum of Ministers of Asia Pacific on

- (a) December 2018
- (b) January 2019
- (c) February 2019
- (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change Mr. Malik Amin Aslam along with Additional Secretary Mr. Babar Hayat Tarrar are representing Pakistan at the third session of UN Environment's Forum of Ministers & Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific. On 25th January 2019 Pakistan has been elected as the Vice Chair of this UN Environment Ministers Forum. Singapore, being the host country, is the chair of the UN Environment's Forum. On this occasion Advisor to PM Amin Aslam said that this is an honor for Pakistan as 41 environment ministers of Asia Pacific, including China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand etc have chosen Pakistan to represent them.

17. General Qamar Javed Bajwa is _____ COAS of Pakistan.
- (a) 7th
 - (b) 10th
 - (c) 13th
 - (d) 15th

Answer (b)

Note: The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), is a military appointment and statutory office held by the four-star rank army general in the Pakistan Army, who is appointed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and final confirmation by the President of Pakistan. General Qamar Javed Bajwa born 11 November 1960), is the 10th and current Chief of Army Staff of the Pakistan Army. A four-star rank army general, he was appointed to the military office on 29 November 2016. According to Forbes magazine, Bajwa is the 68th most powerful person in the world. Born in Karachi, Bajwa was educated at the Sir Syed College and Gordon College in Rawalpindi before joining the Pakistan Military Academy in 1978.

18. Justice Asif Saeed Khan Khosa is the _____ CJ of Pakistan?
- (a) 19th
 - (b) 21st
 - (c) 23rd
 - (d) None of these

Answer (d)

Note: Asif Saeed Khan Khosa born 21 December 1954) is the 26th and current Chief Justice of Pakistan, in office since 18 January 2019. He joined the Supreme Court as a judge on 18 February 2010 and prior to that served as judge of the Lahore High Court. Khosa is the son-in-law of former Chief Justice of Pakistan Nasim Hasan Shah and brother of retired federal secretary Nasir Mahmood Khosa. Before becoming a judge, he was an advocate of the Supreme Court Bar Association and Lahore High Court Bar Association. He was called to the Bar at the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, London, Great Britain on 26 July 1979.

19. Who is Abdulqawi Yusuf?
- (a) Scientist from Iraq
 - (b) Nobel Prize winner from Nigeria
 - (c) President of ICJ
 - (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf is a Somali lawyer and judge who is the incumbent President of the International Court of Justice. The International Court of Justice (abbreviated ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN). It settles legal disputes between member states and gives advisory opinions to authorized UN organs and specialized agencies. It comprises a panel of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and Security Council for nine-year terms. It is seated in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands.

20. Imran Khan as a cricketer took _____ wickets in test cricket?
- (a) 291
 - (b) 311
 - (c) 362
 - (d) 401

Answer (c)

Note: Imran Khan retired from cricket in 1992, as one of Pakistan's most successful players. In total he made 3,807 runs and took 362 wickets in Test cricket, and is one of eight world cricketers to have achieved an 'All-rounder's Triple' in Test matches He was later, in 2010, inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame.

21. Who is the current Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan?
- (a) Fahminda Mirza
 - (b) Manzoor Ahmed Marfani
 - (c) Ali Amin Khan Gandapur
 - (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Ali Amin Khan Gandapur is a Pakistani politician who is the current Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, in office since 5 October 2018. He has been a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since August 2018. Previously, he was a member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

from 2013 to 2018 and served as Provincial Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Revenue for the same period of time.

22. Who is the current Finance Minister of KPK?

- (a) Atif Khan
- (b) Saeed Ahmed Sharani
- (c) Haji Qalandar Khan Lodhi
- (d) Taimur Saleem Khan Jhagra

Answer (d)

Note: Taimur Saleem Khan Jhagra is a Pakistani politician who is the current Provincial Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance, in office since 29 August 2018. He has been a member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since August 2018.

23. 20th SAARC summit will be held in

- (a) 2019
- (b) 2020
- (c) 2021
- (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: The 20th SAARC summit is the 20th meeting of the heads of state or heads of government of the eight SAARC countries after their previous meeting in Pakistan was boycotted by all SAARC members. The Summit will take place in 2019. Pakistan is aggressively seeking support from smaller South Asian nations to host the SAARC summit in Islamabad. Sri Lanka and Nepal have already shown support, but analysts doubt India will agree as it plans to isolate Pakistan.

24. Which of the following countries, is the world's largest emitter of Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?

- (a) China
- (b) USA
- (c) Russia
- (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Countries by carbon dioxide emissions in thousands of tons per annum, via the burning of fossil fuels (blue the highest and green the lowest). China CO2 emission in millions of tons from 1980 to 2009.

25. Pakistan has become nonpermanent member of Security Council for:

- (a) Five
- (b) Two
- (c) Seven
- (d) Nine

Answer (c)

Note: Pakistan officially joined the United Nations (UN) on 30 September 1947 just over a month after its independence from the British Empire. Today, it is a charter member and participates in all of the UN's specialised agencies and organisations. Pakistan has been elected seven times (tied with Colombia and India) into the UN Security Council, with the most recent term in 2013. It is also one of the countries which has had a diplomat, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, serve a term as the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

26. Who is the Current Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)?

- (a) James B. Comey
- (b) Christopher A. Wray
- (c) Andrew Heywood
- (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Christopher Asher Wray (born December 17, 1966) is an American lawyer serving as the eighth and current Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) since 2017. From 2003 to 2005 Wray served as Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division in the George W. Bush Administration. From 2005 to 2016 he was a litigation partner with the law firm King & Spalding

27. Largest airport of the world is

- (a) Paris-Orly airport
- (b) London Heathrow airport
- (c) Dubai airport
- (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Dubai International Airport is the primary international airport serving Dubai, United Arab Emirates and is the world's busiest airport by international passenger traffic

28. 2018 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to
- (a) Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad
 - (b) International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
 - (c) Juan Manuel Santos
 - (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad "for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict," according to the Norwegian Nobel Committee announcement on 5 October 2018 in Oslo, Norway. "Both laureates have made a crucial contribution to focusing attention on, and combating, such war crimes," according to the award citation. After reading the citation, Committee Chair Berit Reiss-Andersen told reporters that the impact of this year's award is to highlight sexual abuse with the goal that every level of governance take responsibility to end such crimes and impunities.

29. National day of Afghanistan is on
- (a) 29th August
 - (b) 19th August
 - (c) 17th August
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Afghan Independence Day is celebrated in Afghanistan on 19 August to commemorate the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1919 and relinquishment from protected state status. The treaty granted a complete neutral relation between Afghanistan and Britain Afghanistan became a British protectorate after they were defeated in the Second Anglo-Afghan War.

30. Who is the current Chief of Air Staff of Pakistan?

- (a) Tahir Rafique Butt
- (b) Suhail Aman
- (c) Mujahid Anwar Khan
- (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan is a four-star rank air force general (air officer in Pakistan) and the Chief of Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force. On 19 March 2018, ACM Anwar took over command of the Pakistan Air Force from his predecessor, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. He belongs to Rajput Sulehria clan originally from Zafarwal. Khan was commissioned in GD (P) Branch of PAF in December 1983. During his illustrious career, he commanded a fighter squadron, a flying wing, two operational air bases PAF Base Shahbaz and PAF Base Mushaf and a regional air command.

31. Russian-Pakistani third joint military drills "Friendship 2018" ended on

- (a) 07 October 2018
- (b) 29 October 2018
- (c) 04 November 2018
- (d) 05 December 2018

Answer (c)

Note: The Pakistan Army and the Russian military hold third joint military drills in the mountains of Pakistan from October 21 to November 4. According to Vadim Astafyev, head of the press service of the Russian Southern Military District, the joint drills – Friendship 2018 – held at the training range in Pakistan's northwestern town of Pabbi. More than 70 troopers from Russia's southern military district had participated in the drills.

32. FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi boarded 4 nations visit from 24th to 26th Dec 2018, that visit includes Afghanistan, China, Iran and

- (a) UAE
- (b) Qatar
- (c) Russia
- (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi embarked on a visit to neighboring countries as part of the government's policy to strengthen bilateral ties and help Afghanistan find a lasting peace. The foreign minister was scheduled to visit Afghanistan, Iran, China and Russia from December 24 to 26 2018. According to a press release by Foreign Office, Qureshi discussed Pakistan's bilateral relations with the senior leadership of these countries, to strengthen cooperation in various areas.

33. Who is the current Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation at the Department of State?
- (a) Zalmay Khalilzad
 - (b) Richerd Olsen
 - (c) Mike Thomsan Jr
 - (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Zalmay Mamozy Khalilzad born March 22, 1951) is a US diplomat and the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation at the Department of State. Previously, he served as a counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the president of Gryphon Partners and Khalilzad Associates, an international business consulting firm, based in Washington, D.C.. He was the US Ambassador to the United Nations under President George W. Bush and, briefly, President Barack Obama. On September 5, 2018, Khalilzad was appointed by Secretary Mike Pompeo to serve as a special envoy to Afghanistan. He has been involved with US policymakers in the State Department and the Pentagon since the mid-1980s, and he was the highest-ranking Muslim in the George W. Bush administration. Khalilzad's previous assignments in the administration included US Ambassador to Afghanistan and US Ambassador to Iraq. In 2017, he was considered for US Secretary of State in the Trump administration.

34. Supreme Court declares Pak-Turk education foundation as 'proscribed organization in
- (a) 2017
 - (b) 2018
 - (c) 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: The Supreme Court (SC) directed the Interior Ministry to declare Pak-Turk International Cag Education Foundation (PTICEF) as a “proscribed organisation” and include its name to the First Schedule under section 11(b) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. As per the details, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar and comprising Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Ijazul Ahsan issued a 15-page verdict, wherein it allowed a constitution petition on December 13, seeking directions to declare PTCIF as terrorist and hand over custody of Pak-Turk schools to the Turkiye Maarif Foundation (TMF), which were established in 1999.

35. PTI Economy policy first agenda was to service the debt obligations of USD _____ due in the year 2019.
- (a) 5 Billion
 - (b) 7 Billion
 - (c) 8 Billion
 - (d) 9 Billion

Answer (d)

Note: Currently, Pakistan is recovering from a growth which was fueled by short term debt and declining investments. The economy was in a bad shape, and by the end of year 2018 Pakistan was almost on the verge of bankruptcy. After taking office, the new government was faced with the challenge of the devalued currency, increasing import bills and huge amounts of debt obligations. Therefore, there was a need for radical reforms in the economic policy of the county. The first agenda was to service the debt obligations of USD 9 B due in the year 2019 and second, to reduce current account deficit to USD 11-13 Billion from the current 19 Billion. Also the last government’s fiscal deficit of 6.6% is not sustainable and needs to be revised.

36. Which countries had declared year 2019 as year of industrial, socioeconomic and agriculture cooperation?
- (a) China Pakistan
 - (b) India Russia
 - (c) Pakistan Qatar
 - (d) USA India

Answer (a)

Note: China and Pakistan Both sides agreed to expedite work by promoting joint ventures and export led growth under CPEC by declaring 2019 as “year of industrial, socioeconomic and agriculture cooperation”. Minister for Planning,

Development & Reform, Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar said that the MoU on Industrial Cooperation, signed during 8th JCC, provides a framework to promote communication on key industries such as textile, petro-chemical and iron & steel, encourages Chinese investors to relocate and explore opportunities of investment in Pakistan.

37. Which one of the following is the trustee of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation?
- (a) Robert Jackson
 - (b) Hander Hayle
 - (c) Warren Buffett
 - (d) Dr Amrill Fil

Answer (c)

Note: Along with Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett is a foundation trustee, helping to shape our vision and develop strategies to address some of the world's most challenging inequities. Buffett is a U.S. businessman and philanthropist. As chairman and chief executive officer of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., he has invested in a broad range of companies, from See's Candies to Geico Insurance to Fruit of the Loom.

38. The Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is scheduled to hold its third session from
- (a) 1st March to 13th March 2019
 - (b) 29th April to 10th May 2019
 - (c) 14th June to 29th June 2019
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: The Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is scheduled to hold its third session from 29 April to 10 May 2019 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. This will be the third and final session prior to the 2020 Review Conference. The Preparatory Committee, open to all States parties to the Treaty, is responsible for addressing substantive and procedural issues related to the Treaty and the forthcoming Review Conference. The Chair of the third session is Ambassador Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob of Malaysia.

39. Independent Election Commission (IEC) had postponed the next Afghanistan Presidential election from April 20 to

- (a) **July 20, 2019**
- (b) September 20, 2019
- (c) October 20, 2019
- (d) None of these

40. Who is the current Chairman of the NATO Military Committee?

- (a) Stuart Peach
- (b) Curtis Scaparrotti
- (c) John Pinhold Sr
- (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach visited the NATO Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy on the 25th January 2019 where he met with the Commander, Admiral James Foggo, and key personnel working at the Hub for the South. The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee is the head of the NATO Military Committee, which advises the North Atlantic Council on military policy and strategy. He is the senior military spokesman of the 29-nation alliance and principal advisor to the Secretary General.

41. Which United States Secretary of State was fired in Trump administration?

- (a) Edmund J. Randolph
- (b) Henry Clay
- (c) Mike Pompeo
- (d) Rex Wayne Tillerson

Answer (d)

Note: Rex Wayne Tillerson (born March 23, 1952) is an American energy executive who served as the 69th United States Secretary of State from February 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018, under President Donald Trump. Prior to joining the Trump administration, Tillerson was chairman and chief executive officer of ExxonMobil, holding that position from 2006 until 2017. Tillerson became Secretary of State on February 1, 2017. An unconventional choice for the role, Tillerson's tenure was characterized by a lack of visibility in comparison to his predecessors in the traditionally high-profile position of Secretary of State. During Tillerson's tenure, new applications to work for the Foreign Service fell by 50%

and 60% of high-ranking career diplomats in the State Department resigned. After their relationship quickly deteriorated, Trump dismissed Tillerson in March 2018, making his tenure one of the shortest in recent history. Tillerson was replaced by CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

42. Donald Trump has revealed that _____ will be the venue for his second summit with Kim Jong-un in Feb 2019.
- (a) Hanoi
 - (b) Da Nang
 - (c) Hue
 - (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Donald Trump has revealed that Hanoi will be the venue for his second summit with Kim Jong-un in February 2019. The US president had said in the State of the Union address on Tuesday that he would meet the North Korean leader in Vietnam from February 27-28. There had been speculation that Da Nang would be the location for the high-profile meeting. In a tweet that disclosed the northern Vietnam city of Hanoi as the venue, Mr Trump said he was looking "forward to seeing Chairman Kim & advancing the cause of peace!"

43. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the _____ President of Turkey.
- (a) 9th
 - (b) 12th
 - (c) 17th
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, born 26 February 1954 is a Turkish politician serving as the 12th and current President of Turkey since 2014. He previously served as Prime Minister from 2003 to 2014 and as Mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998.

44. Brexit referendum was held in
- (a) 23rd June 2014
 - (b) 23rd June 2015
 - (c) 23rd June 2016
 - (d) None of these

Answer (c)

Note: Brexit, a portmanteau of "British" and "exit", is the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. It follows the referendum of 23 June 2016 when 51.9 per cent of those who voted supported withdrawal.

45. Which team won 2018 Davis Cup?
- (a) France
 - (b) Netherland
 - (c) Germany
 - (d) Croatia

Answer (d)

Note: The 2018 Davis Cup was the 107th edition of the Davis Cup, a tournament between national teams in men's tennis. It was sponsored by BNP Paribas. In 2018, new rules were introduced for the Group I and II zonal events, with ties now being played as best-of-three sets over the course of two days. Croatia won the Davis Cup on 25 November with a 3-1 win over France.

46. Who is the current leader of Hamas?
- (a) Khaled Mashal
 - (b) Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi
 - (c) Ismail Haniyeh
 - (d) None of these

Answer (a)

Note: Khaled Mashal born 28 May 1956 is a Palestinian political leader and the leader of the Islamic Palestinian organization Hamas since the Israeli assassination of Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi in 2004. He stepped down as Hamas' politburo chief at the end of his term limit in 2017. After the founding of Hamas in 1987, Mashal came to lead the Kuwaiti branch of the organization. He moved from Kuwait to Jordan in 1991. Following the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Jordan in August 1999, Mashal lived in Qatar before moving to the Syrian

capital of Damascus in 2001. He returned to Qatar in 2012 as a result of the Syrian Civil War.

47. The Gawkadal massacre took place in Kashmir on
- (a) 11 January 1990
 - (b) 21 January 1990
 - (c) 29 January 1990
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: The Gawkadal massacre was named after the Gawkadal bridge in Srinagar, Kashmir, where, on 21 January 1990, the Indian paramilitary troops of the Central Reserve Police Force deliberately opened fire on a non-weapon group of Kashmiri protesters in what has been described by some authors as "the worst massacre in Kashmiri history" along with the Bijbehara Massacre in 1993.

48. What is the expected length of Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline?
- (a) 1,975 KM
 - (b) 2,007 KM
 - (c) 2,775 KM
 - (d) 3,189 KM

Answer (c)

Note: The Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline, also known as the Peace pipeline, or IP Gas, is an under-construction 2,775-kilometre pipeline to deliver natural gas from Iran to Pakistan.

49. Who is the current chairman of PEMRA?
- (a) Shahbaz Shakeel
 - (b) Abdullah Memon
 - (c) Ch Rashid Ahmed
 - (d) Muhammad Saleem Baig

Answer (d)

Note: Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority reporting name: PEMRA, is an independent and constitutionally established federal institution responsible for regulating and issuing channel licenses for establishment of the mass media

culture, print and electronic media. Its constitutional mandate is to enlarge the choice available to the people of Pakistan including news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art and culture as well as science and technology. On 28 June 2018 after the Supreme Court's order Saleem Baig was appointed as the Chairman of PEMRA.

50. Who is the current Director-General of the World Trade Organization?
- (a) Henly Wothford
 - (b) Roberto Azevêdo
 - (c) Jackson Niel
 - (d) None of these

Answer (b)

Note: Roberto Carvalho de Azevêdo born 3 October 1957 is a Brazilian diplomat and the current Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Azevêdo was elected to succeed Pascal Lamy as Director-General of the World Trade Organization in May 2013. He assumed office on 1 September 2013. He is paid a salary of 300,000 Swiss francs and an allowance of 200,000.