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FATAH-II

**ELEVATING PAKISTAN'S LONG-RANGE
ARTILLERY EXPERTIZE**



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WIND OF CHANGE & PAKISTAN'S POSITION



The global geopolitical landscape is experiencing significant shifts, marked by escalating tensions and evolving alliances. Central to this upheaval is the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has not only reshaped European geopolitics but also had far-reaching implications worldwide.

This delves into these winds of change, focusing particularly on Pakistan's position in this complex matrix. Navigating through various regional conflicts and power dynamics, Pakistan's strategic choices and diplomatic maneuvers are crucial in maintaining its national interests. This discussion will explore how Pakistan can balance its relationships with major global powers like the USA, China, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, and leverage its position in a rapidly changing world.

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is a pivotal event in recent history, dramatically altering the global power balance. At its core, the conflict reflects a struggle for regional dominance and influence. Ukraine, supported robustly by Western powers, notably the United States and European Union, finds itself on the frontline of a broader geopolitical contest. Russia, on the other hand, despite facing widespread international sanctions and condemnation, persists in its military campaign, largely isolated in its endeavor.

For Pakistan, this situation presents a complex diplomatic challenge. Historically aligned with the West, particularly the United States, yet seeking closer ties with Russia for strategic depth and economic cooperation, Pakistan must navigate this conflict with caution. Its response to the Russia-Ukraine war is not just about taking a side but more about maintaining a balanced stance that aligns with its long-term strategic interests. This includes securing its borders, enhancing trade relations, and ensuring regional stability, all while managing its image on the international stage.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT AND THE WEST'S INVOLVEMENT

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine is another critical flashpoint with global implications. Israel, receiving considerable backing from the Western world, particularly the United States, is engaged in a protracted struggle with Hamas. This conflict has broader ramifications for the Middle East peace process and the geopolitical dynamics of the region. The Western support for Israel, especially from the USA, underscores the complex interplay of

international relations and regional politics.

For Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country with historical support for the Palestinian cause, this scenario presents a diplomatic tightrope. Balancing its moral stance with the pragmatic needs of international diplomacy and relations with Western powers, especially the U.S., is a nuanced task. Pakistan's approach to this conflict is not just a matter of foreign policy but



also resonates deeply with its domestic audience, who are generally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The challenge lies in voicing support for Palestine while maintaining constructive relations with Western nations, a balancing act that requires astute diplomatic skills.

THE HOUTHİ ATTACKS AND WESTERN RESPONSE

The attacks by the Houthi rebels on American ships highlight another dimension of the regional turmoil. The Western response, primarily led by the USA, reflects the ongoing struggle for influence in the Middle East. These incidents underscore the complex nature of regional conflicts and the intricate web of alliances and enmities that define them.

Pakistan, situated in a geopolitically strategic location, observes these developments closely. The Houthi conflict, while not directly involving Pakistan, has indirect implications, especially in its relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Pakistan must navigate these waters carefully, maintaining a neutral stance while ensuring that its own security and regional stability are not compromised. This requires a diplomatic strategy that is flexible yet principled, allowing Pakistan to engage constructively with all parties involved.

IRAN-PAKISTAN SKIRMISH AND REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The recent skirmish between Iran and Pakistan, marked by Iran's alleged airspace violation and Pakistan's strong response, signals a worrying escalation in regional tensions. This incident raises questions about Iran's military capabilities and intentions, particularly concerning its nuclear ambitions. The speculation that Iran might be inching towards nuclear power status has significant implications for regional security and the balance of power.



For Pakistan, this is a matter of immediate concern. As a neighboring country and a nuclear power itself, Pakistan's response to Iran's actions and potential nuclear status is critical. This situation also ties into the broader context of American interests in the region. The U.S. has historically sought to prevent nuclear proliferation, especially in volatile regions like the Middle East. However, the idea that American interests together with Russia might be served by a nuclear-armed Iran, which could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region, particularly with Saudi Arabia, adds another



layer of complexity.

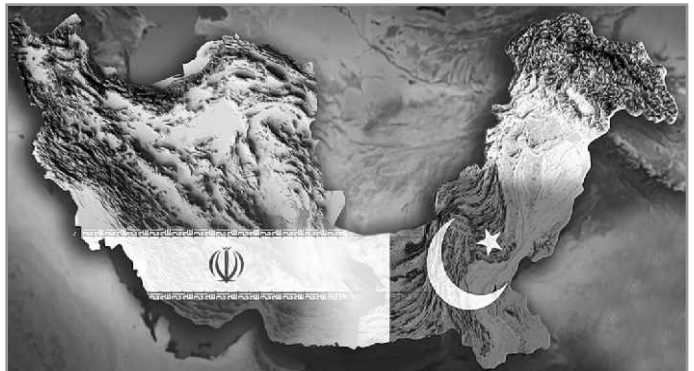
Pakistan must thus consider its own security and strategic interests while responding to these developments. Balancing its relationship with Iran, with whom it shares significant cultural and historical ties, and aligning with American and Saudi perspectives on nuclear proliferation, requires a nuanced and carefully calibrated approach.

PAKISTAN'S BALANCING ACT IN GLOBAL POLITICS

Amid these global and regional upheavals, Pakistan faces the challenge of balancing its relationships with major powers—the USA, China, Russia, and Regional Powers Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia with a rival ambitious country India. Each of these relationships is vital and comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities. The USA has been a long-term ally, but recent shifts in American foreign policy and Pakistan's growing closeness with China have added complexities to this relationship. China, with its significant investments in Pakistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a critical partner, but this relationship also needs careful management to ensure it doesn't alienate other important players, especially the USA and India.

Russia, traditionally aligned with India, has shown interest in improving relations with Pakistan, offering new avenues for diplomatic and economic engagement. The Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry, with its sectarian undertones, poses a unique challenge, requiring Pakistan to tread carefully to maintain good relations with both and avoid getting drawn into regional conflicts. In navigating these relationships, Pakistan's focus should be on leveraging its strategic location, diplomatic skills, and the potential for economic cooperation to enhance its international standing and secure its national interests. This involves playing a constructive role in regional stability, countering terrorism, and fostering economic development, all while maintaining its sovereignty and independence in foreign policy decisions.

In conclusion, the "Wind of Change" in global politics present both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. As the world navigates through these turbulent times, Pakistan's strategic positioning becomes ever more critical. Balancing its relationships with major global and regional powers, while pursuing its own national interests, requires diplomatic acumen and strategic foresight. How Pakistan maneuvers through these complex geopolitical landscapes will significantly impact its future role on the world stage and its internal stability. The path ahead is fraught with challenges, but with careful navigation, Pakistan can emerge as a key player in the evolving global order.



NEWS IN BRIEF



PAKISTAN REACHES OUT TO US OVER INDIAN ROLE IN KILLINGS

Pakistan has reached out to the US and Canada over Indian role in orchestrating the assassinations of two Pakistani citizens within its borders last year. A senior Pakistani diplomat disclosed that this was done to share information with the two countries, who had also been victims of India's "transnational killings program".

The diplomat said operations in three countries resembled in sophistication, compartmentalization, and the use of criminal syndicates. New Delhi has been facing international criticism and investigation due to accusations of running "a covert assassination program" that targets its critics and opponents abroad.

"Ambassador (R) Qazi M. Khalilullah, Executive Director of the Center of International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) tweeted on the matter: "Revelation about the involvement of Indian RAW agents in killing of



two Pakistan's citizens must not have come as a surprise to the two North American countries who's nationals too were victim/target of India sponsored terrorism recently.' 'Emergence of India as translational #killer poses a grave threat to international peace and security as countries targeted by New Dehli's global terror network include global powers, NATO members, and nuclear weapon states,' he added."

MR. SUN WEIDONG, VICE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA CALLED ON GENERAL SYED ASIM MUNIR, NI (M), CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF (COAS), AT GHQ.

Mr. Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ today. During the meeting matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defense cooperation were discussed.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister said that



Pakistan and China are all-weather strategic partners. He acknowledged Pakistan's efforts towards regional peace and stability and also conveyed China's satisfaction with security arrangements for CPEC projects. COAS thanked the visiting dignitary for his warm remarks and said that relations between Pakistan and China are founded on a common understanding of regional peace, stability, and prosperity for the people of both countries.

Courtesy: ISPR

**GENERAL SYED ASIM MUNIR, NI (M),
CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF (COAS)
VISITED PAKISTAN ORDNANCE
FACTORIES (POF) WAH**

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of



Army Staff (COAS) visited Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) Wah today. COAS was briefed about the production capabilities of POF, its contributions towards fulfilling the defense requirements of the Pakistan Armed Forces, and export potential. COAS witnessed a wide range of POF Products including indigenously designed and manufactured new weapons and ammo under test & trials.

While addressing the POF officers and staff, COAS appreciated their contributions to the security and economy of the country by making POF the prime defense industry of Pakistan. "Path to national progress is defined by indigenous and local industries like POF

Wah. We will continue to work for self-reliance and the latest technology which is essential towards ensuring reliability and strengthening the defense of Pakistan." COAS remarked. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Chairman POF Wah.

Courtesy: ISPR

**2ND MEETING OF PAKISTAN, KSA
AND TURKIYE TRILATERAL DEFENCE
COLLABORATION WAS HELD AT GHQ,
RAWALPINDI ON 8 JANUARY 2024**

The 2nd Meeting of Pakistan, KSA, and Turkiye Trilateral Defense Collaboration was held at GHQ, Rawalpindi on 8 January 2024. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss prospective collaboration in defense equipment technologies including research & development. The three sides reaffirmed the importance of combining the intellectual, technical, financial, and human resources of the three friendly nations towards the achievement of shared objectives and attainment of self-sufficiency in the defense domain.

Acknowledging the historical brotherly relations, the three sides reiterated the strategic intent to increase the scope of trilateral cooperation and the need to enhance the pace of collaboration in pursuit of common goals. Three sides agreed to convene the next meeting on Trilateral Defense Industrial Collaboration during the World Defense Show in Riyadh, KSA in February 2024.



Courtesy: ISPR

INDIA'S REPUBLIC DAY OBSERVED AS A BLACK DAY IN AJK

Protest demonstrations were held in different parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Friday (26/01/2024) to mark India's so-called 'Republic Day' as a black day and condemn its unparalleled atrocities on the freedom-seeking Kashmiris amid perpetual denial of their internationally acknowledged right to self-determination.

Participants of these events were wearing black armbands, holding black flags and black balloons in addition to banners and placards inscribed with anti-India and pro-freedom slogans. They not only condemned



the Indian army's atrocities in occupied Kashmir but also the incessant attacks of Hindu extremist organizations on Indian Muslims with full official backing.

Courtesy: Dawn.

PAKISTAN CONDUCTS 'OPERATION MARG BAR SARMACHAR'

On January 18, 2024, Pakistan initiated a series of air and artillery strikes within Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province, targeting Baloch separatist groups. The operation, codenamed "Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar" (meaning 'Death to Insurgents'), was carried out in response to Iranian missile strikes in Pakistan's Baluchistan province two days prior.

Iran reported that nine foreign nationals



lost their lives in the attack, a fact confirmed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), acknowledging the casualties among its members. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Pakistan stated that the country executed a series of highly coordinated and precisely targeted military strikes against terrorist hideouts, referred to as "Marg Bar Sarmachar."

These operations resulted in the elimination of several terrorists, with the rationale being the "lack of action" by Iran regarding the presence of "Pakistani-origin terrorists" on its soil. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations of the Pakistani military, the targeted hideouts were being utilized by militants associated with the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baluch Liberation Front (BLF), including individuals such as Dosta (alias chairman), Bajjar (alias Soghat), Sahil (alias Shafaq), Asghar (alias Basham), and Wazir (alias Wazi). On January 19, Anwaar ul Haq Kakar announced the restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Iran. This decision followed a statement from the foreign ministry indicating that both nations had agreed to "de-escalate the situation."

111 DAYS AND COUNTING.. AN OVERVIEW OF THE MISERIES AND LOSSES!



On January 26, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel, in a case lodged by South Africa to the court, to take action to prevent genocide and help civilians of Gaza in the ongoing war it waged in Gaza. Unfortunately, the genocide is yet in progress, causing humanitarian crises. Here, an analysis of the overall devastations of Gaza, as of 25 January 2023, is compiled and published.

Total Casualties

- Gaza's Health Ministry said that the death toll has climbed to more than 26,000 people, up to 70 percent of them are women and children. Additionally, more than 64,400 got injured; more than 11,000 among them are children.
- At least 341 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have been killed in UNRWA facilities, with a further 1,180 injured due to the hostilities since 7 October.



Missing persons

- As many as 7,000 people in Gaza went missing; many of them are reported to be buried under the rubble of devastated buildings.

Internally displaced people

- With the crisis growing in Khan Yunis and other northern areas of Gaza, an estimated 1.7 million people are internally displaced.
- 1.3 million people, more than 50 percent of Gaza's population, including 609,700 children, seek shelter in only one governorate in the south of the Gaza Strip, the Rafah governorate, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports.
- Most of the 1.7 million Palestinians displaced by the war are crowded into Rafah.

Killing of Medical / Aid workers:

- Israeli bombardment has killed more than 337 medical personnel, and 45 fire brigade drivers and silenced voices of more than 119 journalists by killing them.
- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that 152 UNRWA staff have been killed, while the World Health Organization (WHO) and United



Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report one staff member killed respectively.

Mass Casualties

- Approximately 2,119 Palestinians so far have been mass-murdered, authorities in Gaza claim.

Bombardments

- It is reported by Press TV Iran that Israeli regime has dropped 67,000 tons of bombs on Gaza since October 7.

Infrastructural Damages:

- As many as 140 state-owned buildings and 99 schools and universities have been completely damaged as a result of Israel's bombardments. 378 schools, which makes 76 per cent, sustained damage in the Gaza Strip, the Global Education Cluster reports.
- 161 mosques are destroyed in addition to some 253 which are partially damaged. Moreover, 3 churches are also abolished completely.
- 70,000 residential units are completely devastated whereas 90,000 are left in a condition that cannot be re-accommodated.
- 30 hospitals and 53 healthcare centers are non-operational and 122 ambulances are completely damaged.
- 150 healthcare centers are partially damaged as a consequence of Israel's bombing incidents.
- More than 200 historical and cultural sites have been damaged.
- As of late January, there have been 249 incidents of attacks impacting 141 UNRWA installations, of which 70 installations have sustained direct hits.
- Over 625,000 students and 22,564 teachers have been deprived of education and a safe place for over three months and

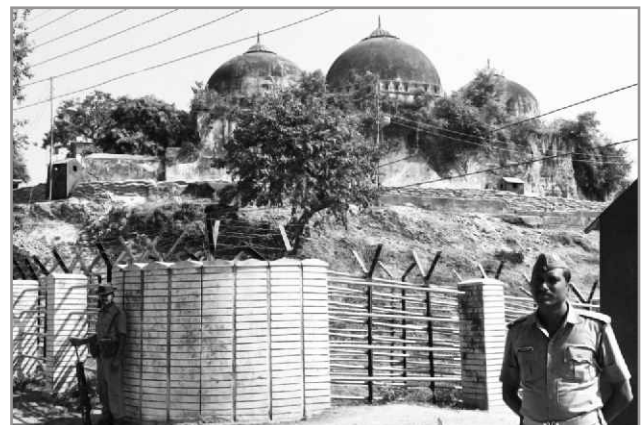
thousands among them killed.

Food Insecurity

Over 90% of the population faces high levels of acute food insecurity in the Gaza Strip (IPC Phase 3 or above), as provided by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

UNVEILING INDIA'S HOSTILE POSTURE: TRACING THE JOURNEY FROM BABRI MOSQUE TO RAM TEMPLE

India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has officially opened a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Ram in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. This event marks the conclusion of a forty-year push by Hindu extremist factions to construct the temple. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has strongly criticized the construction and inauguration of the 'Ram Mandir' on the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India. The OIC expressed grave concern over the actions, denouncing them as an attempt to obliterate the Islamic landmarks represented by the Babri Mosque, which stood for five centuries before being demolished in 1992. The OIC highlighted the growing majoritarianism in India and condemned the temple's inauguration as an affront to the Muslim community. Pakistan also condemned the event, calling it **“a symbol of growing majoritarianism and an affront to the Muslim community in India”**.



The Foreign Office expressed concerns about the future of other mosques in India facing threats of desecration and destruction. In India, opposition parties criticized the grand spectacle of the inauguration and the perceived state-sponsored assault on a peace march.

The opening of the Ram Mandir was seen by Hindu groups and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a landmark moment aligning the country's governance with its majority faith, while the OIC and Pakistan viewed it as a blot on India's democracy and an infringement on Islamic landmarks.

Here a timeline of the Mosque-Temple clash is given to explore the historical background. (most of the events have been sourced from al jazeera)

1528 Mosque construction: Mughal commander Mir Baqi built Babri Mosque under the rule of the first Mughal king, Babur.

1853 First recorded instance of conflict: A Hindu sect claimed that the mosque was built in a place where a temple had occurred years ago.

1859 The British erect a fence: The British colonial administration partitioned the site into two separate sections for Hindus and Muslims. Muslims were allowed to pray inside, while Hindus were allowed to worship in the outer courtyard.

December 23, 1949 Mosque becomes a 'disputed property': The government declared the mosque a "disputed property" and locked its gate after idols of Ram were allegedly placed by Hindu priests inside the structure, according to police reports. No Muslim prayers were offered at the mosque after that.

1950-61 Civil suits filed: Four civil suits were filed in the court ranging from the rights to perform Hindu rituals at the site to a Muslim group seeking declaration and possession of

the site.

1984 Hindu temple committee: A committee was formed by Hindu radical groups, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), to spearhead the construction of a Hindu temple.

1990 BJP'S Ram temple campaign: BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani led a nationwide campaign to build a temple in the place of the mosque. The nationwide campaign left a trail of violence in its wake, resulting in Advani's arrest in the eastern state of Bihar.

December 6, 1992 A Hindu nationalist mob tears down the Mosque: Tens of thousands of Hindus gathered in Ayodhya, pulling down the 16th-century mosque. Hindu-Muslim riots broke out across the country.

December 16, 1992 Liberhan commission: Ten days after the demolition of the mosque, the central government formed the Liberhan Commission to investigate the incident.

2003 archaeological survey: Radical groups in the form of archaeologists began a court-directed survey to determine whether a Hindu temple existed at the site. The survey claimed there was evidence of a temple beneath the mosque, but many liberal archaeologists and Muslims rejected the findings and termed them as predetermined. June 2009 Liberhan Commission report: The commission submitted its report 17 years after the demolition of the mosque. The report named several leaders of the BJP and its ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as responsible for the demolition of the mosque. Some senior BJP leaders, including Advani, faced trial.

RABITA FORUM INTERNATIONAL (RFI) HOSTS CPNE EDITORS LUNCHEON



Rabita Forum International (RFI) hosted a luncheon meet to honor the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), fostering collaboration and strengthening ties. CPNE delegation, including CPNE's Vice President, Amir Mehmood, General Secretary Ijaz ul Haq, Finance Secretary Gulam Nabi Chandio, and other Senior Editors such as Maqsood Yosufi, Saeed Khawar, Dr. Jabbar Khattak, Abdul Khaliq Marshal, Munazza Siham Mirza, Mehmood Alam Khalid, and Ibrar Bakhtiar, commended RFI's exemplary role in leading the nation across diverse fronts, spanning print and digital media as well as research initiatives.

RFI's Chairman, Nusrat Mirza, extended a warm welcome to the CPNE members, expressing the importance of collaborative efforts in safeguarding national interests,

promoting causes dear to the nation's heart, countering malicious propaganda, and enlightening the public with facts. The CPNE delegation, in turn, conveyed their gratitude to RFI, pledging unwavering support in the shared mission of national service.

The event signifies a harmonious alliance poised to contribute significantly to the nation's growth and welfare in near future.



COLONEL (R) MAQBOOL AFRIDI VISITS RFI OFFICE

On January 25, 2024, Colonel (R) Maqbool Afridi visited Rabita Forum International (RFI) Office and was interviewed for 'RFI Talk'. In his talk, he highlighted the dire need of understanding the economic, geopolitical, and strategic importance of Gwadar and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Col. Afridi expressed the belief that Gwadar has the potential to alleviate poverty and bring prosperity to the country, if effectively utilized by the leadership. Following the visit, Chairman of RFI, Nusrat Mirza,



presented him with a set of Interaction Magazines.

NUSRAT MIRZA PRESENTS MAGAZINE TO DG PID



Nusrat Mirza, Chairman Rabita Forum International, presents RFI's memento and monthly Interaction magazine to Ms. Erum Tanweer, Director General Press Information Department (PID).

PAKISTAN-IRAN RELATIONS: EMERGING CHALLENGES AND REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT



**PROF. DR.
TALAT AYESHA
WIZARAT**

Pakistan - Iran relationship holds significance for the two nations and to a large extent these relations also determine the dynamics of regional politics. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan. The two countries were able to demarcate their border in 1958-59 fully mapping the border and marking the area with pillars. This was possible in view of political understanding which existed between the two neighboring states.

After the Islamic revolution took place in Iran this understanding should have further consolidated but this expectation did not materialize. There were two reasons for this trend; Iran viewed with suspicion the close understanding which had existed between Pakistan and Iran under the Shah. Another factor was that Iran's foreign policy became independent under the new government, whereas Pakistan's foreign policy became too dependent on the US under Zia's regime.

After the fall of Zia there was a brief period of political instability in Pakistan, the focus of following governments was mainly on internal challenges. These governments were unable to steer the foreign policy away from dependence on the West. However, in 2016 when Pakistan decided to join CPEC both India and US decided to come together to scuttle BRI and its flagship project CPEC. India is a strategic ally of US and is a partner of US in all its plans to destabilize the region.

The US has imposed sanctions on Iran but



despite that India was allowed to build Chahbahar port in southern Iran a few hundred miles to the west of Gwadar. Chahbahar became a center serving India's intelligence network. A serving Indian naval officer on deputation to RAW was caught in Baluchistan province. Kulbhushan was responsible for espionage as well as terrorism.

The idea was to scuttle CPEC and also to promote secession of Baluchistan which is believed to be common objective of India and its strategic ally the US. The US wants to keep Pakistan dependent on IMF and curtail other options like CPEC which would add to prosperity. Daniel S. Markey in his book 'No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad' has shed light on long term US objectives regarding Pakistan.

Iran had also given India the project to construct a network of roads connecting Chahbahar with Iran's northern border. Now that project has been given to China hopefully this step would lead to a reduction in Indian influence in Iran. However, as long as



Chahbahar is allowed to be used by India their machinations will continue.

Pakistan has been pursuing policies which have created mis-perceptions about its role in the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. Pakistan has declared that it is not part of naval coalition built by US to take action against Ansar Allah of Yemen. In that case there was no need for Pakistan to send its war ships to the Red Sea. Pakistan has also conducted naval exercises with members of US coalition this could send wrong signal to states like Iran.

The US ambassador and UK High Commissioner have been visiting Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Gwadar and other strategic areas in Pakistan. There is nothing wrong in this but misunderstandings can arise because the US and the British hostility towards CPEC is known to all. Also terrorism in GB and Gwadar registered an upward trend following their visits.

This could be a coincidence but it should be taken seriously by law enforcing agencies in view of these countries known antagonism towards CPEC and their desire to destabilize Afghanistan and Iran. US requested Pakistan to provide them with military bases on its soil. We need to seriously ponder over the reasons as to why US desired to build its military bases in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

provinces of Pakistan.

There can be two interpretations of this strategy; under the garb of fighting terrorism US and UK could launch operations to scuttle CPEC. There is another interpretation which also carries serious implications for regional politics. China according to my understanding tries to multiply its options; In view of increasing US influence in Pakistan, China decided to build a road through Wakhan region of Afghanistan going all the way to an Iranian port in Southern Iran.

This would connect China, Afghanistan and Iran. This route would be a little longer than the one through Pakistan but would have increased China's options. The US military bases in Pakistan could also be used to scuttle this new route or ignite a war between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. If a war were to take place between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan who would be the beneficiaries? Arms manufacturers stand to gain from this development. States trying to block China's access to Indian Ocean and also scuttle CPEC would also benefit. Needless to say that the three neighboring countries would be major losers. By destroying each other they would strengthen their mutual enemies. There would be increase in poverty and all the three states would become more dependent on outsiders.

One factor which stands out is obvious. In case of growing tension in the region all regional states will suffer. Russia and China might also face some adverse consequences but that would be nothing compared to the fallout for the three neighbors. The three states will jeopardize the future of their people, will also become dependent on India and the West and all hopes of future prosperity will vanish. It is clearly not in the interest of regional states to allow tensions to grow.

Continued on page 33

WATER SECURITY AND CONFLICTS



SYED HASAN HABIB

Water is fundamental for life as it supports ecosystems and economies. Yet of all water available on earth, only 3 percent is sweet and fit for human consumption. The water is essential to many sectors, its management must consider the interest of all stakeholders; farmers, herders, common citizens, industry, etc. Countries try to control water sources for irrigation and hydropower. The water availability is becoming insufficient and the competition amongst the stakeholders becomes a conflict within and outside countries. Also, water insecurity leads to political, economic, institutional, and cultural aspects leading to enhanced conflict risks.

Water scarcity affects roughly 40% of the world's population and, according to predictions by the United Nations and the World Bank, drought could put up to 700 million people at risk of displacement by 2030. Our concern is what that could lead to?

The amount of water is constant in the system. We can drink, irrigate, wash, and bathe, but the water remains on/in land or in the atmosphere. With the booming population, the pressure on governments is increasing for safe water. According to a



World Bank report of 1995, 'many of the wars of the next century (21st Century) will be about water'. Similarly, in 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan suggested that 'fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict and war in the future'.

TRANS-BOUNDARY WATER CONFLICTS

Researchers in the field of water conflicts agree that transboundary water-related conflicts have substantially grown in the past few decades. Enhanced international focus has been on water quantity and infrastructure (construction of water channels, dams, and diversions) that could lead to conflicts. The presence of national and international treaties between two or more nations and the institutional capacity to deal with instances of conflicting interests between nations reduces the risk. The latter underscores the importance of continued international support to encourage transboundary water-related cooperation, framed by transboundary water treaties.

Shared water resources present extensive opportunities for potential disputes between water users within countries (provinces or regions) and between two or more states. The majority of the world's 310 transboundary river basins are shared between two or more countries. Disputes and collaborations can occur depending on whether decisions affecting water scarcity, quality, and pollution are made unilaterally or jointly. Groundwater aquifers and reserves are similarly at

heightened risk of unsustainable consumption, pollution, and uninformed perceptions of the quantity and quality of available resources.

Governance structures that are used to manage resources sustainably may no longer be operating effectively. Lack of knowledge and monitoring technologies on the quantity and quality of remaining groundwater can also lead to unsustainable water withdrawals leading to imbalances leading to conflicts.

At the same time, shared interdependence over scarce water creates opportunities for long-term repeated interactions that provide the impetus for cooperation, conflict resolution, and peace building. Between 1945 and 1999, cooperative events related to water issues outnumbered conflicts by more than two-to-one, and none of the 1,800 disputes in transboundary basins over those years led to formal war. Strong water management institutions, such as basin treaties are key to creating opportunities to reduce conflict risks.

IMPACT ON WATER AVAILABILITY DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The impacts of climate change affect not only the availability, quality, and distribution of water but also affect governance and migration, multiplying conflict risks. Certain regions that are naturally arid and experience droughts will continue to get drier, while areas with moist climates are expected to get wetter. Despite this imprecise rule of dry gets drier and wet gets wetter, climate scientists expect greater weather extremes and variability across many regions of the world.

Almost 75 percent of natural disasters between 2001 and 2018 were water-related, including droughts and floods (UNESCO 2020). Both acute and chronic climate events alter the volume, timing, and location of precipitation and shift the geographic



distribution of water.

Climate change generates instability through its impact on climate-sensitive activities and interactions with socioeconomic and political stresses that create or escalate tensions. In Syria, for instance, protracted drought in the 2000s coupled with poor water management reduced crop yields, food insecurity, and loss of agricultural livelihoods. The subsequent civil war further contributed to forced displacement and water insecurity.

WATER AS WEAPON

Water-related disputes are not new. The oldest conflict happened in 2500 BC, the Lagash-Umma dispute in ancient Sumeria over water and irrigation led to a century of war. Water was used as a weapon in besieged cities, where water supply was either cut off or deliberately polluted to weaken the enemy population. In recent years several cases have emerged that could lead to water wars. The water can be used in several cases.

The Indian hydrologists are of the view that several Chinese storage dams on River Brahmaputra (also called River Jumna) can be used to flood the infrastructure of eastern Indian states, in case of war. Recently, the Indian release of water in the River Chenab can, in case of war, be used to affect the terrain to their advantage. The Bambawali-Ravi-

Badian link canal (in short the BRB) was used in 1965 as an effective defense line by the Pakistan army.

In the West Bank, the Palestinians rely on springs for drinking water as almost one-fifth of the population is not connected to a water network. Though Israel handed over parts of West Bank territory to Palestinians in December 1995, it kept control over the sources of underground water. Today, if Palestinians want to drill new wells, they must first get permission from Israel. By contrast, none of the 144 Israeli settlements in the West Bank have water shortages. When water negotiators meet, Palestinians focus almost exclusively on water rights. They blame their water shortage on the excess consumed by settlers.

The modern wars remain focused on urban centers. It is here that the denial or diversion of water can impact the outcome. It can also be an indirect consequence of the conflict. For example, in Iraq during the Gulf War, the Allied troops bombed all the power stations shutting down both water treatment and sewage pumping. As an indirect consequence, thousands of infants died due to poor hygiene. Malaysia, which supplies about half of Singapore's water, threatened to cut off that supply in 1997 after Singapore criticized its government policies. In Africa, relations between Botswana and Namibia have been severely strained by Namibian plans to construct a pipeline to divert water from the shared Okavango River to eastern Namibia.

Recently during war, the Russian forces have repeatedly attacked enemy water infrastructure, while the Ukraine intentionally flooded some areas to slow Russia's initial invasion. The Nova Kakhovka dam collapse (June 2023) is probably a new addition to the list of such incidents, though on a larger scale than previously seen in this war.

NOVA KAKHOVKA DAM COLLAPSE IN UKRAINE JUNE 2023

Ten case studies of water-related conflict are listed below:

- a. Dispute over water in the Nile Basin: The Nile Basin features significant conflict over access to and rights over water resources among its eleven riparian countries. With the filling of the new Renaissance Dam, Ethiopia, the chances of crisis are even greater.
- b. Water shortages and public discontent in Yemen: As a consequence of severe mismanagement, Yemen's water availability is declining dramatically and

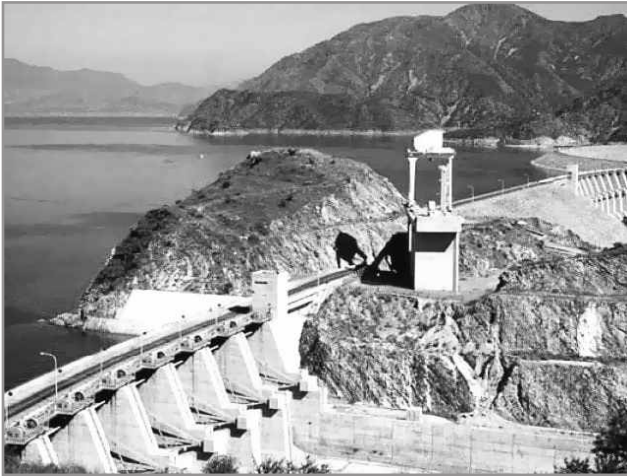


causing serious internal conflict.

- c. Turkey, Syria, and Iraq- conflict over the Euphrates-Tigris: The Euphrates-Tigris Basin is shared between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, with Iran comprising parts of the Tigris basin. Since the 1960s, unilateral irrigation plans altering the flows of the rivers, coupled with political tensions between the countries, have strained relations in the basin.
- d. Transboundary water disputes between Afghanistan and Iran: Afghanistan's efforts to harness the waters of the Helmand River and the Harirud to support post-conflict reconstruction and development have alarmed Iran. The Iranian government perceives Afghan agricultural expansion

and dam construction as threats to water security in its eastern and northeastern provinces.

- e. Security implications of growing water scarcity in Egypt: Egypt is using more water than its internal renewable resources - mainly based on Nile freshwater inflows. Water stress in Egypt will increase due to rapid population growth and rising temperatures. This will put severe strains on Egypt's economy and lead to internal strife.
- f. Dam projects and disputes in the Mekong



River Basin: The Mekong Basin is witnessing an enormous expansion of dam-building for hydropower generation, especially in China and Laos. The countries downstream fear the negative impacts from greater flooding to seasonal lack of water.

- g. Dispute over water in the Cauvery Basin in India: The long-standing conflict over water from the Cauvery River between the Indian states Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has recently resurfaced. The implications are not only legal battles but also violent protests.
- h. Droughts, livestock prices, and armed conflict in Somalia: Frequent droughts in Somalia put significant pressure on

pastoral livelihoods. Herders have to sell more of their livestock, it lowers livestock prices and loss of income.

- i. Water privatization in Cochabamba, Bolivia: In 2000, the privatization of drinking water in Cochabamba incurred violent protests and escalated into the so-called 'Water War of Cochabamba', killing several people. Eventually, the city's water was re-nationalized.
- j. Indian water projects on three western Rivers of the Indus Water Treaty

THE CONTROVERSIAL BAGHLIAR DAM ON RIVER CHENAB

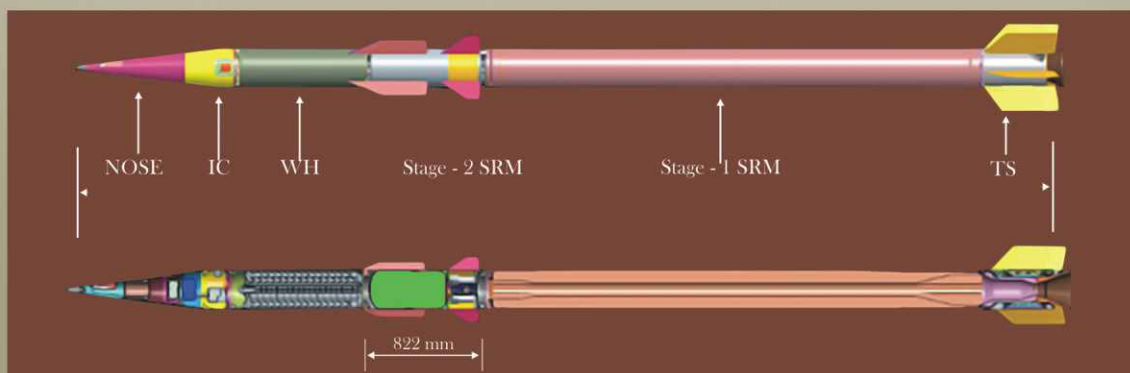
The two sides have been making conflicting arguments about water use since the mid-2000s. India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has taken a tougher public line, since 2014. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi even said in 2019 that India would stop "every drop" of water in the Rivers Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas (the Indus Waters Treaty assigns these to India) from flowing into Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has invoked the treaty's disagreement resolution provisions three times. For the first time, Pakistan asked the World Bank to appoint a neutral expert to address concerns about the Baghliar Dam on the Chenab River in India-held Kashmir. The neutral expert-approved India's plans in 2007 with technical conditions. Pakistan then asked the World Bank to convene a court of arbitration to opine on India's plans for a hydroelectric project on the Kishenganga-Neelum. The court's verdict in 2013 did not fully side with either country. Finally, Pakistan's objections to Ratle project (Indian dam on the Chenab). Pakistan first asked the World Bank to appoint another court of arbitration on these matters in 2016, India wanted to refer to a neutral expert.

Continued on page 33

FATAH-III

ELEVATING PAKISTAN'S LONG-RANGE
ARTILLERY EXPERTIZE



FATAH-II EMERGES: ELEVATING PAKISTAN'S LONG- RANGE ARTILLERY EXPERTIZE



SYED
SAMIULLAH

Pakistan unveiled its new guided multiple-launch rocket system (G-MLRS), Fatah-II, on December 27, 2023. Though this was the first publicly disclosed flight test of the rocket, it was initially showcased by Global Industrial and Defense Solutions (GIDS), representing Pakistan's governmental defense manufacturing, at the IDEF-2023 exhibition in Turkey.

In 2019, Pakistan's Ministry of Defense Production (MoDP) referred to two indigenous MLRS programs in development—a standard MLRS and an “extended-range” MLRS. Initially, it was believed that the A-100 was the initial MLRS variant, and subsequently, Fatah-I was the “extended-range” system. However, in light of the Fatah-II, it is now apparent that the MoDP referred to two domestic programs, where Fatah-I was the standard MLRS and Fatah-II was the “extended-range” version.

The rocket system aims to diversify conventional targeting options for Pakistan,



enabling precision strikes deep into an adversary's territory against various targets with different types of conventional warheads. It has been debated that Fatah-II's development responded to the Indian limited war doctrine known as the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), ensuring Pakistan's capability of retaliating with surgical precision. Additionally, Fatah-II strengthens Pakistan's conventional strike capabilities, reaching rear Indian military bases, ammunition depots, logistics hubs, and air bases for the first time.

Fatah-II is not a new system but an addition to the existing G-MLRS club worldwide. Examples include the United States' M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and China's Weishi rocket series. According to Pakistan's military media wing, ISPR, the rocket is “equipped with state-of-the-art avionics, a sophisticated navigation system, and a unique flight trajectory,” according to the official press release.

It can effectively engage adversaries'



targets within a 400 km range, with a circular error probable (CEP) of less than 10 meters. Setting itself apart within the Fatah rocket series, the Fatah-II incorporates cutting-edge flight control technology and a refined path-finding mechanism.

This includes the integration of satellite and inertial navigation systems, ensuring an exceptional level of accuracy with a CEP of less than 10 meters. This precision targeting capability underscores the Fatah-II's significance in advanced missile technology. The weapon system seamlessly complements existing models such as the Fatah-I, the Chinese A-100, the Yarmouk series, and the Nasr tactical ballistic missiles.

Notably, the Fatah-II's ability to accurately target locations over a distance of 400 kilometers marks a substantial advancement in the field of long-range artillery, surpassing its predecessor, the Fatah-I, which boasts a range of 140 kilometers. Military analysts have labeled the Fatah-II a "flat trajectory missile," a design attribute that poses a radar detection challenge.

Its predecessor, the Fatah-I, is manufactured by Global Industrial Defense Solutions. The conglomerate says the Fatah-I is intended "to precisely attack and destroy the enemy's group and area targets, such as

military bases, massive armored troops, missile launching sites, large airports, harbors, and other important facilities." The Fatah 1 is an eight-round guided multiple rocket launch system based on the same Taian chassis as the 10-round A-100 multiple launch rocket system in service with Pakistan.

The Fatah-II test "marks another step in Pakistan's efforts to field multiple precision strike artillery systems with variable ranges to hold adversary targets at risk," said Frank O'Donnell, a nonresident fellow with the Stimson Center think tank's South Asia Program and a senior research adviser at the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network.

The fact Pakistan developed the weapon, he added, demonstrates the country has learned lessons from recent or ongoing conflicts. "When viewed in the context of Pakistan's parallel efforts to field a similarly diverse arsenal of combat drones, its implementation of certain lessons which the military feels the Azerbaijan-Armenia and Russia-Ukraine wars have reinforced become clear," O'Donnell told Defense News.

"They include the advantages of assigning adversary precision ground bombardment missions to relatively low-cost artillery and combat drone systems, preserving manned fighter aircraft for higher-end strike missions and interception of their counterparts."



Now questions like why Pakistan introduced a long-range artillery system when it already possesses short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) with similar ranges or what benefits are associated with the Fatah-II rocket, could be answered by offering a comparative analysis of Fatah-II's costs, ability to conduct deep strike missions, short sensor-to-shooter response time, and precision strike capability with other weapon systems.

Fatah-II rationally provides more bang for Pakistan's buck because it has lower production and operational costs compared to sensitive systems like SRBMs. Ballistic missiles have high maintenance and operational costs and require separate



storage sites and staff to maintain them, while Fatah-II can easily blend with the MLRS fleet. Besides, the sensor-to-shooter response time of Fatah-II is significantly shorter, making it a preferable choice for operational commanders. Based on footage of the test released by ISPR, the Fatah 2 appears to be a two-round guided multiple-launch rocket system based on the Chinese Taian TAS5450 eight-wheel drive chassis. Fatah-II's extended range of 400 km enables it to eliminate the enemy's strategic long-range air defense systems deployed in the rear.

For instance, it can take out even mobile targets like S-400 air defense systems that can quickly be shifted from one firing location to

another.

Additionally, its low cost incentivizes the military to employ it against enemy air defenses by firing a barrage of rockets on a single battery of S-400 to overwhelm the system and, in the process, eliminate it as well. This makes Fatah-II a unique system in Pakistan's conventional arsenal to perform suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) missions in the future.

In a conversation with Eurasian Times, Defense analyst Patricia Marins expressed astonishment, pointing out the lack of information regarding the missile's unique trajectory. Marins emphasized the need for more details on the missile's evasive

maneuver. Highlighting the challenges posed by the Fateh-II, Marins said that the high range and considerable mobility make it elusive for anti-missile systems to locate launchers effectively.

This advancement is expected to contribute to Pakistan's strategic endeavor to build a robust and versatile military capability for conducting highly accurate strikes over a wide array of distances and with diverse munitions. The integration of the Fatah-II into its arsenal at a subsequent stage would, therefore, mark a major leap in enhancing the country's terrestrial strike competencies.

The author is a Research Officer at RFI and Associate Editor of Monthly Interaction.

THE SPLENDORS OF ANCIENT EGYPT



THE SPLENDORS OF ANCIENT EGYPT:

A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF A TIMELESS CIVILIZATION

INTERACTION
TEAM

The ancient Egyptian civilization, often referred to as one of the world's greatest and oldest civilizations, has left an indelible mark on human history. Flourishing along the banks of the Nile River for thousands of years, this remarkable civilization has captivated the imagination of scholars, historians, and enthusiasts alike. In this exploration, we will try to walk around the multifaceted dimensions of Egyptian civilization, ranging from its philosophical underpinnings to its socio-political structures, geopolitical significance, economic systems, cultural achievements, ideological frameworks, religious beliefs, and historical milestones.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS:

The philosophical foundations of ancient Egypt were deeply intertwined with religious beliefs and societal values. Ma'at, the concept of cosmic order and justice, was central to Egyptian philosophy. The Egyptians believed that maintaining balance and harmony in all aspects of life was essential for the well-being of both individuals and society. The pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, exemplified by the scribe class (refers to a group of individuals in ancient societies who were trained in reading and writing), reflects the importance placed on intellectual pursuits.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE:

Egyptian society was hierarchically structured, with a clear division of classes. At the pinnacle were the pharaohs (a term used for rulers in ancient Egypt), considered divine



rulers responsible for maintaining Ma'at. Beneath them were the nobility, priests, and scribes, followed by artisans, merchants, and farmers. Slavery was present but not as widespread as in some contemporaneous societies. Social mobility was possible through military service, exceptional talent, or royal favor.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE:

The political landscape of ancient Egypt was marked by the central authority of the pharaoh, who wielded absolute power. The Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom were distinct periods, each with its political dynamics. Pharaohs were not only political leaders but also religious figures, linking the earthly realm with the divine. The bureaucracy, comprising viziers and other officials, played a crucial role in governing the vast empire.

GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The geographical setting of Egypt, with the Nile as its lifeblood, greatly influenced its geopolitical significance. The Nile not only provided fertile land for agriculture but also



facilitated trade and communication. Egypt's strategic location at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East made it a vital player in regional geopolitics, attracting influences from neighboring civilizations.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS:

Agriculture was the backbone of the Egyptian economy, thanks to the annual flooding of the Nile that replenished the soil. The surplus produced sustained a complex economy involving trade, manufacturing, and craftsmanship. Papyrus, linen, and precious metals were significant exports. The construction of monumental structures, such as the pyramids, employed a large workforce and contributed to economic stability.

CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS:

Ancient Egypt is renowned for its cultural achievements, encompassing art, architecture, literature, and science. The pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, and the temples of Luxor and Karnak stand as enduring symbols of Egyptian architecture. Hieroglyphs, the complex writing system, adorned temples and tombs. Literature, including the famous Book of the Dead, provided insights into religious beliefs and rituals.

IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS:

Religion played a central role in Egyptian life, permeating every aspect of society. The Egyptians practiced polytheism, with a pantheon of gods and goddesses governing various aspects of existence. Rituals, ceremonies, and funerary practices were

deeply rooted in religious beliefs, emphasizing the importance of the afterlife. The concept of ka (spirit) and ba (soul) was integral to the understanding of the human essence.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS:

The religious landscape of ancient Egypt featured a complex and diverse array of deities, each associated with specific attributes and functions. Ra, the sun god, and Osiris, the god of the afterlife, held paramount importance. The practice of mummification and the construction of elaborate tombs reflected the Egyptians' deep belief in the continuity of existence beyond death.

HISTORICAL MILESTONES:

The history of ancient Egypt is divided into distinct periods marked by political, social, and cultural shifts. The Old Kingdom (c. 2686-2181 BCE) witnessed the construction of the pyramids. The Middle Kingdom (c. 2040-1640 BCE) was marked by territorial expansion and cultural flourishing. The New Kingdom (c. 1550-1070 BCE) saw the rise of powerful pharaohs like Hatshepsut and Ramses II, as well as the construction of monumental temples and tombs.

CONCLUSION:

The legacy of ancient Egypt endures as a testament to human achievement, resilience, and innovation. Its philosophical principles, social structures, political systems, geopolitical significance, economic prowess, cultural achievements, ideological frameworks, religious beliefs, and historical milestones collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this extraordinary civilization. The echoes of ancient Egypt continue to reverberate through the annals of history, shaping the course of human civilization for millennia.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY AND GENETIC ENGINEERING (NIBGE)

**INTERACTION
TEAM**

This series is dedicated to showcasing the remarkable achievements and vital contributions of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and its affiliated institutions. It aims to provide readers with insights into Pakistan's nuclear advancements, including nuclear science, energy production, healthcare breakthroughs, agricultural innovations, and environmental conservation, all driven by PAEC's pioneering efforts. The series draws extensively from the insightful book "Johari Nishtar e Tehqeeq," the first-ever Urdu book on the topic, authored by the Chief Editor of the monthly Interaction, Nusrat Mirza. It offers a unique perspective on untold stories, significant milestones, and the unwavering commitment of PAEC and its dedicated scientists and researchers.

The National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE) is a prominent institution under the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. It was established in 1994. The institute holds ISO 9001:2015 certification and collaborates with international organizations such as the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). The main focus of the institute is on modern biotechnology and

genetic engineering, playing a vital role in national development across agriculture, health, environment, and industry.

NIBGE conducts research programs, offers services, and develops marketable products across various divisions. They are briefly described as under:

1. AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

DIVISION: This division addresses food security challenges in Pakistan by researching key crops, developing approved cotton and wheat lines, and working on transgenic/genome-edited crops with improved traits. Utilizing advanced tools like genomics and bioinformatics, the division aims to enhance crop productivity, reduce production costs, and collaborate with various renowned national and international organizations like Higher Education Commission (HEC), Punjab Agricultural Research Board (PARB), Agricultural Linkages Program (PARC),



Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bill & Malinda Gates Foundation, Pak-US ICARDA and King Abdullah University for Science & Technology (KAUST) etc.

2. INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

DIVISION: Engaging in multidisciplinary research, this division focuses on sustainable manufacturing processes and products such as enzymes, biofuels, prebiotics, and antimicrobials. Research activities involve isolating microorganisms, studying biosynthetic pathways, conducting mass cultures using bioreactors, and recovering products. Four main themes guide the division's work: Bioprocessing of Ores and Fossil Fuels, Industrial Enzymes and Biofuels, Biotechnology of Prebiotics and Antimicrobials, and Nanobiotechnology.

3. HEALTH BIOTECHNOLOGY

DIVISION: The Health Biotechnology Division focuses on combating genetic and infectious diseases in Pakistan, conducting research on molecular studies, nucleic acid diagnostics, therapeutic strategies, and developing diagnostic tools. The division has made significant achievements in discovering gene functions, identifying genes responsible for diseases, and establishing a National Probiotic Laboratory. The division also synthesizes medications, works on vaccines, and offers services such as molecular analyses, chromosomal analysis, and prenatal diagnosis.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL BIOTECHNOLOGY

DIVISION: This division tackles pollution and depleted natural resources by developing wetland technologies for wastewater treatment, bioremediation of

contaminated sites, and environmentally friendly agricultural products. Services include wetland technologies, environmental monitoring, toxicity testing, bio-fertilizer production, and operating an animal house research facility.

NIBGE has developed expertise and infrastructure for bio-fertilizer production. Notable products include BioPowerSuper, a biofertilizer for various crops, and Phosphorus Pool, which addresses soil phosphorus deficiency.

Apart from the various research divisions, NIBGE is actively involved in academic programs, offering M.Phil and Ph.D. level



programs to contribute to human resources in biotechnology. NIBGE's dedicated library is recognized as the National Library for Biological Sciences, focusing on extremophilic microorganisms, microbial biodiversity, biotechnology of extremophiles, extremozymes, and gene mining.

In summary, NIBGE is dedicated to research, education, and biofertilizer production, with a keen focus on modern biotechnology applications in various sectors. The institute's collaboration with international organizations, state-of-the-art research divisions, and academic contributions position it as a leading institution in biotechnology and genetic engineering within Pakistan.

THE FC31 FIGHTER JET

A NEW HORIZON IN PAKISTAN'S DEFENSE CAPABILITIES

MIRZA KASHIF BAIG



The FC31, a cutting-edge stealth fighter jet, represents a significant leap in aerial combat technology. Developed with advanced capabilities, it promises to revolutionize modern warfare. This article delves into the intricacies of the FC31, contrasting it with its counterpart, the F36 Fighter Jet, and explores its strategic benefits to Pakistan. In juxtaposition, the F36 Fighter Jet, known for its technological prowess, serves as a benchmark to assess the advancements and capabilities of the FC31. For Pakistan, the acquisition of the FC31 is more than an upgrade in military hardware; it's a strategic move with far-reaching implications for national defense and regional stability.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION

The journey of the FC31 began in the early 2000s, to create a stealth fighter jet that could match or surpass the capabilities of contemporary Western aircraft. Initially conceptualized as a response to U.S. and European fighter technology advancements, the FC31's development focused on stealth, agility, and multi-role capabilities.

BREAKTHROUGHS AND CHALLENGES

Throughout its development, the FC31 encountered numerous challenges, ranging from technological hurdles to budget constraints. Yet, each obstacle was met with innovative solutions, resulting in breakthroughs in stealth technology, avionics, and weapons systems. These advancements not only marked the FC31 as a formidable aircraft but also as a testament to the evolving aerospace industry. Today, the FC31 stands as a fully developed fifth-generation fighter jet, ready to be deployed. Its journey from conceptual drawings to a flying prototype is a story of resilience and technological ambition, reflecting the broader aspirations of modern aerial warfare.

DESIGN AND STEALTH FEATURES

The FC31's design is a testament to modern stealth technology. Its sleek, aerodynamic structure is coated with advanced radar-absorbent materials, drastically reducing its visibility on enemy radars. The design intricacies extend to minimizing its infrared emissions, a critical



aspect of stealth technology, allowing the jet to operate with a significantly lower chance of detection.

ENGINE AND PERFORMANCE

At the heart of the FC31's performance are its two state-of-the-art RD-93MA turbofan engines. Each engine delivers up to 9,000 kgf of thrust, propelling the jet to a top speed of approximately Mach 1.8. The high thrust-to-weight ratio ensures outstanding agility, crucial for evading enemy defenses and engaging in dogfights. Moreover, the engines are engineered to minimize heat emissions, aligning with the aircraft's stealth profile, and reducing its vulnerability to infrared-guided systems.

AVIONICS AND SYSTEMS

The FC31's advanced avionics system is centered around the KLJ-7A AESA radar. This radar system represents a significant leap in aerial combat technology, with the capability to track and engage multiple targets at long ranges, enhancing the jet's situational awareness and offensive capabilities. The cockpit boasts a glass cockpit layout with multifunctional displays, providing pilots with real-time data and a comprehensive view of the battlefield.

ARMAMENT AND PAYLOAD

In terms of armament, the FC31 is equipped to handle a range of modern warfare demands. Its internal weapons bay is designed to carry air-to-air missiles like the PL-12 and PL-21, as well as precision-guided bombs, maintaining a low radar signature. The aircraft also features external hardpoints, enabling it to carry additional payloads and adapt to diverse combat scenarios. This flexibility in armament allows the FC31 to perform various roles, from air superiority missions to ground attacks.



ELECTRONIC WARFARE AND DEFENSE SYSTEMS

The FC31's electronic warfare suite is a key component of its defensive capabilities. This integrated system provides comprehensive electronic countermeasures, enabling the jet to disrupt enemy radar and communications effectively, thereby enhancing its survivability in hostile environments. The suite includes systems for electronic attack, protection, and support, offering a robust defense against electronic threats. Additionally, the defense systems of the FC31 are bolstered by advanced countermeasures like chaff and flare dispensers. These systems are critical for misleading incoming missiles and protecting the aircraft from enemy fire. The jet is also equipped with an infrared search and track system (IRST) and a missile approach warning system, providing a multi-faceted defense strategy that can counter a variety of aerial threats.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH F36 FIGHTER JET DESIGN PHILOSOPHY AND STEALTH CAPABILITIES

The FC31 and F36 both exemplify cutting-edge stealth technology, yet the FC31 stands out with its balanced approach to stealth and cost. While the F36 prioritizes all-aspect stealth, potentially increasing its production and maintenance costs, the FC31's design achieves an effective blend of stealth, agility, and affordability. Its use of radar-absorbent

materials and aerodynamic shape significantly reduces radar detection, offering substantial stealth capabilities that are more accessible and maintainable for many nations.

ENGINE POWER AND PERFORMANCE

The FC31's RD-93MA engines, though not as advanced as the F36's propulsion system, offer remarkable power and efficiency. The FC31 achieves a top speed of around Mach 1.8, demonstrating notable agility and speed, essential for modern aerial combat. This makes the FC31 an excellent choice for countries seeking high performance without the extensive cost associated with more sophisticated engines.

AVIONICS AND RADAR SYSTEMS

In avionics, the FC31's KLJ-7A AESA radar system offers a commendable balance between capability and cost. While the F36's radar systems provide longer detection ranges and precision targeting, the FC31's avionics are highly effective in their own right, offering excellent situational awareness and the ability to engage multiple targets, a significant advantage in complex aerial battles.

ARMAMENT AND VERSATILITY

The FC31 matches the F36 in terms of armament versatility, capable of carrying a wide array of modern weapons in its internal bay and on external hardpoints. This adaptability is crucial for fulfilling various combat roles, from air superiority to ground attacks. The FC31's weapon system integration, while slightly less advanced than the F36's, still delivers formidable firepower, making it a powerful asset in any air force.

ELECTRONIC WARFARE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

The FC31's electronic warfare systems are

particularly noteworthy. Though the F36 boasts advanced electronic countermeasures, the FC31's systems are impressively effective, capable of jamming enemy radars and communications, which are essential for modern electronic warfare. Its defense systems, including chaff, flares, and missile approach warning systems, ensure the jet's survivability, rivaling the defensive capabilities of more expensive jets like the F36.

COST AND ACCESSIBILITY

A key advantage of the FC31 is its accessibility and cost-effectiveness compared to the F36. The FC31 offers a high-tech solution for nations looking to modernize their air forces without the prohibitive costs associated with top-tier stealth fighters. This affordability does not come at the expense of capability; the FC31 still provides a potent combination of stealth, firepower, and versatility, making it an attractive, strategic choice for countries seeking to enhance their aerial combat capabilities.

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE FOR USERS

For countries like Pakistan, the FC31 presents a strategic advantage. It offers a sophisticated platform capable of leveling the playing field against more advanced adversaries. The balance of cost,



performance, and advanced features makes the FC31 not just a fighter jet, but a symbol of accessible, high-end military technology.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN ENHANCING AIR FORCE CAPABILITIES

The induction of the FC31 into Pakistan's air force is poised to revolutionize its aerial combat capabilities. This state-of-the-art stealth fighter jet, with its blend of advanced stealth features, potent engine performance, and cutting-edge avionics, elevates Pakistan's aerial warfare capabilities to new heights. The FC31's agility and high-speed capabilities, combined with its stealth attributes, render it an ideal asset for securing air superiority in diverse combat scenarios.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL DEFENSE

The addition of the FC31 significantly bolsters Pakistan's national defense. Its advanced electronic warfare systems and comprehensive defense mechanisms position it as a formidable opponent against potential adversaries. The jet's multi-role capabilities, capable of executing a variety of missions ranging from air-to-air combat to precision ground strikes, provide Pakistan with a dynamic and flexible defense tool.

BALANCING REGIONAL POWER DYNAMICS

Acquiring the FC31 is a strategic move by Pakistan to maintain equilibrium in regional power dynamics. Its deployment serves as a deterrent against adversaries, leveling the playing field against nations with more advanced military technologies. The FC31's introduction into Pakistan's arsenal ensures the nation can defend its airspace effectively and assert its strategic position in the region.

BALANCING REGIONAL POWER DYNAMICS

The FC31's cost-effectiveness is a crucial

factor for Pakistan. Its acquisition and operational costs are considerably lower than other fifth-generation fighters, offering advanced capabilities without overburdening the national defense budget. This efficiency extends to maintenance and operational expenses, with the FC31 requiring less upkeep than more complex aircraft, making it a practical choice for a country looking to modernize its air force efficiently.

POTENTIAL FOR INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT AND UPGRADES

The FC31 opens doors for indigenous aerospace development and technological advancements in Pakistan. Collaboration in the development and manufacturing of the FC31 can bolster Pakistan's technical expertise in defense technology, leading to potential upgrades and customizations specific to its defense requirements. This partnership is a step towards self-reliance in defense capabilities and technological sovereignty.

ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE COLLABORATION

Integrating the FC31 into Pakistan's defense forces signifies strengthened international defense collaborations. This cooperation, especially with countries involved in the FC31's development and production, enhances diplomatic and defense relations, bolstering Pakistan's standing in global defense and security arenas.

TRAINING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Operating the FC31 offers a unique opportunity for the Pakistan Air Force to advance its training programs and develop new competencies among its personnel. The exposure to advanced fighter jet technologies will enhance the skills and readiness of both pilots and ground technicians, preparing them for the demands of modern aerial warfare.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The long-term strategic implications of incorporating the FC31 into Pakistan's defense strategy are profound. This move signifies Pakistan's commitment to sustaining a formidable and technologically advanced military presence, crucial for national security in a rapidly evolving global context.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND STABILITY

The FC31's presence in Pakistan's arsenal contributes to regional security and stability. By possessing a credible aerial defense capability, Pakistan can better manage regional tensions and conflicts, ensuring a more balanced security environment. The FC31's capabilities enable Pakistan to engage in effective deterrence, reducing the likelihood of escalation and fostering a more stable regional security landscape.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The FC31 program also presents significant economic benefits. The technology transfer and collaboration involved in the FC31's development and production can spur growth in Pakistan's aerospace industry, creating jobs and fostering technological innovation. This economic boost can have ripple effects across various sectors, contributing to overall national development.

ENHANCING AIR-TO-AIR AND AIR-TO-GROUND CAPABILITIES

The FC31's advanced weaponry and versatile loadout options enhance Pakistan's air-to-air and air-to-ground capabilities. Its ability to carry a range of sophisticated weapons systems enables the Pakistan Air Force to effectively engage in diverse combat operations, from intercepting enemy aircraft to striking strategic ground targets with precision.

The FC31's advanced sensor and radar

systems significantly improve Pakistan's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. The ability to gather and process critical information in real-time enhances situational awareness, providing Pakistan with an edge in strategic planning and decision-making.

BUILDING A FUTURE-READY AIR FORCE

Integrating the FC31 into Pakistan's military aligns with the broader goal of building a future-ready air force. The FC31's advanced features and capabilities position Pakistan's air force as a technologically advanced and strategically capable force, ready to face the challenges of future warfare scenarios. In conclusion, the FC31 fighter jet emerges not just as an advanced piece of military hardware, but as a pivotal element in reshaping Pakistan's defense capabilities. With its sophisticated stealth features, powerful engines, and state-of-the-art avionics, the FC31 stands as a testament to modern aerial combat technology.

Its introduction into Pakistan's air force significantly enhances the country's air superiority, strengthens national defense, and balances regional power dynamics. The FC31's cost-effectiveness, combined with its operational efficiency and potential for indigenous development, makes it a strategic choice for Pakistan. It represents not only a leap in military prowess but also a step towards technological self-reliance and enhanced international defense collaboration. As Pakistan integrates this advanced fighter jet into its arsenal, it solidifies its position as a formidable player in regional and global defense, ready to face the challenges of modern warfare with confidence and capability.

The author is the Editor of Monthly Interaction.

*Continued from page 18***WATER SECURITY AND CONFLICTS**

Recently, India has refused to agree to the World Bank process creating a a very dangerous precedence.

CONCLUSION

Changing the narrative on water security is important, because only then can one move away from thinking of water as a source of conflict, and recognize it as a tool for cooperation. The situation is grim and could become alarming. Looking to the future, attention ought to be redrawn to address the

*Continued from page 14***PAKISTAN-IRAN RELATIONS:**

Conflict reduction should be their objective. China and to some extent Russia can be counted on to provide support in the task of conflict resolution. Pakistan and Iran should initiate dialogue immediately in order to develop mutual confidence. Other confidence building measures can be undertaken i.e creation of mechanisms to allow the dialogue to continue without interruption. In my book ' Belt and Road Initiative:

Emerging World Order' I suggested the creation of institutions in the form of think tanks to deal with crises as they emerge. The most important challenge at present is to restore confidence between Iran and Pakistan. Another step which is required is for Iran to reduce Indian influence in Chahbahar. The net work setup by RAW which has been activated by India should be eradicated. Similarly if Iran informs Pakistan of the presence of any anti-Iran net work in Baluchistan or elsewhere in Pakistan it should be uprooted. When foreign diplomats in Pakistan or Iran want to visit some

world's more urgent water challenges. Investment and expertise could be better harnessed to focus on water management, such as effectively providing clean water to areas where it is unavailable and ensuring more sustainable water use. The mechanisms for water conflict resolution and management be aggressively developed and supported to avoid wars. Most importantly, there is a need to change our lifestyle to protect our planet.

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region they should be accompanied by law enforcing officers for their protection.

The two countries can sign agreement for sharing of Intelligence information. To reduce the element of competition Iran suggested the linking of Gwadar and Chahbahar. The idea appears to be beneficial for both countries, it needs to be explored further and research needs to be done to understand future implications.

Iran and Afghanistan can be invited to join CPEC converting it into CPEC⁺. This will give a boost to CPEC and will therefore be beneficial for all. The region is facing many challenges and we stand at a cross road. If Pakistan and Iran learn to make their decisions keeping their own interests in mind it would serve them well. Pakistan should buy cheap oil and gas from Iran without being intimidated by US sanctions. After all the US allowed India to work on various projects in Iran despite the sanctions.

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OCTOBER 2023 - HAMAS AND ISRAEL WAR

NUSRAT MIRZA

Since ancient times, the Gaza area has held strategic and military significance, leading to conflicts for its possession. Before the emergence of Islam, there was a dispute between Christians and Jews in this region. However, during the rule of Caliph Umar II in 637/38 AD, the Jews handed over control of the area to the Muslims.

Seven hundred years later, Christians temporarily occupied it, but after a prolonged war on 2 October 1187, Sultan Salahu'd-Din Ayyubi reclaimed the territories of Bayt al-Maqdis and Gaza. During the Second World War in 1917, British Foreign Minister James Balfour issued a declaration to settle Israelis in Palestine.

Consequently, in 1949, the establishment of the Israeli state occurred, leading to the gradual occupation of Bayt al-Maqdis by Israel. Palestinians continued their resistance, facing oppression and brutality. A new chapter of cruelty unfolded, yet Muslims remained steadfast, following the orders of Allah. This act must have been pleasing to the Almighty.

After the Arab-Israeli war 2006, which



occurred about 17 years ago, the region remained quiet due to the oppressive and cruel rule of Israel. However, the attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023, has once again brought the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the forefront.

As a result of more than two decades of Israeli oppression, world leaders and international institutions have come to realize that the region has moved beyond the era of contestation. Israel has besieged 2 million Palestinians from Gaza by sea, air, and land routes. The attack on 7 October 2023 shocked the whole world, forcing everyone to break free from their imaginary belief that Israel has complete control over the Palestinians.

Now, the flaws in them have become clear. This attack has revived the Palestinian issue, compelling Israel to seek peace for many reasons. It will either have to initiate a dialogue with the Palestinians, or it will face destruction. The US will not be able to support Israel for long, nor will Europe, as this attack has troubled the Arab rulers and awakened

the Arab people. They are finally united to stand against Israel.

This time, the war will be of a different kind, and it will significantly impact Arab rulers, potentially leading them to distance themselves from America. If they do not withdraw, they will face destruction. While the world may label this attack as sudden, it forgets that Palestinians are Muslims and the original inhabitants of this place. They have been ostracized, so why can't they respond as they did?

The people of the world are now beginning to remember the four-thousand-year history of this region. For centuries, this region has been a battlefield, with Israeli tribes and Palestinians fighting for access to the sea. Throughout this four-thousand-year history, whether it was the tribes of Israel or their kingdoms, they have all been fighting for their own importance and the desire to gain power.

In the same region, Christians killed Jews, a memory that Jews still hold onto, and they are engaged in a game of fighting Christians against Muslims. At one time, Sultan Salahu'd-Din Ayyubi saved the Jews from the oppression of the Christians. However, this act of kindness by the Muslims was not remembered by the thankless nation, and now they are inflicting mountains of oppression and persecution on Muslims by using Christians.

For 75 years, they have followed the Christians because of their wealth. Additionally, the Christians are supporting Israel in order to eliminate the Jews and create confusion among the Muslims. In reality, they hate Jews even more than Muslims. If we examine the period from 1050 AD, it becomes evident that Jews were expelled from every country in Europe and subjected to severe punishments, including being burned alive.

Currently, Christians are seeking to align

themselves with Muslims to protect themselves from the Jews. However, the time has come to put an end to Israel's oppression of the Palestinians and to dismantle the alliance between Christians and Jews. It is important to remember that in the early 20th century, this region belonged to the Palestinians, particularly under British control.

If we examine its history, the Gaza area has been of great importance and a site of wars and controversies since the 17th century BC. When the Hyksos attacked the coastal areas of the Nile River on their way to Gaza, the Pharaohs successfully defeated the Theban tribe. Eventually, in the 20th century BC, the Pharaohs ceded control of the coastal area of Gaza to the Hyksos and the Sea Peoples. These people who are Asian, Africans belonged to Arab tribes, spoke languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, and Phoenician.

These people occupied Gaza, utilized sea routes, and established five cities, including Gaza and the present-day Israeli cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Subsequently, they formed a federal state comprising these cities. Even after that, this region remained a battlefield. Following the Assyrians and Babylon, Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, conquered Gaza in the 6th century BC.



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PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN CONUNDRUM; WHAT LIES AHEAD?



**BUSHRA
BATOOL**



For more than four decades now, Afghanistan has been plunged into the plight of insurgencies, civil war, economic crisis, socio-political instability, foreign interventions, food insecurity, and human rights exploitation, among others. Consequently, the internal displacement and migration of Afghan people into neighboring countries have been a frequent exercise.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides a number of registered Afghan refugees in its neighboring countries and Iran and Pakistan are the biggest recipients among others. The graphical representation is given here:

The recent drive of Pakistan to expel 1.7 million undocumented Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, citing security concerns, might be justified from Pakistan's viewpoint; it is however engaging international criticism including from the United States. In a recent visit of Army Chief General Asim Muneer to the US, many areas of enhancing cooperation were discussed including defense, and

counter-terrorism particularly issues related to Afghanistan.

After the 2021 US forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan, any common ground for collaboration is yet to be seen. Although the threat of extremism is a common concern, it appears that there is a lack of consensus on how to tackle the situation when it comes to Afghanistan, this time.

Recently, the wave of terrorist incidents in Pakistan has intensified. The killing of 23 troops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province is one of such instances claimed by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) since 2021. Pakistan wants the US's assistance to fight extremism emanating from within and outside its borders and cites elements from Afghanistan as facilitators for TTP terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on one occasion mentioned that there has been a 60% increase in terrorism and a 500% spike in terrorist bombing attacks in Pakistan since August 2021 when Afghan Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan. In another instance, the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) in Pakistan Security Report 2023 published that 82% of terrorism-related deaths in Pakistan in the year 2023 resulted from attacks perpetrated by three groups, TTP and its subsidiaries are among them.

Although the US is aware of the severity of the insecurity Pakistan is going through, as indicated by Tom West, US special

representative for Afghanistan, during his visit to Pakistan in December, no decisive commitment or policy implementation from the US to curb this challenge is seen as of yet.

It seems that the US has less of an incentive to partner with Pakistan this time as far as terrorism is concerned, rather there is constant pressure on Pakistan to reconsider its policy of evacuation of undocumented Afghans, or at least give them some time especially those who have received the letter of protection from the US Embassy in Islamabad. Some 25,000 Afghans have so far received the letter of protection and are being processed for their resettlement in the US.

The evacuation drive has further added friction to bilateral Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. In recent developments however, an attempt to thaw their bilateral relations is seen in which the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), also known as JUI (F), Maulana Fazlur Rahman paid an official visit to Afghanistan upon the invitation of the Afghan government. There is a reason why Fazlur Rahman was chosen by the Taliban-led government to visit Afghanistan.

Since the 1980s, the former has enjoyed cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban and had been a steadfast advocate for Afghan Mujahedeen in their resistance against the Afghan republic and the network of US-led coalition forces present in Afghanistan. Fazlur Rahman has also raised his voice against the deportation of undocumented Afghan nationals from Pakistan and deemed it a source of problems between the two countries. Additionally, both Fazlur Rahman and the Taliban shared views about the implementation of sharia at the state level to run state affairs.

The main agenda of Fazlur Rahman's visit to Afghanistan during which he met with the Ameer Ul Monineen- Mulla Haibatullah

Akhundzada, the Interim Prime Minister- Mullah Hassan Akhund and the Deputy Prime Minister- Maulana Abdul Kabir among others, was to overcome the trust deficit between the two countries and restore it. This could only be achieved when the Afghan Taliban somehow manage to reduce the threat of TTP and that Afghanistan had to make a choice between TTP and Pakistan. Fazlur Rehman was supposed to convey Pakistan's rhetoric to Afghan Taliban to help ease TTP tension.

Fazlur Rahman was given the assurance that there was no presence of TTP hideouts in Afghanistan, which remains a point of contention between the two countries, and that the issue of TTP is an internal problem of Pakistan.

The claim was however busted with the fact that Fazlur Rahman himself held a meeting with Noor Wali Mehsud, Chief TTP and Hafiz Gul Bahadur, TTP leader and former member of JUI-F, in Afghanistan. Moreover in a recent instance, numerous TTP militants including Azmat Lala and Maulvi Faqeer were reported to attend inauguration of a madrasa in Kunar province of Afghanistan.

The issue of TTP-linked terrorism and Afghanistan's involvement has economic repercussions too. As highlighted by Afghan acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi who also part of the meeting with Fazlur Rehman, highlighted the issues Afghan



traders are facing during frequent border closure. Pakistan's requirement of valid passport and visa for Afghan drivers entering into Afghanistan carrying traded goods rendered it difficult for hundreds of trucks and other cargo vehicles stranded on Torkham border to enter into Pakistan.

Although extension till the end of March for Afghan drivers without documentations is given, the issue has only been delayed and not resolved. Muttaqi's view that economic relations should not be compromised for political reasons resonate with the fact that Pakistan already has a crippling economy and provided the fact that Afghanistan is one of its major trading partners, this issue would further slowdown Pakistan's economy and would make it more difficult to cater domestic demand.

Trade Map data indicates that only in 2022, Pakistan imported \$957,992 worth of goods from Afghanistan which makes 57.57% of the total exports of Afghanistan to the world. If Pakistan choose to keep the borders closed for trades, it would be difficult to cater the demand of people domestically. Moreover, this would also undermine Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan.

In another move, Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce has banned transition of various goods via Pakistan into Afghanistan which include fabrics, tyres, black tea, home appliances, toiletries, cosmetics, and nuts, rendering them "prone to smuggling". For

some other products, Pakistan has tightened the criteria for Afghan transit commercial goods via Pakistan and imposed a 10% ad valorem on goods, the major categories include confectionery and chocolates, footwear, machinery (mechanical and electrical), blankets as well as home textiles and garments.

Keeping in view the upcoming general elections in the country especially at a time when the country is already going through political, economic and security crisis, Pakistan should be particularly cautious in designing its policies towards its neighbors. Afghanistan apart, Pakistan is already facing a hostile neighbor in East.

Additionally, the recent diplomatic standoff between Iran and Pakistan following Iran's January 16 strikes in Baluchistan and Pakistan's subsequent response is another security concern for the region which is already crippling due to Gaza catastrophe though Pakistan and Iran after a short episode of hostility have agreed to opt for conflict de-escalation and announced return of their representative in respective countries by 26th of January. China enjoys extensive military and economic ties with both Pakistan and Iran and put efforts in normalizing relations, it is yet to be seen to what extent Pakistan would succeed managing the bitterness at borders.

Pakistan and the Taliban government in Afghanistan are currently undergoing tough diplomatic patch and the border restrictions

Location Name	Source	Data Date	Population
Iran (Islamic Republic)	Various	30 Jun 2023	64.7% 3,431,680
Pakistan (Islamic Republic)	Various	30 Jun 2023	34.9% 1,853,100
Uzbekistan	Various	30 Jun 2023	0.2% 13,025
Tajikistan	Various	30 Jun 2023	0.2% 8,164
Turkmenistan	Various	30 Jun 2023	0.0% 9

with Afghanistan may additionally cost Pakistan to bear the cost on economic front.

Afghan Taliban, one of the mediators of 2022 TTP-Pakistan negotiations, are in view of managing the TTP issue with Pakistan through negotiations but direct negotiation is not a favorable option for Pakistan. Afghanistan may ask Pakistan to stop evicting undocumented Afghan refugees and ease in restrictions for Afghan traders as a precondition for peace.

This is the time for Pakistan to have all the calculations done keeping in view that the country is already undergoing overlapping challenges including economic, political and security, ahead of the general elections. Moreover, the country should try to manage resentments with its neighbors, wherever possible, keeping the national interests intact.

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However, two hundred years later, Alexander the Great besieged Gaza for 100 days. Despite the people's brave resistance, which even led to Alexander's injury, he eventually conquered Gaza, resulting in the killing of all men, while children and women were enslaved.

It is essential to emphasize once again that the key to Bayt al-Maqdis was handed over to the second caliph, Hazrat Umar, during the Muslim era. This area remained with Muslims for seven hundred years and, for some time, with Christians. Later, Salahu'd-Din Ayyubi conquered it, returning it to Muslim control until 1949.

Another noteworthy event occurred in 1931 when the ownership case was presented to the International Court of Justice. After considering arguments from both Jews and Muslims, the International Court recognized Muslims' rights over the Great Wall, Bayt al-Maqdis, and the Western Quarters.

Gaza, once a green and area full of vegetables and gardens, now faces water scarcity and an unending human tragedy. The Gaza region holds significant importance. It is



time for world powers to reassess the plight of Palestinians, acknowledging their right to the land. Instead of granting Israel a license to harm Palestinians, recognizing their existence and historical rights could pave the way for peace.

Failing to do so may lead America and Europe to endure severe difficulties. Granting Palestinians their rights could also improve relations with Muslim countries, including Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and other neighboring areas. Failure to recognize their rights may eventually lead to deteriorating relations. Regardless of the outcome of this conflict, Israelis in Israel may never feel truly secure.

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REVIVING HEALTHCARE: THE ROLE OF HEALTH CARDS IN BALOCHISTAN



HAMZA NASIR

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province in terms of land area, has been grappling with the persistent challenge of providing adequate healthcare to its residents. Shortages of hospitals, substandard healthcare facilities, and limited awareness of available healthcare options have compounded the issue. However, recent years have brought a glimmer of hope to Balochistan with the introduction of "health cards." Health cards have emerged as a lifeline for individuals in need of medical treatment. These specialized cards offer financial assistance, alleviating the burden of high medical costs. This initiative has been a lifeline for those who previously struggled to afford essential healthcare services. The implementation of health cards faced some delays but became possible during the tenure of the caretaker government, which took the initiative to address Balochistan's healthcare challenges. Both the previous and current government administrations have taken proactive measures to expand the reach and effectiveness of the Health Card Program. They have allocated resources and funding to ensure the program's sustainability and broaden its reach.

Dr. Muhammad Khan Jomezai, as a caretaker minister of health, the government of Balochistan, played a pivotal role in addressing the challenges and bottlenecks that were hindering the smooth implementation of the Health Card Program.



Their concerted efforts and dedication were instrumental in making it possible for the general populace to gain access to this essential health card, which, in turn, granted them the privilege of receiving cost-free medical treatment across the entire nation.

Dr. Muhammad Khan Jomezai, a highly respected figure in Balochistan's healthcare sector, has played a pivotal role in advancing these efforts. Dr. Jomezai, a seasoned healthcare professional with an in-depth understanding of Balochistan's unique healthcare challenges, has been a vocal advocate for enhancing the Health Card Program and has made significant contributions to its improvement. His expertise and unwavering dedication have been instrumental in fostering collaboration between government institutions and healthcare providers to ensure that health cards effectively address the healthcare needs of Balochistan's residents.

Balochistan health card, or just an ID card. If you have the local of Balochistan and have a



disease like cancer or kidney failure, you can visit any of the 1200 listed hospitals in Balochistan and Pakistan for free treatment. No form will have to be filled out; no documents are required. In Quetta city, you can also get free treatment at the top 30 hospitals. Treatment for up to 1 million people in a year is absolutely free.

Several vital hospitals in Balochistan, including Civil Hospital Quetta, Bolan Medical Complex Hospital, Sandeman Provincial Hospital and other private hospitals, now cater to individuals with health cards. This means that people can access a wide range of medical services, from routine check-ups to surgeries, without facing overwhelming financial burdens. This marks a positive step toward enhancing healthcare accessibility in the province. State Life Insurance's efforts in conjunction with the Health Card Program, particularly with Domki, can provide additional financial security for cardholders. This collaboration can offer a safety net for individuals and families facing medical expenses, reinforcing the overall effectiveness of the Health Card Program. State Life's cost-effective health insurance provides extensive coverage through a 1,200+ hospital network, offering cashless services and quick response during emergencies. Their paperless claims process guarantees prompt payments, solidifying their leadership in healthcare

insurance and prioritizing customer convenience. Confirm eligibility by texting your CNIC to 8500 for up to PKR 1,000,000 per year in medical coverage. Seek treatment at State Life hospitals, contact the 24/7 call center at 0800-01001, and download the Balochistan Health Card app for support.

A significant portion of Balochistan's population remains unaware of these health cards, emphasizing the critical need for increased awareness. In this regard, Hamza Shafqat, the commissioner, also tweeted and focused on the fact that the majority of people in Balochistan are unaware of the health card services. He said that "Today is the 3rd day since it has started in Quetta, but only 7 people have availed of this facility." However, despite the progress made, challenges persist. Raising awareness about health cards among the population is crucial. Many eligible individuals remain uninformed about the benefits and how to obtain a health card.

Efforts should include information campaigns, community outreach, and partnerships with local organizations to ensure that people are aware of this valuable resource and how to access it. While there has been significant progress, it is clear that more needs to be done to fully unlock the potential of health cards in Balochistan. Continued collaboration between the government and the private sector, along with the dedication of committed individuals, will be instrumental in driving positive change in the healthcare sector. These passionate efforts, both from individuals and collectively, are essential for expanding awareness, improving healthcare infrastructure, and ensuring that health cards effectively meet the healthcare needs of Balochistan's residents.

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THE MORAL QUANDARY: A CLOSER LOOK AT WESTERN RESPONSE AND MEDIA BIAS TO GHAZA



**NOUREEN
CHoudRY**

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has garnered global attention, with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres warning that the region is fast becoming "a graveyard for children." However, the Western response to the crisis has raised questions about their moral credibility and ethical standards, particularly in comparison to the Ukraine war. The way Western governments are handling Israel's actions in Gaza, unveil the hypocritical and dual role of Western governments and media.

Despite the exposed war crimes, Israel continues to receive military aid from the United States, a stark contrast to the swift condemnation and sanctions imposed on Russia during the Ukraine conflict. The unwavering support for Israel from the U.S., UK, Germany, and France, along with the continuous supply of weaponry, has sparked concerns about the West's moral stance. One major obstacle hindering criticism of Israel's actions is the fear of being labeled anti-Semitic. This fear has silenced many in the West, preventing open dialogue about the



situation in Gaza. I think that challenging this misuse of the anti-Semitism charge is crucial to maintaining moral integrity.

The media's portrayal of Palestinians as violent terrorists has contributed to the dehumanization of their struggle. Western media coverage has failed to present the Palestinian perspective, perpetuating stereotypes and justifying Israel's actions. The intentional focus on Hamas and violence aims to further dehumanize Palestinians and shift blame for their suffering. The economic and humanitarian consequences of the conflict are immense, with Israeli restrictions causing crises in Gaza's productive sectors. The fishing industry, agriculture, and access to electricity face significant challenges, leading to financial losses and a decline in living conditions for the population.

The violation of international conventions by Israel's imposition of collective punishment on Gaza is inhuman from every angle. It calls for the lifting of restrictions, an end to collective punishment, and international pressure to uphold the rights of Palestinians in accordance with relevant norms. The devastating statistics of more than twenty-five thousand casualties by the end of January, 2024, including half being children and women, highlight the human cost of the conflict. The lack of essential facilities such as water, food, and adequate medical care further accentuates the dire situation faced by Gaza's inhabitants.

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UNJUST WITH SALARIED CLASS



**M. SHEROZ
KHAN LODHI**

Budgets seem to be all about providing largesse to the poor and incentives to the industry while reiterating the constraint of being fiscally prudent. Any talk of addressing the issues confronting the middle class is skipped and never quite addressed. The salaried class is the backbone of the economy, providing skilled labour, professional services, and human capital to various industries and sectors. They are also the most compliant taxpayers, as their income tax is deducted at source by their employers.

On the other hand, the agricultural sector, which contributes 20% of the GDP, paid less than 1% of the total income tax. Similarly, the real estate sector, which has an unpaid potential of Rs 500 billion, and the wholesale and retail businesses, which have an unpaid potential of Rs 234 billion, are largely untaxed or under-taxed. There is a basic principle: there will be no income tax in our society unless justice is established.

Our salaried class is under serious financial stress, as their disposable income is shrinking and their living expenses are increasing. The inflation rate in Pakistan reached 29% in November 2023, which is much higher than the core inflation rate of 18.5%. This situation is not only unfair but also unsustainable.

The salaried class cannot bear the brunt of the fiscal adjustment alone, while other segments of society enjoy tax exemptions and concessions. Our fiscal deficit soared to 7.6

percent of GDP. We have to see in Argentina that they have imposed a wealth tax for the next two years. We also have to think about how long we will depend on these unjustified taxes.

There is no rocket science in this thing. The salaried class cannot be expected to pay more taxes when they are already paying more than



their fair share. The salaried class cannot be ignored or exploited when they are essential for the economic development and social stability of Pakistan.

The basic question is whether we achieved the tax target. How did we achieve it? If we achieved this by raising the tax target by taxing the salaried class unjustifiably or by taxing high-consumption commodities by raising the general sales tax, then, in my opinion, this is not a big success for us.

The salaried class already pays 200% more taxes than exporters and retailers, and the government is considering putting further burden of taxes on this class. If the government

does so, it will be a total disaster for the salaried class, and a big question mark will be on the intention and will power of the government and its concerned departments as well. In my opinion, the government needs

to follow a one-line policy for further enhancement of tax revenue and tax spread on the basis of “taxing the untaxed or low-taxed incomes and documenting the undocumented economy.”

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THE MORAL QUANDARY:



It is, however, responsibility of the media to question the moral values of the West, particularly the United States, in providing unconditional aid to Israel despite its alleged use in harming civilians. The actions of the West clearly signal a great loss of moral and human values, raising concerns about the ethical foundation of their foreign policies. In short, I would emphasize that Western governments, particularly the United States, have displayed moral inconsistency in their response to the Israel-Gaza conflict. What is the dire need of the day is that to call for an impartial international investigation into alleged war crimes in the Israel-Gaza conflict and to urge the United Nations to establish a commission for accountability. Advocating for unrestricted humanitarian aid to Gaza, emphasizing collaboration among international organizations and countries to address the crisis is necessary.

Enforcing Western governments, particularly the United States, to prioritize diplomatic solutions and support an

immediate ceasefire over military aid. Highlighting the media's role in shaping public opinion, urging responsible reporting and unbiased coverage of the conflict is also needed.

Furthermore, it is also essential to emphasize the importance of upholding international conventions to protect civilian rights and call on relevant international bodies to pressure Israel for humanitarian needs. Promoting awareness campaigns about the conflict's complexities, encouraging critical thinking and discouraging the misuse of accusations are also important to be kept in mind.

On broad level advocating for increased global solidarity and cooperation to address root causes, urging diplomatic efforts for a just and sustainable resolution are also obligatory. Hence, an humanitarian crises could be resolved and the moral stance or the standard they claim could also be restored otherwise the stance would become a clasp to bosom that “the Satan is at work”

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GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE



**WAJEEHA
NAJAM**

Countries engage in conflict or go to war in the modern era for various reasons. The primary motives include protecting national resources, maintaining regional influence, gaining control over shared resources, and preserving colonial rights, heritage, or values. However, in the case of Russia and Ukraine, the conflict between both has its roots in historical, geopolitical, and ethnic factors. One of the key events that triggered the conflict was Ukraine's decision to pursue closer ties with the European Union in 2013. In 2014, pro-European protests in Ukraine led to the ousting of the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich.

Following these events, Russia annexed Crimea in a move widely condemned by the international community. The eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence also led to a conflict between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists. The situation escalated, with accusations of Russian military involvement supporting the separatists. Despite several attempts at ceasefires and peace agreements, the conflict has persisted, causing a significant humanitarian crisis and displacing many people. The international community, including the European Union and the United States, has imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine.

The conflict remains a complex and sensitive geopolitical issue, with ongoing diplomatic efforts to find a resolution. The

situation has broader implications for regional stability and international relations, impacting not only Ukraine and Russia but also countries and regions that have economic and political ties to both parties.

After the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, oil prices exceeded USD\$100 a barrel in March 2022. The invasion made it difficult for European oil marketers and oil companies to receive energy supplies from Russia, as Russia is the world's second-largest oil producer and sells most of its crude to European refineries. The oil import ban placed on Russia during the invasion led to an energy shortage in Europe and a sustained rise in energy prices in the first half of 2022. Similarly, Gas prices for household use also increased due to fears of a disruption to global energy supplies. There were concerns that a retaliatory export ban on energy supplies to Europe and the rest of the world by Russia could plunge the world into a prolonged energy crisis, which could significantly reduce the global economic growth forecast, and plunge many European and non-European countries into a recession.



The disruptions in international trade highlighted the dependency of small economies in Europe on imports, especially of energy. These events may have changed Europeans' attitudes towards globalization. The experience of economic instability due to close trade ties with Russia in the energy sector and with Ukraine in the food sector could strengthen citizens' desire for national self-sufficiency and, thus, less dependence on international trade.

According to a World Bank report, the impact of the war in Ukraine on global trade and investment shows that world trade dropped significantly. Manufacturing exporters such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Mexico see a sharp decline, especially in energy-intensive sectors. Net exporters of crops, including Turkey, Brazil, and India, and of fossil fuels, such as Nigeria and countries in the Middle East, see a surge in their exports, attenuating the negative effects of the war. The economic shock waves are moving through five channels: commodity markets, logistics networks, supply chains, foreign direct investment (FDI), and sectors such as tourism.

Beginning with oil, Russia is a major player in global crude oil export, it accounts for 12 percent of global market shares. Due to economic sanctions on Russia, oil prices increased which directly hurt Pakistan from an economic perspective and led to an increased price of oil in Pakistan as well. Pakistan has historically had economic ties with both Russia and Ukraine. In 2020, Pakistan exported \$279 million worth of goods to Russia, including citrus, non-knit women's suits, and knit sweaters. Russia, on the other hand, exported goods worth \$699 million to Pakistan, including wheat, dried legumes, and coal briquettes.

In 2023, trade between Pakistan and Russia improved with the launch of a direct

shipping service. The first container ship from Russia berthed at the Karachi Port, opening a new sea route for direct shipping and enabling immediate access of Pakistani products to the Russian market. Payments are made through the local banking channel in Chinese Yuan, and the service is the result of an agreement between Pak-Shaheen (Private) Limited and the Russian express liner service Neco Line.

On the other hand, Ukraine exported goods worth \$573 million to Pakistan in 2020, including light synthetic cotton fabrics, citrus, and rice. Pakistan exported goods worth \$82.1 million to Ukraine in the same year. The crisis is expected to lead to higher inflation and potential depreciation of the Pakistani rupee, negatively affecting living standards. To prepare for potential economic challenges, Pakistan can consider measures such as utilizing local coal for electricity production, reducing subsidies on petrol and diesel, implementing temporary bans or higher duties on luxury imports, arranging oil credit facilities, and promoting the reduction of non-essential travel.

Despite all, Pakistan should also focus on strengthening its agricultural sector, as the country's economy is predominantly agricultural. By becoming more self-sufficient in food production, Pakistan can mitigate the impact of rising global food prices caused by the war. In terms of geopolitics, Pakistan should seek to improve its relations with Asian countries and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with major powers such as the United States, Europe, China, and Russia and needs to carefully assess its strategic position and make informed decisions to navigate these challenging times while prioritizing its agricultural sector and self-sufficiency.

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BOOK REVIEW:

PAKISTAN: STATECRAFT AND GEOPOLITICS IN TODAY'S WORLD

WRITTEN BY SHAHID JAVED BURKI, KARACHI:
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2022, PAGES 337

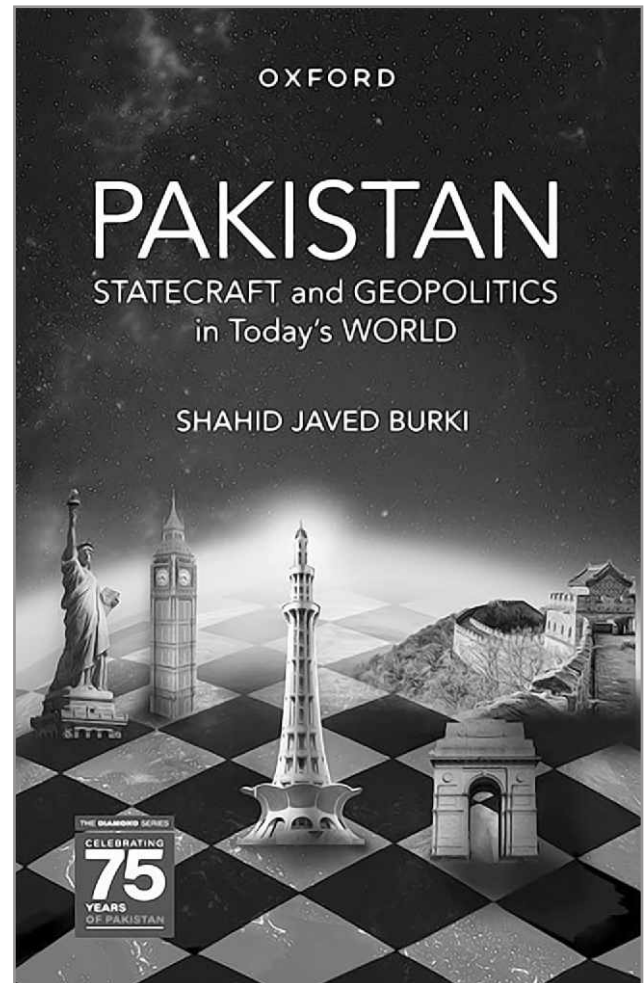


WAJEEHA
NAJAM

Shahid Javed Burki, a professional economist who previously held the position of Vice President at the World Bank, has authored this comprehensive book delving into the realms of economic development and the political history of Pakistan. In this extensive work, he explores the significance of global external relations for nations, placing a specific emphasis on Pakistan's interactions on the international stage.

He explores the positive image of Pakistan, substantiating it with valuable facts and multiple shreds of evidence. He begins his work by citing scholars who view Pakistan as a "hard country," a term used by Anatol Lieven. This term signifies Pakistan's ability to navigate crises through a system of patron-client relationships in the social, political, and economic domains.

Burki argues that Pakistan, among a selected few Muslim nations, is successfully developing its social, political, and economic systems conducive to long-term stability. He quotes an article titled 'Pakistan, the Global Pivot State,' written by Russian political analyst Andrew Korybko, highlighting Pakistan's economic potential, international connectivity, military strength, diplomatic finesse, and the importance of its strategic location, envisioning it as the global pivot state of the 21st century. He claims, though contrary to common belief, that the pivotal global state of the 21st century is not China, the US, or Russia, but rather Pakistan. Despite a negative



international reputation stemming from the Indo-American information war, Korybko believes that Pakistan is strategically positioned to influence the 21st century.

Burki insists that no country can exist in isolation from the world outside its borders while presenting the experience of the global spread of COVID-19 when even island states

were affected by the spread of what was happening in the world. He further argues that to understand Pakistan's external affairs, it is important to set the context by discussing the changes in the domestic political situation.

He has divided his book into 14 extensive chapters. In the introductory chapters, he discusses the internal politics of Pakistan particularly people's aspirations regarding the elections of 2018, and the given vision of Naya Pakistan, Emphasizing the importance of Pakistan's location rotates the globe towards a new global order which is exceptional. He also debates that historians didn't give enough credit to the country's policymakers for weathering so many crises that hit it just after its independence.

In the subsequent chapters, the book broadly explores Pakistan's relationships with its neighbors, particularly Afghanistan, and the challenges posed by groups like the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It also investigates the internal political challenges within Pakistan, emphasizing the lack of a culture of tolerance and the breakdown of the democratic process.

In the context of India-Pakistan relations, the book examines the Pulwama incident and the succeeding tensions, as well as the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. Burki stresses the importance of Pakistan closely monitoring India's policies and actions.

The book also highlights the discriminatory nature of Indian legislation, exemplified by the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019. An illustrative incident involving an Indian businessman, expressing hatred for Pakistan, underscores prevailing prejudices.

Burki identifies reasons for Pakistan's close monitoring of India, citing concerns over India's declining democratic setup, the rise of Hindu nationalism, and an 'India first' policy hindering regional progress.

Additionally, the author scrutinizes Pakistan's symbiotic relationship with China, specifically focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its global implications. The book discusses the challenges posed by the escalating American hostility towards China and the impact on Pakistan due to India's military alliance with the US.

Regarding Pakistan's relationship with China, Burki deems the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) crucial within Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Despite concerns about U.S. pressure due to India's alliance, the book optimistically envisions a bright future for Pakistan.

The author delves into Iran's history from the inception of Pakistan, meticulously examining the pre-revolutionary era and its aftermath. The narrative extends to encompass Iran's evolving relations with Pakistan amid shifting global dynamics. The book features dedicated chapters shedding light on Pakistan's diplomatic ties with Muslim nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, countries in the Middle East, and Turkey.

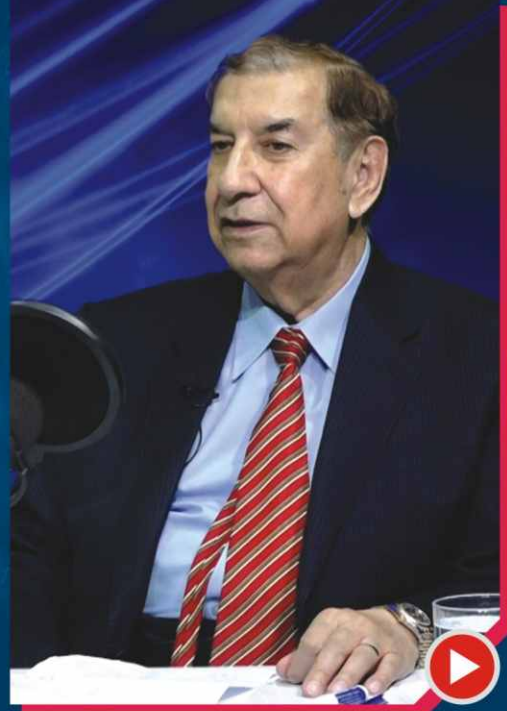
While the emphasis primarily centers on external affairs, the author goes beyond, addressing global issues like terrorism, climate change, and global warming in a comprehensive manner and elucidating their impact on Pakistan.

In essence, the book offers a thorough exploration of Pakistan's geopolitical history and presents an optimistic vision for the nation despite prevailing challenges. It is noteworthy that the author consistently reinforces the credibility of his research by citing various sources, including books, research journals, magazines, and newspaper articles throughout the entire book.



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