PAKISTAN MEDIA ON US STRATEGY
FOR AFGHANISTAN

SPECIAL BULLETIN

Tuesday, September 12, 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINES:</th>
<th>SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pakistan Media on US Strategy for Afghanistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Pakistan scapegoat not to help stabilize Afghanistan: Asif</td>
<td>-APP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time for US troops to leave Afghanistan: Imran Khan</td>
<td>–Press TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan To US: Don’t Look Us At, Look At Afghanistan Harboring Terrorists</td>
<td>–Daily Caller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump desire to give India active role in Afghanistan severely lacks logic:</td>
<td>–Pak Tribune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US blaming Pakistan to hide its defeat in Afghanistan, says ex-CJP</td>
<td>–The News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan Urges U.S. To Tackle Militant Sanctuaries In Afghanistan</td>
<td>–RFE/RL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan committed to peace in Afghanistan: Asif</td>
<td>–Daily Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan welcomes Afghan president’s offer of talks</td>
<td>–Gulf Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM statement: Pakistan wants to see peace in Afghanistan</td>
<td>– AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan’s strong response to the US</td>
<td>– PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asfandyar for ‘bold steps’ to end Pak-Afghan mistrust</td>
<td>– Dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World must play role in stopping Indian aggression: Asif</td>
<td>– The News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump speech should not hijack Pak-US ties</td>
<td>– Nation.PK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan ready to help US for peace in Afghanistan</td>
<td>– The News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump Is Treating Pakistan Like a Scapegoat for America's Failures in Afghanistan</td>
<td>– National Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aizaz says now it’s Afghanistan’s turn to destroy terrorist safe havens</td>
<td>– PT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan Moves To ‘Unite' Region Against Trump Strategy</td>
<td>– TOLO News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, Pakistan take swipes at Trump’s Afghan policy</td>
<td>– theglobeandmail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US demands of ‘do more' undermine Pakistan’s losses in Afghan War</td>
<td>– Daily Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘No military solution’: China &amp; Pakistan slam Trump’s new Afghanistan strategy</td>
<td>– RT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak hails China’s ‘constructive role’ for settlement of Afghan conflict</td>
<td>– ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trilateral meeting of Pakistan, China, Afghanistan FM’s likely this year</td>
<td>– The News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Pakistan Army official blames 'collective failures' for Afghanistan expanding war</strong></td>
<td>– ANI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Foreign Or Military Solution To Afghan Problems: Hayat</td>
<td>– TOLO News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan FM leaves for Iran to discuss mutual ties, Afghanistan issue</td>
<td>– IRNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan calls for regional consensus to address Afghan issue</td>
<td>– IRNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan, Iran stress political solution in Afghanistan</td>
<td>– AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan’s FM calls for achieving regional consensus to address Afghan issue</td>
<td>–Xinhua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PM warns US against ‘starving Pakistan of funds’</strong></td>
<td>– Reuters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US forces have failed in Afghanistan: Pakistan</td>
<td>– The News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani, Chinese officials discuss Afghanistan amid tension with U.S.</td>
<td>– Reuters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan cannot bring Afghan war into Pakistan: Qamar Bajwa</td>
<td>– Pak Tribune</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pakistan Hardens Stance to Trump’s Afghan Strategy – VOA 41
Pakistan wants peace and stability in Afghanistan: PM – PT 43
Chinese special envoy, foreign secretary discuss Afghan peace process – Dawn 43
Trump’s new Afghanistan policy has Pakistan angry and alarmed – Washington Post 44
Trump’s spat - Pakistan’s response? – Nation.PK 46
News Analysis: Cracks deepened between Pakistan, U.S. on Afghan issue, engagement still needed – Xinhua 48

Call to muster regional support against US’s Afghan policy – Dawn 49

Pakistan perspective on new Afghan policy of the US – China.org 50
Pakistan, India Are Unlikely to Cooperate on Afghanistan – WSJ 52
Pakistan wants Afghanistan’s support to wipe out terrorism, says Aizaz Chaudhry – Pakistan Today52
Pakistan’s army chief says cannot fight Afghanistan’s war in Pakistan – KP 52

Trump Afghan Strategy Poised to Fail, Pakistan Premier Says – Bloomberg 54

Afgan Taliban leadership is in Quetta & Peshawar, alleges US Commander – The News 56
Bring Afghan Taliban on the negotiation table – Daily Times 57
Divisions appear in Afghanistan after Trump’s announcement of new policy – Daily Times 59

US official says nobody's asking for Indian troops in Afghanistan; New Delhi's role focused on economy, not security – PTI 61

Pakistan PM Says Trump Strategy For Afghanistan ‘Will Not Work’ – RFE/RL 62
Pakistan postpones U.S. visit after Trump speech – Reuters 63

Trump’s Afghanistan doctrine! – Pak Observer 63
Rationalisation of Afghan policy – Pak Observer 65
Response to Trump’s Afghan strategy – Pak Observer 66

Pakistan and US must talk – Dawn 67
Asif asks parties to give united response to Trump allegations – Dawn 68
A policy of discord – Nation.PK 69

Won’t accept U.S. policy to make Indian PM ‘Chaudhary’ of Pak: Rabbani – ANI 71

The real game begins – The News 71

Trump's anti-Pakistan tirade angers tribal elders – Daily Times 74

Trump’s Afghan policy adds to Kabul woes – The News 74

Why Pakistan’s policies regarding Afghanistan and the US need to be more Pakistan-centric – Express Tribune 75

Political solution key to breaking Afghan imbroglio – Pak Observer 77

Staying the course in Afghanistan – The News 78

The ‘Greater Game’ – Dawn 80

Kh Asif meets Nawaz Sharif, discusses Trump’s Afghan-South Asia policy – PT 81

PAGE 2 OF 143
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US blames Pakistan to hide its failure in Afghanistan: JI chief</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The US, Pakistan, and Afghanistan</td>
<td>nation.PK</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan war complications</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump has a bad hair day</td>
<td>Express Tribune</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US versus Pakistan: the way forward</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New tidings For AfPak</td>
<td>Nation.PK</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The void in Trump’s Afghanistan strategy</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Afghan flip-flop</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s move to single out India to do more in Afghanistan could backfire</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan's foreign minister to discuss Trump's Afghan plans with Russia and China</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pak military won’t be intimidated by US: world media</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fazl hails army chief’s courageous reply to Trump</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Afghan policy needs redesigning</td>
<td>Express Tribune</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAS urges trust-based Pak-Afghan response against terrorists</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Trump’s Afghanistan strategy was received by Afghan president and Pakistan</td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan in Isolation</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US envoy briefs Pakistan army chief on Trump's Afghan plans</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan rejects role of 'scapegoat for U.S. failures' in Afghanistan</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign minister: US 'should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan’</td>
<td>The Hill</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan's ambassador: We want to work with Trump to end war in Afghanistan</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump's new Afghan policy and road ahead for Pakistan</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry senators ask govt to block US air routes, cancel FM’s visit</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Request for India’s Help in Afghanistan Rattles Pakistan</td>
<td>NY Times</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Explains: How Pakistan fits into Trump’s Afghan plans</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump's Afghanistan Policy to Focus on Operational Results</td>
<td>VOA</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillerson to meet with top Pakistani diplomats, discuss new Afghan war plan</td>
<td>Washington Times</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Now, Pakistan okay with India's involvement in Afghanistan'</td>
<td>ANI</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistanis alarmed at Trump’s new policy on Afghanistan</td>
<td>pri</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan rejects ‘disappointing’ US criticism</td>
<td>Nation.PK</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s about time Pakistan blocked roads for US supplies to Afghanistan</td>
<td>Nation.PK</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Pakistan desires peace and stability in Afghanistan’</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace in Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s interest: Aizaz Chaudhry</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media urged to highlight Pakistan's position on Afghanistan</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan Reacts to Afghan Strategy: ‘We Must Reject Being Made Scapegoats'- breitbart</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Ambassador Calls on Pakistani Foreign Minister After Trump New Policy</td>
<td>ATN News</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump’s Afghanistan strategy</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trump and Afghan Labyrinth</td>
<td>Nation.PK</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Afghan policy and Pakistan</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The graveyard of wrong policies</td>
<td>Nation.PK</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Do more Pakistan’ syndromes of USA</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No good news for Pakistan in US new Afghan policy</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. CentCom chief visits Pakistan as Trump weighs relationship</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s interest, says PM Abbasi</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan continues to support Afghan govt, society, PM Abbasi tells US General</td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The US South Asia policy</td>
<td>Pak Observer</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pakistan Media on US Strategy for Afghanistan

Making Pakistan scapegoat not to help stabilize Afghanistan: Asif -APP

August 24, 2017

ISLAMABAD, Aug 24 (APP): Minister for Foreign Affairs Khawaja Asif Thursday said the National Security Committee (NSC) outrightly rejected the allegations made against Pakistan by the US president, observing that making Pakistan a scapegoat would not help stabilize Afghanistan.

Winding up debate in the Senate on the national security vis-à-vis the new US strategy announced by President Trump for South Asia and Afghanistan and his remarks about Pakistan, he said the NSC rejected the specific allegations and insinuations made against Pakistan.

Being its immediate neighbour, he said, Pakistan had an abiding interest in peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The committee observed that Pakistan had to manage the blowback of a protracted conflict in Afghanistan that resulted in deluge of refugees, flow of drugs and arms and more recently in the shape of terrorist safe havens in eastern Afghanistan from where anti-Pakistan terrorist groups continued to operate and launch attacks inside Pakistan, he added.

The fact, he said, remained that the complex issues and internal dynamics inside Afghanistan posed a grave challenge not only to Pakistan but also to the broader region and the international community.

While noting the US commitment to continue to shoulder the burden of Afghanistan and reverse the expanding ungoverned spaces in that country, he said the NSC observed that Pakistan had consistently supported all international efforts for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan and had also committed more than a billion US dollars for infrastructure and social development in that country.

Over the years, Asif said, Pakistan had worked with both the United States and Afghanistan to promote peace through a politically negotiated outcome which, in Pakistan’s view, remained the best option to bring stability to that war torn country. A prolonged military campaign in Afghanistan had resulted in destruction and killing of hundreds of thousands of Afghan civilians.

He said Pakistan had also endorsed and supported all Afghan-owned and Afghan-led initiatives for peace. It was Pakistan’s expectation that any strategy adopted to stabilize Afghanistan would succeed to end the protracted conflict and usher in an era of peace in the country paving way for the dignified return of millions of Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan for which “we are willing to extend all possible cooperation.”

“More specifically, we would like to see effective and immediate US military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harbouring terrorists and miscreants on the Afghan soil including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan.”

The Afghan war, he said, could not be fought in Pakistan.
On its own part, the minister said, Pakistan had taken indiscriminate actions against all terrorist networks and sacrificed tens of thousands of troops and civilians in that fight. The demonstrated security improvement inside Pakistan would not have been possible without eliminating all terrorist hideouts.

Moreover, successful cooperation with the US in the past against the common enemy, terrorism, reflected Pakistan’s unflinching commitment to eliminate this menace, he added.

The committee stressed that instead of any financial or material assistance, there should be understanding and recognition of Pakistan’s efforts, contributions and sacrifices of thousands of Pakistanis and over 120 billion US dollars of economic losses, he said.

Asif said, “We consider the lives of the citizens of other countries as sacrosanct as those of our own and, therefore, Pakistan is committed to not allowing its soil to be used for violence against any other country. We expect the same from our neighbours.

“The claims of billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan are also misleading to the extent that the reimbursements to Pakistan since 2001 only account for part of the cost of ground facilities and air corridors used by the United States for its operations in Afghanistan, rather than any financial aid or assistance.”

He said Pakistan’s effective counter-terrorism operations had clearly proved that tide of terrorism could be reversed and “we are willing to share our experience with both the US and Afghanistan.”

It would require working together and focusing on core issues of eliminating safe havens inside Afghanistan, border management, return of refugees and reinvigorating the peace process for a political settlement in Afghanistan, he added.

The NSC, he said, stressed that India could not be a net security provider in the South Asia region when it had conflictual relationships with all its neighbours and was pursuing a policy of destabilizing Pakistan from the east and the west.

The committee, he said, expressed deep concern at Indian policies inimical to peace in the region, including interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries and using terrorism as an instrument of state policy. It condemned state-inflicted repression on the people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and reiterated Pakistan’s continued diplomatic, political and moral support for their struggle for self-determination.

The committee, he said, reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It underscored that as a responsible nuclear weapon state, Pakistan had in place a robust and credible command and control system which had been universally recognized and appreciated.

Pakistan, the minister, would continue to extend all possible cooperation to the international community for achieving the common objectives of peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the broader region.

Time for US troops to leave Afghanistan: Imran Khan –Press TV
Aug 25, 2017

The best case scenario for peace in Afghanistan is the withdrawal of US forces from the country and multilateral negotiations between main stakeholders -- Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and China -- to establish a consensus government, Pakistani opposition politician Imran Khan says.

Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, made the remarks in an interview with CNN on Thursday, days after US President Donald Trump announced his controversial war strategy for Afghanistan.

In a blatant U-turn from his campaign pledges to end the now 16-year occupation of Afghanistan, Trump said on Monday that his views have changed since entering the White House and that he would continue the military intervention “as long as we see determination and progress” in Afghanistan.

Trump also accused Pakistan of providing "safe havens for terrorist organizations," which are active in Afghanistan.

“I would say that this is a deeply flawed policy. It’s more of the same,” Khan said when asked what he would tell to the US president in response to his foreign policy on Afghanistan.

“If he’s going to send more troops [to Afghanistan,] what are these troops going to do which 150,000 NATO troops could not do?” he asked.

“And I feel that his stated policy of killing the enemy…I mean that’s what they’ve been doing for all this while,” he said, referring to Trump’s remarks that the US is not in Afghanistan for nation building, but to kill terrorists.

“I think they should change policy. They should engage the neighbors, that means China, Russia and Iran. And they should try and form a government of consensus,” he said.

“And actually the US should think of leaving Afghanistan, because as long as their troops are in Afghanistan there’s always going to be a problem,” Khan stated.

The prominent politician said that in his opinion the only solution for the Afghanistan issue is the withdrawal of US forces from the country and at the same time set up a government of consensus.

The US president announced that he would send more troops to the country’s longest war, which he once described as a “complete waste.”

The United States -- under Republican George W. Bush’s presidency -- and its allies invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror. The offensive removed the Taliban regime from power, but after more than one and-a-half-decade, the foreign troops are still deployed to the country.

After becoming the president in 2008, President Barack Obama, a Democrat, vowed to end the Afghan war -- one of the longest conflicts in US history – but he failed to keep his promise.

Trump, who has spoken against the Afghan war, has dubbed the 2001 invasion and following occupation of Afghanistan as "Obama's war".

But now Trump has announced to deploy thousands of more troops to the war-torn country, signaling a policy shift.
Pakistan To US: Don’t Look Us At, Look At Afghanistan Harboring Terrorists – Daily Caller

By Jonah Bennett
24 August 2017

Pakistan has responded to the latest salvo of accusations from the U.S. that it’s harboring terrorists by suggesting the U.S. military is not doing enough against terror havens in Afghanistan.

Following statements from President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and National Security Council spokesman Michael Anton bashing Pakistan for harboring terrorists, the office of Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi released a rare statement in response.

“We would like to see effective and immediate U.S. military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harbouring terrorists and miscreants on Afghan soil, including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan,” the prime minister’s office said in a statement, Reuters reports.

Not only did Abbasi’s office refer to the Afghan Taliban, but it also stated that the Pakistan Taliban has outposts in Afghanistan, as well.

Further, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif complained that Washington was using Pakistan as a scapegoat to cover up its military failings in Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan is now America’s longest war, spanning 16 years, but despite the amount of time U.S. troops have spent in the region, the Taliban still either controls or contests about 40 percent of all districts in Afghanistan, according to a quarterly report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

While President Donald Trump has in the past pushed for troop withdrawal in Afghanistan, he recently was persuaded otherwise by his advisers and now has authorized a new troop surge, though it’s unclear how many troops will be sent over. However, Trump has emphasized that even though more troops will enter the war theater, he is not interested in “nation-building.”

“I share the American people’s frustration,” Trump said in his address on Afghanistan strategy. “I also share their frustration over a foreign policy that has spent too much time, energy, money — and, most importantly, lives — trying to rebuild countries in our own image instead of pursuing our security interests above all other considerations.”

Part of the strategy calls for a renewed toughness on Pakistan, which is believed to be providing safe haven for terror groups to launch attacks into Afghanistan. On a call with reporters Tuesday, Anton said that the U.S. is considering levying sanctions against Pakistan terror groups and also on any Pakistani officials with ties too close to these groups.

Trump desire to give India active role in Afghanistan severely lacks logic: Imran Khan –Pak Tribune
24 August, 2017

SLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Wednesday strongly criticised the federal government’s ‘muted’ response to ill-advised statement of US President Donald Trump regarding Pakistan’s role in war against terrorism.

Addressing media here, Imran said that Trump’s desire to give India an active role in Afghanistan severely lacks logic and seems a blatant attempt to undermine Pakistan’s incredible human and economic sacrifices rendered for the elimination of terrorism through US-led war on terror. He said that the federal government should convene a joint sitting of parliament to devise future course of action and should convey a clear message to the US administration that it cannot pin the blame of its failed policies on Pakistan. The PTI chairman lashed out at government stating that neither prime minister nor foreign minister issued a statement in response to Trump’s speech, even though China came to our defence.

“Country’s political leadership is scared, which is why the army chief had to respond to Trump’s statement. They have their looted billions of dollars abroad and that is why they are afraid of responding.” “A unanimous message should be conveyed to the US that civilian and military leadership in the country are on the same page,” he said.

The PTI chief condemned the statement of the US president stating that Pakistan had been facing negative impacts of an unstable Afghanistan for decades. “The allegations signals that Trump has no understanding of the South Asian region or the dynamics of war on terror,” he added. Imran Khan recalled that he had opposed Pakistan’s decision to join US war after the 9/11 attacks. “Pakistan had no reason to take part in that war. We have done a lot and sacrificed more than 7,000 lives while our economy suffered billions in losses in a war that was not even ours,” he said.

---

Pakistan recounts sacrifices in Afghan war, wants re-invigoration of peace process -Dawn

By Sanaullah Khan

August 24, 2017

A high-level meeting of military and political leaders under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi concluded Thursday evening with a strong rejection of US President Donald Trump’s accusation that Pakistan has been undermining the US's so-called 'war against terror' despite receiving billions of dollars in aid.

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee Zubair Hayat, Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman, and Naval Chief Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah had been in attendance at the meeting, which stretched for over four hours.

In a statement that followed its conclusion, the Pakistani civilian and military leadership countered the US's criticism by reminding it of Pakistan's role in the protracted conflict and asking that the US work with Pakistan with a focus on core issues like the elimination of safe havens inside Afghanistan, better border management, the repatriation of "millions of Afghan refugees" and a re-invigoration of the peace process for a political settlement in Afghanistan.
National Security Committee’s statement

The conclusions of the meeting were later shared in Senate by Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif.

"The committee observed that Pakistan had to manage the blow-back of a protracted conflict in Afghanistan that resulted in a deluge of refugees, flow of drugs and arms and, recently, terrorist safe havens in eastern Afghanistan," the foreign minister said, reading out from a lengthy statement.

"The committee observed that these safe-havens harbour anti-Pakistan terrorist groups that continue to operate and launch attacks inside Pakistan. The fact remains that the complex issues and internal dynamics inside Afghanistan pose a grave challenge not only to Pakistan but to the broader region and the international community.

"While noting the US commitment to continue to shoulder the burden of Afghanistan and reverse the expanding ungoverned spaces in the country, the committee observed that Pakistan has consistently supported all international efforts for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan," he added.

"It was observed that Pakistan has also committed more than a billion US dollars to the infrastructural and social development in that country," he observed.

"Over the years, Pakistan has worked with both the United States and Afghanistan to promote peace through a politically negotiated outcome which, in Pakistan’s view, remains the best option to bring stability to this war torn country.

"A prolonged military campaign in Afghanistan has resulted in destruction and the killing of hundreds of thousands of Afghan civilians; however, Pakistan has always endorsed and supported all Afghan-owned and Afghan-led initiatives for peace," he said, defending Pakistan's perspective on a lasting solution for the neighbouring country.

"It is hoped that the strategy will pave way for the dignified return of millions of Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan for which we are willing to extend all possible cooperation.

"More specifically, we would like to see effective and immediate US military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harboring terrorists and miscreants on the Afghan soil — including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan. The Afghan war cannot be fought in Pakistan," he warned.

"On its own part, Pakistan has taken indiscriminate actions against all terrorist networks and sacrificed tens of thousands of troops and civilians in this fight.

"The demonstrated security improvement inside Pakistan would not have been possible without eliminating all terrorist hideouts.

"Moreover, successful cooperation with the US in the past against the common enemy, terrorism, reflects Pakistan’s unflinching commitment to eliminate this menace.

"The committee stressed that instead of any financial or material assistance, there should be understanding and recognition of our efforts, contributions and sacrifice of thousands of Pakistanis and over $120b of economic losses.

"We consider the lives of the people of other countries as sacred as the lives of our own people, which is why we have not let our resources be used against our neighbours," he later said.
"The claims of aid worth billions of dollars being provided to us by the US are also misleading to the extent that since 2001, the reimbursements to Pakistan only account for a part of the cost of the ground facilities and air corridors used by the US for its operations in Afghanistan — rather than any financial aid or assistance," he said.

"On the matter of the people of India-held Kashmir, the committee has reiterated Pakistan’s political, diplomatic and moral support," he said, responding to the US’s blacklisting of a Kashmiri separatist group which enjoys popular support in the conflicted region.

"The committee has also reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity," he told the Senate.

Preempting possible criticism of Pakistan's nuclear programme after the US's shift in stance, he reminded those listening that: "The committee understood that as a responsible nuclear-weapon holder state Pakistan has in place a robust command and control system, which has been universally recognised and appreciated."

Turning to the Afghanistan conundrum, the foreign minister assured that: "Pakistan will continue to extend all possible cooperation to the international community for the objective of achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan and the broader region."

"Pakistan’s effective counter-terrorism operations have clearly proved that tide of terrorism can be reversed and we are willing to share our experience with both the US and Afghanistan," the foreign minister offered.

In Trump's cross-hairs

The national security meeting was held to come up with a combined response to President Trump's new stance regarding Afghanistan and South Asia, in which he had singled out Pakistan for its alleged involvement in terrorism.

“We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting,” Trump had said in his speech on Monday night.

He demanded that Pakistan should "stop offering safe haven to agents of chaos” as he presented his policy for the 16-year-long war in Afghanistan in his first formal address as commander-in-chief.

While inviting India to provide more economic assistance and development to Afghanistan, Trump discarded his previous criticism of America's longest war as "a waste of time and money".

Reactions to Trump's tough stance

On Wednesday, US Ambassador David Hale had called on Gen Bajwa to brief him on the new policy.

Responding to the US's invective, the army chief had said: "We are not looking for any material or financial assistance from the US, but trust, understanding and [an] acknowledgement of our contributions."

Earlier, on Tuesday, the day after Trump's speech, Ambassador David Hale had also met Asif and told him that US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will discuss the bilateral relationship between the two countries and the US's South Asia policy in greater detail in their upcoming meeting.
During the meeting, Asif had reiterated Pakistan's desire for peace in Afghanistan and told the ambassador that he had accepted the invitation extended to him by Tillerson and looked forward to his interaction with Washington.

The same day, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had underlined the measures the Trump administration could take to prevent Pakistan from allegedly supporting the Afghan Taliban.

Tillerson had also reminded India of the need to “take some steps of rapprochement” for improving ties with Pakistan.

Support from allies

After Trump’s allegations against Pakistan for allegedly harbouring terrorists, China and Saudi Arabia had come to the country’s defence in separate statements and asked that the world acknowledge Pakistan’s contribution in the fight against terrorism.

After a meeting with PM Abbasi on Wednesday, Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman Al Saud acknowledged Pakistan’s efforts and sacrifices in its fight against terrorism.

Separately, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying had asserted that Pakistan was on the front line in the struggle against terrorism and had made "great sacrifices" and "important contributions" in the fight.

Chunying called on the international community to recognise Pakistan's role in the fight against terrorism.

**US blaming Pakistan to hide its defeat in Afghanistan, says ex-CJP –The News**

*August 25, 2017*

LAHORE: The Washington administration was blaming Pakistan once again to hide its defeat in Afghanistan, said Pakistan Justice and Democratic Party chief Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry on Thursday.

In a press release issued here, the former chief justice said that the US administration must bear it in its mind that Pakistan is a nuclear state and it would not succumb to its pressure tactics at all.

He said the Pakistani nation offered the most sacrifices in the war against terrorism, both in men and material. He said only a strong Pakistan could guarantee a stable South Asia. Condemning the fresh statements by US President Donald Trump and other officials, he warned the USA not to repeat the past mistakes.

**Pakistan Urges U.S. To Tackle Militant Sanctuaries In Afghanistan** – RFE/RL

*August 25, 2017*
Pakistan strongly rejected U.S. accusations that it is prolonging the war in Afghanistan by harboring terrorists and said the United States should focus its efforts on eliminating militant sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

In a rare statement on August 24 by Islamabad's National Security Committee, which includes Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and his army chiefs, Pakistan repeated its complaint that it is being "scapegoated" by the United States to cover for Washington's own failure to win or settle the war in Afghanistan.

The strongly worded statement reflected the outrage and shock in Pakistan over U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to withdraw aid or downgrade Pakistan's status as a military ally unless it eliminates "agents of chaos, violence and terror" within its borders that are threatening Afghanistan.

Even opposition leaders in Islamabad have demanded a strong rebuttal from Abbasi.

The committee said Pakistan has participated in and encouraged every peace effort in Afghanistan while waging a campaign against terrorists within Pakistan that has led to the death of "tens of thousands" of soldiers and civilians but produced notable success in reducing violence recently.

"To scapegoat Pakistan will not help in stabilizing Afghanistan," the leaders said, adding that "Pakistan has an abiding interest in peace and stability in Afghanistan" and will continue to seek a negotiated solution to the 16-year war.

The leaders noted that Pakistan has been dealing with costly "blowback" from the long Afghan war, particular a "deluge of refugees, flow of drugs and arms, and more recently....terrorist safe havens in eastern Afghanistan from where anti-Pakistan terrorist groups continue to operate and launch attacks inside Pakistan."

"We would like to see effective and immediate U.S. military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harboring terrorists and miscreants on Afghan soil, including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan," the leaders said.

In rejecting the U.S. allegation that Pakistan has provided safe harbor to the Afghan Taliban, which the United States claims is close to elements in Pakistan's military and intelligence services, the leaders said Islamabad has been "indiscriminate" in pursuing "all terrorist networks" and has "sacrificed tens of thousands of troops and civilians in this fight."

They said Pakistan has suffered $120 billion in economic damages during its antiterror campaign and demanded that Washington provide more "understanding and recognition of our efforts" and "sacrifice."

Pakistan estimates that nearly 17,000 people have been killed in militant attacks since islamabad joined the U.S. "war on terrorism" in 2001.

Islamabad's leaders boasted that their own antiterror efforts have been more successful recently than efforts in neighboring Afghanistan, and offered to help Kabul and Washington clear border areas of militants and "reinvigorate" the peace process.

"Pakistan’s effective counterterrorism operations have clearly proved that the tide of terrorism can be reversed and we are willing to share our experience with both the U.S. and Afghanistan."

The Pakistani leaders also rejected the U.S. bid to get India more involved in Afghanistan, saying India's longrunning suppression of Muslims fighting for "self-determination" in Kashmir shows that New Dehli's policies are "inimical to peace."
Washington's claim that it has paid billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan is misleading, the leaders added, because U.S. payments to Pakistan since 2001 have covered only part of the cost of providing ground facilities and air corridors to U.S. troops operating in Afghanistan.

Despite Pakistan's protests, U.S. intelligence agencies say Islamabad has long tolerated the presence of Afghan Taliban and its allied Haqqani network militants in restive southwestern tribal regions while cracking down mainly on militant groups that target Pakistan's own citizens.

**Pakistan committed to peace in Afghanistan: Asif –Daily Times**

*25-Aug-17 by*  
*By Ijaz Kakakhel*

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif on Thursday rejected US President Donald Trump’s allegations and reiterated that Pakistan backed all international efforts for a peaceful Afghanistan.

Giving a policy statement in the Senate, the minister denied US allegations that Pakistan wanted to destabilise Afghanistan.

“Pakistan has been supporting all international efforts for a peaceful Afghanistan. Islamabad backs Washington and Kabul in their efforts to restore peace in Afghanistan through talks,” he said.

The minister said the National Security Committee, in its meeting on Thursday, had completely rejected Donald Trump’s allegations against Pakistan. “Scapegoating Pakistan will not stabilise Afghanistan,” he said.

“Due to the Afghan issue, there has been an influx of refugees, drugs and arms in our country. Safe havens against Pakistan have been formed on the Afghan soil. Pakistan has always taken indiscriminate action against terrorists and has suffered over $120 billion losses in the war on terror. We don’t allow our soil to be used against any country and expect other states to reciprocate,” Asif said.

The foreign minister also said the country was ready to cooperate with the United States and Afghanistan for lasting peace in the region.

The minister slammed India over its role of spreading terrorism in Afghanistan and called it a sensitive issue. “India wants to de-stabilise Pakistan from both east and the west,” he said. The minister further mentioned that the NSC members had condemned aggressive Indian policies of waging war in the region, calling it a threat to regional peace. He accused India of using terrorists in order to fulfill its state policies.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi assured the Senate that he would probe why the Pakistan Television (PTV) had not provided live coverage to the debate on the US President Donald Trump’s recently announced South Asia strategy.

Earlier, Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani had expressed concern over the non-coverage of the debate.

The PM said he would investigate why a directive in this regard had not been complied with.

During the proceedings, the Senate chairman suggested that the session be extended as the house’s foreign affairs committee was in the process of formulating its recommendations on the issue.
To this, the prime minister said the committee should finalise the recommendations which could be communicated to the National Assembly after being adopted by the Senate.

“Even a joint session of the parliament could also be convened on the matter,” he said.

Prime Minister Abbasi said the federal cabinet had discussed the issue for three hours and the National Security Committee had also deliberated over it during its four-hour long meeting.

Earlier, senators had strongly denounced the statement made by US President Donald Trump about Pakistan and said that the whole nation was on one page against the US new policy.

They were discussing a motion over the US president’s new strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan and remarks about Pakistan. They said that Pakistan was a strong and brave nation and Pakistanis knew well how to defend their motherland. The senators said a national narrative against terrorism should be formulated in consultation with all the stakeholders and the parliament.

They said that the foreign policy should be reviewed keeping in view national interests. Some members said that the US ambassador should be summoned to the Foreign Office and a demarche should be issued on the US president’s statement.

**Pakistan welcomes Afghan president’s offer of talks – Gulf Times**

*03 Sep 17*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday welcomed Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani’s proposal that his country is ready for a comprehensive dialogue with Islamabad.

The country’s Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif hailed Ghani’s statement seeking talks, saying that his country is willing to hold a dialogue with Afghanistan in line with a bilateral mechanism.

“Pakistan’s position in the context of Afghanistan is very clear. We want to see peace and stability in Afghanistan and for that Pakistan will contribute and play its due role in all the initiatives taken to that end,” Asif was quoted as saying by Radio Pakistan.

He also said Pakistan and Afghanistan have already had bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral mechanisms for dialogue and interaction in place. “Those mechanisms should be utilised to their full potential,” he said.

Asif said that during previous interactions, both sides recognised the need for political to political, military to military and intelligence to intelligence cooperation.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Islamabad wanted to see stability and peace in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Pakistan would continue to play her due role for maintaining peace in the Kabul, Asif said while reacting to Ghani’s statement in which he offered comprehensive negotiations to bring peace to the troubled relationship between the two neighbouring countries.

Asif, who had recently delayed his scheduled trip to the US for bilateral talks with his counterpart Rex
Tillerson for the regional tour, says Pakistan have several forums to hold talks with Afghanistan, adding all available methods should be utilised in this connection.

**FM statement: Pakistan wants to see peace in Afghanistan – AP**

*02 Sep 17*

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) -- Pakistan's Foreign Ministry says the country wants to see peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The statement Saturday comes a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's message for the Eid al-Adha holiday called on Pakistan to engage in comprehensive peace negotiations.

The Pakistan statement noted there are already mechanisms for dialogue with Afghanistan in place. It says Pakistan will do its part in all initiatives aimed at securing peace.

Afghanistan routinely accuses Pakistan of harboring insurgents, while Islamabad says its enemies have found sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan celebrated the Eid al-Adha holiday on Friday while in Pakistan the holiday was being celebrated on Saturday. It commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.

**Pakistan’s strong response to the US – PT**

*03 Sep 17*

Sanity always prevails

The National Assembly and the Senate have given a strong message to the US, Afghanistan and their allies, read India, through unanimously rejecting the targeting of Pakistan by US President Donald Trump.
Lawmakers have shown their strong concerns over the disregard by the powerful players for Pakistan’s vast sacrifices and year’s long fight in countering the scourge of terrorism.
The response stems from the recent policy unveiled by Trump on South Asia. It is bold and clear and carries several implications, both good and bad.
Commenting on the issue, leading journalist and political analyst from Lahore, Ahsan Raza, told DNA that the crux of the strongly worded resolution, read out by Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, was rejecting Trump’s claim of billions dollars aid by the US to Pakistan and reminded Trump and his Afghan commander that Pakistan suffered heavily instead of gaining anything in the war on terror. This is factually correct.
He added that the figures quoted in the resolution say Pakistan suffered a loss of over $123 billion. The world of international relation works well on mutual respect. The US president needs a lesson on how to address sovereign nations only to save his own servicemen in Afghanistan.
Raza added that Trump repeatedly asked in clear terms for Pakistan to do more to stem the flow of Taliban and Haqqani militants from Peshawar and Quetta to Afghanistan.
Well, he had better ask his own commanders and well-equipped NATO forces to get Taliban militants; in other words Trump should ask his own and allied forces to do more, he added.
But we do not know what Trump will do. He will do whatever suits his country.
Raza further said that the strongly worded resolution by the houses was a step towards isolation.
Whenever it is about the US or other developed parts of the world, we exhibit the inclination towards isolation, instead of integration and cooperation.

“Terrorists’ hideouts in pockets of Pakistan have been a reality and these terrorists’ prime target is Pakistan itself,” he said.

The political analyst added that though the military operations carried out by the Pakistan army have flushed out the militants, they keep striking occasionally to remind Pakistan about their presence.

Pakistan had better keep on doing its work to eradicate terrorism regardless of Trump’s warning.

He recommended that side by side, it should take its diplomats out of deep slumber and start talking with US authorities. In the first place, Pakistan should not have spoken through the resolution; rather its actions should have spoken loud. Trump’s statements should have been dealt with through diplomats.

“We should not forget that we have gained and lost due to brilliant and poor diplomacy,” said Raza.

However, Investigative journalist, Yasir Habib Khan, in his opinion piece for Daily Times titled ‘Wanted: Pak-centric foreign policy’ stated that on fast-paced developments, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif delayed his US tour and geared up to visit China and Russia and Turkey on the recommendations of National Security Committee. Acting assistant secretary of state for south and central Asian affairs Alice Wells’ visit to Pakistan has been held in abeyance.

“Pakistan turned lionhearted after receiving upbeat response from China, Russia, Iran and other friendly countries when Trump tried to spell doom revealing when new policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan,” said Habib.

He further stated, “The emerging outlook is good for morale-boosting and mood-lifting. It gives us a silver lining in the gathering storm. However, sense must prevail with its real might, once we thrash out a Pakistan-centric foreign policy to live as a respectful nation, instead of caving in to any pressure, come what may.

“Under existing foreign policy that needs to be overhauled, Pakistan has lost much and gained nothing in totality. According to a report of Washington-based Center for Global Development (CGD), US poured more than $30b direct aid to Pakistan since 1948. Under a Coalition Support Fund, US released a total of $14b till 2016 since 2002. Half of the chunk went to military assistance. Ironically, often aid is withheld on various lame excuses.”

“Recently Adam Stump, a Pentagon spokesperson, announced to stop $350m funds on the pretext that Pakistan failed to take desired action against the Haqqani Network, a group of militants based around the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, blamed for ambushing western and Afghan forces.”

Yasir further stated in his Daily Times piece that in return, the war on terror cost Pakistan’s economy $118 billion as per report of State Bank of Pakistan. That report disclosed that terrorists incurred irreparable losses, badly impacting economic development and social sector growth. They also caused massive casualties and mass displacement.

“It is disturbing that the US administration always looks down upon Pakistan suspecting its action in eliminating terrorist networks and their sanctuaries. Pakistan launched lethal operations including Rah-e-Nijat, Rah-e-Rast, Zarb-e-Azb, Khyber 1-through-4 and on-going Radd-ul-Fassad reclaiming its land from TTP and its allied groups. These ground offensives and air strikes worked well in booting out the senior leadership of TTP from South Waziristan, FATA and other parts of the country. IDPs surged as a result of these operations. This created a humanitarian crisis in Pakistan,” Habib mentioned in his piece.

“In order to intercept the movement of TTP and other terrorist groups on Pak-Afghan border, an effective border management system was put in place that produced positive results.

Islamabad, in the process of attaining peace, pulled out all stops to initiate talks with Afghan Taliban and TTP leadership. Before something positive took place, US played devil with the peace process. From killing Baitullah Mehsud to murdering Mullah Mansoor, Pentagon threw the spanner in the works.

The Pentagon — in its six monthly report to Congress — claims that despite some action by Pakistan, Afghan-oriented militant groups, including the Taliban and Haqqani Network, enjoy freedom of action inside Pakistani territory and cashing in support from elements of the Pakistani government.

In this perspective, a question appears about 16 years are on and $1 trillion burnt in establishing peace in Afghanistan. America also deployed over 100,000 American troops to erase out terrorists and insurgents.
Can the US justify this epic failure before asking Pakistan as to why Pakistan could not come up to its expectations?”

Habib wrote that there are tangible questions that Pakistan needs to table everywhere to design a new foreign policy. Consultations with candid friends like China, Russia, Turkey, Iran and others will help to shape it better. These points should also be conversed with world community seeking its point of view.

“No, the time is ripe to attend to wits without triggering aggression against the US. Imminent foreign policy should be built on the fundamental ideology of the founder of Pakistan to have peace with everyone, especially neighbours.

“With an upright image in the world, Pakistan should never let anything compromise its national interests. New foreign policy has greater chance to live up to aspirations of people of Pakistan if parliament is given greater role to thrash out dos and don’ts. When both houses of parliament — who have the sound mandate of public — will put their heads and action together, sanity always prevails.”

**Asfandyar for ‘bold steps’ to end Pak-Afghan mistrust – Dawn**

*05 Sep 17*

CHARSADDA: Awami National Party president Asfandyar Wali Khan has said that Afghan President Dr Ashraf Ghani’s negotiation offer to Pakistan is a positive step that will reduce tension between the two countries.

Speaking at Ghazi Gul Baba Mosque after Eid prayers, he urged Pakistan to reciprocate positively because peace was prerequisite for stability and economic development.

He said that unity among Pakhtuns was need of the hour. He added that foreign elements should stop from interference in the region.

The ANP chief said that bilateral talks could end mistrust between the two countries. “Pakistan should take initiative in this regard. Kabul and Islamabad should take bold steps to improve ties,” he added.

He showed astonishment over statements of Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq against corruption and said that the JI emir had closed his eyes to corruption in the so-called Afghan jihad.

Mr Khan said that JI laid foundation of corruption in Pakistan by misappropriating billion of dollars during the so-called jihad. He said that champions of transparency ignored corruption in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The ANP chief announced to convene all-party conference in Islamabad on Sept 14 to develop consensus for merger of Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that social, political, legal and economic rights of tribal people could be safeguarded through merger Fata with the province.

Mr Khan said that ANP would continue struggle for merger of Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that his party gave identity to millions of Pakhtuns by renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

“The existing administrative line between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fata will be omitted very soon,” said Khan, adding that Pakhtuns living in Balochistan would be integrated with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The ANP chief alleged that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan promoted culture of abusive language in politics. He said that Imran Khan and senior leaders of PTI owned offshore companies, but no action was taken against them. He said that Imran wanted to remove Nawaz Sharif from power, not to eliminate corruption.
Meanwhile, Qaumi Watan Party chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao also welcomed statement of President Ghani and said that friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan were inevitable for sustainable peace in the region.

Talking to journalists, he said that statement of Afghan president was important in the context of prevailing situation in the region. He said that stable and prosperous Afghanistan was in the interest of Pakistan.

**World must play role in stopping Indian aggression: Asif – The News**

*05 Sep 17*

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Saturday said that international community should play a role in stopping the Indian aggression against the innocent Kashmiris. He said that the world must help implement the UN resolutions in realising the unalienable right of the Kashmiris to self-determination.

He said that Pakistan’s position in the context of Afghanistan was very clear as it wanted to see peace and stability in that country. In response to a media query regarding President Ashraf Ghani’s statement, he said: “Pakistan’s position, in context of Afghanistan, is very clear.

“We want to see peace and stability in Afghanistan, and for that Pakistan will contribute and play its due role in all the initiatives taken to that end. “We already have bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral mechanisms for dialogue and interaction with Afghanistan in place,” according to a press release of the Foreign Office.

He said, “Those mechanisms should be utilised to their full potential. “During our interactions, of late, both sides recognised the need for political to political, military to military and intelligence to intelligence cooperation.”

**Trump speech should not hijack Pak-US ties – Nation.PK**

*06 Sep 17*

Envoys’ conference | Diplomats say sovereignty should not be compromised | Asif maintains no military solution to Afghan issue

ISLAMABAD - US President Donald Trump’s controversial speech should not be allowed to hijack Pak-US ties, reckoned Pakistan’s senior envoys as they joined heads at a three-day conference here.

A senior diplomat who attended the conference told The Nation that the envoys were in favour of a relationship with the US where the country’s sovereignty was not endangered.

President Trump, in his first formal address to the nation as commander-in-chief last month, warned Pakistan: “We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations. Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbour criminals and terrorists.”
Trump had said that military and other aid to Washington’s nuclear-armed ally was at stake if Pakistan did not clamp down on extremists. “We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting,” he added.

Pakistan reacted sharply to Trump’s scathing criticism and rejected his claims that Islamabad was sheltering the terrorists. Pakistan’s civil and military leadership reminded Trump of the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan in the war on terror.

As a result of Pakistan’s reaction, US Ambassador in Islamabad David Hale called on National Security Adviser Nasser Khan Janjua before Eidul Azha to “discuss the new US strategy on Afghanistan and South Asia, announced by President Trump on August 20.”

Ambassador Hale clarified that the media had generally taken the policy piece by piece instead of interpreting it as a whole. He maintained that President Trump did not blame Pakistan for the failure in Afghanistan.

The diplomat told The Nation that the ‘US clarification’ was highlighted during the conference as the ambassadors voted in favour of ‘giving a chance’ to the Pak-US partnership.

Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, who chaired the inaugural session, invited proposals from the ambassadors on the foreign policy keeping in view the regional and the international situation.

The declaration by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa summit in Xiamen – where some terror outfits, allegedly based in Pakistan, were named – was also discussed in the meeting, sources said.

Addressing the inaugural session, Asif said Pakistan was committed to eliminating terrorism in all its manifestations.

He said there were no hideouts of militants in Pakistan and the forces and the people had sacrificed much with an aim to make Pakistan a terror-free country.

Asif emphasised the need for a non-military solution to the Afghan conflict. He said Pakistan wanted to maintain equal relations with neighbours. The minister said peace in Afghanistan was in Pakistan’s own interest.

The foreign minister said the world must highlight the Kashmir issue as India was involved in state-sponsored terrorism in the occupied territory.

He said that Pakistan will continue its “moral, political and diplomatic support” for the people of the occupied Kashmir.

Asif said that instead of blaming Pakistan, India should stop interference in Pakistan’s internal matters and avoid using Afghanistan’s soil against Pakistan.

Later, Asif told a television channel that China had not changed policy towards Pakistan. “The BRICS declaration is not a new policy of China,” he said.

Separately, Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir said that Pakistan rejects the declaration released by the BRICS member countries adding there were no ‘safe havens’ of terrorists in Pakistan.

The foreign minister will embark on a tour of the regional countries – beginning with China – after the three-day envoys’ conference to discuss the foreign policy and the future strategy.
The tour of the important regional countries comes after Trump’s anti-Pakistan speech last month. Now the BRICS declaration has been added to the agenda for the China visit. Asif will fly to China on September 8.

The three-day envoys’ conference is being organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Envoys from various capitals will deliberate over a range of bilateral, regional and global dimensions of Pakistan’s foreign policy. The prime minister will chair the concluding session,” said a statement released by the foreign ministry.

Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said that the envoys will discuss the potential strength of the foreign policy and options available in view of the geopolitical and regional situation.

Envoys in various countries including the United States, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Afghanistan, Iran, and India are participating in the conference.

Zakaria said that based on the ongoing internal deliberations, a strategy to deal with the challenges and engage with the United States would be formulated.

The spokesperson said that Pakistan had a longstanding relationship with the US and both the countries wanted to continue the friendship.

The conference will continue today (September 6). The envoys’ recommendations will be made part of the foreign policy, an official at the foreign ministry said.

Pakistan ready to help US for peace in Afghanistan – The News

07 Sep 17

RAWALPINDI: Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa said on Wednesday that Pakistan was ready to help the United States and Nato for peace in Afghanistan, but Pakistan’s security concerns need to be addressed.

Speaking at the end of the event held on the lawns of General Headquarters (GHQ) to mark the country’s 52nd Defence Day in commemoration of the 1965 war with India, the army chief sought to respond to international concerns about the alleged presence of terrorist groups and their safe havens on Pakistani soil.

In his 15-minute speech delivered in Urdu, the army chief gave an insight into how Pakistan planned to stay away from conflict in Afghanistan and carry forward its domestic fight against terrorism.

His speech was particularly significant as it was delivered at a time when Pakistan is preparing its strategy on future engagement with the United States after the announcement of the new US policy on Afghanistan and South Asia.

Government ministers have earlier hinted that Pakistan would remain engaged with the US.

Gen Bajwa said Pakistan had already suffered a lot in the wars started by superpowers in terms of financial losses and extremism and terrorism that engulfed the country, but would not endure any further costs.
“We cannot fight Afghanistan’s war in Pakistan,” he said in an apparent response to US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s statement that Pakistan is expected to “take decisive action against militant groups based in Pakistan that are a threat to the region”.

Army chief says country has already suffered a lot in wars started by superpowers in terms of financial losses, extremism and terrorism

The general said Pakistan had previously tried its best for peace in Afghanistan, but if the Afghan factions were bent on war, his country would not become part of it.

Spelling out Pakistan’s strategy, he said for complete impartiality in Afghan conflict Pakistan would want an early repatriation of Afghan refugees from its soil and securing of 2,600km porous border with Afghanistan, which it has already started fencing.

He said Pakistan also expected that sanctuaries of Pakistani terrorists on Afghan soil would be quickly and effectively removed.

Responding to international criticism of Pakistan’s counterterrorism effort, Gen Bajwa said if international powers could not extend a helping hand in fighting terrorism, they should also avoid shifting the blame for their failure to Pakistan.

He said Pakistan’s fight against terrorism was for its own survival and would be taken to its logical end. The war against extremism and terrorism, he said, had to be won for our future generations. He warned that the whole region would be destabilised if Pakistan faltered in this war.

The army chief said the military was working with other state institutions on key reforms without which the National Action Plan could not be successfully implemented. In this respect, he mentioned educational / seminaries reforms, police reforms and legal reforms.

He also addressed those who had joined the ranks of militant groups describing them as “misguided” and said they needed to review their actions that were hurting their country and their people and serving the enemies of Pakistan.

In a speech that was marked with high-pitched rhetoric, he underscored the sustainable success against terrorism was not possible without national unity and support.

Speaking about India, he advised the Indian leadership to seek political and diplomatic solution of the Kashmir issue instead of maligning Pakistan and suppressing the uprising. He said India, besides fomenting terrorism in Pakistan, was seizing its waters.

Gen Bajwa said Pakistan was vigilant against enemy designs and vowed to defeat them.
The Trump administration believes it can kill its way to victory by ramping up the war effort and keeping the Taliban out of power.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.” This sums up Pakistan’s perspective of President Donald Trump’s Afghan policy. After sixteen years of war that has cost Americans $1 trillion, Trump has opted for the tried, tested and failed formula of conflict militarization in Afghanistan. At the same time, Trump has called out Pakistan on its duplicity of allegedly “harbouring terrorists” and urged India to play a larger role in stabilizing Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, there is disappointment on Trump’s blame game. Instead of acknowledging Pakistan’s sacrifices in the war on terror that have left sixty thousand people dead and cost over $118 billion in economic losses, Trump has conveniently scapegoated Pakistan for American failures in Afghanistan.

The United States needs a reality check: not Pakistan, but America’s inconsistent policies and impatient approach have destabilized Afghanistan. Since 2009, the U.S. policy in Afghanistan has changed every year. For instance, in 2009, the Obama administration opted for troop surge arguing there were not enough boots on the ground to win the war. In 2010, the U.S. focus shifted its focus to poppy eradication, which was deemed as the main factor that fueled the Taliban insurgency. Then, in 2011, the United States developed an obsession with rampant corruption in Kabul that undermined the U.S. nation-building efforts.

Unable to break the deadlock of the Afghan conflict militarily, in 2012, the United States reached out to Pakistan to peruse political reconciliation with the Taliban. Retired Gen. Ashfaq Pervez Kiani, who was Pakistan army chief at the time, handed over his white paper to President Obama as a blueprint for Afghan reconciliation. In 2013, the U.S. paradoxically adopted the policy of fight-and-talk simultaneously. In 2014, U.S. forces and NATO forces started pulling out from Afghanistan and handed over security responsibilities to Afghan forces. However, in 2015 and 2016, as opposed to his original plan of keeping one thousand U.S. troop in Afghanistan, President Obama stationed eight thousand U.S. troops and four thousand NATO troops under the Resolute Support Mission.

With his Afghan policy, Trump has revived the fight-fight approach as the war in Afghanistan comes full circle. It is not hard to imagine that fifteen thousand foreign troops would not be able to gain what 150,000 international troops could not achieve. It will give the Taliban all the more reasons to continue their armed struggle. Trump will deny the Taliban an outright military victory with fifteen thousand troops, but he is unlikely to gain a position of strength to force the Taliban to the negotiation table.

It is over-simplistic to assume that the United States lost the war in Afghanistan because of the Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan. The cross-border sanctuaries may be an enabler but not a game changer for the Taliban’s battlefield victories in Afghanistan. Today, more than more than 40 percent of Afghan territory is under Talibam’s control and they do not need safe havens in Pakistan to continue the war. In addition, the Taliban have diversified their regional links with Tehran, Moscow, Beijing and Qatar to minimize their sole reliance on Pakistan. Given this evolving regional dynamics of the Afghan conflict, bringing Afghanistan’s war inside Pakistan will be counterproductive.

Notwithstanding Pakistan’s sincere efforts to facilitate political reconciliation between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban (on U.S. insistence), it was twice backstabbed. In 2015, the disclosure of Mullah Omar’s death during the Murree peace talks between the representatives of the Taliban and Afghan government derailed a process that looked promising. The jury is still out on who leaked the news and who benefited from it. On the second occasion, Islamabad was betrayed when the United States killed Mullah Omar’s
successor, Akhtar Mansour, with a drone strike in Balochistan when he was returning from Iran. Following Mansoor’s death, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group-led peace process, comprising China, Pakistan, United States and Afghanistan, crashed.

The American demands of increased cooperation from Pakistan while ignoring the latter’s legitimate security concerns in Afghanistan is foolhardy, to say the least. Washington’s backing for New Delhi to play a larger security role in Afghanistan will fuel the India-Pakistan proxy war.

Moreover, the U.S. intimidation of blocking military and civilian aid cuts no ice with Pakistan, as it is no longer dependent on the U.S. aid. That aid is a political tool that the Trump administration is leveraging to force Pakistan to cooperate. Of all the American financial assistance that Pakistan has received since 9/11, 60 percent is military aid and 40 percent is civilian aid. The military aid paid under the Coalition Supports Fund is reimbursement for what the Pakistan army spends in counterterrorism operations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. As far as civilian aid is concerned, 80 percent of it goes back to the United States in consultancy overhead cost and only 15–20 percent is spent in Pakistan. Moreover, the aid that Washington provides Pakistan is not for egalitarian reasons, but to enhance its own security and global image.

The problem is everyone wants peace in Afghanistan, but only on his or her terms. Pakistan believes the path to Afghan reconciliation goes through Islamabad and requires power-sharing with the Taliban. The Trump administration believes it can kill its way to victory by ramping up the war effort and keeping the Taliban out of power. Similarly, New Delhi and Kabul want peace in Afghanistan sans the Afghan Taliban.

In such a situation, Afghanistan requires a new political vision at the local, regional and international levels. The Taliban are a hard reality that will not evaporate into thin air with Trump’s Afghan policy. Eventually, Kabul and Washington will have to sit down with them at the negotiation table. On the contrary, conflict militarization is counterproductive and the mutual blame game will only embolden the peace spoilers in Afghanistan. All wars have ended with negotiations and the Afghan war is not an anomaly in that reality.

**Aizaz says now it’s Afghanistan’s turn to destroy terrorist safe havens – PT**

06 Sep 17

Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States Aizaz Chaudhry, in an interview with the state-owned television channel, said it was now Afghanistan’s turn to destroy terrorist safe havens on its soil, while reiterating that Pakistan has destroyed all terrorist safe havens on its soil.

“Pakistan is willing to work with Afghanistan,” he said, adding that Pak-Afghan relations should not only be viewed from the US perspective, and certain points raised in the new US policy for the region are debatable.

Chaudhry also stated that Pakistan has borne losses worth billions in the war on terrorism, while insisting that terrorists present in Pakistan have roots in Afghanistan.

He had said earlier that only Afghan-led dialogue can bring peace in the neighbouring country.

A day earlier Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir rejected the declaration naming terrorist groups in the region by leaders of BRICS countries, saying there are no safe havens for terrorists on Pakistani soil.
Similarly, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence had also strongly condemned the hostile and threatening statements made by US President Donald J Trump and Gen John W Nicholson.

In the resolution adopted by the parliamentary body, the claim of the US president regarding Pakistan providing safe havens for terrorists was rejected.

The committee took strong exemption to the statements and adopted a condemnation resolution unanimously.

On the other hand, Afghanistan on August 22 welcomed Trump’s revised vision for the Afghan war, saying it was the “result of intense deliberations” and took into account “both our countries’ needs and considerations.”

Afghanistan’s Ambassador to the US, Hamdullah Mohib also hailed Trump’s announcement.

**Pakistan Moves To ‘Unite’ Region Against Trump Strategy – TOLO News**

06 Sep 17

Islamabad has reportedly pulled in all its ambassadors stationed in the region to discuss the recently announced US strategy on Afghanistan and South Asia.

As global pressure mounts against Pakistan, Islamabad has opted to unite Russia, China and Turkey against the new US strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia.

The remarks were made by Pakistan Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif this week after he suspended his trip to the United States. He said he will travel to regional countries and garner their support over the US’s rising pressure against them.

Pakistan reports indicate that Asif will soon visit Moscow to discuss the US strategy.

According to these reports, Pakistan has also summoned its ambassadors from regional countries to Islamabad in order to discuss the new US policy.

Pakistan Defense Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan on Wednesday claimed that 40 percent of Afghanistan’s territory is out of the Kabul government’s control and that these areas serve as safe havens for those who are fighting against the Afghan government.

“The Afghan government does not have control over 40 percent of its territory; therefore, this percentage is a safe haven for those who are fighting the (Kabul) government,” Khan said. “It means that a big part of Afghanistan is a safe haven. But why do they put the blame on Pakistan?”

Afghanistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted to the remarks and said the claims were baseless.

“Problems cannot be addressed with baseless allegations. It is better that the Pakistani side eliminate the real safe havens of terrorists instead of putting the blame on us,” said Shakib Mustaghi, spokesman for Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“The international community will stand against Pakistan if it does not change its policies,” the defense ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said.

Afghan analysts said Pakistan is trying to achieve the ‘sympathy’ of a number of countries in the region.
“Pakistan cannot make a coalition. It will try to gain the sympathy of countries. It cannot form an alliance because Russia does not want to lose India,” said Nasrullah Stanikzai, analyst and university lecturer.

This comes after Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi last month said there has to be a political settlement in Afghanistan and that US President Donald Trump’s new war strategy will fail.

Late in August, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned that Pakistan could lose its status as a privileged military ally if Islamabad does not change its approach towards insurgents enjoying safe havens in the country.

**China, Pakistan take swipes at Trump's Afghan policy –theglobeandmail**

*08 Sep 17*

The top diplomats from China and Pakistan took swipes at President Donald Trump's newly unveiled Afghanistan policy on Friday as they called for new talks with the Taliban to resolve the 16-year conflict.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing stood firmly behind its "ironclad friend" Pakistan, even though "some countries" did not give Islamabad the credit it deserved in fighting terrorism, a pointed reference to the U.S.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif's first trip abroad to Beijing this week appeared to highlight how ties between the two all-weather allies have grown even closer while Pakistan's critical relationship with the U.S. is disintegrating amid mutual recriminations and distrust.

Wang and Asif announced that China, Pakistan and Afghanistan will hold a new series of three-way talks later this year in China to push forward settlement negotiations with the Taliban while the U.S. doubles down on its military campaign.

Trump infuriated Pakistan last month when he accused Islamabad of providing extremists safe haven and threatened to withhold military aid. He further raised alarms in Pakistan when he raised the prospect of recruiting archrival India into the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials said this week that $225 million in military aid for Pakistan have been suspended while about 3,500 additional troops will head to Afghanistan to reverse the Taliban's battleground advances and gain leverage in negotiations.

"It's our firm view that there is no military solution in Afghanistan, the focus should be on a politically negotiated settlement," Asif told reporters in Beijing. "China is playing a very constructive role in this regard."

Pakistan has repeatedly rejected U.S. accusations that it is abetting groups like the Taliban-linked Haqqani Network, a position that China has backed.

"The government and people of Pakistan have made huge sacrifices in the fight against terror for everyone to see and the international community should recognize that," Wang said.

The two ministers presented a closely unified front just days after China handed Pakistan an unexpected diplomatic setback at the BRICS economic summit in Xiamen. On Monday, China joined several nations to declare the Pakistan-based militant groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad as terrorist organizations, in a move that was praised by India and the U.S.
Asif did not address the terror designation on Friday but was quoted by Pakistani media before arriving in Beijing as saying that it should not jeopardize bilateral ties. Rather, Pakistan should put its "house in order," he said.

**US demands of ‘do more’ undermine Pakistan’s losses in Afghan War –**

**Daily Times**

09 Sep 17  
*Saddam Hussein*

American aid does not help the government’s precarious fiscal situation in any meaningful way: only 12-15 percent of the total amount is channelled for budgetary support.

Pakistan has encountered the most serious of consequences due to the war in Afghanistan over last few decades - with repercussions to its political landscape to its security domain, to its socio-economic outlook and even to environmental aspects.

From hosting millions of refugees to being a major victim of terrorism, the cumulative impact has been colossal, resulting in an adverse overall growth rate in all major sectors of the economy. Normal economic and trading activities were disrupted; leading to higher costs of doing business - comprising of cost of insurance, among other costs- and substantial deferrals in meeting export orders around the world. As an outcome, Pakistani goods gradually lost their market share to their competitors. Economic growth as well could not pick up as planned during the last decade. The country continues to be the target of terrorism, which also includes foreign-sponsored terrorism from its immediate neighbourhood.

*Pakistan’s economic losses as a result of the war against terror far exceed the amount of aid received from the United States. A reputed study states that, “if US civilian assistance is completely withdrawn, it will only have an impact of 0.14 percent on Pakistan’s GDP growth”*

A substantial portion of precious national resources, both in personnel and material, had to be diverted to address the security challenges as well as to repair the damaged infrastructure during the last many years. In addition to economic losses, cross-border terrorism in Pakistan has inflicted untold human suffering: indiscriminate and brutal terrorist attacks have taken place against the civilian population. More than 70,000 civilians have succumbed to this War on Terror, in addition to 7,000 personnel of the armed forces.

Ever since Pakistan became a frontline ally of the US-led alliance in the war against terror after 9/11 16 years ago, its economy has suffered a whopping $123.1 billion on account of loss of lives and economic opportunities, and damage to the country's infrastructure. As Pakistan's current GDP volume is $304 billion, this huge loss is 41 percent of the total economic size of the country. This shows that two-fifths of the economy not only went in thin air: it further damaged the possibilities and potentials of the Pakistan's economic growth.

On US aid to Pakistan; it is worth mentioning that the country's economic losses as a result of the war against terror far exceed the amount of aid received from the United States. The total aid Pakistan has received during these years amounts to just $30 billion - which is not even enough to cover the bill for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) supplies over the period. A study, conducted by Shahid Javed Burki for the Woodrow Wilson Centre, states that: "[i]f US civilian assistance is completely withdrawn, it will only have an impact of 0.14 percent on Pakistan's GDP growth."
Calculations were based on gross aid, 40 percent of which goes to American 'consultants'. These are conservative estimates compared with how US aid is being spent in Iraq and Afghanistan, where more than 60 percent of the money goes to with American 'contractors' and 'consultants'. With that, 25 percent is wasted on administrative expenses.

Former State Bank Governor Ishrat Husain says that American aid does not help the government's precarious fiscal situation in any meaningful way. Only "12-15 percent of the total amount is channelled for budgetary support. Assuming that the whole $3 billion [per annum] in economic and military aid is disbursed fully, this accounts for less than seven percent of the total foreign exchange earnings of the country… The increase in export revenues and remittances in the current year was almost twice that amount."

With losses of such magnitude, continued US demands of 'do more' seem farfetched. It is beyond comprehension that a country which has suffered losses of more than 70,000 human lives in its fight against terrorism is being blamed of playing a double game. Had there been any double game, why would Pakistan have suffered gigantic human and economic losses? Recently, the international community has also acknowledged Pakistan's success in fight against terrorism, and has appreciated Pakistan's sacrifices to make the world a safer place.

What prompted President Trump to repeat USA's old clichéd narrative against Islamabad? It seems to be American anxiousness over Pakistan's alliances with China, Iran, Turkey, and warming up of relations with Russia. This not only plays against US hegemony in the world - and also the region - but also undermines India's position (as the new main US ally) in the region.

Therefore, President Trump is apparently investing more in exacerbating security crises while trying to make Pakistan a scapegoat: this will not only ensure US presence in the region, but will also keep the regional stability/security at a stalemate.

‘No military solution’: China & Pakistan slam Trump’s new Afghanistan strategy – RT

08 Sep 17

China and Pakistan have slammed US President Donald Trump’s new policy on Afghanistan, which includes sending additional troops to the country. The nations have instead urged new talks with the Taliban.

The Pakistani and Chinese foreign ministers announced that their two countries and Afghanistan would hold a new series of three-way talks later this year, aiming to reach settlement negotiations with the Taliban.

“It's our firm view that there is no military solution in Afghanistan, the focus should be on a politically-negotiated settlement,” Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said during a visit to Beijing on Friday, as quoted by AP.

“China is playing a very constructive role in this regard,” he added.

That statement comes after Trump did a U-turn on his previous position of disengagement from Afghanistan, instead opting to send more troops to the country. An additional 3,500 US soldiers will soon head to Afghanistan, officials told media this week.
“My original instinct was to pull out, and historically I like following my instincts,” Trump said in a televised speech last month. “But all my life, I’ve heard that decisions are much different when you sit behind the desk in the Oval Office.”

If the deployment of 3,500 additional soldiers is confirmed, it will bring the total number of US troops in Afghanistan to around 14,500.

The Friday statement also comes after Trump angered Pakistan in August, accusing it of providing a safe haven to extremists. Last month, the Trump administration announced that $255 million in military aid for Pakistan would be withheld until Islamabad cracked down on extremists threatening neighboring Afghanistan.

“We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change, and that will change immediately,” Trump said at the time.

Trump also infuriated Islamabad when he voiced the possibility of recruiting India – Pakistan's arch rival – into Washington's strategy in Afghanistan.

However, Pakistan has rejected claims that it is aiding groups including the Taliban-linked Haqqani Network, a position which China backed on Friday.

“The government and people of Pakistan have made huge sacrifices in the fight against terrorism for everyone to see and the international community should recognize that,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

He added that Beijing is standing behind its “ironclad friend” even though “some countries” do not give Pakistan credit for its fight against terrorism.

Russia, for its part, has slammed Trump's Afghanistan strategy as a “dead-end approach.”

“The main emphasis in the new strategy, which was announced by Washington, is made on settlement through use of force,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a press conference in August. “We believe that it’s a dead-end approach.”

Lavrov also noted that the new strategy allows for negotiations with the Taliban without any preconditions, which jeopardizes the joint international stance formed by the UN Security Council.

He went on to note that the UN Security Council, with the backing of the Afghan government, had ruled to allow the Taliban to enter the negotiation process under conditions that include severing ties with terrorist links, bringing armed resistance to an end and respecting Afghanistan's constitution.

“We maintain the contacts with the Taliban exactly in accordance with these criteria, urging them to comply with these UN Security Council demands,” Lavrov said.

**Pak hails China's 'constructive role' for settlement of Afghan conflict – ANI**

*08 Sep 17*

Pakistan has lauded China's "constructive role" in the process for a politically negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict.
Addressing a joint press conference after his meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, Pakistan Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said that the two countries are in favour of a political solution for the Afghan conflict and not military.

Asif, who arrived in China on Friday, appreciated China's "constructive role" in the process for a politically negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict, saying that Pakistan and China can together contribute to a political solution to the conflict.

He is in China as a part of his regional outreach for consultations on the new US policy on Afghanistan and South Asia.

"Pakistan strongly adheres to one-China policy: We support Beijing on its core issues of Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and South China Sea," the Dawn quoted Asif as saying.

He said Operations Zarb-i-Azb and Raddul Fasaad have yielded positive results against terrorist groups including East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).

He added that ETIM is a threat not only for China but also to Pakistan.

China had repeatedly blamed ETIM for carrying out attacks in its far western region of Xinjiang.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Minister reaffirmed Beijing's continuous and firm support for Pakistan in war against terrorism, saying that both the countries stand together in the changing regional and global scenario.

"China supports Pakistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty and dignity," he said.

Emphasising on trilateral cooperation between Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, Wang said his country wants improved relations between Islamabad and Kabul and is also ready to support both the sides.

He said peace in Afghanistan remains in the interest of both countries.

Wang further said that China, Pakistan and Afghanistan will hold new high-level talks this year to push forward for settlement negotiations to resolve Afghan issue.

Wang said that Pakistan's efforts to eliminate terrorism should be recognised by the international community.

"When it comes to the issue of counterterrorism, Pakistan has done its best with a clear conscience. In comparison, some countries need to give Pakistan the full credit that it deserves," he said.

Wang's statement in favour of Pakistan come days after the BRICS declaration that named militant groups allegedly based in Pakistan as a regional security concern.

BRICS leaders had recently unveiled the Xiamen Declaration in which member countries unequivocally condemned terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations and called upon all states to adopt a comprehensive approach in combating the menace, including countering radicalisation, recruitment, and movement of terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters.

The Xiamen BRICS Declaration signed by the BRICS members specifically stated, "BRICS express concern on the security situation in the region and violence caused by the Taliban, ISIL/DAISH, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb ut-Tahrir."
"BRICS deplore all terrorist attacks worldwide, including attacks in BRICS countries, and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever committed and by whomsoever and stress that there can be no justification whatsoever for any act of terrorism. We reaffirm that those responsible for committing, organising, or supporting terrorist acts must be held accountable," it added.

Asif will travel to Iran after completing his China visit. He is also expected to meet Russian and Turkish leaders in coming days.

**Trilateral meeting of Pakistan, China, Afghanistan FM's likely this year – The News**

09 Sep 17

BEIJING: Foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan will hold their first trilateral talks within the year, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Friday.

Wang made the remarks during a press conference after a meeting with visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, adding that Pakistan and Afghanistan are important countries in the region and he hopes the two nations can work together to safeguard stability in the region.

While, Pakistan has reiterated support for China's offer to host the first trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan later this year, focusing on strategic communication, practical cooperation, and security dialogue.

Wang said that China attaches great importance to the relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and actively helps the two countries narrow differences and enhance mutual trust. It is also exploring opportunities to develop cooperation among the three countries, he added.

Addressing a press conference along with his Pakistani counterpart, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Pakistan's people, government and the armed forces rendered unprecedented sacrifices against terrorism.

He said Pakistan and China stand together amid changing regional and international situation. He also welcomed Pakistan’s efforts for peace in Afghanistan and expressed Beijing’s desire for better relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Earlier, China pledged its support for Pakistan's efforts against terrorism as foreign ministers of both the countries discussed regional and international situation.

During the meeting with Asif, Wang said China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners, and China supports Pakistan's efforts to uphold sovereignty, fight terrorism and safeguard national security.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said these relations were founded in the principles of mutual-trust, equality, non-interference, harmonious co-existence and win-win cooperation, based on common agenda of socio-economic development.

In a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday in Beijing, Khawaja Asif expressed great satisfaction in the spirit of mutual support to each other on the issues of their vital national interest.
Top Pakistan Army official blames 'collective failures' for Afghanistan expanding war – ANI

Kabul [Afghanistan], September 10 (ANI): A top Pakistan Army official has termed the expanding war in Afghanistan a 'collective failure' and insisted that there is no military solution for the violence and will assist Afghanistan in reconciliation talks.

"Afghanistan's problems lie within Afghanistan and there is no military solution to the problems of Afghanistan as outside formulas are unlikely to yield any positive results. You cannot blame a country, an individual and an institution for the failures that are collective,"Khaama Press quoted Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, as saying during a gathering in United Kingdom.

This statement by General Hayat comes as the Afghan officials have long been insisting that the growing instability in the country has direct links with the Taliban and Haqqani network sanctuaries remaining intact in Pakistan.

Pakistan has been under immense pressure from U.S. to eliminate the sanctuaries of the Afghan militants in its soil, Gen. Hayat said "Pakistan has tried and will try its best to partner with all forces towards reconciliation between various factions so that there is peace and stability inside Afghanistan."

Hayat added, "Pakistan stands committed to trying to stabilise Afghanistan and we are in the process of building 900 posts alongside Afghanistan-Pakistan border, we are in the process of building a fence between Af-Pak border, we are constructing gates where there will be no entry without documents and identity will be proven either way. These steps are being taken so that no bad crossing takes place and we want others to partner with us on these accounts."

While announcing strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia, US President Donald Trump had said, "For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror. The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict. And that could happen."

No Foreign Or Military Solution To Afghan Problems: Hayat – TOLO News

10 Sep 17

Pakistan’s chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee blamed the country’s instability and war on “two opposing forces” inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Zubair Mahmood Hayat said over the weekend that solutions to Afghanistan's problems lie within Afghanistan and that there was no military solution to the current crisis, Geo News reported.

He said foreign “formulas” were unlikely to yield positive results.
Addressing a gathering in London over the weekend, which was also attended by senior military officers of the British armed forces and members of defense think-tanks, Hayat spoke at length about various regional and international issues.

Geo News reported he said instability and war in Afghanistan has brought great destruction inside Pakistan.

He said the problem lies inside Afghanistan between two opposing forces "and therefore the solution lies inside Afghanistan".

Without naming or mentioning any country or individual, Hayat said that "you cannot blame a country, an individual or a country and an institution for the failures that are collective".

He said there are no military solutions to Afghanistan’s problems but that Pakistan will continue to work hard for peace in Afghanistan.

"Pakistan has tried and will try its best to partner with all forces towards reconciliation between various factions so that there is peace and stability inside Afghanistan," he said.

He added: "A peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of Pakistan but you cannot have a peaceful Afghanistan if you implant foreign powers which are not contiguous to Afghanistan or try and deploy a level of force which actually is counter to the requirements of reconciliation. Pakistan stands committed to trying to stabilize Afghanistan but we will play our role.

“We have cleared our area and we are in the process of building 900 posts alongside Afghanistan-Pakistan border, we are in the process of building a fence between Af-Pak border, we are constructing gates where there will be no entry without documents and identity will be proven either way. These steps are being taken so that no bad crossing takes place and we want others to partner with us on these accounts”.

Hayat also said Pakistan has been fighting the war against terrorism for decades, adding that the people and the armed forces rendered unprecedented sacrifices to curb this menace. He said more than 200,000 Pakistani soldiers have been engaged in the war on terror, Geo News stated.

Hayat said Britain and Pakistan have deep-rooted military ties and both countries enjoy cordial relations at many levels. He said Pakistan Army, with help from other institutions and the people of Pakistan, has turned the tide against militancy and terrorism and as a result Pakistan is stable and has a better outlook than at anytime before.

Pakistan FM leaves for Iran to discuss mutual ties, Afghanistan issue –

IRNA

Islamabad, Sep 11, IRNA – Foreign Minister of Pakistan led a high level delegation to Tehran on Monday to discuss new US policy for Afghanistan and south Asia with top Iranian officials.

During his one-day visit, Khawaja Muhammad Asif is planning to meet with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani. Bilateral ties would also come under discussion.

National Security Advisor of Pakistan Naseer Khan Janjua, Foreign secretary of Pakistan Tehmina Janjua
and Foreign ministry Additional Secretary on UN affairs Tasnim Aslam accompanied Khawaja Muhammad Asif to Iran.

The high-level delegation is going to leave Tehran for the holy city of Mashhad later today for pilgrimage of the holy shrine of Imam Reza(AS).

Khawaja Asif is the foreign minister of new cabinet of Pakistan government and the current visit, is his first ever visit to Iran.

A couple of days ago the top diplomat of Pakistan also visited China to discuss new US policy for Afghanistan and south Asia with Beijing officials. He will pay a visit to Ankara on Tuesday for the same purpose.

US President Donald Trump announcing his new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia on August 21 denounced Pakistan for allegedly allowing terrorists to maintain safe havens inside its territory.

Trump’s speech was perceived by many, including the Pakistani government and parliament, as a direct threat to the country’s sovereignty.

Pakistan calls for regional consensus to address Afghan issue – IRNA

Islamabad, Sep 11, IRNA – Foreign Minister of Pakistan says achieving a consensus among regional countries could lead to the best solution to the problems in Afghanistan.

Talking to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) at the Islamabad airport before leaving for Tehran on Monday, Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that neighbors of Afghanistan must agree on a common approach towards Afghanistan problem.

"Basically my main purpose of the visit to Iran is to evolve some consensus amongst the neighbors of Afghanistan, because peace in Afghanistan will have a comprehensive effect on the rest of the region,' Khawaja Asif said.

The Pakistani top diplomat said that the US military approach in Afghanistan has already failed to address the problems in the country.

'Peace in Afghanistan is what we want and we have been struggling for it from last decades," he said. "It is very important for us, it is very important for the region that we evolve consensus over different problems," he added.

Khawaja Asif also said that, it is very important and imperative that regional disputes should be solved by the countries in the region because the imported solutions won’t work.

"It is our interests which is paramount, so the countries of the region should find a solution and a common approach to our problems," he said.

He said in the aftermath of the speech made by US President Donald Trump and the announcement of his new strategy in Afghanistan and south Asia, there are few questions which are very important.

“In Pakistan we do believe that there can be no military solution to Afghanistan problem, it has to be
political solution, a political solution is always a long-lasting one but military solutions will collapse soon, Khawaja Asif said.

Couple of days ago, I went to China and reiterated on a political solution to Afghanistan, he said.

“I will also be going to Turkey tomorrow to try Pakistan’s best to evolve a regional consensus on Afghanistan,” he added.

“No need to say that the approach taken by the Americans which is a military one, has not been able to bring peace to Afghanistan 16 years and military solution will not work,” the Pakistani foreign minister said.

“I am also planning to meet my Russian counterpart in near future on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session and discuss the peaceful approaches for Afghanistan issue with him,” he added. Commenting on Iran-Pakistan ties, Khawaja Asif said that, Pakistan and Iran are brothers.

We must meet with each other regularly and we hope Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi will meet President Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN Generally Assembly session in the near future.

Our relationship goes back in history which is centuries old relationship. Pakistan was part of the sub-continent and Iran has had deep relations with the sub-continent for thousands of years, he said.

Foreign Minister of Pakistan led a high level delegation to Tehran on Monday to discuss the new US policy for Afghanistan and south Asia with top Iranian officials.

During his one-day visit, Khawaja Muhammad Asif is expected to meet his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani. Bilateral ties would also come under discussion. National Security Advisor of Pakistan Naseer Khan Janjua, Foreign secretary of Pakistan Tehmina Janjua and Foreign ministry Additional Secretary on UN affairs Tasnim Aslam are accompanying Khawaja Muhammad Asif in his visit to Iran.

Pakistan, Iran stress political solution in Afghanistan – AP

11 Sep 17

ISLAMABAD (AP) -- Pakistan and Iran say there is no military solution for the conflict in Afghanistan and that a negotiated political solution is imperative for lasting peace.

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, on his day-long visit to Tehran Monday, discussed with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani the “strengthening of brotherly relations between the two countries rooted in common history, culture and people,” according to a statement issued by the ministry.

Asif earlier held detailed talks with Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif on bilateral relations and the prevailing regional situation, including efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

They underscored that the regional countries have vital stakes in the stability of Afghanistan and should play a more proactive role in peace efforts.
Pakistan's FM calls for achieving regional consensus to address Afghan issue –Xinhua

11 Sep 17

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday here urged regional countries to reach a consensus that could lead to the best solution to the Afghanistan problem.

Asif made the remarks in an interview with Iranian official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) at the Islamabad airport before leaving for Tehran for a visit.

"Basically my main purpose of the visit to Iran is to evolve some consensus amongst the neighbors of Afghanistan, because peace in Afghanistan will have a comprehensive effect on the rest of the region," Asif said.

The Pakistani top diplomat said the U.S. military approach in Afghanistan has already failed to address the problems in the country.

"No need to say that the approach taken by the Americans which is a military one, has not been able to bring peace to Afghanistan 16 years," he said. "It is very important for us, it is very important for the region that we evolve consensus over different problems."

He said Pakistan believes that there can be no military solution to the Afghanistan problem, because a political solution is always a long-lasting one while a military solution will collapse soon.

Asif said he reiterated on a political solution to the Afghanistan problem during his visit to China days ago.

Meanwhile, Asif said he will travel to Turkey on Tuesday to try his best to reach a regional consensus on Afghanistan.

He added that he also plans to meet his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in the near future on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session to discuss the Afghanistan issue.

During his one-day visit to Tehran, Asif is expected to meet his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani.

In addition to the Afghanistan problem, the two sides will also discuss how to deal with the new U.S. policy for Afghanistan and South Asia and promote the bilateral ties.

PM warns US against ‘starving Pakistan of funds’ – Reuters

11 Sep 17

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi says it would be counter-productive for the United States to sanction Pakistani officials or further cut military assistance, warning that any such move would hurt both countries’ fight against militancy.

US-Pakistan relations have frayed since President Donald Trump last month set out a new Afghanistan policy and lashed out at Islamabad, accusing it of giving ‘safe haven to agents of chaos’ by harbouring the Afghan Taliban and other militants.
The United States has already begun conditioning future aid to Pakistan on progress Islamabad makes in tackling the Haqqani Network militants, who, it alleges, are Pakistan-based and have helped the Taliban carry out deadly attacks inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan denies hosting militant sanctuaries, and Islamabad bristles at claims it has not done enough to tackle militancy, noting the country has borne the brunt of violence in the war against terrorism, suffering tens of thousands of casualties since 2001.

Abbasi, 58, told Reuters that any targeted sanctions by Washington against Pakistani military and intelligence officials would not help US counter-terrorism efforts. “We are fighting the war against terror, anything that degrades our effort will only hurt the US effort,” he said in an interview in Islamabad on Monday. “What does it achieve?”

US officials privately say the targeted sanctions would be aimed at Pakistani officials with ties to extremist groups and are part of an array of options being discussed to pressure Pakistan to change its behaviour, including further aid cuts.

Washington’s civilian and military assistance to Pakistan was less than $1 billion in 2016, down from a peak of $3.5 billion in 2011, and Abbasi warned that the US will not achieve its counter-terrorism aims by starving Pakistan of funds. “If the military aid cuts degrade our effort to fight war on terror, who does it help?” he said. “Whatever needs to be done here, it needs to be a cooperative effort.”

Abbasi said one practical side-effect of military aid cuts and the US Congress blocking the sale of subsidised F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan will be to force Islamabad to buy weapons from China and Russia. “We’ve had to look at other options to maintain our national defensive forces,” he said.

The Trump administration’s tougher stance is seen as pushing Islamabad closer to Beijing, which has pledged about $60 billion in roads, rail and power infrastructure in Pakistan as part of its ambitious Belt and Road initiative to build vast land and sea trade routes linking Asia with Europe and Africa. “We have a major economic relationship with (China), we have a major military relationship since the 1960s, so that’s definitely one of our options,” Abbasi said.

The prime minister said it was “unfair” to blame Pakistan for all the troubles in Afghanistan, stressing that Washington should show more appreciation for Pakistan’s losses from militancy and its role in hosting 3.5 million Afghan refugees.

He added that Afghan-based militants have also launched cross-border attacks on Pakistani civilians and military, prompting Islamabad to begin investing ‘several billion dollars’ to fence the porous 2,500 km border. “We intend to fence the whole border to control that situation,” he added.

Abbasi also faces growing headwinds on the economy ahead of the general election, likely in mid-2018. Growth in Pakistan’s $300 billion economy surged to 5.3 per cent in 2016-17, its fastest pace in a decade, but the macroeconomic outlook has deteriorated, stoking concerns Pakistan may need an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout to avert a balance of payments crisis. Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves have dwindled by almost a quarter to $14.7 billion since last October, while the 2016-17 current account deficit has more than doubled to $12.1 billion.

Abbasi said the government was looking at a raft of measures to alleviate current account pressures to avoid going back to the IMF, including reducing imports of luxury goods, boosting exports, and possibly devaluing its currency.
Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is a staunch opponent of a weaker rupee but the Prime Minister said it had been discussed. “There are pros and cons to devaluation, but that could be a decision we take,” he said, adding that any devaluation would not be drastic, and “today, it’s not on the table yet.”

Abbasi is also pushing ahead with a wide-ranging tax reform agenda before the elections. The ruling PML-N is looking for cross-party support for the reforms, but Abbasi said radical changes would require an integrated approach, including building confidence among tax payers, reducing income taxes and making it less attractive to invest in a real estate sector that attracts black money. “You not only need to have a stick, you need to have a carrot also.”

Abbasi, who has hinted his former boss, Nawaz Sharif, remains the power behind the throne by repeatedly calling him ‘the people’s prime minister’, said the three-time premier remains hugely popular despite his disqualification by the Supreme Court on July 28. “Politics is not decided in courts,” said Abbasi, who was jailed along with Sharif after the 1999 military coup. “Politically, Nawaz Sharif is stronger today than he was on July 28.”

**US forces have failed in Afghanistan: Pakistan – The News**

*12 Sep 17*

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday said the US forces had failed to restore peace in Afghanistan and emphasised a politically-negotiated solution to the conflict.

The foreign minister expressed these views during a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Dr Javad Zarif here. Asif also called on Iranian President Dr Hassan Rouhani, who said foreign powers did not want a solution of problems.

According to a Foreign Office statement, soon after his arrival in Tehran, Asif held detailed talks with Dr Javad Zarif on bilateral relations and the prevailing regional situation, including efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

They underscored that the regional countries had vital stakes in Afghan stability and they should play a more proactive role in the peace efforts. Asif said pursuing the policy of peaceful neighbourhood, Pakistan was committed to further strengthening relations with Iran and working closely for promoting peace, security and development in the region.

In this regard, he expressed satisfaction over the increasing engagement between Pakistan and Iran while emphasising the need for focusing on promoting trade, economic cooperation and connectivity.

Dr Javad Zarif reaffirmed Iran’s commitment to deepening relations with Pakistan in diverse fields including trade, investment, connectivity as well as border management. Both ministers shared deep concern over human rights violations in the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK).

The two ministers also expressed deep concern over the atrocities being committed against the Rohingyas and agreed on the need for urgent humanitarian efforts to alleviate their suffering.

**Pakistani, Chinese officials discuss Afghanistan amid tension with U.S.-**

*Reuters*
28 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary met China’s special envoy on Afghan affairs on Monday, a foreign office spokesman said, a day after Islamabad canceled a scheduled visit by a top U.S. official.

The decision by Pakistan to postpone the visit of Alice Wells, acting assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, came a week after President Donald Trump said Islamabad was prolonging the war in Afghanistan.

Trump had accused Pakistan of harboring “agents of chaos” and providing safe havens for militant groups waging an insurgency against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul.

Pakistani officials responded by saying the U.S. should not “scapegoat” Pakistan and accused the American military of failing to eliminate militant sanctuaries inside Afghanistan.

Wells had been due to discuss Trump’s new Afghan policy during her time in Islamabad.

During Monday’s visit, Chinese envoy Deng Xijun and Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua discussed “efforts for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan,” Pakistan’s foreign office said in a statement.

“The Chinese special envoy lauded Pakistan’s contribution and sacrifices made in the fight against terrorism ... he said Pakistan’s efforts toward eliminating the scourge of terrorism should be fully recognized by the international community,” the foreign office said.

Beijing has pledged to spend $57 billion on infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of its “Belt and Road” initiative.

China's spending in Pakistan has helped to revive the country's sputtering economy.

The deepening ties between the two nations have turned Pakistan into a key cog in China's plan to build a modern-day "Silk Road" of land and sea trade routes linking Asia with Europe and Africa.

Pakistan cannot bring Afghan war into Pakistan: Qamar Bajwa – Pak Tribune

28 Aug 17

DUSHANBE: Assuring cooperation to Afghanistan, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa said that Pakistan cannot bring Afghan war into Pakistan.

Addressing Quadrilateral Counter Terrorism Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on Sunday, the army chief said terrorism is a multinational threat. He said Pakistan has indiscriminately eliminated all safe havens of terrorists on its soil.
The meeting was attended by senior military leadership of member countries, including Gen Bajwa, Gen Li Zuocheng (China), General Sobirzoda Imomali Abdurrahim (Tajikistan) and General Sharif Yaftali (Afghanistan), the ISPR said.

All four leaders welcomed the QCCM initiative and expressed hope that an inclusive and cooperative regional approach will prove best for eradication of terrorism.

Bajwa highlighted achievements of Pakistan in fight against terrorism for eliminating terrorists' safe havens from its soil. He said that terrorism being a transnational threat can only be defeated through intelligence sharing and coordinated effective border management.

The participants also signed an outline cooperative mechanism which will come into force after its endorsement by respective governments.

On sidelines of the event, COAS met Afghan CGS Gen Sharif Yaftali. Afghan situation was discussed candidly sharing concerns.

He said that Pakistan has already cleared all its areas indiscriminately and has started unilateral border security measures including fencing. Besides border security management other key factor for enduring peace is dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees.

The army chief reassured Afghan side that Pakistan is open to any suggestion that facilitate peace in Afghanistan. In this spirit, he offered to form a Pak-Afghan army working group to jointly work and formulate security recommendations for government level discussion aimed at addressing mutual concerns. Afghan CGS agreed to the proposal and thanked COAS for his relentless efforts towards peace.

Defence Ministry officials and military leadership of all four countries have held several staff level consultations over the last few months to formulate agenda points for conduct of this event, said the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army's media wing.

Upon arrival, the COAS called on the Tajik Defence Minister Sherdil Mirzo and Chinese Chief of Joint Staff General Li Zuocheng.

The participants also signed an outline cooperative mechanism which will come into force after its endorsement by respective governments.

During the next two days the forum will discuss regional security environment and way forward in relation to situation in Afghanistan and Counter Terrorism efforts.

Last week, Gen Bajwa reacted strongly to President Donald Trump's accusations that Islamabad takes billions of dollars in aid from Washington and helps militants plotting deadly attacks against American troops in Afghanistan.

"We are not looking for any material or financial assistance from USA, but trust, understanding and acknowledgement of our contributions," General Qamar Javed Bajwa told the US ambassador in a meeting at Pakistan army's headquarters in Rawalpindi.

While announcing his long-awaited Afghan policy, Trump harshly criticized Pakistan, asserting Washington is paying Islamabad "billions and billions of dollars", but the South Asian nation is sheltering the terrorists US forces are fighting on the other side of the border. Bajwa in his meeting with
Ambassador David Hale reiterated that peace in Afghanistan is as important for Pakistan as for any other country. "We have done a lot towards that end and shall keep on doing our best, not to appease anyone, but in line with our national interest and national policy," noted the top general.

**Pakistan Hardens Stance to Trump’s Afghan Strategy – VOA**

28 Aug 17
Ayaz Gul

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan appears to have hardened its stance to U.S. President Donald Trump’s recently announced Afghan and South Asia strategy; but, officials dismiss suggestions Islamabad is seeking “confrontation” or a “rupture” in its decades-old relations with Washington.

While announcing his long-awaited policy last week, Trump accused Pakistan of housing “agents of chaos” and “the very terrorists” the U.S. military has been battling in Afghanistan. The policy also attempts to give Pakistan’s archival, India, a major role in security-related regional efforts.

Pakistani leaders responded by saying the U.S. terror charges are an attempt to “scapegoat” their country and accused the American military of failing to defeat the 16-year-old Afghan Taliban insurgency.

Moreover, Pakistan postponed Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells’ visit to Islamabad, scheduled for Monday, “until a mutually convenient time.”

The development came shortly after Islamabad decided against sending Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif to Washington, where he was scheduled to meet with his U.S. counterpart.

**More engagement needed**

Instead of acknowledging Pakistan’s “unprecedented” sacrifices in fighting terrorism, Washington’s new Afghan strategy is nothing but the same “old tactics of bullying and browbeating,” according to Pakistani Senator Mushahid Hussain.

“That attempt has already backfired,” says Hussain, chairman of the Pakistani Senate’s Defense Committee. “That’s why Pakistan has said very clearly neither the foreign minister is going to Washington nor are we willing to receive any American delegation to Islamabad,” Hussain noted.

The influential Pakistani senator emphasized the importance of engagement between the two countries, saying only through collective efforts, also involving key regional stakeholders, can the long-standing Afghan problem be resolved.

“I think the best way forward would be for the United States administration to review its wrong policy, not place blame on Pakistan and consider Pakistan as part of the solution rather than part of the problem and not look at issues and the region through the lenses of India,” asserted Hussain.

Islamabad alleges rival India is using its growing influence in Afghanistan to foment terrorism and violence in Pakistan.

Pakistan has long ignored U.S. and Afghan demands to use force against Taliban insurgents hiding on its soil. Officials maintain millions of Afghan refugees are in the country and it is impossible for authorities to identify suspected militants who are using the displaced population for shelter.
“Pakistan cannot bring Afghan war into Pakistan,” the chief of the country’s powerful military, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, reiterated Sunday. He was talking to his Afghan counterpart on the sidelines of four-nation counterterrorism military-level talks in Tajikistan, with China also in attendance.

“Pakistan has already cleared all its areas indiscriminately and has started unilateral border security measures including fencing,” Bajwa said.

**Pakistan defends efforts**

Suspicion in Washington about Islamabad's efforts against terrorism stem from the killing of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden by U.S. forces deep inside Pakistan in 2011 and the elimination of Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in a U.S. drone strike in the country's southwest in 2016.

Pakistani officials cite the U.S. military’s assessments the Taliban has extended its control or influence to more than 40 percent of the Afghan territory since the withdrawal of international combat forces from Afghanistan in 2014.

“They don't need hideouts or sanctuaries in Pakistan. They have vast territory [under their control], which is beyond Kabul’s, at their disposal. Why would they come to Pakistan for sanctuaries?” Foreign Minister Asif asked over the weekend.

Pakistani officials say the fencing of nearly 2,600-kilometer largely porous border with Afghanistan and building of new forts as well as outposts will effectively deter terrorist infiltration.

Despite financial and logistical challenges, the massive project is expected to be completed within next two years, says army spokesman Major-General Asif Ghafoor.

The border management program has already reduced terrorist attacks in the country and Pakistan would like Afghans to introduce similar steps on their side, he said. “We are even ready to fund and fence the border as well as build security outposts for Afghan security forces on their side of the frontier,” Ghafoor said.

Within a year, all traditional crossing points on the Afghan border will be opened for travelers and traders because Pakistan’s aim is to “hurt terrorists” and facilitate movement of peaceful citizens.

“For years, terrorists were freely roaming across the border but today, 90 percent of the frontier is difficult to cross from the Pakistani side because of strict measures we are putting in place,” Ghafoor said.

**Other support for Pakistan**

Officials in Islamabad have shown concern about possible U.S. military and economic sanctions in the Trump administration's new Afghan policy, citing years of dependence on American military hardware and the U.S. being a major trade partner.

They do not, however, anticipate a "rupture" in bilateral ties as Pakistan's ground lines of communication and airspace continue to play a crucial role in sending supplies to thousands of American and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

Observers say Pakistan’s deepening relations with traditional ally, China, and emerging alliance with Russia have apparently emboldened Islamabad to say “enough is enough” to U.S. pressure tactics.
On Monday, the Chinese special envoy on Afghan Affairs, Deng Xijun, during his visit to Islamabad, reaffirmed Beijing’s “continuing and firm” support to efforts Pakistan is making for peace and stability in Afghanistan, officials said.

“The Chinese special envoy lauded Pakistan’s contribution and sacrifices made in the fight against terrorism,” said a Pakistani Foreign Ministry statement.

**Pakistan wants peace and stability in Afghanistan: PM – PT**

28 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that Pakistan wanted peace and stability in Afghanistan as it has suffered immensely on account of the prevailing situation in that country. He said this on Monday while talking to British High Commissioner Thomas Drew, who called on him to congratulate the PM on his assumption of the office.

The prime minister said that Pakistan had the greatest stake in Afghanistan’s return to normalcy, but its commitment to peace and stability in the region was underscored. He added that Pakistan had carried out a successful campaign and continued its fight against terrorism inside the country and made enormous sacrifices in the process.

The high commissioner conveyed greetings of British Prime Minister Theresa May and underscored that in United Kingdom (UK), Pakistan had a great friend. He added that the British prime minister also knew Pakistan well and had visited the country three times. PM Abbasi thanked the high commissioner for conveying the message from Theresa May.

The prime minister and the high commissioner discussed regional situation – including Afghanistan, enhancing bilateral trade and the significant role of the Pakistani community in the UK. The envoy also highlighted the importance of trade and informed the PM that new British Trade Minister Greg Hands would visit Pakistan in the coming months to discuss the increasing trade opportunities with Pakistan after ‘Brexit’.

The envoy also assured that the UK was committed to supporting Pakistan in its efforts for a peaceful and stable region, and he recognised the sacrifices made by Pakistan’s law enforcement agencies and military. He acknowledged that the operations carried out by Pakistan had helped in cleaning up large parts of tribal areas of terrorists and their networks.

**Chinese special envoy, foreign secretary discuss Afghan peace process – Dawn**

28 Aug 17

China's Special Envoy on Afghan Affairs, Ambassador Deng Xijun called on Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua on Monday afternoon to discuss "regional and international efforts for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan", a press release issued by the Foreign Office stated.
"Ambassador Deng Xijun reaffirmed China’s continuing and firm support to Pakistan’s commitment and efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan," the release said. "Emphasizing that there was no military solution to the conflict, he underlined the need for a politically negotiated settlement through an Afghan-led Afghan-owned peace process," it said.

The envoy also reiterated China's position that Pakistan's efforts towards eliminating terrorism should be recognised by the international community.

The missive stated that Janjua had emphasised the need for close cooperation and coordination between Pakistan and China to promote "the shared objective of peace and stability in the region" while recalling the "productive deliberations" between the two sides during her recent visit to Beijing last week.

The two representatives agreed to strengthen cooperation in "facilitating peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan as well as promoting meaningful engagement between the three neighbourly countries," the release said.

**Trump’s new Afghanistan policy has Pakistan angry and alarmed**

**Washington Post**

29 Aug 17  
*Pamela Constable*

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — A wave of anti-American anger has swept Pakistan this past week, triggered both by President Trump’s threat to punish the country for harboring insurgents and by his invitation to India, Pakistan’s longtime rival, to become more involved in Afghanistan’s future.

Tribal and religious leaders have held protests at border crossings, and banners urging “Say no to America!” have appeared across the capital. Officials have canceled trips to Washington and asked a State Department official to postpone her planned visit here this week. Across the country’s fractious political spectrum, leaders have raised a collective fist at Trump.

In a stern speech Aug. 21, the U.S. president laid out a new militarized policy for the region, saying he would send more American troops to Afghanistan and insisting that Pakistan must “do more” to rein in Islamist militants or face possible sanctions, such as cutting aid or revoking its status as a major non-NATO ally.

Afghan officials welcomed Trump’s message, but Pakistanis accused him of “bullying” their country despite its history of cooperating with the United States in foreign conflicts. They said he had betrayed them by reaching out to India, which Pakistan views as a persistent threat to its existence.

“President Trump wants to portray us as a villain despite the huge losses we have suffered in the so-called anti-terrorism war,” said Hafiz Hamdullah, a conservative Muslim cleric and legislator. “Both India and the U.S. want to use Afghanistan against us. These charges of terrorist hideouts are just to destabilize Pakistan.”

Mian Raza Rabbani, the left-leaning chairman of Pakistan’s Senate, denounced Trump in similar terms. “No country in the world has done more than Pakistan to counter the menace of terrorism,” he declared. Invoking the “legacy of Vietnam,” he said that if Trump “wants Pakistan to become a graveyard for U.S. troops, let him do so.”
In tribal regions along the border, where U.S. drone strikes have killed hundreds of suspected militants and civilians, one crowd of tribesmen chanted, “Long live Pakistan.” In another spot, religious activists held up placards saying, “India, America and Afghanistan are conspiring against Pakistan.”

Pakistan’s National Security Committee, which comprises top military and civilian officials, sharply rejected Trump’s charges of sheltering insurgents and demanded that the U.S. military “eliminate sanctuaries for terrorists” on the Afghan side. “The Afghan war cannot be fought in Pakistan,” the group declared.

Pakistani officials took other steps to show their unhappiness. They requested that a planned visit by Alice Wells, the senior State Department official dealing with the region, be indefinitely postponed. Pakistan’s foreign minister, who had been planning a trip to Washington, instead announced that he would travel to China, Russia and Turkey.

Despite the hostile rhetoric, there were signs that U.S.-Pakistan relations are far from collapsing. Over the past few weeks, several low-profile meetings were held between current and former officials from both governments to discuss how to keep relations on an even keel.

Pakistani newspapers ran headlines that blasted Trump as a hectoring bully but also published nuanced commentaries calling for pragmatism and patience. The editors of Dawn, the country’s most influential daily paper, counseled that “there is still space and time for constructive dialog. A strategic rupture is in neither the U.S. nor Pakistan’s interest.”

For Pakistan, the issue of militant sanctuaries is a familiar one; both of Trump’s immediate predecessors pressed Pakistan to crack down on them but did not take harsh measures, especially because Pakistan was cooperating in the broader anti-terrorism war. This time, though, Pakistani officials are said to be far more worried that Trump, an unpredictable leader, may follow through.

“Trump’s threats are real. . . . Madness on our doorstep has already arrived,” commentator Syed Talat Hussain wrote in the News International on Monday. He suggested that if Trump, “an ignoramus addicted to creating sensation,” ordered a drone strike in Pakistani territory - as opposed to the border tribal areas — it could “get us embroiled in a war with the U.S. This is deadly serious business.”

Pakistanis have been even more deeply rattled by Trump’s warm embrace of India, where the current prime minister is an ardent Hindu nationalist and Indian army troops have been waging an aggressive, months-long campaign against Muslim protesters in the disputed Kashmir region.

Pakistan has long pursued influence in Afghanistan largely as a foil to India, a larger and more powerful rival, only to see New Delhi become a major benefactor of the U.S.-backed government in Kabul.

“Trump’s comments about India were more unsettling for Pakistanis than his threats to Pakistan,” said Michael Kugelman, a Pakistan expert at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. “The U.S. calling for a deeper Indian footprint in Afghanistan sets off alarm bells across Pakistan. It will cause very real fear.”

A few Pakistani voices here have called for a rethinking of Pakistan’s efforts to influence Afghanistan, noting this has created a burden on its resources and a spillover of Islamist radicalization. But virtually no one questions the notion that India, the world’s largest democracy, is their mortal enemy — a premise that has long kept Pakistan’s army in a position of extraordinary power but has left the country increasingly isolated.

Today, the dominant sentiment here is one of betrayal by an old friend that owes a large debt to Pakistan.
“We have sacrificed for so many years to help the United States, and this Afghan war has destroyed us,” said Rehman Malik, a Pakistani senator and former interior minister. “We don’t want anything but their respect. We are a victim of terrorism, not a cause of it. We want peace in Afghanistan, not war. Now America is befriending India at the expense of Pakistan. And that really hurts.”

**Trump’s spat - Pakistan’s response? – Nation.PK**

30 Aug 17

*Dr Kamal Monnoo*

President Trump’s spat against Pakistan when announcing his new Afghan policy last week was uncalled for, rather disappointing and downright insulting - naturally Pakistanis are hurt. Ever since, anti-American sentiment here has risen; in reply the opposition leader, Imran Khan, has spoken passionately-cum-strongly in the parliament; and a large segment of proud and patriotic Pakistanis are pressurizing their government to give a tit for tat message to the United States (US) or even temporarily sever ties, if need be. While one can surely understand the anger and a sense of betrayal (by the US) being felt here, the question is would a knee-jerk reaction from Pakistan be the right response and more importantly, will it be in the interest of Pakistan?

After all, one has come to know by now that decisions associated with Trump may no longer reflect the true feelings or majority of the American public. Already there is a strong dissent within the Republican camp on this new Afghan policy, which they consider to be strategically flawed and doomed for failure. They opine that not only is it poorly crafted, but it also fails to capture Pakistan’s role without which a sustainable Afghan solution will always remain elusive – in short, no lessons learnt from the last 16 years. Moreover, critics say that it has been primarily prepared by a group of 3 retired Generals whose objectivity is questionable owing to their quite dismal performance during service on respective assignments in Afghanistan and sadly, a grave personal tragedy in case of one. Potentially, it is likely to implode over time.

However, the reality is that good or bad; a new Afghan policy has been announced by the US that is bound to create difficulties for Pakistan in the days ahead and therefore, we need to now formulate our strategy on how to counter it. Also, the situation presents a new phenomenon for Pakistan, since the 60s, it is the first time that we practically find ourselves on the wrong side of the US foreign policy – the threats of ‘do more’ have been there for a long time, but the enemy status, if labelled, will certainly be the first. And it is this very possibility of reaching extreme positions that we need to diffuse – firm stands and guarding one’s self interest do not necessarily require noise or hurling insults! Any defence czar will tell you that in wake of a threat the best security is one that is subtle. To resolve the situation what is required is a comprehensive approach entailing the required short-term and long-term measures and a process to achieve desired objectives.

Short-term: Like it or not, it is important to take into account certain realities when crafting our response strategy. USA is still Pakistan’s largest market next to the European Union (EU) and we do not want to lose it; All doors to global financial institutions like the IMF, World Bank, etc. lead through the US and its allies; a significant portion of home remittances still come from the US; and last but not least, our dollar transactions require clearance from New York and any hiccups there could be disastrous for the economy. In wake of this and given that the underlying desire is to keep our friendship with the US intact, the following would be advisable:

* There is a large presence of US Corporations in Pakistan (Abbott, Coca Cola, Pepsi, CPC, Colgate-Palmolive, etc.), which have expanded exponentially in recent years, thus showing their faith in our
economy. The government should go that extra mile to assure them of its continued support and that their interests remain well protected in every way. This will not only be vital in cementing existing mutual economic linkages, but will also go a long way in projecting Pakistan as a mature and responsible country, promoting a soft image.

* Resultant anti-American sentiments spurred by any political party, group or media should be strictly curbed.

* Emphasis should be on letting the US know what Pakistan has to offer them, politically, militarily and economically, and not on what the US stands to lose by alienating Pakistan. This will prevent any ‘I said so’ notions from gaining credence in the American public. In fact this will be the most effective way of putting to shame all misconceived rhetoric on Pakistan’s genuine commitment to war on terror.

* No good putting the US in an either-or situation vis-à-vis India. Our relevance in any case is of paramount importance in Central and South Asia regardless of the US relationship with India.

* Work on bringing realism in mutual expectations by clearly articulating importance and necessity of Pakistan’s role in reaching a win-win solution in Afghanistan, but at the same time being mindful of the fact presenting a non-supportive Pakistan will become uninteresting for the US interests in the region.

* Use common friends like Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey, UK and the European Union to put across Pakistan’s point of view.

* Mobilize Pakistani diaspora and Pakistan’s friends in the US for effective lobbying.

Long-term: The objectives should focus on:

* Promoting academia linkages. Most Ivy campuses (including that of my Alma Mater) have an overriding Indian presence, which needs to be matched.

* Encouraging cross investments by providing space to US Corporations aspiring to access Pakistani market (Monsanto is one such case that comes to mind). I am certainly not advocating here that we give them a free hand, but to work with them while ensuring our self-interest.

* Pakistan is a huge market of 220 million people with perhaps the fastest growing middle class in the world, and has its own importance as an extremely lucrative consumption economy. Comparison to India in many ways is irrelevant. Use this leverage effectively.

* Utilize Pakistan’s entrepreneurs effectively to promote economic linkages. For example, the way India formed the infamous London Club of leading Indian business houses, back in the early 2000s, which today has gone on to create a visible Indian footprint on the global corporate canvas.

* Get Pakistan’s economy in order.

Finally, the process: To start with it is important that our Foreign Minister (FM) should definitely undertake his planned visit to the US. To put one’s perspective across and to convince, dialogue is a pre-requisite. However, before the FM lands there, the government needs to ensure that it first puts its own house in order by reigning in any irresponsible media (print & electronic), analysts and think tanks from raising hysteria or from destroying the credibility of the very leaders representing us. Pakistan is certainly not a nation idealizing cheats or corruption, and there is no civil-military rift when it comes to safeguarding the sovereignty of the country. There should simply be no room for airing such divisiveness. Lastly, high level visits for relationship building just set the tone, whereas, the process itself is on-going. Ironically, at present, there is no such framework nor a team of professionals specifically
tasked by the government to explicitly identify our objectives and then work at keeping the US engaged in a continuous dialogue process. No wonder, we always wake after the damage has been done!

**News Analysis: Cracks deepened between Pakistan, U.S. on Afghan issue, engagement still needed – Xinhua**

*Muhammad Tahir*

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 29 (Xinhua) -- A vast majority of Pakistanis believe that the United States has failed in the war in Afghanistan despite using all its military power in 17 years and U.S. President Donald Trump has put more pressures on Pakistan to find a scapegoat to convince Americans.

In a major shift in his pre-election approach to pull the U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, where the U.S. forces have been involved in their longest war, Trump has agreed to deploy more troops.

Pakistanis also seemed upset at the U.S. president's ignorance of Pakistan's anti-terrorism role which claimed about 73,000 lives, including over 6,000 security personnel, since 2003 when Pakistani troops were sent to tribal regions to fight against militants, many of whom had been forced to cross the border to Pakistan due to U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

Trump had warned that his administration could no longer be silent about "Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond. Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists."

Experts in Pakistan are unanimous that the Trump's new policy for South Asia is the continuation of the policies of his predecessors, Barack Obama and George W. Bush, to use the military option in Afghanistan instead of pressing for political negotiations.

Veteran Pakistani diplomat Ayaz Wazir argued that as the United State is not winning the war in Afghanistan, it has started accusing and putting more pressure on Pakistan.

"This is a fact that Pakistan is very important and that is why Russia and China opposed pressure on Pakistan after President Trump unveiled his review for the region. Pakistan's role is more important even than the U.S. in peace and stability in Afghanistan and the U.S. should use this role," Wazir told Xinhua in a recent interview.

Senior security expert Sayed Qaiser Hussain Shah opined that Trump has admitted that the U.S. policy in Afghanistan has failed since the start of the war in 2001.

"As the U.S. new policy is mainly shifted the blame to Pakistan, the government should increase its understanding and cooperation with Russia, China, Iran and other regional countries to jointly work for peace talks in Afghanistan," Shah, who has served as Air Marshal in Pakistan Air Force, told Xinhua.

He also pointed out that Kabul also lacks a clear policy to deal with the situation and efforts for political dialogue in Afghanistan could also reduce the influence of India.

Rahimullah Yousafzai, the resident editor of The News daily, said the U.S. policy for South Asia is based on Trump's wishes, who unfortunately did not recognize Pakistan's sacrifices against terrorism.
People in Pakistan backed the government's decision to postpone the visit to Washington by Foreign Minister Khwaja Mohammad Asif in the wake of Trump's serious accusations against Pakistan. The visit was reportedly scheduled last week.

U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells also had to postpone her Pakistan visit planned in this week on Pakistan's request amid tensions.

A senior Pakistani official has told Xinhua in Islamabad that the country had valid reasons to delay Asif's visit.

"It would show our weaknesses if the foreign minister visit the U.S. despite wild accusation and to discredit Pakistan's unprecedented sacrifices against terrorism," said the official anonymously.

He, however, said Pakistan would engage the United States and there could be high level contacts on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly next month.

The official said Pakistan is focusing on consultations with the regional countries, including China, Russia, Iran and Turkey, to jointly work for peace in Afghanistan and the region.

Pakistani political leaders, including opposition parties, have showed rare unity against the new U.S. policy and said the country would not surrender to any threats.

A series of demonstrations on Monday also condemned Trump's allegations.

Call to muster regional support against US’s Afghan policy – Dawn

30 Aug 17

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Senate is set to adopt on Wednesday (today) a resolution recommending to the government to launch a regional initiative to coordinate response to US President Donald Trump’s new Afghan policy critical of Pakistan’s antiterrorism efforts.

It also suggests that the quadrilateral mechanism comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan be made more proactive to play a greater role in countering terrorism in the region.

The house, which converted itself into a committee, gave a final shape to the draft resolution based on the policy guidelines proposed by a six-member subcommittee. After its passage by the Senate, the resolution will be sent to the National Assembly, which is likely to adopt a resolution on the same lines.

Informed sources told Dawn that the draft resolution rejected Trump’s remarks as one-sided and pointed out that it put the entire blame on Pakistan while ignoring its legitimate concerns.

Senate set to adopt today resolution rejecting Trump’s remarks as one-sided

It also wants the security establishment to take note of the United States’ plan to increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan and maintain their presence for an indefinite period. It calls for focusing on border management and security along the border with Afghanistan. It asks the government to prepare a fact sheet on American assistance to Pakistan in order to clear the picture of how much actual reimbursements have been made under the Coalition Support Fund as well as the US failure to supply...
military hardware and aid on one pretext or the other and the losses incurred by Pakistan since the US war in Afghanistan.

The resolution also wants the government to effectively highlight the Indian interference in Pakistan and refers to militants like Moulvi Fazlullah and others hiding in Afghanistan and operating against Pakistan. Similar allegations by Afghanistan need to be looked into more closely.

It stresses the need for a mutually acceptable verification mechanism to look into acrimonious allegations of cross-border violations that emanate from both Kabul and Islamabad.

During the in-camera proceedings of the Senate Committee of the Whole, members wanted the government to take a firm stand on its principled position that the international community should acknowledge and respect Pakistan’s sacrifices as frontline state in the war on terror instead of accusing Islamabad of harbouring terrorists.

According to the sources, the senators suggested that the government should highlight its sacrifices in the war against terrorism, including loss of invaluable human lives and destruction of its infrastructure, which were colossal than the much-trumpeted US assistance to Pakistan.

They suggested establishment of links with the critics of President Trump in the US Congress and Senate. Pakistan’s viewpoint should not only be conveyed to the friendly countries, but also to the allies of the United States, they said, adding that the US ambassador should be called to the Foreign Office and informed him about the parliamentary proceedings on the issue of Trump’s remarks about Pakistan. The senators asked the government to immediately convene a meeting the parliamentary committee on national security.

**Pakistani perspective on new Afghan policy of the US – China.org**

30 Aug 17
Ahmad Bilal

The new U.S. policy on Afghanistan is less the "America First" approach being strongly touted by the Trump administration and more "America Only." From Pakistan's perspective, it was no big surprise, as it has become accustomed to such American policy U-turns.

Nevertheless, there are some new aspects that deserve attention. The mistake committed in Iraq has been rightly admitted, and the U.S. even seems to acknowledge other similar mistakes in the past. However, what assurance is there that the new policy is not laying the foundations for yet another mistake?

There's talk of "nation building;" however, can anyone offer a single example of successful nation building by the U.S. in a country where its military operated?

How many terrorist attacks in last few years that directly targeted U.S. or its allies can be proven to have originated from Afghanistan?

While departure from time-based approach is forced by circumstances and nation building is being left to Afghanistan alone, can a security-centric approach backed by couple of thousand troops suffice to create the desired conditions?
One can assume that American commanders will have recourse to excessive use of drones and air strikes not only inside Afghanistan, but on perceived safe havens outside that country. This is most likely to be augmented by private contractors operating with a greater degree of immunity.

We shouldn't be surprised to see increased "collateral damage." A vicious cycle of violence awaits in Afghanistan, stimulated by the infinite outlook of American strategy there.

Consequent to the "strategic application of force," what kind of political process can be expected? Already, we have seen most of the political processes being scuttled in succession.

If there are genuine concerns about safe havens in Pakistan, why doesn't America support an effective border control along Pakistan-Afghan border? In fact, Pakistan has often asked the Americans to ensure sealing of the border in support of anti-terrorist operations in its border areas.

Pakistan partnered the U.S. effort in Afghanistan for more than ten years. How much did it really gain? Terrorism engulfed almost the whole of the country, leading to over 50,000 Pakistani civilian and military deaths. And yet, Pakistan is still blamed for the entire Afghanistan mess. If that is what Pakistan has to gain from partnering U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, one doesn't have to be an Einstein to foretell Pakistan's policy choices.

What payback can India offer for the billions of dollars earned in trade with the U.S.? Should it provide much-needed manpower to fight in Afghanistan on behalf of American security, or contribute financially to support the military effort?

Playing on the Indian zero sum mindset with regards to Pakistan, the U.S. uses the stick for Pakistan while showing the carrot to India. Will the latter take the bait? Indian strategists would be naive to fall into the trap. They are already getting much from Afghanistan to keep the pressure on Pakistan.

Reflecting on the announced Trump policy, some outcomes can be foretold. Anti-U.S. sentiment and calls will be an immediate outcome, at least in Pakistan; undoing all the gains made by Pakistan in last decade. Saner voices in India would quickly spot the hazards of increased Indian involvement inside Afghanistan, most unacceptably in the shape of a force contribution.

Pakistan has been given an opportunity to rethink its policy of supporting the American war on terror. In 2001, choices were limited. Today, with a much-improved internal security profile, its choices are far wider. Of course, the much-hyped American financial assistance has been continuously on the decline. The new policy has actually liberated Pakistan from many compulsions and it is in a very good position to chart its own course of action.

Ignoring other regional stakeholders like China, Russia and Iran renders meaningless all political processes aimed at reconciliation in Afghanistan. This is definitely unhelpful to peace in Afghanistan.

In Afghan context, a strategic approach independent of timelines is realistic but it would be productive only if main effort went into the political realm, complemented by effective control along the border.

Employment of forces for indefinite period with open borders would indicate a lack of genuine effort to improve situation in Afghanistan. It simply means a prolonged U.S. presence with some contribution by NATO and high-tech precision strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan continuing for the foreseeable period.

The Taliban will keep fighting and anti-U.S. sentiment will draw more recruits from Pakistan, giving more reasons for the Americans to use lethal force. It's not an attractive picture.
Pakistan, India Are Unlikely to Cooperate on Afghanistan -WSJ

*It is analogous to expecting Iran to work with Israel to root out Hezbollah.*

**Sept. 7, 2017**

Saad Mohseni and Mitchell Shivers are right in arguing that “President Trump Needs a Special Envoy in Afghanistan” (op-ed, Aug. 24). However, their suggestion that the appointee will have to coax India and Pakistan to work together on Afghanistan shows that, despite their depth and length of experience in that country, they have learned nothing about that particular dynamic. It is analogous to expecting Iran to work with Israel to root out Hezbollah.

Vijay Dandapani

Pakistan wants Afghanistan’s support to wipe out terrorism, says Aizaz Chaudhry –Pakistan Today

**7 September 2017**

Pakistan’s Ambassador to United States Aizaz Chaudhry has urged Afghanistan to cooperate with Pakistan in addressing the issue of terrorism.

He ruled out the presence of terrorists’ safe havens on the soil of Pakistan and said that terrorists’ presence in Afghanistan is causing problems for Pakistan.

Pakistan’s army chief says cannot fight Afghanistan’s war in Pakistan -KP

**Sep 07 2017**

The Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said the country cannot fight Afghanistan’s war in Pakistan, apparently gesturing towards the demands by Kabul and Washington to eliminate the sanctuaries of the Taliban and Haqqani terrorist network based in the key cities of the country.

The remarks by Gen. Bajwa could be a gesture of Pakistan to reject the calls for the elimination of the terror sanctuaries as he said the country would prefer to remain impartial in the ongoing violence in Afghanistan.

He said “We cannot fight Afghan-istan’s war in Pakistan.”

The Pakistani officials had earlier given similar statements regarding the calls for the elimination of the Afghan-linked terror sanctuaries, saying such moves could endanger the security of Pakistan.

In the meantime, Gen. Bajwa said for complete impartiality in Afghan conflict Pakistan would want an early repatriation of Afghan refugees from its soil and securing of 2,600km porous border with Afghanistan, which it has already started fencing.
The US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had earlier said Pakistan is expected to “take decisive action against militant groups based in Pakistan that are a threat to the region.”

The pressures by Washington on Pakistan regarding the safe havens of the terror groups are on the rise after the announcement of the new strategy by US President Donald Trump last month.

President Trump said “For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror. The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict. And that could happen.”

He said the next pillar of the new strategy is to change the approach and how to deal with Pakistan, emphasizing that we can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond, emphasizing that Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists.

**Pakistan: Time To Quit US Proxy War In Afghanistan – OpEd – Eur Asia Review**

*September 7, 2017*

*By Shabbir H. Kazmi*

My narrative may sound undiplomatic, but it is a true reflection of the feelings of Pakistani. Those in power or seeking access to the corridors of power may still be willing to negotiate the terms to continue to tow the US foreign policy. However, the demonstrations held in various cities of Pakistan are a clear demonstration of the feelings of the masses. The use of power to disperse the demonstrators, the use of tear gas shells and the insulting attitude towards religious clerics was enough to instigate the mob.

The worst was the helplessness of the government that was evident when it admitted that resorting to assault by police was uncalled for and those arrested were also released to avoid further agitation. It is a practice around the world that people submit a note of descent at the embassy/consulate which is received by them. Pakistanis were also following the same protocol/code of conduct and wanted to hand over their note to the US Consulate in Karachi.

The anti-Pakistan statements of the US president and other functionaries (including foreign office and the army) are nothing but the release of growing frustration after facing defeat after defeat. Though, the US administration is still not ready to accept its defeat in Iraq and Syria, it is eager to shift the attention to some other parts of the world.

The effort by the US to initiate an armed encounter between Saudi Arabia and Qatar failed and no one seems to be ready to accept its allegations against Iran. In the Korean Peninsula the US faces serious resistance from China and Russia. India already faces a strangulated relationship with China and seems not ready to indulge in any other adventure. This gives the US the chance to talk about Afghanistan, where the war continues among the tribes to gain control over opium cultivation.

The US has already lost its war in Afghanistan and its sympathizers are confined to the presidential palace in Kabul. The classification of the good and the bad Taliban has also lost its meaning. It is apprehended that the ISIS members on the run from Iraq and Syria are landing in Afghanistan. To keep these blood-thirsty and ruthless beasts busy the US has the option to herd them into Pakistan or Iran.
After the recent failed adventure of ISIS in Iran, Pakistan becomes the softest target, because of the hundreds of kilometers of a highly porous Pak-Afghan border.

Under the prevailing circumstances, the Pakistan Army has the prime responsibility of protecting its borders with ever hostile India and Afghanistan and stopping any attack on Iran from Pakistani soil. Many of the critics have already pointed out that some of the local channels, getting support from outside Pakistan, are busy in creating anti army sentiments, this policy in the past has led to the creation of Bangladesh. The masses expect that the army will not move its focus away from defending Pakistan to fighting any proxy war.

The Government of Pakistan will have to tell the US in clear words that it does not need the paltry payment for providing logistic support to the US troops. Pakistan will also have to mend its relationships with India and Iran. My humble advice to the Indian government is that it should abstain from opening fronts against Pakistan, because the war would force the foreign investors not to invest in the war-ridden country.

**Trump Afghan Strategy Poised to Fail, Pakistan Premier Says – Bloomber**

*Ismail Dilawar and Faseeh Mangi*

*August 27, 2017*

- Abbasi says Trump’s Afghan plan needs a political strategy
- Abbasi won’t allow ‘Afghanistan’s battle on Pakistan’s soil’

U.S. President Donald Trump’s strategy for the nation’s longest-running war in Afghanistan will meet the same fate as the plans of his predecessors, according to Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. Failure.

“From day one we have been saying very clearly the military strategy in Afghanistan has not worked and it will not work,” Abbasi, who took over as premier three weeks ago, said in an interview Saturday night in Karachi. There has to be a “political settlement,” he added, and it needs to be inclusive. “That’s the bottom-line.”

Abbasi said while his government supports the fight against terrorists it won’t let the war in Afghanistan, with which it shares a 2,500-kilometer (1,550-mile) border, spill into Pakistan.

The stance of Abassi’s administration may complicate Trump’s plan for the region after he pledged more U.S. troops for Afghanistan and called on Pakistan to stop providing a safe haven for terrorists.

Failure by Trump to resolve the Afghan war risks even greater financial and human cost for the U.S., could leave it bogged down further in the conflict, and may become a further sore point for ties with China and Pakistan, with Trump already chiding Beijing for not doing enough to stop the turmoil. The war has cost the U.S. about $714 billion and several thousand lives.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Sunday said the new strategy is intended to pressure the Taliban into negotiating with the Afghan government by “sending a message to the Taliban that we are not going anywhere.”

“I think the president’s been clear that this is a dramatic shift in terms of the military strategy,” Tillerson said on the “Fox News Sunday” program. “The president was clear that he’s not setting any arbitrary timelines,” he said. “Our patience is not unlimited.”
Losing Control

Afghanistan’s government is slowly losing its hold over the country with the Taliban now controlling about 40 percent of the country, which U.S. officials say couldn’t have been possible without help from Pakistan’s military. That’s a charge the Asian nation disputes.

“This is a classic dialogue of the deaf between Washington and Islamabad because neither agrees on what needs to be pursued but both make a sham of going together,” said Burzine Waghmar, a member of the Centre for the Study of Pakistan at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. “U.S. priorities are not the same as Pakistan,” which wants Afghanistan to stay dependent on it, he said.

The U.S. in previous offensives in Afghanistan used drones to attack alleged terrorists in Pakistan. NATO troops have also used Pakistani ports and roads to move equipment into land-locked Afghanistan.

“We do not intend to allow anybody to fight Afghanistan’s battle on Pakistan’s soil,” Abbasi said during an interview at the former home of the nation’s founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah, while he was on a visit to the nation’s commercial capital. “Whatever has to happen in Afghanistan should be happening in Afghanistan,” he said, adding Pakistan doesn’t harbor terrorists.

China’s Role

Abbasi was picked by the ruling party as prime minister this month after the nation’s top court disqualified predecessor Nawaz Sharif in July.

Support and investment from China will help Pakistan defy the U.S.

China, which is seeking to build its economic and strategic clout in South Asia, has more than $50 billion in planned infrastructure projects in Pakistan. With China’s role increasing, Pakistan’s forces have fewer incentives to stop covertly supporting insurgent groups that strike inside Afghanistan and India, while targeting outfits that threaten its own domestic security, according to analysts.

Pakistan’s military has been conducting its own offensive against terrorists with the latest operation in the Khyber tribal region starting last month after Islamic State’s presence increased across the border in Afghanistan. The Pakistani army earlier said it had cleared North Waziristan on the Afghanistan border, a region the U.S. has called an “epicenter” of terrorism.

More than 60,000 people have been killed while Pakistan’s economy has suffered a loss of about $120 billion from waging war at home against terrorists, according to the finance ministry. The nation also became one of the largest hosts to refugees globally after Afghans started crossing the border to flee the war after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S.

Pakistan has started returning refugees and plans to fence its border with Afghanistan to prevent the cross-border movement of militants.

Abbasi said Pakistan is willing to work with all countries including India, from which Trump sought help to develop Afghanistan’s economy, to achieve regional stability. Still, he added the Afghan government should be “owning” the issue and dealing with the Taliban.

“If they require our support, our support is available,” he said. “Our support is unconditional as far as terrorism is concerned.”
Afghan Taliban leadership is in Quetta & Peshawar, alleges US Commander

– The News

27 Aug 17

KABUL: Days after Donald Trump leveled allegations against Pakistan, commander of United States Forces and NATO in Afghanistan General John Nicholson has alleged that the US knows the Afghan Taliban leadership is in the Quetta and Peshawar areas.

“The Quetta Shura, Peshawar Shura, these shuras are identified by cities inside Pakistan, we know Afghan Taliban leaders are in these areas,” he said.

In an interview with Afghan media TOLOnews, US commander Gen Nicholson said the issue of sanctuaries outside the country was serious and has to be addressed.

The US Commander said the issue of outside sanctuaries has to be addressed but that it was “being addressed in private between the US government and the Pakistani government - but it does need to be addressed.”

“Support for terrorists and insurgents has to be reduced, has to be stopped,” Nicholson told TOLOnews.

On whether a diplomatic solution could be found, he said this was a possibility but that a significant military effort inside the country would be carried out and that together the US would work with the Afghan government to increase its military capabilities.

“I am primarily focused on activities inside Afghanistan,” but other officials are looking into the issue of sanctuaries in Pakistan, he said.

According to him, the issue of sanctuaries was a serious one and one that needed to be addressed.

Specifically asked whether the Taliban leadership in Quetta and Pashawar and other major Pakistan cities “shouldn’t sleep in peace from now on”, he said “I won’t put words in the (US) president’s mouth but he definitely conveyed this message.”

He said that following US President Donald Trump’s announcement earlier this week on his new war strategy, he, Nicholson, as a commander, has a new policy – “one based on conditions and not time.”

He said: “It gives us additional capabilities. We have a direction now provided by the US policy that is being supported by NATO.”

On the issue of general security in Afghanistan, Nicholson said the “civilian casualties is a real tragedy”.

“We know the Taliban receives the majority of its financing from narcotics traffic,” he said adding that the organization has become a group that brings misery and hardship to the people.

Asked if he sees the Taliban as a terrorist organization, Nicholson said: “They do terrorist activities and they enable terrorists.”

As an example he pointed to the Taliban links in the past to al-Qaeda.

On whether he had a mandate to go out and kill the Taliban, Nicholson said: “It is our mandate to put military pressure on the Taliban.
However, he said that the US wants a peaceful solution in Afghanistan but that the “Taliban need to know they cannot win militarily.” He said he hopes they enter the peace process.

“In the meantime we will put increasing pressure on them inside the country and on the external sanctuaries.”

In terms of developing the military, he said the special forces will be doubled and with the growth of the Afghan air force the Taliban will lose. He said these special forces’ commandos have never lost a battle against the Taliban and with an expanded force they will retake the majority of territory either outside government’s control or territory that is being contested.

He said as these forces expand their control, coupled with pressure on external sanctuaries, the Taliban will get to a point where it realizes it cannot win militarily and will have to enter into a reconciliation process.

Asked whether he was confident about winning the war, Nicholson said: “I am very focused on my mission here and on delivering for the Afghan people and delivering for my nation and the alliance. I am very encouraged by the new policy by the United States … yes I do feel confident.”

This interview comes just two days after Nicholson addressed a press conference in Kabul and said the Taliban has become a “criminal organization that is more interested in profits from drugs, kidnapping and murder for hire.”

He called on the group to lay down their arms and end the war.

**Bring Afghan Taliban on the negotiation table – Daily Times**

*Pakistanis are frustrated with the US which continuously mistreats Pakistan and ignores its material and personnel losses, which are minuscule compared to the aid Pakistan has received from this ‘ally’*

28-Aug-17

*Babar Ayaz*

President Trump brashly shifted the blame for American failures in Afghanistan on Pakistan. Even if he is right to some extent, the United States should not forget that it itself helped to train, arm, equip and fund those militants to fight a Jihad in Afghanistan — when it suited them in the ‘80s. So if most of the Islamic terrorists groups coalesce in Afghanistan and Pakistan today, it is also the fault of Reagan era US policies. The present insurgency by the Afghan Taliban is the continuation of the Jihadism inculcated by the establishments of both countries some decades ago.

The much-awaited Afghanistan policy of the United States, which was announced on Tuesday by President Trump, was tough on Pakistan. That was not unexpected: keeping in view the fact that the US has neither been able to win in Afghanistan, nor has it restored peace with the help of the existing government, and therefore required a scapegoat.

For the last 16 years, the US has tried everything and spent almost US$800 billion to suppress the Taliban insurgency, but to no avail. For the failing to crush the insurgency, despite creating and funding a large (but ill-disciplined and untrained) Afghan army, Pakistan cannot and should not be held solely responsible.
President Trump was right when he said that announcing a date for the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan would be counter-productive. It would give the Taliban a hope that the US can be beaten out of Afghanistan, and they (Taliban) would increase attacks to hasten the US withdrawal. Understandably, both sides — the US and the Taliban — would like to come to the negotiating table from a position of power. So to assume that the militants would cease fire for important peace talks for Afghanistan is a grave miscalculation on the part of Pentagon strategists.

Pakistan has to take two features of President Trump’s policy seriously: One, when he says “We will also expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorists and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan... these killers need to know that they have nowhere to hide; that no place is beyond the reach of American might and American arms. Retribution will be fast and powerful.” And two: when he says “I have already lifted restrictions the previous administration placed on our war fighters that prevented the Secretary of Defense and our commanders in the field from fully and swiftly waging battle against the enemy... micromanagement from Washington DC does not win the war.”

These features of the policy are dangerous because this may give haughty US field commanders license to attack the Afghan Taliban bases — alleged or otherwise — by conducting ‘hot pursuit’ or cross-border attacks inside Pakistan.

There is no doubt that Pakistan’s armed forces are fighting a heroic war against terrorists who challenge the writ of the government — and they are winning. But by giving importance to India in the same policy speech on Afghanistan, President Trump has given no credence to Pakistan’s sovereign concerns that India is encircling Pakistan by entrenching itself in Afghanistan. This fear drives the Pakistani establishment to consider the Afghan Taliban as their insurance policy. Supporting the Afghan Taliban also counters Indian influence on the Afghanistan government and intelligence apparatus.

Frustrated Pakistanis are asking why the US continuously mistreats Pakistan, who has been in the forefront in the fight against terrorism since it began. Pakistan has lost 7,000 soldiers and over 60,000 civilians in terrorist attacks — ten times as many as US casualties. And the damage to the economy goes into the hundreds of billions of US dollars. Pakistan does not want financial assistance: Pakistan wants the world to acknowledge its sacrifices in the war on terror, which surpass every other nation.

To bring peace to South Asia, the multinational asymmetrical war must end. We don’t need the US administration to bully us into stopping aid to the Afghan Taliban; but it is in the interest of the people of Pakistan that this seemingly duplicitous policy should be appropriately dealt with.

And even if the world doesn’t, Pakistan needs to rebuild its economy to survive. The government in Pakistan believes that they can checkmate US pressure with China’s economic and political support: the quick response by the Chinese administration in favour of Pakistan obliquely indicates that Pakistan has outsourced its geostategic interests to China. Today, China is more important to Pakistan than the US: a guarantor of Pakistan’s integrity who is already engaging threats from India in its own Doklam/Donglang region.

President Trump also reminded Pakistan that the US gave in billions of dollars to Pakistan: the facts are that the US itself initiated financial and military assistance, and from 2002 to 2012, it pumped in around $23.6 billion into Pakistan. Out of this, $15.82 billion was military assistance and $7.77 billion categorised as economic assistance. Pakistani finance ministry sources say that $8.8 billion was not mutual assistance as it came for the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), so that should be deducted from $23.6 billion grand total. This leaves the real assistance to $14.8 billion; and according to US Congressional Reports, all of this money has not been disbursed to Pakistan. But even if the figures are accepted, it means that Pakistan has received over $43 billion from the US since 1948, out of which more
than $23 billion was allocated in the last 10 years — when the US foolishly unleashed a war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s military chief has made it clear that Pakistan should be trusted by the US and Afghanistan in that it is not providing financial or strategic support to the Afghan Taliban. These are not words: these facts are evident from the deeds of the Pakistan army when it comes to fighting with homegrown Jihadi groups. And while the world appreciates our counter-terror activities against local Jihadis, they don’t talk about the terrorists who are a clear and constant threat to Pakistan. So when we talk about sacrifices of fighting against terrorism, the US and world leaders are talking about different sets of terrorists.

Pakistan should take an initiative to reconstitute the Quadrilateral Coordination Group’s peace dialogue on Afghanistan, which included China and the US. The last session of the QCG dialogue was stalled — and some say deliberately sabotaged — when news about Mullah Omar’s death in a Pakistani hospital was leaked by the Afghan sources. It is high time that to bring peace, this asymmetrical war is brought to an end. We don’t need the US administration to bully us to stop aiding the Afghan Taliban. It is in the interest of the people of Pakistan that this duplicitous policy should be dealt with.

**Divisions appear in Afghanistan after Trump’s announcement of new policy**

– Daily Times

*While Ghani welcomes, critics believe policy mainly focuses on continuation of war instead of promoting political dialogue*

28-Aug-17

Tahir Khan

**ISLAMABAD:** US President Donald Trump’s strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia seems to have divided Afghan leaders. Critics claim the policy only focuses on the continuation of the war instead of promoting political dialogue to end it.

President Ashraf Ghani welcomed President Trump’s statement, which he said “shows an enduring commitment by Afghanistan’s foundational partner in this global conflict.” Chief Executive Dr Abdullah and some other government leaders, including first vice-president General Abdul Rashid Dostam, also hailed the US policy.

However, former Afghan president Hamid Karzai reacted angrily to the strategy and said the US president had insisted on continuation and expansion of war instead of peace, which, he said, was the fundamental and original demand of Afghans.

“We oppose and condemn America’s approach and strongly oppose it,” Karzai said in a statement posted online.

“Afghans call for permanent peace in the country and the region and not the expansion of the war, killings and destruction. The US should try to put an end to the war through dialogue and peaceful measures in Afghanistan and the region that will enable the regional countries to live in peace,” said the former president, who still enjoys widespread support in Afghanistan.

Karzai, however, praised Trump’s threatening posture towards Pakistan.
Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (Hekmatyar), which signed a peace deal last year and is now part of the political system, questioned Trump’s decision for sending more troops to Afghanistan.

“Nearly 150,000 well-equipped American and NATO troops have been fighting against their armed opponents since October 2001. They have killed hundreds of thousands and displaced and maimed others. However, they have failed to bring peace to the country,” Hizb’s mouthpiece, Daily Shahadat, said in editorial comments.

“It is unclear as on what grounds and hopes Trump has made the decision to increase the number of troops. A total of 150,000 troops have been unable to bring peace so far. So what will just 4,000 additional troops achieve?” the paper asked.

“The US and others who have troops in Afghanistan should think about pulling out their forces and instead spend the funds on the Afghan National Army and police. Afghans should be allowed to solve the problem,” it said.

Latif Pedram, the leader of the National Congress Party of Afghanistan and a member of the parliament, also criticised the new US strategy and said that the Trump strategy "continues the occupation and war in Afghanistan".

Pedram, whose comments on the recognition of the border with Pakistan months ago caused uproar in Afghanistan, also accused India of creating trouble in the war-shattered country.

"The Indian government is also one of the factors contributing to the continuation of the war in Afghanistan," the lawmaker said on his official Twitter, while commenting on Trump's strategy.

"India opposes any policy that improves Afghanistan-Pakistan relations," Pedram further said, adding "Trump and Narendra Modi will make Afghanistan the battlefield of the bloodiest war."

Some independent analysts also opposed the US plan.

Dr Faiz Muhammad Zalanad, a writer and commentator, asked why President Ghani and Dr Abdullah were celebrating a vague policy.

Describing officials at the Presidential Palace as the "Facebook militia", he said the they were happy at Trump's policy because he had "threatened Pakistan, but it does not mean that Trump will exert pressure on Pakistan for the sake of useless and corrupt National Unity government. For Trump, the US' own interests are the priority."

"The new strategy will push the war towards intensification. It will be difficult to steer the country out of the situation," he said in comments posted online.

Pashtoon nationalist leaders in Afghanistan also seemed upset at the new US policy as they believe expansion of war will mostly affect the Pashtoons. Some of the Pashtoon leaders in TV debates expressed disappointment and pressed the Trump's administration to shift focus on peace process.

Former Mujahedeen leaders including Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf, Sibghatullah Mujadadi, Hamed Gailani, and Qayyamud Din Kashaaf, who had been active part of the armed resistance against the Soviets, and now live in Afghanistan, however, remained tight lipped over the issue.
US official says nobody’s asking for Indian troops in Afghanistan; New Delhi's role focused on economy, not security – PTI

27 Aug 17

Washington: Asserting that nobody has talked about asking India to send troops to Afghanistan, a senior US administration official has said New Delhi’s role in the war-torn country is focused around economic and democratic development and not on security issues.

President Donald Trump reached out to India in his Afghan and South Asia policy speech last week seeking an enhanced role for New Delhi, especially in the economic field, to bring peace and stability in war-torn Afghanistan.

The official clarified that there is no specific ask or to do list from the United States to India, but the president expects that India would continue with its good economic developmental work in Afghanistan.

"I don't think the president has articulated any specifics (about India's role in Afghanistan). But, the inter-agency (team in the US) has discussed this issue as part of the overall deliberations, and is focusing on what can be done in terms of the economic development issues, and support democratic development," the official told PTI on condition of anonymity.

"But, (India's role is) not focusing on security issues. Nobody's talking about asking India to put troops on the ground in Afghanistan. No, that has not been part of the discussions," the official said, giving an insight into the deliberations that has gone within the Trump administration as it formulated the Afghan policy over the past several months.

The official said the discussions have focused around India's role in helping with economic development with basic support to the regional processes that are aimed at ensuring regional partners have a constructive role.

"Here, I'm talking about the six plus one, which India will be very much a part of," the official added.

"We just look forward to India continuing to play the kind of positive role it's been playing over the last several years, and maybe even enhancing that even more, in terms of supporting the peace process in the country, and being involved in those regional initiatives," the official added.

Noting that India was very much involved in the Kabul process, and has always been part of the regional solution and building up regional consensus for a stable, peaceful Afghanistan, the official said, "We look forward to India continuing to play that role."

Responding to a question, the official said that the US recognises that India has already pledged $3 billion to Afghanistan, which is a large sum.

"India's development work, whether it be building a dam, or some of the energy projects, the parliament building, India has been deeply engaged in the economic development of Afghanistan. We would encourage that to continue," the official said.

"I don't think anybody has mentioned any specific dollar figure," the official said when asked if the president has a dollar figure in mind when he sought an enhanced Indian role in Afghanistan.
"The president was clear that he sees India as a country that can help in stabilising and securing Afghanistan, and that he's looking forward to working with India on these issues, in terms of the economic development in Afghanistan and strengthening the democratic institutions. India has a great role to play here, being the world's largest democracy, and being so close in the region to Afghanistan," the official said.

"So, there's no particular dollar amount that the president is thinking about. He's just thinking about how much India has to offer, and how much is at stake for India in Afghanistan. Sort of putting those two facts together and then expressing his expectation that India would be playing a helpful role in Afghanistan," said the official.

Pakistan PM Says Trump Strategy For Afghanistan 'Will Not Work' – RFE/RL

28 Aug 17

Pakistan's prime minister says U.S. President Donald Trump’s strategy for the war in Afghanistan is doomed to failure.

“From Day One, we have been saying very clearly the military strategy in Afghanistan has not worked, and it will not work,” Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said in an interview with Bloomberg News published on August 27.

There has to be a “political settlement,” he added. “That’s the bottom line.”

Abbasi, who assumed office three weeks ago, said that while Islamabad supports the fight against terrorists in neighboring Afghanistan, it will not let the conflict spill over into Pakistan.

On August 21, Trump set out his administration’s new “path forward” for Afghanistan, where U.S.-led forces have been fighting a 16-year war against Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other extremist groups attempting to overthrow the government in Kabul.

Speaking at a military base near Washington, D.C., Trump vowed "to win" the war and said his strategy will not be based on "arbitrary timelines" but on conditions on the ground.

Following Trump's address, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis suggested the United States and other countries would send more troops to Afghanistan.

In setting out the new strategy, Trump also took aim at Pakistan, saying Washington will no longer tolerate Pakistan offering "safe havens" to extremist groups, a claim Islamabad denies.

"We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens," Trump said. "Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor terrorists."

In an apparent response, Pakistan postponed a visit by U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells due to begin on August 28.

Pakistan did not say the postponement was linked to Trump’s allegations, but Islamabad has heavily criticized the comments.

"At the request of the government of Pakistan, Acting Assistant Secretary Wells' trip has been postponed until a mutually convenient time," the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad said.
U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on August 27 said the administration’s new strategy in Afghanistan is designed to put pressure on the Taliban to enter into negotiations with Kabul by “sending a message...that we are not going anywhere.”

“I think the president’s been clear that this is a dramatic shift in terms of the military strategy,” Tillerson told Fox News Sunday.

**Pakistan postpones U.S. visit after Trump speech – Reuters**

27 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan postponed a visit by a U.S. acting Assistant Secretary of State, officials said, as small protests broke out against President Donald Trump’s accusations that Islamabad was prolonging the war in Afghanistan.

The visit of Alice Wells, acting assistant Secretary of State for South and Asian Affairs, scheduled for Monday, would have been the first high-profile visit by a U.S. official since Trump’s Afghan policy speech on Aug. 21.

“At the request of the Government of Pakistan, Acting Assistant Secretary Wells’ trip has been postponed until a mutually convenient time,” a U.S. Embassy spokesperson told Reuters in Islamabad on Sunday.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry released a statement with similar wording.

Neither side gave a reason for the postponement, but U.S. officials working in Pakistan have been on high-alert since Monday’s speech.

Trump accused Pakistan of harboring “agents of chaos” and providing safe havens to militant groups waging an insurgency against a U.S.-backed government in Kabul.

Pakistani officials responded by saying the U.S. should not “scapegoat” Pakistan and accused the American military of failing to eliminate militant sanctuaries inside Afghanistan.

In the southern metropolis of Karachi, police fired teargas at protesters from a religious student group as they began moving toward the U.S. consulate building.

Between 100 and 150 protesters carrying placards bearing pictures of President Trump and chanting anti-U.S. slogans were kept at bay by police and not allowed within 3 km (2 miles) of the consulate.

On Friday, banned Islamist organization Jamaat-ud-Dawa, held responsible by Washington and New Delhi for a series of coordinated attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai in 2008, staged nationwide protests but also failed to draw large numbers.

**Trump’s Afghanistan doctrine! -- Pak Observer**

29 Aug 17
Khalid Saleem
PRESIDENT Trump’s broadside against Pakistan, related to the Afghanistan situation, and its sinister implications over-all cannot be taken lightly. It would appear that the sole superpower having burnt its fingers badly in its Afghanistan adventure – much the same as happened in Iraq – is out looking for a ‘fall-guy’. President Trump’s advent has resulted in moving of the goal-posts; given that the new administration is not known for adhering to the norms of diplomatic conduct. As for Pakistan, we find ourselves in a tight corner. A serious look over the shoulder at the (evolving?) mess in Afghanistan and its blow-back may not be out of place.

The trouble with news trickling out of Afghanistan is that it always gives out mixed signals. One thing is clear, though. Major stake-holders have for quite some time past grudgingly acknowledged what a closer study of history should have brought home to them before they enthusiastically embarked on their adventure: that no invading force has ever managed to subjugate the fierce and proud Afghan people. It is not territory that is of significance per se; it is the people that inhabit it who make the difference. Let us take a cursory look at the recent history of the happenings in the troubled milieu of that historic land.

History is witness that the US/NATO forces in Afghanistan have hardly fared any better than the earlier colonial expeditionary forces. The United States could perhaps be excused for having nursed the illusion that its awesome new and untested lethal weaponry would bring the ragged and comparatively lightly armed Afghan resistance to its knees. What it had failed to take into account was the indomitable will and raw courage of the Afghan people. The rest, as they say, is history.

In 2011, the departing commander of the British forces in Afghanistan had averred his belief that the Taliban “will never be defeated”. Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith was quoted as having told The Times that, in his opinion, a military victory over the Taliban was “neither feasible nor supportable”. He indicated that the only way forward was to find a political solution. The head of the French military force General Jean-Louis Georgelin – according to AFP reporting from Paris – had backed the senior British military officer’s view that the war in Afghanistan was un-winnable. General Georgelin had asserted that all initiatives “aimed at encouraging reconciliation among Afghans are good and should be encouraged”.

To top it all, US General David Petraeus had at that juncture confirmed that attempts were under way to open talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, General David McKiernan, the top US commander in Afghanistan, did not rule out reconciliation with ousted (now late) Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. At around the same time, a top United Nations official in Kabul had called for a political settlement. The top U.N. envoy, Kai Eide, was reported to have said that the war “has to be won through political means”. He expressed the opinion that” if you want to have relevant results you must speak to those who are relevant”. He added that, “in my view a policy of engagement is the right policy”.

Admittedly, all of the aforesaid represented mere straws in the wind. Prudence demanded that they not be accepted at face value and not be allowed to become the basis of any hasty conclusions. The situation since has shown little signs of improvement. But the time to ‘wait and see’ is long past. As they say, forewarned is forearmed. Whichever way the events move, Pakistan, this time, simply cannot afford to be left high and dry. For far too long we have fallen into the abominable habit of missing the opportunities that fate lets fall in our collective lap. Missing the bus in the current scenario could well prove fatal.

Should the Americans move swiftly and Pakistan does not do its sums right, there is imminent danger that the latter would be left holding the ‘war on terror’ baby, with all its terrible ramifications. Americans can and will secure their vital interests in the region in any settlement, but for Pakistan the chickens let loose by the infamous U-turn may come back home to roost. The Taliban, who once led an Afghan regime that was not unfriendly towards Pakistan, may not be that accommodating this time around. The Northern Alliance leopard cannot be expected to change its spots. What is more, several variables have since entered the equation thanks to the vested interests of neighbors. The détente between the United States and Iran sent out mixed signals.

The result of the presidential election in Afghanistan resulted in moving the goal posts to Pakistan’s disadvantage. We have to be prepared to absorb the resulting shock-wave that thus materialised. The advent of the trump administration in the United States has further loaded the dice to Pakistan’s
detriment. The portents could hardly be more daunting! Here’s hoping that the Foreign Office whiz kids are au fait with the turn of events and are busy in drawing up the viable options. To this may be added the hope and prayer that, when presented with these options, the powers that be will have the gumption and foresight to make the optimum choice. If not, the ship of the state may well be on its way to choppy and uncharted waters.

**Rationalisation of Afghan policy -- Pak Observer**

28 Aug 17

Dr Muhammad Khan

Once President Donald Trump was outlining new US Policy for South Asia (Afghan Policy) in his address at Fort Myer military base in Arlington, he was very blunt and irrational in making accusations against Pakistan. In his address, he said that, Pakistan provides, “safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror” and that, his new Afghan strategy will “change the approach in how to deal with Pakistan”. While making these charges, President Trump did not make a mention of safe havens, formally established by US backed Kabul regime in its bordering areas along Pak-Afghan border. These safe havens house thousands of terrorists, which include; TTP, terrorists of Afghan origin and now the IS elements. They have posed huge threats for the state and society of Pakistan as witnessed in the form of attacks, ever since 2014.

Had Trump been a rational personality, he should have at least made a mention of these elements with their perpetrators, objectives and particularly usage. A one sided approach of allegations against Pakistan has exposed the US prejudices towards Pakistan. If there are only accusations against Pakistan, the presence of terrorist’s hideouts on Afghan soil is a reality. These terrorists carryout terrorism in Pakistan with help of their abettors in Afghanistan. These abettors include; the Afghan spying network (NDS) and Indian intelligence agency (RAW) and they are fully supported by the spying network of occupation forces. It could have been a balanced approach had President Trump highlighted causes of instability in Pakistan along with the forces of this instability. The one sided picture has prematurely exposed the US biases against Pakistan.

The elements targeting US forces in Afghanistan (Taliban or Haqqanis), as indicated by Trump, are Afghans and reside inside Afghanistan. It is worth mentioning that, over 50% areas of that country is still under the influence of Taliban, who consider US as an illegal occupant of their homeland. Therefore, Trump’s warning that, ‘partnership with Pakistan could survive its “harbouring of militants and terrorists who target US service members and officials” is virtually incorrect and based on misperceptions, since he is not a statesman. Besides, Pakistan also feels that, it has gone extra mile in fulfilling its commitments of combating the terrorism and lost over 70,000 people in the process. Therefore, the Trump’s counselling like; “it is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilisation, order and to peace” is against the diplomatic norms, once assessed from the point of view of international relations. This threatening sentence is a direct threat to the sovereignty and integrity of Pakistan.

Pakistan cannot be accused of failed US strategies in Afghanistan. Despite Pakistani advices to US for resolving the Afghan problem through negotiations and peaceful means, US opted to use hard military power for one and half decade now. In the process, Afghan problem got further complicated and now US is scapegoating Pakistan for its failed strategies and ill-conceived policies in Afghanistan in particular and South Asia in general. Throughout his election campaign and thereafter till-date, Trump has been trumpeting for a disengagement from Afghanistan. And now, what forced the reversal of his original plan and policies. Perhaps, he could not sustain the pressure of powerful US establishment; the Pentagon, CIA and hawkish congressmen and senators. This mantra of doing more and accusation against Pakistan is an old rhetoric, coined by US establishment, to hide its failures and policy flaws or else to further the strategic objectives of United States.

No country in the region would be benefitted more than Pakistan, if there returns; peace, stability and
economic prosperity in Afghanistan. It is considered view of the political leadership, the military establishment and people of Pakistan that, peace in Afghanistan is a pre-requisite for peace in Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan cannot promote instability in Afghanistan by sheltering the militants on its soil. Nevertheless, Afghan Taliban is a reality which still control and influence a sizeable portion of that country. The best way to tackle the Afghan Taliban is to bring them on a negotiating table, the way Pakistan persuaded them to Murree round of talks in July 2015. US should be well aware of those, sabotaged the dialogue and why.

US has not given billions of billions of dollars to Pakistan in charity. Rather, U.S and NATO has used the Pakistan infrastructure for decades without paying the due amount. U.S has not given Pakistan, what it has promised in term of; Coalition Support Funds, the weapons and equipment needed to fight against terrorism. Above all, US military engagement in this region has retarded the economic opportunities, particularly the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan. Pakistan can no more take dictation from US and West. Compare to threatening language of President Trump, Pakistani Army Chief, General Bajwa has politely told US Ambassador, David Hale, that, “We are not looking for any material or financial assistance from the US, but trust, understanding and [an] acknowledgement of our contributions.” Indeed, a limited amount (the peanuts), Pakistan received from US during last sixteen years neither raised its economic status nor gave it an edge on military sphere. Gone are the days when Pakistan used to bank on US military hardware. It has grown its own military complex(s), sufficient in number and superior in qualitative to support any military operation for the defence of its motherland.

Let there be a rational thinking at Whitehouse and among the powerful US establishment about Pakistan and its strategic partnership. US need to take care of impoverish Afghan masses through a rational and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan, rather promoting its strategic interests and those of Indians by making use of its handpicked Kabul guards. US military might cannot engulf Pakistan, since it is a nuclear state, supported by China and Russia at strategic level.

Response to Trump’s Afghan strategy – Pak Observer

28 Aug 17

Mirza Aslam Beg

Pakistan needs to develop a well-thought-out, cool and calculated response to “Trumps Strategy” on Afghanistan, which is a vague plan, and cannot be called a strategy, but the fact is that, Trump is on the back foot and on the wrong side of history. He doesn’t have to be pushed to fall, because he would fall in any case, under the weight of his lop-sided decisions:

* “Doubling down on an unsuccessful war is not an act of strength or persistence. It is a sign of insanity to do the same thing over and over again and expect different result.”
* “To make Afghanistan safer and more secure, this strategy ranges from bad to worse. It is a mess because it has no diplomatic component.”
* “Trump is now so enfeebled that Generals and Admirals are not just emboldened to ignore his orders with contempt, rather are dictating foreign policy, directly undermining his own support base.”

Pakistan therefore has to take some deliberate steps to challenge the consequences of ‘Trump’s anti-Pakistan Afghanistan strategy. Step One: Evolve a realistic Afghan Policy, because we have been acting as a rentier state following American dictates from General Ayub to Nawaz Sharif. During the 1950s, Pakistan joined the Cold War against the Soviets. In 1990 when the Soviets retreated from Afghanistan, America denied power sharing to the Mujahideen, and induced civil war. Both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif, treated Afghanistan as the back burner issue and purged ISI, to cut-off contacts with the Afghan freedom fighters, thus leaving space for India to establish its roots there. Musharraf took the worst decision of the time to join American war on Afghanistan, pushing Taliban towards Iran, Russia and China. Thus, for us there is no love lost in Afghanistan and there is a trust deficit, which must be
corrected on priority.

Step Two: Trump’s ‘sign of insanity’ and the jingoism of his generals, such as Mad Dog Mattis, present a very serious unpredictable threat to Pakistan. Pakistan has been warned of dire consequences if it fails to meet the demands of eliminating terror from its soil. The punitive actions could be in the form of drone attacks, air strikes or the use of Dirty Bomb on suspected terror hide-outs inside Pakistan. Our armed forces have to be fully prepared not only to defeat such aggression, but also to respond with punishing blows at targets inside Afghanistan.

Step Three: The situation demands robust political and diplomatic initiatives to reach understanding with Iran and Russia for developing meaningful contact with the Taliban, who are the real arbiters of peace and have resolved “to make Afghanistan the graveyard of American forces.” They are prepared to talk only on one condition that, “the occupation forces, one and all, must leave Afghanistan to create space for peace talks.” There is no other way to peace, which Pakistan could follow. Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China, together could play the pivotal role in this regard.

Step Four: The Americans have been trying to build-up India as their proxy in the South Asian region, as the dominating force from Afghanistan to Bangladesh. For this purpose USA allowed India to establish a large spy network in Afghanistan, mainly focusing on Pakistan and in 2005, entered into Strategic Partnership with India, with declared objective to contain and curb rising Muslim extremism and the increasing Chinese economic and military influence in the region. And now it has entered into Strategic Defense Partnership, to provide India with high tech weapon and equipment, for maintaining India’s military domination in the region. This is a serious emerging security threat to which our armed forces are cognizant of, and are prepared to accelerate efforts to maintain balance, with full support from the government, and friends like China.

Step Five: Trump’s Strategy for Afghanistan is purported to create conditions for turning Afghanistan into Daeshtan, that would destabilise all the countries in the region including Central Asia, Russia, China, Pakistan and Iran. It is estimated that by holding-on to Afghanistan till end 2018, America would succeed in its sinister design. Literally speaking “there is no insanity in Trump’s design, in not leaving Afghanistan. His troops are staging in Afghanistan to achieve “the purpose” of destabilising the target countries, with means other than fighting a full fledged war, which is a clear example of a hybrid war strategy. What answer do we have to this madness?

The complex situation developing in Afghanistan demands that Pakistan must develop a meaningful system of study and evaluation of threat to national security and evolve strategies to meet the challenges. The adhocism, personalised decision making and relying on the so called NSC, which is more of a crisis management team, is taking us no where. The new team at the helm of affairs is the hope. They are engaged in deliberate consultations to evolve appropriate response to the impending threat. From “Friends Not Masters” to “Trust – Not Aid,” a period of six decades, should be good enough now for us to take the right decision. This is a good sign of reasoned exercise of sovereignty, by Parliament from decades of a petty rentier state of the United States of America. Thank you Mr. Donald Trump for providing that opportunity.

China and Russia now ‘are with us.’ Iran has rejected Trump’s policy of “pressuring the regional countries” on the issue of war in Afghanistan. Now, we must reach-out to Iran, to complete the “Eastern Front,” to provide the much needed Strategic Depth of Security, against foreign ingress and intrigues.

Pakistan and US must talk – Dawn
28 Aug 17

As the senior-most American military commander in Afghanistan tasked with implementing the US administration’s latest strategy in the country, Gen John Nicholson was likely to have tough words for Pakistan.

In an interview with Tolo News, Gen Nicholson has reiterated a familiar US talking point on Pakistan: Afghan Taliban leaders continue to allegedly enjoy sanctuary and freedom of movement inside Pakistan.

More promisingly, the American general added that the issue of alleged Pakistan-based militant sanctuaries is “being addressed in private between the US government and the Pakistani government”. If that is the case – if behind-the-scenes talks are indeed continuing rather than the US simply hectoring Pakistan – it suggests a pragmatism on both sides that has not been in evidence in public recently.

Indeed, the decision to postpone Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif’s talks with his American counterpart, Rex Tillerson, in the US and embark on visits to China, Russia and Turkey first suggests a typically knee-jerk diplomatic reaction.

Mr Asif’s mission as determined by the National Security Committee is to win support for Pakistan’s official position on Afghanistan – that there can only be a political settlement with the Afghan Taliban for long-term peace – and Pakistan’s concerns of regional destabilisation that the Trump administration’s so-called South Asia strategy will likely cause.

Direct talks with the US, especially at the highest diplomatic levels, could have sent a signal that Pakistan is interested in finding solutions to problems rather than just complaining to third countries about perceived American unreasonableness.

Today, a senior bureaucrat from the US State Department was expected to visit Pakistan in a previously unannounced trip. Instead, Pakistan has chosen to further signal its displeasure by cancelling the visit of the US acting assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs, perhaps an unnecessary move.

The new US policy is certainly unfair in its characterisation of the Afghan war, with its readiness to heap blame on Pakistan and its willingness to draw India deeper into Afghanistan without addressing the competing interests of several other regional powers.

However, US President Donald Trump is clearly uncomfortable with having had to bow to the advice of the American defence and national-security apparatus and that may help create the space for a continuing and pragmatic bilateral engagement with the US. As army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa has rightly argued, Pakistan is not seeking America’s largesse, but its fair understanding of a complex regional situation.

While the strategic chasm between the US and Pakistan on Afghanistan is now public and undeniable, there is still space and time for constructive dialogue. The starting point must be a realisation on both sides that absolute positions are neither helpful nor workable.

A strategic rupture is in neither the US nor Pakistan’s interest.

Asif asks parties to give united response to Trump allegations – Dawn
SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Khawaja Muhammad Asif says that the government wants all political parties to develop consensus for giving a strong message in response to the new United States policy on Afghanistan and allegations against Pakistan.

Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, he said that Pakistan was alive to the situation in the region and understood the impact of the new US policy and President Donald Trump’s tirade against the country.

He said the government had summoned a special session of parliament on Tuesday and invited major political parties to participate in discussion on the issue of the US president’s statements against Pakistan.

He said the government was very clear on the issue and wanted to develop consensus among political entities to give a strong message to the world. The fact was that the nation was united and would respond to any challenge with dignity, honour and due measure of sobriety, he said.

The minister said the US had not wholeheartedly helped Pakistan. However, he added, Pakistan would continue to play the frontline role in the war against terrorism and the world would recognise its role and sacrifices rendered by its people for elimination of terrorism, militancy and extremism.

Instead of berating Pakistan, he said, the world should acknowledge its contributions in the war against terrorism.

He said the world should reject Indian propaganda against Pakistan.

A policy of discord – Nation.PK

28 Aug 17

Durdana Najam

What is it that Pakistan fears from India? Ever since the unveiling of Trump’s new policy on Afghanistan, Pakistan’s intelligentsia and media has gone into a defensive mood to shield Pakistan from the danger it faces now that the US has given a larger role to India in Afghanistan.

There is nothing unusual about the new policy review on Afghanistan.

The tone could be harsh, but that is how the Trump administration voices its concern on almost any issue. From Donald Trump to the NATO’s head, to the Chief of the US military regime, to the leaders of the Afghan government, it is Pakistan that has made the war on terrorism a hard win for the US in the last 16 years.

The accusation goes that Pakistan provides ‘safe haven’ to the terrorists to offset elements hostile to Pakistan’s interest in Afghanistan.

This narrative has been around for years now.

Trump’s policy review has only refreshed the memories.

Instead of going into the hues of blaming the US of backstabbing Pakistan it would rather be useful if Pakistan looks inward and find the reason for the neglect of the international community of the sacrifices the country has made against terrorism.

Playing innocent would further isolate us.

And if our only modus operandi is to replace one master (the US) with another (China) than of course, we can let Indian fear, US fear, and Afghan fear play us down.

India on many occasions, especially after the CPEC project, has openly confessed to harming Pakistan’s stability and economic interests.
We have presented dossiers ad nauseam to the United Nations and the US about Indian involvement in Balochistan.
And when Allah favoured us with Kulbhushan Yadav, living proof that India has been undermining Pakistan’s interest from Afghanistan, we had our moment of relief.
or the last one year, the entire government machinery has been invested in protecting the ruling family from the Panama leak’s effects.

Pakistan has said loud and clear that it no longer supports either the good or the bad Taliban.
The Trump administration has yet to finalise its strategy about dealing with Pakistan, according to the policy review.
We do not know whether we would be facing financial sanctions or diplomatic cul de sac.
If our conscience is clear and we have dissected the jihad narrative from our foreign policy than we should not have any problem in satisfying the US or its allies about it.
Now is the time to prove our dissociation from rogue elements, especially when China and Russia have come to support us against the US.
Even though Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has welcomed US policy on Afghanistan, many sane voices have rejected it.
Even the former Afghan president Hamid Karzai rebuffed it.
Any political and economic space given to India in Afghanistan will start a new arena for a proxy war between India and Pakistan.
It will turn the clock back to 90’s when the Afghan soil was used for the same purpose.
It would further intensify the Kashmir insurgency.

The problem is that the US refuses to see Pakistan emerging as a different country in the new South Asian context where Chinese economic dominance is a reality.
What was effective yesterday may not work today? Using the power of the purse to nudge Pakistan to comply with the US demand is perhaps no longer an option.
Why would Pakistan endure a loveless affair for $ 900 million when it could get billions from China?
The new Afghan policy has been painted on an older canvass that the Bush administration built.
The policy is flawed.
However, the question is why the US would keep its policies antiquated while spending billion in a winless war.
Could it be that winning war in Afghanistan is not an option?

Guess work aside, the reality is that the US may spend as many years in Afghanistan as it may desire, but winning Afghanistan would remain elusive, even if a ‘Mad Dog’ (Nickname of US Secretary of Defence John Mattis).
He earned this name because of the war crimes he committed in Falluja Iraq) is made in-charge of the war, or more US soldiers are sent to perish in a wilderness that is 60 per cent now in the hands of the Taliban.
The salvage of Afghan crisis lies in a political and not a military solution.
Once the CPEC project becomes operational, and the Russian economic stakes get stronger in Afghanistan, the US might find staying back even costlier and worth nothing.

Pakistan fears India because India’s bad designs on Pakistan and its rogue policies in Kashmir would spoil the peace of the region.
Now is the time for Afghanistan to earn stability not on the back of the US, which can never come, but with the support of the economic development initiated by China in the form of One Belt One Road project.
Won't accept U.S. policy to make Indian PM 'Chaudhary' of Pak: Rabbani – ANI

Islamabad [Pakistan], August 27 (ANI): Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani on Saturday said that they "will not accept the United States policy to make the Indian Prime Minister a Chaudhary of this region."

Speaking at a seminar on democracy at the Karachi Press Club, Rabbani asked the people of Pakistan to come forward and join hands against the Trump's remarks on Pakistan, while rolling out the new South Asian policy, The Express Tribune reported.

"Pakistan has rendered great sacrifices in the war against terrorism and the international players must understand and realise it," he said.

He insisted, "A weak democracy is hundred times better than a dictatorship," and asked as to who had given permission to the U.S. to use "our airports and airspace in the war against terrorism."

This remark comes after Washington openly criticised Islamabad for its double standards in fighting the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, and, at the same time, sought more help from India in Afghanistan.

While rolling out the new Afghan Policy, Trump had said, "People in Pakistan have suffered from terror, but at same time Pakistan has been a safe haven for terrorists."

Earlier, U.S. President Donald Trump sought more help from India in Afghanistan.

Speaking from the Fort Myer military base in Arlington, Va., Trump said, "We will develop a deeper strategic partnership with India, but we want them to help us more in Afghanistan."

He further added that "India makes billions of dollars with the United States in trade; we want them to help us more in Afghanistan."

Relations between Afghanistan and India received a major boost in 2011 with the signing of a strategic partnership agreement, Afghanistan's first since the Soviet invasion of 1979.

According to a 2010 Gallup survey, Afghan adults are more likely to approve of India's leadership than the Chinese or the U.S. leadership.

Trump's wish of a bigger Indian role in Afghanistan is a blow for Pakistan, which has been opposing New Delhi's presence in Kabul.

The real game begins – The News

28 Aug 17
Syed Talat Hussain

We are doing what we do best: cry over spilt milk. The spurt of anxiety and outrage that the country has seen in the wake of Donald Trump’s South Asia review is understandable. It is fully justified. The Trump administration, by singling out Pakistan as the mother-lode of all trouble in Afghanistan and in the region, has done a wrong thing. This can only take its policy in the wrong directions and, possibly, entail
disastrous consequences. Also it is India that provided the ink to the pen that signed on this egregiously off-the-mark review of the region.

Donald Trump is an ignoramus, who, like all ignoramuses, is addicted to creating sensation. His generals and lobbyists have used his ignorance to set him on a course that has already sunk better presidents before him, but he doesn’t know that.

We do know, though – or, at least, we should have known. The shock and regret permeating our response – summed up in the press release of the National Security meeting last week – is hollow. There is little element of surprise in what has come out of the White House. Signals from the US were clear that they would lock onto Pakistan and blame it for all that ails the region: terrorism, freely operating terrorist groups and a long list of scuttled peace efforts. Not one, but dozens of US representatives struck the same chord since Trump came to power.

Not one but several messages that came from seasoned Pakistani diplomats in the US conveyed to Pakistan’s military and civilian representatives that things did not look good in the US as far this review was concerned. More recent engagement between the two countries made it clear to everyone that Trump had decided to go in the crazy direction of practically designating Pakistan as an unfriendly/enemy state.

So there was no dearth of real information as far as this policy drift of the US was concerned. But, of course, information is only as good as the capacity to process it. All the while this policy review was underway the entire focus inside Pakistan was on managing the JIT to put the government in power in a hurt-locker situation. For its part, the government – unfocussed and distracted in the best of times – became totally clueless about and uninterested in pushing Pakistan’s own narrative on the perennial problems of Afghanistan’s peace. Indian lobbyists had a field day just when we were busy lobbing bombs of shame on each other at home.

Even earlier the drag of an engineered domestic fracas in the name of ‘national interest’ inside Pakistan had caused national debate to be totally off kilter and cut off from the dangers to Pakistan’s core security that Trump had brought with him upon arriving at the Oval Office. When Trump won the election and had caused elation in some circles in Pakistan, we had argued the following in this column space:

“He may turn towards foreign policy to find short-term relief. Fighting terrorism with new vigour can become his rallying cry. Military expeditions can become his refuge from domestic disorder…There is little that can be offered to the divided Americans at this point as a middle ground. Little except the old idea that America can be made secure by creating foreign policy success. A spectacular spectacle outside the US can generate the much-needed bond to connect the two poles…Inevitably, the topmost issue in such a situation will be terrorism, which Trump and the Republicans’ warped worldview associates with all Muslim countries. Here their gaze will turn towards Afghanistan and Pakistan…In this respect he (Trump) can be like Narendra Modi who came to power by splitting his nation at the seams and is now trying to win national legitimacy by waving the threat of terrorism. A Trump in the Modi mode can be a truly dangerous thing. We better watch out.” This was end 2016.

Some months later, the following reflections on the India-US nexus under Trump and Modi were penned:

“Delhi, backed and encouraged fully by Washington, wants Pakistan to be defined as a state nurturing terrorism. It wants to dilute its credentials as a reliable international actor. And it wants to set the stage for a case for delegitimising its defence capability, which includes the nuclear arsenal, by framing it as an international threat. These are three dangerous Ds. This is the actual aim.” This was early 2017.

Almost three months ago, this was written: “Washington in its recent communications with Islamabad has been delivering blunt, Trump-like messages to Pakistan. What it is saying is this: give up support to the Haqqanis; kill them all; and those in your custody, hand them over. Pakistan’s repeated assurances
that we do not protect the Haqqanis nor do we have the influence to change their behaviour cut no ice with Washington.

“American National Security Advisor H R McMaster in this recent engagement with Pakistani representatives has done extremely tough talking. He has warned of punitive measures in case the US hostages are killed or any US interest is threatened by the Haqqanis in a future event.

“We can guess what these threatened ‘punitive measures’ can be. They can range from Salala-like incidents of heavy attack on Pakistani posts to aerial raids on designated ‘camps’ a la the OBL raid. Worse still, they can use the dirty bomb whose rehearsal has already taken place inside Afghanistan with devastating effects on ground.” This was June 2017.

A few others had also pointed out in vain that we needed to pay attention to a fast-changing regional scenario and stop waging domestic wars amplified through a hijacked media and its fakesters. Yet the power of folly was too strong to be defeated by the value of logic and evidence. And now when Washington has laid bare its intentions with a made-in-India logo all over them, we are being treated to an unimpressive show of hurt pride and national honour.

Even this outcry about ‘Washington’s stupidity’ misses the crux of the matter. It is not a contest of logic, morality or who has more wounds and betrayals to show to shame the other party. It is madness on our doorstep that has already arrived. And since it is already declared and announced, there is very little scope of its declared aims to change. Trump’s generals have completely numbed his non-existent foreign policy sense. Therefore, his ownership of the policy is total, dangerously bombastic, and can be truly challenging to our core security interests. A strike inside Pakistan’s territory can practically get us embroiled in war with the US. This is not a joke. This is deadly serious business.

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of the current state of regional emergency our country is faced with is the lingering idea that somehow the US can be engaged to achieve national goals if the militaries are talking to each other. Even after being defeated repeatedly by history, the idea refuses to die. Ayub Khan was chums with Washington but in the end had to get Friends not Masters ghost-written to express his feeling of being scorned and jilted. Ziaul Haq turned Pakistan upside down for American pleasure and his own politics but weeks before his death was heard saying: deal in coals and you get a black face.

Gen Pervez Musharraf repeated Zia’s feat. In fact, he went a step ahead. He signed on US demands without even reading them properly. He too was abandoned when the hour of strategic need had passed. General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani had the deepest of engagements with the US but in the end saw the Salala and OBL operations take place behind his back. Gen Raheel Sharif restored institutional links in the US only to find out that he could not stop enhanced drone strikes inland. And, yet, we believe that somehow if the military-to-military equation is stable Washington can be influenced.

It is unfortunate that nothing teaches us anything. Neither history, nor events, nor declared policies and known intentions. Dealing with Washington (or, for that matter, India or any other country) is a holistic job. It is a full-time job. It cannot become an interval in pursuit of crazy domestic agendas that are injurious to internal stability. Nor can it be reduced to moral outrage and perfunctory post-event meetings. Trump’s threats are real. We can either play domestic games or deal with the real game that has begun to unfold fast around our borders. Dealing with Washington would be a lot easier if we had our priorities straight and history-reading accurate.
Trump’s anti-Pakistan tirade angers tribal elders – Daily Times

28 Aug 17

KHYBER AGENCY: Tribal people on Sunday finalised preparations to hold a protest against US President Donald Trump’s anti-Pakistan tirade. The protest will be held on Monday (today) at Torkham border. Large numbers of elders of Zakha Khel, Shinwari and Shelmani tribes beside workers of political parties and numerous trade unions participated in the gathering. Speaking on the occasion Malik Darya Khan Afridi, Malik Abdul Razaq, Haji Masal Khan, Abdul Raziq Shinwari, Shoaib and Muqtadir Afridi condemned the US president’s statement regarding Pakistan in which he disgraced the sacrifices rendered by the Pakistan Army and people of Pakistan while combating terrorism. The tribal elders also stressed upon the Afghanistan government not to be part of any conspiracy initiated against Pakistan.

Trump’s Afghan policy adds to Kabul woes – The News

27 Aug 17

Ahmad Hassan

ISLAMABAD: President Donald Trump’s new Afghan policy has not only caused concern for Pakistan but has further fragmented already divided political landscape as president Ashraf Ghani’s approval of American offensive pasture towards Pakistan is opposed by the former president Hamid Karzai.

This fragmentation apart, the Kabul government’s recent overtures for reconciliation and political mainstreaming of Taliban has also been hurt and fears have risen about escalations of hostilities on both sides leading to a fresh influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan.

The new American policy has not only caused furor in Islamabad due to the threatening tone, but it has also created fissures in the sections of Afghan political groups whose efforts of reconciliation and mainstreaming Taliban into national polity have been hit hard.

The former Prime Minister Eng Gulbadin Hikmatyar’s options have also shrunk as his commitment with the Kabul regime to bring Taliban sections to a dialogue table has also been reduced for which, he had done a lot of spade work.

It would be worth recalling that Hekmatyar has been staunchly demanding withdrawal of all the foreign troops from Afghanistan to give chance to peace through dialogue with the estranged Taliban. He had an assurance given by the Kabul regime at the time, he entered into a historic accord with it last year that no future reinforcements would be required and that a gradual withdrawal of foreign troops would take place soon.

Whereas Hamid Karzai a father figure in the Afghan society due to his two-term presidency has taken a rigid line by declaring not to tolerate any future air strikes on innocent citizens which cause huge collateral damage, he has also been emerged a nationalist pashtun leader in the country. For, in his opinion, it was time to reconcile with all the fighting forces in order to strengthen country’s defence against the emerging danger of ‘ISIS’ which is causing havoc with the human lives especially creating sectarian divide in the country.

The Taliban which comprise on multi-sectarian forces are clearly perturbed over the alarming emergence of Daesh activities across the country.
They are, however, getting strong by the day as a large number of regular Afghan national army troops are joining them along with their arms due to lack of salaries and other privileges. The main source of Taliban has become tax on the transportation of opium, the largest cash crop produce of the country, smuggled out of the country.

The defence analysts and experts on Afghanistan also fear that the increase in Indian role in that country could further escalate skirmishes between Taliban and the foreign troops, including Indian installations.

The Taliban who were working on establishment of their political wing to enter into dialogue with the regime in Kabul may also halt its activities for three to four months and return to the strengthening of militant activities. They have already warned imminent escalation of war.

Another phenomenon that has crept into the Afghanistan’s landscape is grabbing the ownership of one trillion-dollar worth of minerals as American companies as well as Indians are vying for the booty in lieu of their services and investment in that country.

The US policy change is also aimed at trying to get foothold in the Taliban captured and influenced areas which are full of these minerals, but the skeptics feel it may further escalate war in all the Taliban held parts of the country and result in pushing the citizens to the Pak Afghan border to sneak across and cause big influx for already burdened country.

**Why Pakistan’s policies regarding Afghanistan and the US need to be more Pakistan-centric – Express Tribune**

*By Dr Ali Hashim*

*August 26, 2017*

President Donald Trump’s new [strategy for Afghanistan](#) requires a rethink of Pakistan’s policies towards both the US and Afghanistan.

President Trump laid out a new policy for the 16-year-old war in Afghanistan earlier this week. The strategy lacked specifics but stated that it would focus on the primary mission of getting rid of terrorists and its supporters from Afghanistan.

The speech also contained harsh words for Pakistan including statements to the effect that US support would be conditional for Pakistan. The support depends on Pakistan helping the US in its primary mission and in taking out safe havens for the terrorists like the Haqqani network from within Pakistan.

The speech also hurled the usual accusations against Pakistan on its duplicitous role in Afghanistan despite the “billions of dollars” in aid from the US. Furthermore, it went on to say that it will not be “business as usual” with Pakistan any more. The speech also contained veiled threats that the US may [rely more on India](#) to solve the Afghanistan problem.

These statements have been the subject of press coverage both in Pakistan and internationally. The Pakistani media, including talk shows and editorial pages, are [full of statements](#) that range from hurt feelings – “we have done so much to combat terrorism and this is what we get in return” – to statements such as “good riddance”, “we can do without US aid” and “let us see how the US can resolve anything without Pakistan’s support”.
I think this discussion misses the point.

Foreign policy is not a soap opera but is based on the cold calculus of realpolitik.

The US will act to safeguard its own interests and Pakistan should do likewise. An international relationship based on anything else will only result in disappointment, for either or both parties.

The changing geo-political situation may require a re-think of Pakistan’s policy towards the US. The reason for this is not because the US has failed Pakistan but because our interests may no longer be congruent.

We already see muttering to this effect in Pakistani circles, and assertions of support from China and even Russia. China has been an all-weather friend but the statements from Russia also provide interesting opportunities to diversify Pakistan’s relationships.

Zamir Kabulov, the Russian presidential envoy to Afghanistan stated the following:

“Putting pressure (on Pakistan) may seriously destabilise the region-wide security situation and result in negative consequences for Afghanistan.”

However, what has not been discussed is the notion that perhaps Pakistan’s policy towards Afghanistan also requires a paradigm shift.

We need to ask ourselves why it is necessary for Pakistan to play an active role in shaping the US policy in Afghanistan. It does not have one in shaping the US policy in Iran, China, Sri Lanka, so why should Afghanistan be any different? Especially when Afghanistan has been viciously criticising and blaming Pakistan for the problems prevalent in the country?

The concern is driven by the mistaken notion of strategic depth. The notion that Pakistan believes a friendly Afghanistan is critical for the security and stability of Pakistan is false. Furthermore, Pakistan is also mistaken in its belief that Afghanistan will provide strategic depth to them if Pakistan were to be attacked by India on the Eastern front.

But this has been a pipe dream since the time this theory was formulated. The concept of strategic depth has literally back fired. It is the Afghans who have repeatedly sought refuge in Pakistan, either in the form of around two million refugees or in the form of Taliban establishments, who have used Pakistan as a haven to launch attacks on their opponents in their homeland and now in Pakistan.

Afghanistan has always been less than friendly towards Pakistan. Please recall that it was the only country that voted against Pakistan’s UN membership in 1947. The brief period of friendly relations occurred when the US was using Pakistan to combat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Following this was another short period of ‘friendliness’ which came when the Taliban were in power.

Even the friendliest Afghan government has always prioritised their own interests as any rational government would. We also see that Pakistan has been able to exercise very little leverage with them.

On the other hand, our Afghan policy has had disastrous effects on Pakistan’s politics. This policy has resulted in the rise of extremist religious thinking, the Kalashnikov and drug culture, and the rise of jihadis. Ultimately, it has also led to increased terrorism, which has shaken the very foundation of our state. Currently, Pakistan considers most of its major internal terror incidents to be related to cross-border incursions from Afghanistan.
Our policies regarding Afghanistan need to be more Pakistan-centric. We first interfered in Afghan affairs at the behest of the US to help the Americans throw out the Soviets. In hindsight, this may not have been the best course to follow.

It is time that Pakistan recognises the limits of its friendship with Afghanistan and manages its expectations on a more rational basis. As experience has shown, it may not be realistic or even necessary for us to expect a completely pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. If this realisation takes hold then there is no reason to provide the alleged safe haven to any Afghan formation in Pakistan.

Secondly, we need to recognise that countries in the South Asian region and those on the western border of Pakistan will see an economic advantage in developing good relations with India. This is because India has developed into a major economic power house in the region. This behaviour is not solely limited to Afghanistan as we also see this in the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, we cannot expect everybody in our neighbourhood to consider our “so-called adversary” as their adversary as well.

If anything, we should try to normalise relations with India. The key to peace on the western border may lie on the eastern border.

**Political solution key to breaking Afghan imbroglio – Pak Observer**

27 Aug ’17
Xiao Bin

ON the evening of August 21, US President Donald Trump proposed a new strategy on Afghanistan. Trump said he would push for more US troops in Afghanistan and strengthen cooperation with NATO allies to resolve the conflict between Pakistan and India.

After Trump unveiled this new strategy, US Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters, “I am very comfortable that the strategic process was sufficiently rigorous.” Though the public doubted the effectiveness of the new strategy, many political elites showed positive attitudes toward it. Republican Senator John McCain said the new Afghanistan strategy is a “big step in the right direction.”

As an important stakeholder, the Afghan government responded positively to the strategy. Hamdullah Mohib, the Afghan ambassador to the US, said Afghans heard “exactly what we needed to.” Davood Moradian, the director general of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies in Kabul, said that the “tone and narrative” of Trump’s speech was “reassuring and uplifting for many of us, because it projects the confidence and resolve which are necessary for our besieged population and exhausted security forces.”

This announcement represents a reversal from Trump’s stance during the election campaign. He was obliged to change directions because the security pressure in Afghanistan was increasing.

According to NATO, as of February 2017, there were 13,459 troops from 39 countries deployed in Afghanistan, among which 6,941 were American soldiers, accounting for 51.5 percent of the whole force. The total number of the Afghan National Army was about 183,000. This army fought with more than 20 rebel groups, including the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Al-Qaeda, ISIS-K and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

The low effectiveness of the Afghan National Army made it difficult to reverse the security situation in Afghanistan. Although the Afghan government held control over Kabul, the main population center, transportation hub and provincial capitals, the Taliban still expanded its power. Kunduz and Helmand have been the hotly contested areas.

At present, the Taliban controls around 10 percent of the Afghan population, and this number is growing. According to a report from the US Defense Department in 2017, the biggest threat to Afghanistan’s security is the Haqqani network. ISIS-K, which emerged in 2015, is also active and destructive.

Some 4,806 cases of terrorist attacks happened from December 1, 2016 to May 31, 2017, for an average
of 801 cases per month, an obvious increase compared to the same period in 2016. It was clear that international forces are confronted with extreme pressures.

As a result, Trump couldn’t stick to his stance during the campaign, which was, “We have wasted an enormous amount of blood and treasure in Afghanistan. Their government has zero appreciation. Let’s get out!”

Trump has found three reasons for his new Afghan strategy. First, the US must receive due respect and results. Second, the consequence of an immediate withdrawal is predictable and unacceptable, with Iraq serving as an example. Third, the US is facing urgent threats in Afghanistan and other regions and it must eliminate terrorism resolutely with its international allies. But even if the US successfully increased troops in Afghanistan, it could only serve to alleviate the tension, but couldn’t resolve Afghanistan’s root problems. Military strikes are only a means to an end and a political solution is fundamental.

The immediate cause of the turmoil in Afghanistan today is rapid social changes and the ensuing imbalance it has generated on the economy, society and culture. An imbalanced social environment created the opportunities and foundation for the emerging radical political forces. Without a more effective channel for their political appeals, violence became the only means of expression for radical powers, and a militant attitude prevailed in their daily life. Violence thus escalated and conflicts expanded. So the key to Afghanistan’s problem is politics. Actually, the ultimate goal of the Trump administration’s new Afghan strategy is also a political solution.

Trump chose the globally accepted principle of “the Afghan people governing Afghanistan.” Trump said, “It is up to the people of Afghanistan to take ownership of their future, to govern their society and to achieve an everlasting peace. We are a partner and a friend, but we will not dictate to the Afghan people how to live or how to govern their own complex society. We are not nation building again. We are killing terrorists.”

**Staying the course in Afghanistan – The News**

27 Aug 17  
*M Saeed Khalid*

The US has stepped up its criticism over Pakistan’s perceived non-cooperation in delivering Afghanistan. Pakistanis lost no time in shredding to pieces Washington’s one-sided narrative and warnings. Pakistan would do well not to lose sight of the larger picture and draw appropriate inferences from the much heralded review of America’s strategy in Afghanistan. The bottom line of all that has been said by Trump & Co is that there will be no fundamental change in the US’ plans for the war-ravaged country.

I watched Trump’s speech in full and must say that the man does not suffer from the ideological baggage of nation-building or remaking the world a la neo-cons nor does he struggle with Obama’s agony over the just war in Afghanistan and the unjust one in Iraq. Trump is simply asking: what’s in it for him and his country? And he has added that he will not reveal the specifics of his war plans. By the end, the whole exercise appeared as a theatrical presentation rather than a genuine policy review. There is a clear intent to stay the course with some operational course correction.

The Trump speech also brought to fore the perennial dilemma of dealing with the terrible two of South Asia – Pakistan and India – while trying to sort out the mess in Afghanistan. Here, there is no originality. His muttering against Pakistan and lavishing praise on India was so 1962-ish. Washington has been going through pangs of love for India since New Delhi got into a big misadventure with China. Pakistan was quickly warned not to take advantage of ‘India’s China war’ by moving troops into Held Kashmir.
The edifice of Pak-US alliance came crumbling as the Kennedy administration, suitably filled by Boston Brahmins, worked day and night to take advantage of the situation to bring India into America’s fold. One begins to wonder if the Indian provocations on China’s frontier, somewhat like her current hostile military moves on the Chinese border, were not meant to wreck Pak-US relations, by demonstrating that Washington could count on India to be a challenger to China.

To some, this thesis may be farfetched. I have one simple question for their consideration. Did or did not 1962 war shake the very foundation of the Pak-US defence alliance which went into a state of limbo till the Soviet tanks came rolling across the Amu Darya into Afghanistan in 1979? India joined the group of countries that remained sympathetic to Moscow’s flagrant violation of a small country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Trump and Modi share a visceral hatred for the Muslims. We have yet to hear a single word from Trump about India’s colonial style repressive policies in Occupied Kashmir. It should not be a matter of surprise if Trump wants his pal in Delhi to join in Washington’s plans for Afghanistan. Trump has been briefed about American corporations’ assessment of the country’s mineral wealth. Some have been audacious to suggest the colonisation of Afghanistan to exploit its resources to pay for America’s war.

The US, of course, refuses to admit certain basic facts about Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban whom Trump labels as terrorists were in power till they were dislodged from Kabul by the US and allied forces including those of the Northern Alliance. They should not be called dissidents for trying to recover what they have lost. Secondly, the Afghan National Army is so dominated by the erstwhile Northern Alliance elements that a US withdrawal will hasten the Taliban’s return to Kabul.

The US is no doubt aware that terrorist attacks form part of the Taliban’s war tactics. That tactic will not change whether they have support in Pakistan or not. The only way for Washington to convince Pakistan against sheltering Afghan dissidents is to disprove the Pakistani thesis that the Taliban will outlast the American forces in Afghanistan.

Can official America have the brashness to side openly with corporate America to tell Pakistan that the US has plans for a long-term stay in Afghanistan? This stay will stretch up to the time when Afghanistan becomes another country depending on US/Western capital and technology to emerge from its millenary state of underdevelopment. That can only happen if the American troops can sit out till the present generation of Taliban leaders become history.

The stalemate in Afghanistan has links with the evolving alignments in the larger region. US actions to consolidate ties with India as a balancing factor to China have produced an opposite reaction by greater China-Pakistan cooperation in economic and defence fields. Nor will China look benignly at Washington’s overt invitations to India to get more active in Afghanistan. Traditional Taliban critics Russia and Iran too have regular contacts with the Afghan Taliban.

This is not the first time that Pakistan is confronted with a fundamental choice of sending the Afghan ‘dissidents’ back or continuing to allow them shelter or, as the US alleges, bases on our soil. Surprisingly, Pakistan’s public narrative lacks an important element: to offer reciprocal steps if India and Afghanistan renounce their assistance to anti-Pakistan networks operating out of Afghanistan. Let us hope that this issue is forcefully raised in meetings between Pakistani and American interlocutors, both civil and military, here as well as in Washington.

After a week of effervescence around the review, we basically stand where we were. The US strategy is designed not to abandon its protégés because the result would be their ouster from Kabul. Washington, despite its periodic tendency to leave, is going to stay in Afghanistan. Whether it is a holding exercise or develops into a colonial adventure depends on their stamina and their relative success.
The ‘Greater Game’ – Dawn

Ashraf Jehangir Qazi
August 26, 2017

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has accused Pakistan of giving “safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror”. His new Afghan strategy will “change the approach in how to deal with Pakistan”. He warned no partnership with Pakistan could survive its “harbouring of militants and terrorists who target US service members and officials”. Trump added “it is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilisation, order and to peace”. Pakistan rejects these accusations. But what matters is what it does.

The Trump speech reflected three failed Afghan policies: those of Kabul, the US and Pakistan. The Afghan government has failed to consolidate itself, establish its authority and credibility in the country, and compel or persuade the Afghan Taliban to come to the negotiating table within the parameters of the Afghan constitution and indefinite US military activity in Afghanistan.

The US military invasion, occupation, counter-resistance and its current operation ‘Resolute Support’ have added up to its longest war “without victory”, and without victory in sight. Three American presidents have ‘owned’ the war in Afghanistan: Bush, Obama, and now Trump. In the process, US arrogance, ignorance and power have destroyed another Muslim society with ghastly humanitarian consequences and future stability repercussions that are incalculable. The US has required other countries, especially Pakistan, to ‘do more’ to minimise the consequences and repercussions of its own Afghan policy.

The Trump speech reflected three failed Afghan policies: those of Kabul, the US and Pakistan.

Pakistan has failed to bring any longer-term coherence to its Afghan policy. It alienated the massive Afghan goodwill, built during the Soviet occupation, through self-serving ideological fervour and arrogant short-sightedness which have exacerbated the political confusion and terrorist violence in Afghanistan. It has enabled India to steal a strategic march over it. It has extended a range of ‘deniable’ support to extremist organisations operating in Afghanistan. It wasted an opportunity to build a working relationship with President Ashraf Ghani that could have contained Indian influence in Afghanistan.

As a result, Pakistan has undermined its role as a key peacemaking neighbour and finds itself today at the receiving end of Afghan resentment, Indian hostility and US pressure. It is simply unable or unwilling to rationalise its Afghan policy within a broader and longer-term policy context. Instead, it relies on protestations of innocence and proxies to bring about a ‘friendly’ Afghanistan whose friendship is measured in terms of distancing itself from India. This entails an unnecessary and self-defeating contempt for Afghanistan’s sovereign independence.

In a forest of domestic and foreign policy idiocies Trump made two sensible campaign promises: to improve relations with Russia and to get out of Afghanistan. Since becoming president, and under massive establishment pressure, he has reversed himself on both. The loss of his chief strategist, Steve Bannon, has rendered Trump helpless in the face of his assertive generals and hawkish senators who are not prepared to face defeat and strategic humiliation at the hands of the Taliban and their cohorts — whom they see as aided and abetted by Pakistan.

The Afghan government and US policymakers see Taliban resilience as the result of Pakistan’s insistence on a power-sharing arrangement in Kabul. At one time it appeared the US was on board with Pakistan’s strategy if not its tactics. However, Narendra Modi, Ghani and the US establishment have convinced Trump this would be fatal for the Kabul government and for US and Indian strategic interests in an emerging China- and Russia-centric political, economic and security order in Eurasia. The ‘loss’ of
Afghanistan could lead to the loss of the Eurasian heartland — and that would be fatal for Trump’s presidency. Pakistan is seen as a villain in this unfolding Greater Game!

Modi played a crucial role in hardening Trump’s stance on Pakistan during his June visit to Washington as an essential first step towards containing China in Central and South Asia and in the Indian Ocean. In the joint statement of June 27, 2017, Trump and Modi “called on Pakistan to ensure that its territory is not used to launch terror attacks on other countries. They further called on Pakistan to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, Pathankot and other cross-border terrorist attacks perpetrated by Pakistan-based groups”.

On Afghanistan, the statement said “the increasing instability, due to terrorism [read Pakistan] in Afghanistan is one of our common concerns” and “in order to attain our objectives for peace and stability in Afghanistan we will maintain close consultation and communication to enhance coordination between our two countries”. Pakistan poses “a threat to the region and beyond”. All this is echoed in Trump’s latest warning to Pakistan.

Interestingly, the US has not yet designated the Taliban as a terrorist organisation. If Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s qualification of some of Trump’s remarks is any guide, the door to negotiations with a militarily weakened Taliban may not be slammed shut. Pakistan is expected to facilitate this weakening of the Taliban as a test of its own reliability. Also interestingly, Trump referred to South Asia “and the broader Indo-Pacific region” in which, as in Afghanistan, the US and India share objectives for peace and security.

The strategic targeting of China is obvious. Indian aggression in Doklam with the US fully backing India against China confirms that Indo-US coordination regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan is part of a much larger theatre of strategic cooperation, competition and confrontation. India is playing for high stakes. Indo-US pressures on Pakistan are set to build. A normally cautious China and Russia have sprung to the defence of Pakistan after Trump’s accusations against Pakistan. The global strategic lines for the 21st century are being drawn.

It is, accordingly, critical for Pakistan to formulate and follow an integrated Afghanistan, India and Kashmir policy. Strategic coordination with China will be essential. China is, incidentally, a better interlocutor for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region than the US. Finally, a short-sighted India-centric Afghanistan policy will be disastrous for Pakistan-Afghan relations and for the strategic development of Pakistan-China relations. As a weak link in any strategic chain Pakistan will be of no use to anyone.

Kh Asif meets Nawaz Sharif, discusses Trump’s Afghan-South Asia policy –

PT

26 Aug 17

Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif met the former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif at his Jati Umra residence on Saturday and discussed his forthcoming visits to China, Russia and Turkey.

These friendly visits to the said countries are being under taken by the foreign minister to discuss the Afghan and South Asia policy announced lately by President Trump, putting Pakistan at notice.
Minister for Railways, Kh Saad Rafiq told newsmen at Jati Umra that since Mian Nawaz Sharif has vast experience in foreign affairs and relations with these countries, he was consulted by the foreign minister.

Kh Asif is scheduled to leave for China on Saturday night. Thereafter the foreign minister will travel to Moscow and Ankara to meet with leaders of these countries.

The decision to undertake the visit was taken at a meeting of the National Security Committee on Thursday, which deliberated on the new US policy and formulated the response.

The foreign minister’s previously scheduled trip to the US for bilateral talks with his counterpart, Rex Tillerson, has been delayed for the regional tour.

The consultations would be aimed at developing regional consensus on efforts for peace in Afghanistan.

The regional trip, Pakistani diplomats believe, will send a strong message to the US that Pakistan cannot be coerced and that the country enjoys broad support in the region.

Both Beijing and Moscow have criticised the US position on Pakistan and have insisted that Pakistan’s importance for peace in Afghanistan and its sacrifices in the fight against terrorism need to be recognised.

There have been multiple statements from China in this regard, including one by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi who praised Pakistan’s “great sacrifices” in the fight against terrorism and urged their acknowledgement by the world.

Meanwhile, Russian President’s Envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said that Pakistan was “a key regional player to negotiate with” and warned that undue pressure on it could “seriously destabilise the region’s security situation”.

Iran too has joined the countries disapproving the US policy. The Iranian foreign ministry in a statement has denounced the new strategy adopted by the US towards Pakistan and blamed Washington’s opportunistic strategies and unilateral and meddlesome policies for growth in terrorism and extremism in the region.

**US blames Pakistan to hide its failure in Afghanistan: JI chief – The News**

27 Aug 17

CHAKDARRA: Urging the government to review the foreign policy, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Senator Sirajul Haq on Saturday said that US was blaming Pakistan to hide its own failure in Afghanistan.

Speaking at a public meeting here, the JI chief demanded review and removing flaws in the country’s foreign policy. “We need a cohesive foreign policy in line with the guidelines of Islam,” he added.

He said that the JI was more than ready to defend the geographical and ideological boundaries of the country.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Minister Muzaffar Said, JI provincial chief Mushtaq Ahmad, deputy chief Noorul Haq, Lower Dir district chief Maulana Asadullah and others also spoke on the occasion.

Sirajul Haq said the courts did a favour to deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif by only disqualifying him, and not sending him to jail.
He said the courts decided the Panama Leaks case as per the aspirations of the people and did a favour to them, adding, “Now it is the people’s turn to return the favour.”

He said that a powerful family named in the Panama Papers leaks was held accountable and other 450 people named in the leaks was needed to be held accountable. He alleged that the families of Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan People’s Party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari looted the country with both hands and promoted corruption. “It is because of the two families that corruption is rampant in the country,” he went on to say.

Sirajul Haq said that former military ruler general (retd) Pervez Musharraf also committed corruption. He claimed that Musharraf had only Rs40 million in his account, which rose to Rs2 billion after he ruled the country for years.

The US, Pakistan, and Afghanistan – nation.PK

27 Aug 17

It should be absolutely clear that no one is more to blame for the United States’ Afghan quandary than the United States itself.
What began as yet another arrogant display of US military might and imperial power has, over the past decade and half, become the US’ longest running war.
Estimates of the cost of the war range from $800 billion to over a $1 trillion, with the US also losing 2403 soldiers (with more than 20000 injured) over the course of the conflict.
The US invasion has also led to almost thirty thousand civilian deaths with a comparable number of wounded.
Yet, for all this blood and treasure, Afghanistan remains dangerous and unstable; the Taliban continue to represent a credible threat to the fledgling and largely powerless Afghan government and security forces, and it is only foreign aid and military assistance that prevents a return to the anarchic violence of the 1990s.
An unending, unchanging stalemate is all that the United States has been able to achieve as a result of its invasion of Afghanistan.

In retrospect, the reasons for the failure of the United States are not difficult to see.
As was the case with Iraq, the neo-conservatives who pushed the Bush administration to invade Afghanistan were imbued with the strong belief that US power could and should be used to reshape the world in the pursuit of American interests and hegemony.
The mantra of regime change, accompanied by appeals to the principles of humanitarian intervention or the protection of national security, became an explicit element of US foreign policy, and the ease with which the US military was able to initially rout its adversaries in Iraq and Afghanistan only strengthened the belief in this doctrine.
The problem with this, of course, was that while toppling regimes was easy, replacing them and rebuilding societies shattered by years of war turned out to be extremely difficult.
The United States lacked the knowledge, will, and resources needed to effectively engage in the process of ‘nation-building’, with its interventions in both Iraq and Afghanistan transforming into quagmires from which it is still struggling to escape.

In this context, Donald Trump’s recent announcement that the United States will maintain a military presence in Afghanistan for an indefinite amount of time represents nothing more than the continuation of a policy that is demonstrably flawed.
While hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on Afghanistan and its reconstruction, the
country’s fundamental problems of governance remain largely unaddressed. The police and military, for example, remain chronically underequipped, undertrained, and underfunded. State institutions are marred by a lack of capacity and the government suffers from a lack of popular legitimacy. These issues are compounded by widespread corruption and graft. Entire swaths of the country remain outside of the control of the government, divided up between local powerholders and the Taliban. Adding a few hundred US troops to the handful currently deployed in Afghanistan, as Trump intends to do, will have no impact whatsoever on these realities. In thrall to the generals appointed to key positions in the heart of his administration, Trump has chosen to pursue the worst possible ‘solution’ to the Afghan problem; a half-hearted military intervention aimed at resolving complex economic, political, and social issues.

Much has also been made of Trump’s announcement that the United States will now be adopting a tougher position with regards to Pakistan and its alleged support for terrorist networks and militant groups that oppose the Afghan government and the US. The civilian government and military have been quick to deny these accusations, arguing that Pakistan has been fighting terrorism for the past decade, and that it is itself a victim of state-sponsored terrorism originating in Afghanistan and India. The Pakistani response represents a continuation of a narrative that the government has been attempting to propagate around the world for some time now, albeit with limited success.

Part of the problem is that Pakistan’s version of events is difficult to believe. After all, it has long been established and widely recognised that establishing ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan was a pillar of Pakistan’s strategic policy, with the idea being that the country’s North-Western neighbour could provide critical support in the event of any conflict with India. It is this logic that led the military establishment in Pakistan to back the Afghan Taliban during the 1990s, providing them with logistical, economic, and diplomatic support at a time when the regime was internationally isolated. Following from this, accusations of duplicity that have been levelled against Pakistan suggest that, despite receiving billions of dollars in aid and military assistance from the United States in the ‘War on Terror’, Pakistan has continued to support elements of the Afghan Taliban precisely because it wishes to reestablish its control in Afghanistan following an inevitable US withdrawal from the region.

Some elements within the US foreign policy establishment have long argued that the solution to the Afghan problem actually lies in Kashmir. The reasoning they cite is simple; given that Pakistani interference in Afghanistan is derived from the belief that the latter can provide the former with strategic depth and other kinds of support in the event of hostilities with India, resolving points of contention between India and Pakistan, and securing peace between them, eliminates the need for Pakistan to meddle in Afghanistan’s internal affairs. Certainly, with the civilian government and military establishment in Pakistan continuously propagating the idea that Indian involvement in Afghanistan amounts to an attempt at encirclement, it is obvious to see how Pakistan’s paranoia about its Eastern neighbour prompts much of what it does in the West. Since Pakistan is likely to remain a crucial player in any eventual resolution of the Afghan conflict, any realistically workable settlement is one that attempts to allay Pakistan’s security concerns.

Having said that, there is another dimension to this, one that has received very little attention within Pakistan itself. This line of reasoning suggests that if Pakistan is indeed continuing to support violent militant organisations in Afghanistan, it should cease doing so not because of US pressure, but because it was and is poor policy. Whatever dubious strategic gains may have been made by interfering in Afghanistan, Pakistan has had to
pay a big domestic price for its involvement; to the extent that supporting and tolerating Islamist militancy in Afghanistan is linked to the proliferation and growth of similar organisations within Pakistan itself, it is clear that the pursuit of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan has come at the cost of considerable domestic violence and terrorism.

Similarly, while it is plausible that India and Afghanistan are using Afghan soil to plan and launch terrorist attacks in Pakistan, one could argue that this is hardly surprising given that Pakistan is alleged to have done exactly the same thing with both countries in the past.

The belief that violent Islamist groups are nothing more than pliable proxies that can be deployed to pursue strategic objectives is a flawed one.

Time and again, Pakistan has experienced the blowback from decades of misguided policies that have allowed such groups to thrive and flourish within its borders.

Tens of thousands of Pakistani civilians and soldiers have died at the hands of these groups, and their continued existence only serves to reinforce the notion that Pakistan is a pariah state that supports terrorism.

Trump’s approach to Afghanistan might be wrongheaded, but that does not mean that Pakistan should not engage in some introspection about its own role in the conflict, and the future it wishes to share with its neighbours in the region.

Afghan war complications – PT

27 Aug 17

Pakistan’s position and choices

Why was Trump’s take on Pakistan, during his speech about the war in Afghanistan of course, such a bombshell for Pakistan? And why is everybody, especially the press, so ‘puzzled’ about the twist about India? “Pakistan’s the problem (in Afghanistan)” has been Trump’s favourite line about the war since the early days of his presidential campaign. And the bit about India only stresses the point that failing an immediate “do more” on the part of Pakistan, the latter is out of the American plan for Afghanistan, at least till their next reset moment.

Considering the unconventional style of the US president, and that he saw Pakistan as the “problem” for a while, shouldn’t the national security huddle – that met to react to Trump – have taken place much, much earlier to preempt just such a situation? And it’s not as if Trump has just shocked everybody by mentioning the safe havens. It has been a recurring theme since George W Bush brought it up with Gen Musharraf in the early days of the war. And now we’ll struggle to convince a third US president of just how far we’ve brought our own fight against terrorism, and how Afghanistan actually houses our insurgents in its own little safe havens that nobody seems to notice.

The talk about Pakistan taking the first step in softening the relationship with America, in favour of moving closer to regional powers China and Russia, is indeed serious and should be taken up vigorously by the government as well as the establishment. Bolstering friendly, and business, relations with Russia – on top of the political bond and CPEC bonanza binding us with China – will prove beneficial not just trilaterally, but will also help end the fighting in Afghanistan. Chinese and Russian cooperation with Iran on numerous fronts will also help bring Iran to the Afghan endgame as another important neighbour; a crucial leverage that the Trump White House has deliberately squandered away. Yet to play alongside these heavyweights Pakistan, too, will have to bring to the table something more remarkable than just its geographic location. So far we are a country dependant on others’ money even for our day-to-day
functioning. To be able to protect our pride and sovereignty internationally, we will have to shape up or risk always being the one party always trying to punch above its weight in international politics.

**Trump has a bad hair day — Express Tribune**

27 Aug '17

*Anjum Niaz*

Friday before last, Donald Trump gathered his military brass known as the ‘wise men’ to pitch for his friend and millionaire Blackwater owner Eric Prince. The plan was to pay him $10 billion a year for his mercenary army to fight the terrorists in Afghanistan. Prince had prepared a presentation for bagging the deal, but last minute, the generals told Prince to beat it. Trump seethed with rage that had earlier reached its peak when he was forced to sack his soul-mate Steve Bannon as his chief strategist. After all, the former editor of *Breitbart News* served as the “paranoia-inducing, rage channelling, conspiracy-fanning” weaponry to fire up Trump’s base who got him elected. Like a caged animal when let loose, Trump went for the kill.

And the kill that day was Pakistan.

The petulant president trained his guns on Pakistan. “Washington is being ripped off by Islamabad,” he’s quoted saying. As a punishment, America needs to cut off all military aid to Pakistan, was Trump’s “strategy.” This is the same man who as president-elect extolled Pakistanis as “fantastic” and “one of the most intelligent people.” He gushed to then PM Nawaz Sharif that he was “ready and willing to play any role that you [Nawaz Sharif] want me to play to address and find solutions to the outstanding problems.” But the 70-plus president suffers from memory lapses. He also lacks the mental capacity to understand foreign policy; nor has he much appetite for it.

Pakistan is a moving target for American generals. Presently, we are viewed as “duplicitous.” The following Monday, in his speech on Afghanistan Trump wagged a finger at Islamabad for harbouring “criminals and terrorists.” He threatened to cut off aid because “We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting.”

The philistine president and his speech-drafters (US generals) showed a pathetically ignorance of Pakistani values, traditions and our cultural heritage with this sentence: “It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order and to peace.” To say Pakistan is ‘uncivilised’ is most offensive. Words come cheap out of Trump’s mouth, but they have serious consequences. To label 193 million people of a nuclear-armed nation as barbarians and primitive is the worst diplomatic screw-up ever! He made it worse when he chose to “appreciate India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan.” Trump accused Pakistan of ignoring its “commitment to order and to peace,” whereas, he is the one destabilising “order and peace” between India and Pakistan by playing favourites. This is not the ‘Art of the Deal’ but a geo-political pratfall for Trump and his generals.

That said, the arc of American mindset on Pakistan’s support for terrorists is wide-ranging — from the Trump administration to Congress to the media. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that Pakistan ‘ripped’ America off its $20-billion military aid to fight terrorism. This is a serious allegation that needs addressing by Pakistani establishment. We must know how, when, where and why $20 billion were spent and by whom. No more holy cows…if politicians are audited, so should our generals. The masonic society appearance of the army has warded off any outside audit of its accounts thus far. Everything is a secret like the Freemasons. The ball is in the court of Army Chief General Bajwa. He has to brief the Americans, even jog their memories on Pakistan’s long war against terrorists; not for them! He needs to
show not tell the havoc wreaked by “criminals and terrorists” on our soil. Seeking a ‘shahbash’ certificate from Trump will not work as Gen Bajwa hopes, “We are not looking for any material or financial assistance from USA, but trust, understanding and acknowledgement of our contributions.”

Needed pronto: a more muscular response.

US versus Pakistan: the way forward – Daily Times

It will be a foreign policy mega blunder to lose the opportunity to work with the US to counter terrorism once and for all

27-Aug-17  
Dr Ejaz Hussain

The Trump Administration finally released its South Asia strategic policy that hinges on three elements: one, the centre of future geopolitics in South Asia will be Afghanistan due to its proximity with Iran, Central Asia (and Russia), China and, importantly, Pakistan. Two, India has been assumed as a strategic partner with a major role not only in Afghanistan but also in regional matters; three, Pakistan is now going to be perceived as a non-transnational and conditionised country. The present shift in the US policy is not necessarily a hallmark of the current administration, but a consequence of academic research that views China as an emerging superpower after three decades. Russia is already seen as a major power with the will and capacity to challenge the US hegemony in (Central) Asia and (East) Europe. India, whose relations with Pakistan and China remain structurally conflictual, is thus regarded as an emerging major power with a huge market. The former is engaging some Southeast Asian countries bordering China besides consolidating its hegemonic position within South Asia. Moreover, India is viewed as the world’s largest electoral democracy in the west that adds to its strength.

Putting faith in China and Russia to help Pakistan counter the US is naive. Due to its own peculiar geopolitics, China is not likely to support Pakistan beyond moral and diplomatic means

By contrast, Pakistan is understood as a small country with a defective democracy, divided society, semi-capital market and, importantly, jihadi policy. Indubitably, militant organisations were created in and around Pakistan with the Saudi money, US weaponry and Pakistani training and space during the 1980s to fight the Soviet communism. What most of Pakistani people and policymakers failed to understand is the Afghan war ended in 1989 and the US, having emerged as the sole superpower, disengaged from the region. From this logic, Pakistan was supposed to roll back the whole jihadi business. This never happened due to our preoccupation with India.

Nevertheless, 9/11 once again afforded Pakistan with the opportunity to interact with the US. The latter entered into short-term transactional relations with the former. In exchange for ‘billions and billions of dollars’, Pakistan provided air bases, supply routes and intel to the US. However, from Pentagon’s perspective, Pakistan double-crossed too. The killing of Bin Laden, among others, on Pakistani territory is cited by the Americans as a case in point. In addition, since Musharraf’s days, the list of banned militant organisations is available with foreign governments and the very presence of such entities on (social) media point to their relative autonomy in the polity, politics and the state of Pakistan. Thus, the ‘do more’ mantra was often pronounced by the Obama Administration in an urge to change such a policy (dis)course in Pakistan. The latter did not take American assertions into account owing to overconfidence in its geopolitics where China was put as a counterweight to Washington.
Paradoxically, despite the preceding, the US under Trump has literally and unprecedentedly threatened a pro-China and nuclear Pakistan with dire consequences if it fails to comply with the former to genuinely counter terrorism in South Asia. Trump’s policy speech, however, is apparently rendered ineffective by Pakistani authorities who, on the one hand, decided to take China, Russia and Saudi Arabia on board before (possibly) visiting Washington and, on the other, cautioned the US not to liken Pakistan to Vietnam and Cambodia. By adopting such a Trump-like style, Pakistani policy makers did and will harm the country’s interest.

Pakistan is still dependent on the US-led financial institutions and pro-US countries such as Japan. In addition, the US and the NATO countries are still close allies and the current research points to further deepening of this time-tested security regime.

Second, Saudi Arabia is far less dependent on Pakistan as it is on the US. The latter’s weaponry is a crucial component of the Saudi warfare in Yemen. Hence, it is fallacious an argument that Riyadh can negotiate with the US on Pakistan’s behalf. Third, it is equally naïve a thinking to put faith in China and Russia to help Pakistan counter the US. Due to its own peculiar geopolitics, China is not likely to support Pakistan beyond moral and diplomatic means. Importantly, sole reliance on China will further enable the latter to control the trajectory of bilateral relations from short to the long run. In addition, Chinese money comes with heavy conditions if accepted in duress will ruin our future generations. Besides, Russia may support us morally.

The crux of the foregoing is it will be a foreign policy mega blunder to lose the opportunity to work with the US to counter terrorism once and for all. We lost thousands of lives. It is indeed sorrowful but again it is due to our bad policies. It is time Pakistan revisits its security policy drastically and timely. Our pluralist Indus civilisation and our religion teach us peace. Pakistan’s topmost priority must onwards be perpetuation of internal and (extra) regional peace. Rather than publicly re-launching jihadism, our state ought to roll back such organisations and ideology.

Last, if Pakistani authorities behaved as the Taliban did under Mullah Omar after 9/11, the former should be ready to pay the price ranging from denial of entry in the western world to possibly witness a drone or a Mother of All Bombs, every day. Afghanistan did receive one lately. Perhaps that was a precursor to the pronounced policy.

New tidings For AfPak – Nation.PK

26 Aug 17
Afrasiab Khattak

The new US Afghan policy declared in a speech by President Donald Trump on August 22 is impressive for its clarity, comprehensiveness and nuance. US seems to have learnt from its past mistakes and the deep, rigorous and long process of consultation involving all stakeholders in the US state system must have also contributed in producing a substantial policy. Surge in US troops will be quite modest but unlike the past there is no date for withdrawal given in advance. Decision about withdrawal in the future will be taken on the need basis keeping in view reality on the ground.

In the past even a huge military surge was ineffective because Taliban knew the date of withdrawal of international forces in advance so they could adopt the simple strategy of waiting them out.
In that situation US had the watch and Taliban had the time. Now the tables have turned.

The focus of the fresh US support program is to equip, train and advise the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) rather than replace them in fighting. ANSF has turned out to be an effective fighting force during the last four years, after taking over the country’s defense from international forces. There were certain deficiencies in equipment and training. The additional equipment and training (particularly the air cover) will boost its strength and morale. Under the new policy US military commanders will have greater power to make decisions on ground in Afghanistan which will enable them to take quick decisions, and time is of the essence in this war like every other war. But the most important aspect of the policy is the focus on counter-terrorism. That has been the most significant purpose of the presence of international troops in Afghanistan but it wasn’t given its due priority.

Nation building in Afghanistan isn’t the business of foreigners. It is for Afghan themselves to work on the project of nation building and state building. The new US policy makes a strong commitment to support Afghanistan but it also makes it clear that the Afghan government shouldn’t take it as a blank cheque. The National Unity Government (NUG) has to put its act together in terms of implementing reforms, rooting out corruption and achieving legitimacy by gaining people’s confidence. Interestingly the new US policy, along with expressing commitment for support of NUG, also leaves the door open for negotiations for a political solution which adds to the strength of the policy.

President Trump’s new Afghan policy mentions Indian contributions in stabilising Afghanistan in terms of economic development. It carefully avoids any military role for India and again the new policy is building on something that is already there. India has already invested billions of dollars in building roads, dams, bridges and other infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Coming to the aspect of the new US Afghan policy dealing with Pakistan one can say that it’s the least surprising. Pakistan’s consistent campaign for imposing Taliban’s rule on Afghanistan has been attracting the criticism of different US leaders after September 11. By redefining his Afghan policy as AfPak policy President Obama had made it clear that he regarded Pakistan as part of the problem. He had also threatened Pakistan with international isolation if it kept providing sanctuaries to Afghan insurgents.

Due to long association and collaboration of the past (coming from working together in SEATO, CENTO and Afghan War) the US security establishment has taken a long time to put the Pakistani security establishment on warning for its support for Taliban and other organisations alleged to be involved in terrorism. But it had to come one day and it’s still a warning so far. It may be a historic opportunity for Pakistan to get rid of a flawed Afghan policy that has acquired malignant proportions over the time. Even otherwise, this is a potentially suicidal policy for Pakistan.

Pakistan’s Afghan policy is the product of a militaristic and hegemonic design based on the jihadist project of the 1980s and it hasn’t changed in any tangible way despite tall claims to the contrary. It aims at imposing a puppet government on Afghanistan by defeating the Afghan state and its
international allies. Many political parties in Pakistan have been criticising this policy. It has neither been approved by the Parliament nor supported by any elected political government. Pashtuns in Pakistan are particularly opposed to it because it puts them in the eye of the terrorist storm. Pakistan’s Afghan policy has been the monopoly of the country’s security establishment and at times the civilian government would be sent packing for opposing it. Taliban’s brutality was unleashed on every entity that clearly opposed it. The policy of supporting good Taliban (that includes Afghan Taliban and elements fighting against India) has perpetuated terrorist problem in Pakistan despite valiant sacrifices by the people of the country and members of the security forces. Pakistan has remained a war theater for almost the last four decades. It’s only natural that the generals and not the civilians would call the shots in a war theater. So it isn’t surprising to see that support for jihadist project and threat to democracy emanate from the same source. Again it’s the same mindset that is attacking democratic republics (however flawed they may be) in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistan has already missed many opportunities to review this bankrupt Afghan policy during the last so many years. It has renounced the policy of so called strategic depth only in statements but in practice there hasn’t been an iota of change. Pakistan has not been able to avail the opportunity of having access to Central Asian markets because Talibanisation of Afghanistan has remained a higher priority than developing regional connectivity and trade. The approval of the National Action Plan in December 2014 was another big opportunity for wrapping up the Taliban project and we were given to understand at the highest level that there will be a shift. But it never came, despite the fact that Pakistan has every possibility of achieving its legitimate national interest in Afghanistan through political and diplomatic means. No other two countries in the world have the type of commonalities that exist between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This potential can be taped only if Pakistan learns to befriend Afghanistan instead of doting on the Taliban.

Political will to implement the policy is equally crucial. Similarly China, Iran, Russia and Central Asian states aren’t mentioned. They are important players and their inclusion is a must for any sustainable solution to the conflict around Afghanistan. China and Russia are genuinely worried at the presence of the so called IS in the region along with other violent extremists that threatens their vision of regional development. The recent collaboration between Taliban and IS in massacring Shia Hazaras in northern Afghanistan crystallises the nature of the threat. One hopes countries of the region and beyond will cooperate to eliminate this common enemy instead of playing double games.

The void in Trump’s Afghanistan strategy – Daily Times

Afghan institutions often only function superficially. Decision-making happens in a parallel system of kitchen cabinet-like circles and ethno-political dealings

26-Aug-17
Thomas Ruttig

After US President Trump announced his strategy for Afghanistan on Monday, much has been written about the eventuality of a negotiated settlement, the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan's role in the mix. Afghanistan's internal political situation has received much less attention. Trump has explicitly ruled out "export democracy to faraway countries", as if democracy was a western-owned commodity. This is not good, as this situation is one 'colour' in the Rubik's Cube of conflicts in the country, without setting it straight the whole set would not be sorted.

Afghan institutions often only function superficially. Meanwhile, decision-making happens in a parallel system of kitchen cabinet-like circles and ethno-political dealings. Meritocratic principles that could lead to good governance, if they become the rule, fall on the wayside more often than not. Good results are mainly achieved against the system, or circumventing or short-cutting it, and through individuals inside it who dare to go against its pre-democratic workings.

The National Unity Government (NUG) with its president and its 'chief executive', a position not existing in the constitution, is the outcome of that very institutional weakness. Government-controlled bodies technically unable but, more importantly, politically unwilling to curb manipulation allowed that the 2014 presidential election was botched. The two main contenders simply could not agree on who won; attempt by the UN to sort this out got stuck in the mess. (This was not too much different from the 2009 presidential and 2010 parliamentary elections and, therefore, predictable.) Then US Secretary of State John Kerry had to come in to invent the NUG, only to be derided today by the same Afghan politicians who made his intervention necessary. Strangely enough, even the Chief Executive does not insist any longer on a decision whether his position would be turned into that of a permanent prime minister, as stipulated in the 2014 NUG agreement.

Ever since, the NUG remained more busy with itself, quarrelling over influential and lucrative positions, than with the problems of a country, in which - after all the investments of the past 16 years - thirty per cent of the people continue to live under the poverty line and another thirty per cent not much above it. (These percentages are growing.) They include millions of refugees who have, many voluntarily, but often less so, returned from Pakistan and Iran. They are still waiting for being reintegrated into their society, languishing in makeshift settlements and scraping though with occasional day jobs in a market that is full of unemployed people. As one observer put it, in the context of Afghanistan's migration policies: "There are world-class policy papers, but close to zero implementation."

This is only the tip of the iceberg of Afghanistan's institutions weaknesses. The entire political system is out of sync, and there are gaping holes. With the exception of the Attorney General's office, the judiciary is all but independent. Electoral oversight bodies have new members, but remain unreformed. The cabinet is often side-lined. The independent commission tasked to watch the constitution's correct implementation is bogged down in internal conflict.

Parliament has lost its full legitimacy; it should have been elected latest by June 2015. No one believes that the date set now, July 2018, is realistic, but no one says so publicly. One of the biggest oddities is the (unwritten) ban of political parties to form groups in it, thus denying the body of any political structure. Parties, although officially allowed to function and participate in elections, also cannot present lists of candidates to voters. This has virtually made each MP his or her own party, open to manipulation and bribery. It has also undercut its own legitimacy by its often destructive attitude vis-à-vis cabinet ministers and urgent legislative projects.

Trump's contradictory position vis-à-vis 'state building' and his failure to mention the need for a strong, independent civil society and the defence of human rights and democracy in Afghanistan is highly problematic
All this has eroded constitutional checks-and-balances, and next to nothing has been done to fill them. The elites continue their selfish politicking, but rarely have time to address the deepening social gap. On top, there is the return of the frightening ethnicisation of the political struggle, by all sides. This goes hand in hand with using the threat of violence as a political means. Crime is on the rise, and much of it enjoys political protection.

No doubt, there is some progress. Former US ambassador to Kabul Ron Neumann, one of the most perceptive Afghanistan watchers, recently wrote in The Atlantic that there were three things which had impressed him during his last trip to the country: "the reform of military leadership, civil service improvements, and anti-corruption efforts". He added that "none of the changes are complete" and "all could be lost or reversed", and he warned that particularly the forthcoming elections "may undercut them". This is because the rules of coalition building necessitate, from the point of view of candidates, to involve those "entrenched political elites" (Neumann) that anti-corruption reform are supposed to remove from the system based on legal procedures.

ELECTING A PARLIAMENT - and helping to this in a way that produces an accepted outcome -, for example, might sound like a luxury for a country torn apart by war. Particularly as there are many people in the West who stick to the semi-racist belief that Muslim-dominated country are 'not fit for democracy' anyway. After everything that transpired, I would not be surprised it that was also the opinion among White House advisors.

In this context, Trump's contradictory position vis-à-vis "state building" and his failure to mention the need for a strong, independent civil society and the defence of human and democratic in Afghanistan are highly problematic. A country as ethnically, religiously, politically and socially diverse as Afghanistan needs reliable institutions to manage and alleviate a set conflicts that consists of much more than the Taleban insurgency, Daesh's terror and the harmfully bad Afghan-Pakistanirelations. To ignore this fact bodes disaster for Afghanistan's future.

**Trump’s Afghan flip-flop – The News**

26 Aug 17

**Hussain H Zaidi**

Donald Trump’s flip-flop on Afghanistan has hardly come as a surprise. Contrary to his previous opposition to America’s costly involvement in foreign wars, the enigmatic US president has announced his plans to shore up his country’s military presence in Afghanistan.

With the Taliban ratcheting-up their offensive against the beleaguered government in Kabul and the transnational cataclysmic organisation – the IS – taking root in the war-torn country, the about-face was always on the cards. The ultimatum to stick the knife into Pakistan in case it does not mend its ways is also not staggering in view of the country’s perceived role of a show-spoiler in Afghanistan. A country that is believed to hold the key to putting down the militancy faced by its neighbouring nation and allegedly continues to aid and abet militants needs to be conveyed the right message in so many words.

The new Afghan strategy implies a shift from the ex ante or time-based approach of the Obama administration towards an ex post or result-based approach. The ex ante approach resulted in the withdrawal of combat US troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014, leaving 8,000 strong special forces to help the Afghan Army take on the terrorists.
The approach spelled disaster as the Afghan Army has proved unequal to the task of holding itself against the heightened Taliban onslaught. Last year and the first eight months of the current year have seen greater bloodshed in the country than any other period during the preceding 10 years.

What is worse, Daesh, which is currently on the retreat in Iraq, is looking for new safe havens. What can be a safer haven for it than a country like Afghanistan where the writ of the state is conspicuous by its absence, an overwhelming majority of the population has been condemned to live in abject poverty and squalor and sufficient ideological support exists for radical Islamist groups? Nearly two decades ago, it was these characteristics of Afghanistan that provided a fertile ground for Al-Qaeda to thrive in the country.

The Taliban, an essentially local outfit, have never been – and are not likely to be – a direct threat to US security. The fateful events of 9/11 – which brought the US back to Afghanistan – were the making of Al-Qaeda, which has been decimated in the region. If the Taliban were the only menace in Afghanistan, Washington’s interest in the country would have tapered off. What the US fears is that an unstable Afghanistan may become the stronghold of another transnational militant organisation like the IS. The July 31 fatal strike at the Iraqi Embassy in Kabul, which was masterminded by Daesh, lends credence to such apprehensions.

Pakistan has been warned against falling between two stools and presented with the stark choice of being either with the Americans or with the militants. A similar choice was given to Islamabad after 9/11. In case Islamabad does not side with Washington, which is another way of saying that if it does not stop “patronising” some factions of the Afghan Taliban – notably the Haqqani Network – it will have “much to lose”.

In the words of Trump, “we have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars. [At] the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting”. India has been asked to play a starring role in Afghan reconstruction, which may be seen as one way to punish Pakistan. The greater the Indian role in Afghanistan, the more conspicuous its presence there and the stronger its influence on the coalition government in Kabul.

The Trump administration’s view of Pakistan is the same as the perception held by the one that preceded it: an errant boy in the comity of nations in need of foreign assistance to sustain itself. So if the screw is turned on the chap, it may see reason. Seen from American spectacles, Pakistan is a state sponsor of terrorism and constitutes a direct threat to the stability of the key Washington allies in the region, namely India and Afghanistan.

The flip side is that Pakistan is the sixth largest nation in the world in terms of its population and the second largest state, economy and military power in South Asia. It possesses nuclear weapons and – at least on paper – is a major non-Nato ally as well as a strategic partner. Such credentials make Pakistan exceedingly important for durable peace in the region.

Understandably, the Obama administration as well as Congress remained on tenterhooks on Pakistan. Should Islamabad be left to its own devices or continue to be engaged? Was going harder or softer a better course of action in dealing with Pakistan? Should Pakistan be declared a state sponsor of terrorism?

Pakistan, on the other hand, has maintained that it has discarded the notion of good and bad militants once and for all and that by accusing it of backing Afghan militants, Washington is tilting at windmills. In international relations, as in interpersonal relations, perception is more important than reality. Despite Pakistan’s rebuttal, the Americans, Afghans and Indians remain unimpressed. In their book, mere tilting
at Pakistan would be of little consequence. So the new administration in Washington must tighten up on Islamabad. But how?

The Trump administration may designate Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism (SST). American laws empower the executive to give a country this designation if it has repeatedly provided support for international acts of terrorism. Such countries can be slapped with sanctions. These include restrictions on foreign assistance, a ban on defence sales, specific controls over exports of dual-use items (technology that can be used for both civilian and military purposes) and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions, such as a travel ban. The three countries on the SST list are Iran, Sudan, and Syria.

As indicated by the US secretary of state, Pakistan’s non-Nato ally status may be revoked. The status, which was conferred on Pakistan in the initial years of the war on terror, has been instrumental in providing substantial security and civilian aid to Pakistan – which has been of no small help to the capital-scarce country. The US may also carry out strikes on alleged militant hideouts in the settled areas of Pakistan, which may result in a good number of civilian casualties.

Putting Pakistan on the SST list or withdrawing the non-Nato ally status, like a double-edged sword, may cut either way. It may squeeze the country economically at a time when it is running a huge current account deficit and thus make it change its counter-terrorism stance to the satisfaction of the US.

Alternatively, it may harden its stance on such matters, making it difficult for Washington to hit the bull’s eye in Afghanistan. The same goes for possible surgical strikes. Constructive engagement – in such a way as to address the concerns of both sides – rather than penalisation seems to be a better policy option as both countries have high stakes in uprooting militancy.

Giving India a greater role in Afghanistan is bound to raise Pakistan’s as well as China’s hackles. Beijing’s unequivocal defence of Islamabad’s counter-terrorism credentials following the unveiling of Trump’s Afghan strategy should leave no one in doubt that it differs with Washington on the modus operandi for tackling militancy in the region. The envisaged larger role for New Delhi will be seen by both Beijing and Islamabad as running counter to their strategic interests in the region. It will also push Pakistan even closer to China.

Trump’s move to single out India to do more in Afghanistan could backfire –

Dawn

26 Aug 17

IN the middle of Monday night’s fairly orthodox speech on Afghanistan, President Donald Trump swerved into a brief discussion of India. It would have been odd to summarise a “comprehensive review of all strategic options in Afghanistan and South Asia” without mentioning India, with 1.3 billion people. But the president, after studying “Afghanistan in great detail and from every conceivable angle”, used the occasion to prod India to do more to solve America’s 16-year Afghanistan problem.

Consistent with his mercantilist worldview, Trump highlighted that “India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States”. This is true: India shipped approximately $24bn more in exports to the United States in 2016 than it imported from the US. After underlining India’s vulnerability, Trump then stressed, “We want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development.”
So what’s the story here? India has done much to help Afghanistan already, as Trump appropriately acknowledged in his address. India has provided $2bn of aid to Afghanistan, and pledged an additional $1bn more last September. It is, by far, the most generous donor among the “regional countries”.

Indian-built projects include a large hydroelectric dam and a “spur” that connects the Afghan highway network to Iran — and even the newly built Afghan parliament building. India has also trained more than 4,000 Afghan National Army officers and provided helicopters to the Afghan Air Force.

Like the United States, India does not want Afghanistan to act as a staging ground for international terrorists, many of whom would be as happy to target Indian cities as European or American ones. When US cruise missiles struck Al Qaeda-linked training camps in Afghanistan following the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, several members of anti-India terrorist groups were killed in the apparently shared facilities.

India does not have the geography to alter the strategic course of landlocked country

In addition, India suffered the unique embarrassment in December 1999 of having to hand over three captured militants in Taliban-controlled Kandahar to secure the release of the passengers and crew aboard a hijacked Indian airliner.

Here’s the problem: India does not have the strategic tools — or the geography — to alter the strategic course of Afghanistan. Its $3bn aid commitment is about two per cent of total international donations to Kabul since 2002.

Pakistan, which sits between India and Afghanistan, is wary of facing adversaries on both its western and eastern borders.

US policymakers have long considered a greater Indian role, but such deliberations quickly led to brutal arithmetic: what economic aid, military training or even ground forces could India send to Afghanistan that Pakistan could not offset through support to hostile militant groups?

Despite having the world’s second-largest military, India cannot take over for the United States in Afghanistan. Since independence, India has modest experience operating expeditionary forces in hostile environments, mostly from UN peacekeeping operations but also a failed attempt to intervene in Sri Lanka in the late 1980s, what some described as “India’s Vietnam” experience. The Indian military, despite its ongoing modernisation, would still find it hard to support major operations at considerable distance.

Any large-scale Indian military effort would have to bypass Pakistan, and require support from Iran. In fact, it is difficult to imagine any enhanced Indian role — economic or military — in Afghanistan without closer Indo-Iranian ties, which would probably generate friction with Iran hawks empowered in the Trump administration.

Trump’s public invitation of more Indian involvement is likely to put more pressure on Pakistan, which already faces the prospect of cutbacks in US aid. Pakistani military leaders have a choice: acquiesce to outside pressure and lose their current veto on Afghan stability, or accept possible sanctions. The prospect of greater Indian involvement may empower hawks in Islamabad who argue Pakistan must bear whatever costs necessary to avoid strategic encirclement. Trump’s effort seems more likely to escalate Pakistan’s own involvement than compel an end to Pakistani interventionism.

If India does play a bigger role and Pakistan continues its cross-border support, it is likely to leave all the players roughly where they now sit: engaged in a holding action to prevent the territorial defeat of the Afghan state from a mostly indigenous insurgency.
India probably will contribute more aid, technical expertise and military training in Afghanistan, but there should be no illusions that those efforts will substantially ease the US mission there. At the end of the Trump administration, in all likelihood there will still be thousands of US service members in Afghanistan, many of them younger than the war in which they will be fighting.

**Pakistan’s foreign minister to discuss Trump’s Afghan plans with Russia and China – AP**

26 Aug 17

Talks with Moscow and Beijing follow US President’s announcement of new strategy in which he accused Islamabad of harbouring terrorists

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry on Friday said that Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif will soon visit China and Russia for consultations over the new US policy for Afghanistan and South Asia.

Nafess Zakari, a spokesman for the ministry, told a weekly briefing that no date has been fixed for the visits.

“You have already seen the emergence of our new partnership,” he said, referring to Islamabad’s tilt toward Moscow and its strategic partnership with China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. “New momentum is being given to regional activity.”

Regarding the timing of his upcoming visit to the United States, media reports said that Asif will visit Washington after holding consultations with the Chinese and Russian leaderships.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson earlier this month extended the invitation to Asif, with the new American approach to South Asia set to top the agenda.

In his address on Monday presenting his administration’s new strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia, US President Donald Trump accused Pakistan of harbouring terrorists and warned that the two countries’ partnership may unravel if it continues.

Pakistan denies sheltering terrorists and in turn has accused Afghanistan of providing shelter to fugitives who carried out terrorist acts on its side of the border.

The following day, Pakistani Foreign Secretary Tahmina Janjua visited Beijing where she met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

It was during her stay in the Chinese capital that Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi, China’s top foreign policy official, rang up Tillerson to say that Pakistan’s role in the resolution of the Afghan conflict should be recognised and its sovereignty respected.

During the briefing Zakari was asked if a new “Great Game” was being played in the region and if strategic collision could take place in the region because of the new alliances and partnerships.

“You have your own ways to understand why it is happening. This is a fertile region. This is an area in which natural resources are underexploited,” he said.
He added that the region was in the grip of developments because of both economic and political reasons.

**Pak military won’t be intimidated by US: world media – The News**

26 Aug 17

KARACHI: Here is an overview of foreign media outlets on the new Afghan policy announced by the US president Donald Trump.

According to Bloomberg, “Trump’s new strategy to turn around the 16-year conflict in Afghanistan will probably falter for a reason few of his voters would realize: China. Trump publicly tried to pressure Pakistan ….. But this aspect of the Afghan strategy is likely to founder because of China’s increasingly close economic ties with Pakistan, which reduces American leverage.”

With more than $50 billion in planned infrastructure projects and strong diplomatic support for its positions, American threats to withdraw billions in military aid are becoming less worrying for the powerful army, which dominates foreign policy.

“China is the shield now,” said Harsh Pant, an international relations professor at King’s College London. “The more aid America will cut, Pakistan will be expecting China to fill the vacuum.”

Pakistan has long denied it harbours terrorists. China’s support for its ally means Pakistan doesn’t need to alter course.

The Forbes magazine criticized Pakistan by citing the April 17 issue of Current History: “Nonetheless, America continued to scale up its support for Pakistan for many more years. More than fifteen years have passed since the United States launched operations in Afghanistan, ostensibly with the support of Pakistan,” notes Fair. “During this period, the Americans scaled up and then scaled down troop deployments and investments in Afghanistan’s economy, infrastructure, civil society, and armed forces, but never managed to deal with the simple fact that, throughout this war, they have depended on one country that was steadfastly opposed to US and NATO objectives: Pakistan.”

That’s good news for India that now has America on its side in its efforts to maintain influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to contain China in its northern border.

Meanwhile, America’s major policy shift in the region couldn’t come at a worse time for Pakistan’s equity markets, which have already been suffering hefty losses from corruption scandals that brought down the Sharif government.

According to Washington Post, President Trump said: “Today, 20 US-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan — the highest concentration in any region anywhere in the world.”

A presidential address to the nation is usually carefully vetted for factual accuracy. That’s not always the case for President Trump’s speeches, but extra care appeared to have been taken for his speech on the strategy on Afghanistan. Still, this number — 20 US-designated foreign terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan — jumped out at us. It seemed rather high. Where did this number come from?

The Facts: The secretary of state designates foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), and Trump’s phrasing suggested that he was referring to the list of FTOs maintained by the State Department. But when we asked the White House where this number came from, an official pointed to congressional testimony by
Gen. Joseph L. Votel, the commander of US Central Command. But here’s the problem: The State Department only lists 13 FTOs as active in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with one (Hizbul Mujahideen) being added just last week.

Indeed, the White House sent us a list of 20 purported terrorist organizations that were designated, and only 12 were on the official State Department list.

As far we can tell, the only source for this statistic is Gen. John W. Nicholson, the US commander in Afghanistan. In interviews, news briefings and congressional testimony, he has repeatedly said that “of the 98 US designated terrorist groups globally, 20 are in the AF/PAK region.” His statements have then turned up in news reports, such as in the New York Times.

So where did Nicholson get his figure? His spokesman, Navy Capt. William K. Salvin, said that he added entities designated by the Treasury Department and State Department as providing financial support to terror groups under Executive Order (EO) 13224, issued by President George W. Bush after the Sept. 11 attacks.

But adding together FTOs and EO designations really mixes apples and oranges, as some of the EO designations are for providing support to terrorist groups instead of being a terrorist group itself. That’s the reason the State Department has the legal authority to designate foreign terrorist organizations, and why the FTO list is considered the gold standard.

The total number of FTOs designated by the State Department is 62, not 98. We asked for further clarification from the White House but did not get a reply. The White House really needs to do a better job of quality control for important speeches. Rather than rely on a statistic ginned up by a field commander, someone should have called the State Department and double-checked whether it was valid to use this figure.

According to The Wall Street Journal, Trump’s new strategy face a potential challenge because of the rising fortunes of Imran Khan, a popular politician, a fierce critic of the US policy, who maintains that Pakistan’s anti-terror alliance caused destruction in Pakistan and gave rise to violence.

Former US ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, wrote in the New York Times, advising Trump to show an unflagging commitment to the cause and be prepared to respond to moves by adversaries to disrupt his plan. He said the president must be ready for Pakistan to resist and test his resolve. This might come in the form of attacks on American assets in Afghanistan or of interference with supply routes across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Pakistan’s security apparatus will try to prove that the United States cannot succeed without cooperating on Islamabad’s terms.

A major change from the Obama era is Trump’s decision to give American commanders in the field the flexibility they’ve long sought in assisting the Afghan forces fighting the Taliban and other insurgents. The president also adopted a realistic position regarding peace talks, moving away from President Barack Obama’s pursuit of reconciliation regardless of the deteriorating military situation.

In another write-up, The News York Times says Pakistani officials have cited Indian influence as a primary cause of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. Officials in Islamabad accuse India of supporting a hostile political regime in Kabul and funding militants, who use Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks inside Pakistan.

Pakistani officials said they expected private contractors to take a more dominant role than troops already in Afghanistan. Senior Pakistani security officials stress that an all-inclusive engagement is the only option for peace inside Afghanistan. More troops inside the country, along with blaming Pakistan for harboring terrorists, will not work, they said in background interviews.
Sehar Kamran, an opposition senator who leads an Islamabad-based think tank, said Mr. Trump’s plan appeared to be “more of the same, under much more colorful language and contradictory bluster.”

Ms. Kamran said that pushing India to play a stronger role inside Afghanistan would isolate Washington’s friends in Islamabad “without realizing, understanding or perhaps deliberately underestimating the impact of increasing Indian presence on Pakistan’s western border.”

“An unnecessary flexing of military muscles and the deployment of additional troops at this time will only undo much that has been achieved over many years diplomatically, and serve to further antagonize regional countries like Pakistan, China and Russia,” she said.

“Pakistan is prepared to absorb the impact of a more assertive US policy toward the country,” said Arif Rafiq, a nonresident fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington. “It’s the most economically stable that it’s been in a decade, thanks in part to massive Chinese investment, and it has managed to secure much of its border regions despite the withdrawal of most US combat forces.”

He said that Pakistan also knows that it has several options to counter punitive actions by Washington, including closing supply routes to Afghanistan.

James Stavridis, former US admiral and supreme commander of Nato allied forces, wrote in Foreign Policy Magazine: The options are bad in Afghanistan. We could cut our losses (2,400 Americans dead, $1 trillion spent) and depart — but that would eventually lead to another Vietnam moment, with helicopters lifting off the roof of the US Embassy. Another approach would be to return to a robust NATO-led operation with 150,000 troops doing the actual fighting, which was the size of the force when I ran the Afghan war as supreme allied commander in 2009-2013. But there is no appetite for that level of commitment on either side of the Atlantic, and, frankly, the entire world wrestles with profound Afghan fatigue.”

He said: The new strategy is hardly new, and sometimes the best Plan B is to work harder and smarter at Plan A. Kudos to the president’s generals for landing him on a glide path that makes strategic and tactical sense, albeit an option that is merely the least worst next move in the long-running great game of Afghanistan.

According to CNN, Trump has always insisted he's all about winning. But on Monday night, as he laid out his new strategy for Afghanistan, America got to see how its new President confronted what many experts believe is a no-win situation: a war that has dragged on with no end in sight for 16 years. Trump declares US will 'win' in Afghanistan, but gives few details. Trump laced his prime-time speech with volleys of bold language that might be expected from a new commander-in-chief taking over a failing war. His plans hardly seem sufficiently sweeping to unlock the victory that eluded Presidents George W. Bush and Obama in a nation that is treacherous for foreign invaders.

They are also unlikely to significantly change calculations among Taliban leaders and in Pakistan's military.

Chicago Tribune said: The speech was a model of bold phrases and grand promises unsupported by any specifics that would indicate the president has any idea how to make his vision into reality. It doesn’t tell us much when Trump makes declarations such as, “We will push onward to victory. He thinks loosening the restrictions on how our forces fight will make a big difference. But those restrictions are designed to minimize civilian casualties — partly because killing innocents unnecessarily is morally wrong and partly because it antagonizes Afghans, thus increasing the number of people willing to fight against us.
Trump also claims he will force Pakistan to stop providing a safe haven for the Taliban, extract more economic aid from India and persuade our NATO allies to up their involvement in the war. This is not a plan; it’s a letter to Santa Claus.

Pakistan has vital interests at stake that take precedence over ours — not to mention leverage that has made it largely impervious to the demands of American presidents. The United States, reports Reuters, “has no choice but to use Pakistani roads to resupply its troops in landlocked Afghanistan. US officials worry that if Pakistan becomes an active foe, it could further destabilize Afghanistan and endanger US soldiers.”

India is not about to let Washington dictate its policy toward a neighbour — and more Indian involvement would worsen our relations with Pakistan. Trump has done nothing to make our allies in Europe want to knock themselves out on our behalf.

Trump indulged in such fierce, uncompromising rhetoric for an obvious reason: to distract Americans from how puny his plan is and how meager his goals. He promises victory, but all he can realistically hope to do is stave off defeat — at the cost of more American lives and $25 billion a year.

According to Los Angeles Times, citing analysts isolating Pakistan could unsettle the US relationship with Islamabad and push it closer to Russia, China and Iran, further complicating efforts to stabilize the region.

"The idea of US leverage in Pakistan is deeply exaggerated," Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the US-based Wilson Center's Asia Program, said in an email to The Associated Press a day after Trump's speech. "No matter the punishment, policy, or inducement, there's little reason to believe that Pakistan will change its ways.”

According to an analysis in The Guardian, “instead of maintaining a policy of careful diplomacy, the US president’s attack on the country has gifted China greater influence in an unstable region. … This is a serious strategic mistake.”

The Economist said: “It will still remain difficult for America to reach a point where it can claim success in Afghanistan. Mr Trump’s insistence that he is not in the business of nation-building is all very well. But without progress by the dysfunctional Afghan government towards delivering security and basic services, the Taliban will retain support in the Pushtun south and east of the country. Nor is there much prospect of enlisting the help of Afghanistan’s neighbours.”

A report in The Diplomat said: China seems to be the only nation that dare to defend Pakistan against the United States. What’s interesting is that Pakistan’s attitude shifted to high-profile after Pakistan gained China’s “strong support” after Trump's speech. Later on August 22, Pakistan’s foreign ministry published another emotional and lengthy statement to fire back at the US.

Fazl hails army chief’s courageous reply to Trump – The News

26 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD: JUI-F Ameer Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Friday welcomed the reply of the army chief to Trump that he said was a courageous step. He said amending or repealing articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution is not on agenda of the government.
Talking to reporters at the Parliament House mosque on Friday, he said linking such a move with the government was propaganda and creation of the media. He said now was the time for Pakistan to withdraw from the war on terror and pull out of international alliance.

Fazl supported dialogue between Parliament, the judiciary and the army. He said the army chief was expected to give a courageous response to US President Donald Trump. He said the importance of Parliament should be acknowledged in foreign, defence and national security affairs.

He said a proposal for stopping misuse of Articles 62 and 63 was under consideration. Continuing, he said encouraging statements of Russia and China provided a way forward for Pakistan after Trump’s statement.

He said now that the real face of the US had been unveiled, the institutions should realise their mistakes. He said a political crisis was created in Pakistan and the moment the JIT report surfaced he had said it was not about corruption.

He said internal instability was not in anybody’s interest. The JUI-F Amir said he had said that this issue should be seen in perspective of international developments but nobody heeded him.

He said a political divide took place in the country and an expression of tension in civil-military relations was created. He said political forces stood against one another and Trump benefited from this situation issuing an anti-Pakistan statement.

He said the Senate gave a befitting response to Trump and the institutions should now rise to occasion. He said the decisions made in 2001 were driven from ad-hocism compromising national interest. He said possible developments for the coming 20 years should have been taken into consideration while making decisions at that time but unfortunately ‘we do not see beyond our nose’.

He said Pakistan had no margin of error in the coming 10-15 years. He said Pakistan’s economy was shifting from west to east and the country was at the first stage of CPEC, which’s why it was being targeted.

He said the country fell prey to the US schemes adding that the US wanted to divide developing nations. He said the US was losing it as a unipolar power. He said China had challenged the US economically and ‘we should have moral courage to admit our mistakes’.

He said in the past, Parliament passed unanimous resolutions ignoring opinion of the army chief in his presence. “Why should the power hindering implementation of Parliament’s decisions not be criticized?”

He said the propaganda that the government was going to repeal or amend Articles 62 and 63 was aimed at creating distance between the religious powers and the PML-N. He said the definitions of ‘Sadiq’ and ‘Ameen’ will determine limits of these articles and discussions are underway to stop their misuse.

Our Afghan policy needs redesigning – Express Tribune

26 Aug 17

On the face of it, there is nothing new in the so-called new Afghan policy of the US the salient features of which were announced by US President Donald Trump on Monday.
But a closer look at these features makes it clear that the US has finally decided to stay put in Afghanistan and fight to the last Taliban. And this time it is not asking Pakistan to ‘do more’ like in the past. This time the US is asking Pakistan to ‘stop’ forthwith ‘aiding and abetting’ the Haqqanis.

And interestingly, the US wants India to foot the bill of Washington’s renewed Afghan war effort. Trump is not asking India to send its troops to the war-ravaged country. For this he is looking at Nato. If India agrees to foot Trump’s war bill, it will lose Iran for good which would be a boon for Pakistan.

The most sensible response to Trump’s latest on Afghanistan in Pakistan’s context has come from Beijing. Asked about Trump’s speech, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said: “We are happy to see Pakistan and the United States carry out anti-terror cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, and work together for security and stability in the region and world.

“We hope the relevant US policies can help promote the security, stability and development of Afghanistan and the region,” Hua said.

“We believe that the international community should fully recognise Pakistan’s anti-terrorism achievements,” she told a daily news briefing. She certainly did not lambast Trump’s speech as some analysts in Pakistan would have us believe that she did.

Our National Security Committee (NSC) which met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Thursday strongly rejected US President Donald Trump’s accusation that Pakistan has been undermining the US’s so-called ‘war against terror’ despite receiving billions of dollars in aid. This was solely for the consumption of our domestic audience.

We know that the US would like to make a Cambodia of Pakistan at some future date when even after a surge in troops things would go from bad to worse. That is what we should be guarding against rather than wasting our breath on issuing useless and false bombastic against the US.

Our current Afghan policy has been built on the premise that one day soon the US boots would walk away from Afghanistan, leaving us to cope with the consequent mess like the CIA did after the first Afghan war. That is perhaps why we felt we needed to remain on the right side of the Taliban as we knew with the Isaf troops out of Afghanistan it would not take long for the Taliban to return to Kabul. Therefore, the safe havens for Haqqanis and the Quetta Shura, at the risk of being accused of playing a double game.

Now that the US has said that it is not going anywhere in a hurry we do need to revisit our 16-year-old Afghan policy. More so, because there are other equally compelling reasons for the US other than the Taliban to extend its stay in Afghanistan indefinitely.

With Afghanistan situated as it is in the heart of one of the world’s most volatile regions, the US would find it almost impossible to walk away from. And for India to fight America’s proxy war against China with any degree of effectiveness, the US would surely like to have its boots located in easy reach of the proxy war theatre.

With the US staying put in Afghanistan ostensibly until the full obliteration of the Taliban, we should stop bothering about being encircled by a hostile trio — India, Iran and Afghanistan — and start redesigning a new Afghan policy based on the premise that we do not need the Afghan Taliban any more. And at the same time we need a brand new policy to win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan so that they would also feel that it was time for them to decide that they do not need the Pakistani Taliban any more.
COAS urges trust-based Pak-Afghan response against terrorists – The News
25 Aug 17

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa Friday said that terrorists were common enemies of Pakistan and Afghanistan and a trust-based coordinated response was required against them rather than blame game.

According to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement, the Army chief during a meeting with a nine-member Afghan media delegation at General Headquarters (GHQ) said that Afghanistan was Pakistan's brotherly neighbour.

He said media could play a vital role in mitigating the negativity created by inimical forces.

The COAS reiterated that Pakistan had undertaken operations against terrorists of all hue and colour and there were no safe havens inside Pakistan, which were being used against Afghanistan.

Emphasizing the need for an effective border management along Pak-Afghan border, he said Pakistan had taken measures on its side of the border, including fencing and establishment of new border forts and posts.

The Afghan media delegation thanked the Army Chief for his time and the candid discussion.

They acknowledged that such interactions were very useful to understand each other and added that were carrying back home a facts based positivity through this tour.

The delegation is on a week-long visit to Pakistan in coordination with ISPR.

How Trump’s Afghanistan strategy was received by Afghan president and Pakistan – Fox News
23 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD – President Trump’s comprehensive new strategy to achieve a “lasting peace” in Afghanistan was enthusiastically received Tuesday by the government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, which praised the increasing number of U.S. troops in the country as another way to strengthen weakened Afghan forces.

Trump’s speech also created pressure on the Pakistani government, which the U.S. has long suspected of sponsoring terrorism in Afghanistan.

Pakistan security officials have accused Trump of shifting the blame for failures in the war against the Taliban and other militant groups fighting in war-torn Afghanistan.

Addressing a new plan for the 16-year conflict in Afghanistan Monday night, Trump asked India -- Pakistan’s archrival -- to help the U.S. economically in Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development.
“We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting,” Trump also said.

“The strategy is made in accordance with realities on the ground,” said Najibullah Azad, a spokesman for the Afghan president. “This is the first time the U.S. government is coming with a very clear-cut message to Pakistan to either stop what you’re doing or face the negative consequences.”

However, while acknowledging Washington’s relationship with Pakistan as an ally, Trump said, “We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond.”

"This is going to be a tough one for Pakistan -- the war has finally come to Pakistan in Afghanistan. My concern is for adventurism on both sides, but particularly how the deep state will now go after further silencing voices in the country that criticize the policy of supporting selected militant groups," said Pakistan’s Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa, a well-known defense analyst.

"What Trump said about Pakistan may have been tough, but it was certainly not new. We’ve heard U.S. leaders many times pledge to get Pakistan to change its ways. And to this point, they haven't succeeded," said Michael Kugelman of the Woodrow Wilson Center.

"Such are the immutability of Pakistan's strategic interests -- which entail maintaining ties to groups like the Taliban because they keep India at bay in Afghanistan -- that I don't expect Trump's strategy, regardless of what it comes up with, to get Pakistan to alter its policies," he said.

The Afghan ambassador to the U.S., Hamdullah Mohib, called the speech a “shift away from talking about timetables and numbers to letting conditions on the ground determine military strategy.”

Mohib said the new strategy was a break with “micromanagement from Washington.”

U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale paid a courtesy call on Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif Tuesday afternoon. Hale briefed the foreign minister about Trump’s latest policy review on South Asia and Afghanistan. Hale also reportedly said U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson looked forward to meeting Asif in the next few days to have an in-depth discussion about the two countries’ relationship as well as the new U.S. policy.

Asad Umar, a senior political leader from opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, said, "It’s a failure of 16 long years, and the U.S. is moving in the circle without any achievements, the same old pressure narrative on Pakistan but it’s not new indeed."

Umar, who is also an economic expert, said he believes, "Possible economic sanctions will hold no global support as the U.S. is affecting the world negatively and the outcome of its policies, primarily in war-torn Afghanistan, is virtually close to zero."

One senior intelligence official in Islamabad told Fox News, on the condition of anonymity, that, "U.S. failure in Afghanistan is evident as casualties of civilians and troops are at record-high level, they are finding a way to get out from Afghanistan, the U.S. can't run away the failures of their own policies of the Ghani-led government and are blaming Pakistan."

“The U.S. wants a face-saving exit from Afghanistan, and sooner or later they will completely withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving the war-torn country mercilessly on its own fate,” said Shahzad Chaudhary, a Pakistani defense analyst.
“America wants us to fight their war, i.e. with the Haqqani network, which is purely an Afghan militant group. Regional powers should create a force for Afghanistan, which should play a role within itself for viable Afghan solution” Chaudhary added.

Afghanistan in Isolation – Daily Times

Like his predecessors Trump has failed to address the fundamental problem and the very phrase ‘Afghanistan and South Asia’ demonstrates a myopic obsession with a lost war to the detriment of an entire region

24-Aug-17
Adam Weinstein

President Trump has finished his comprehensive review of ‘Afghanistan and South Asia’ policy and delivered his findings in a speech. Like his predecessors he has failed to address the fundamental problem and the very phrase ‘Afghanistan and South Asia’ demonstrates a myopic obsession with a lost war to the detriment of an entire region. US strategy in Afghanistan must be ancillary to a comprehensive South Asia policy rather than its sole focus.

During his speech, President Trump said ‘someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan.’ But if a political settlement is predicated on the success of a military effort than the US might as well quit now because its relationship with the Afghan National Army (ANA) is dysfunctional and the cost of fighting an insurgency is too high.

It is true that there are many diligent Afghan soldiers. But there is a total trust deficit between the ANA and US military. During my 2012 deployment fears of Taliban infiltration were so high that ANA cell phones were often confiscated in the lead-up to an operation and coalition soldiers were warned not to be ‘too trusting’ of them. At my first base in Helmand province there was an overnight guard post with the sole mission of protecting Marines from the section of the base belonging to the ANA. At night, we slept peaceably knowing there were sand-filled HESCO barriers, barbed wire, and two Marines with an M249 machine gun between us and our trusted partners. Later I moved to Tarin Kowt and as talks of a drawdown ensued some expressed concerns that containers designed to resist mortars might benefit the Taliban when the ANA inevitably fled.

Indeed, worries about insider attacks proved valid and on August 30, 2012 an ANA soldier killed three Australians at a patrol base in Uruzgan province. This is a good example of the immense cost of an insurgency and comparative advantage the Taliban have in Afghanistan. It did not matter that the Australian soldiers were better trained or had the advantage of air-support and encrypted radios. All of that was for naught against a Taliban sympathizer who shot the defenceless Australians at close-range and then escaped. What followed was a massive manhunt in which I played the very small role of helping to cordon off a road. But there were dozens of missions despite there being only one fleeing Taliban fighter. This is the exponential power of an insurgency. Eventually the suspect was arrested inside Pakistan which is a fitting end to the story because this is where the US strategy really begins to unravel.

The US has excluded Iran from the dialogue entirely, chosen to ignore conflicts in Kashmir and Balochistan, viewed Pakistan more as a useful enemy than an equal partner with independent interests, and portrayed the Taliban as a foreign element altogether.
You cannot choose your neighbours much less someone else’s. Yet for most of the war the US has excluded Iran from the dialogue entirely, chosen to ignore the conflicts in Kashmir and Balochistan, viewed Pakistan more as a useful enemy than an equal partner with independent interests, and portrayed the Taliban as a foreign element altogether. Trump’s answer to this conundrum was to give a backhanded acknowledgement of Pakistan’s contributions during his speech, scapegoat it for the region’s terrorism, and then prod at Islamabad’s deepest insecurities by prioritizing a strategic relationship with India. This is likely not what General Bajwa meant when he said he wanted recognition from the US. A heightened role for India in Afghanistan might be productive if the US were willing to also admit that the conflicts in Kashmir and Balochistan are real and need to be resolved. Meanwhile Iran was missing altogether from the speech even though it has a vested interest in keeping ISIS out of Afghanistan.

So, the US war in Afghanistan continues unchanged. Perhaps US troops will temporarily enjoy more resources and less restrictive rules of engagement. Maybe India will increase its already robust investment in the country. And it’s even possible that Pakistan will take a harder line against the Haqqani Network. This may initially produce some gains but ultimately the Taliban will adapt and absent any leadership from the US the regional tensions that prevent a political solution to Afghanistan will remain unresolved. In all likelihood ‘Afghanistan speeches’ will be a centrepiece of US presidencies for years to come.

**US envoy briefs Pakistan army chief on Trump's Afghan plans – AP**

23 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD (AP) -- The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan met with that country's army chief on Wednesday, two days after President Donald Trump warned Pakistan to stop harboring insurgents who are battling U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's military said Ambassador David Hale briefed Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa on Trump's new Afghan war strategy. The U.S. president announced the new strategy late Monday but provided few details about how he plans to win America's longest war, which began nearly 16 years ago.

The military statement quoted Bajwa as saying Pakistan wants peace in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials and analysts have long said Pakistan tolerates the presence of the Afghan Taliban and the allied Haqqani network, which are leading the insurgency against Afghan and U.S. forces.

**Pakistan rejects role of 'scapegoat for U.S. failures' in Afghanistan – Reuters**

23 Aug 17

KARACHI, Pakistan (Reuters) - Pakistan has rejected U.S. criticism of its efforts to fight terrorism, saying it should not be made a scapegoat for the failure of the U.S. military to win the war in Afghanistan.

U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his policy for Afghanistan on Monday, stepping up the military campaign against Taliban insurgents and singling out Pakistan for harboring them.
U.S. officials later warned that aid to Pakistan might be cut and Washington might downgrade nuclear-armed Pakistan's status as a major non-NATO ally, in order to pressure it to do more to help bring about an end to America's longest-running war.

Pakistan's powerful military chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, met U.S. Ambassador David Hale on Wednesday and told him Pakistan was actively working for peace in Afghanistan.

"We have done a lot ... and shall keep on doing our best, not to appease anyone but in line with our national interest and national policy," Bajwa was quoted in an army press statement as telling Hale.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif added his voice to a chorus of indignation over the U.S. criticism, reiterating Pakistan's denial that it harbors militants.

"They should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan," Asif said in an interview with Geo TV late on Tuesday.

"AMERICA IS THE ENEMY"

A group of influential Pakistani clerics including Sami-ul Haq, who runs a Islamic seminary where many senior Afghan Taliban studied, angrily condemned the United States.

"America is the enemy of the Muslim ummah (community)," Haq told a press briefing along with other clerics who preach a jihadist doctrine.

"The government of Pakistan should quit the alliance for war against so-called terrorism," Haq added. "The heavens will not fall if America gets angry with us."

Pakistan has for years been battling homegrown Islamist militants who are seeking to overthrow the state with bomb attacks and assassinations.

But critics say the Pakistani military nurtures other Islamist factions, including the Afghan Taliban, which are seen as useful to Pakistan's core confrontation with old rival India.

Asif said Pakistan had suffered great losses from Islamist militancy - the government estimates there have been 70,000 casualties in militant attacks, including 17,000 Pakistanis killed - since Pakistan joined the U.S. "war on terrorism" after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

The relationship between the two countries has endured periods of extreme strain during the past decade, especially after al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was found and killed by U.S. special forces in Pakistan in a 2011 raid.

Last year, a U.S. drone strike killed then-Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in southwestern Pakistan, an attack Islamabad protested as a violation of its sovereignty. Pakistan has denied knowledge that either bin Laden or Mansour were in the country.
Foreign minister: US 'should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan' – The Hill

23 Aug 17

Pakistan's foreign minister said Tuesday the U.S. should not make Pakistan a "scapegoat" regarding Afghanistan.

"They should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan," Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said in an interview to Geo TV late Tuesday, Reuters reported.

"Our commitment to war against terrorism is unmatched and unshaken."

Asif said Pakistan's "contributions, sacrifices and our role as a coalition country have been disregarded and disrespected."

The comments come after President Trump on Monday announced his strategy for the Afghanistan War. Trump described his plan as a "shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions," linking American aid to greater cooperation from the Afghan government, Pakistan, India and others in the region to fighting terrorism and cutting down corruption.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday said Pakistan must do more to crack down on insurgent fighters.

“Pakistan and the U.S. historically had very good relationships, but over the last few years there has been a real erosion in the confidence of between our two governments,” Tillerson told reporters Tuesday afternoon at the State Department.

“There’s been an erosion in trust because we have witnessed terrorist organizations being given a safe haven inside of Pakistan to plan and carry out attacks against U.S. servicemen, U.S. officials, disrupting peace efforts inside of Afghanistan.”

Pakistan's ambassador: We want to work with Trump to end war in Afghanistan – USA Today

23 Aug 17

The Pakistani government is willing to work closely with the Trump administration to find a political solution to end the war in Afghanistan, the ambassador to the United States pledged Wednesday.

Pakistani Ambassador Aizaz Chaudhry said in an interview with USA TODAY that the government will help promote peace talks between the U.S.-backed Afghan government and rebel Taliban group "in whatever manner it can."

He said Pakistan would use its considerable influence over the Taliban to prod the insurgent group to the negotiation table.
Chaudhry spoke after President Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson vowed this week to step up pressure on Pakistan to work harder with its neighbor to the west to end the nearly 16-year old war.

"Pakistan believes that there should be peace talks with a clear commitment of the government of Afghanistan," Chaudhry said, adding that his country has consistently supported the need for an Afghan-led peace process.

Pakistan has its own Taliban movement fighting the government but some agencies, such as the Intelligence services, have been accused by the U.S. and other governments of supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

President Trump on Monday lashed out at Pakistan, urging it to stop giving sanctuary to "agents of chaos, violence and terror." “We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond,” Trump said.

On Tuesday, Tillerson raised the prospects of sanctions against Pakistani government officials, the cut off of aid and putting in jeopardy Pakistan's military partnership with NATO. The Trump administration also has hinted it may improve ties with Pakistan's arch-enemy, India.

The ambassador said his government has reversed the tide of terrorism in Pakistan but it is aware that Pakistan's gains against terrorists and its economic progress will remain in jeopardy so long as Afghanistan is unstable.

"We, therefore, believe a comprehensive political process must be pursued in earnest to secure lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan," he said.

Chaudhry said management of the over 1,500 mile-long Pakistani border with Afghanistan is critical to stopping cross border movement of militants, and that his country has started fencing the border.

"Related issues such as repatriation of refugees back to Afghanistan in honor and dignity as well as a close cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan would also be of singular importance," the ambassador said.

Some of these topics have already been discussed through back-channel talks between the U.S. and Pakistan.

On Aug. 11, a group of former diplomats, military officials and security experts from the two countries held their third meeting in six months to discuss Pakistan's support in Afghanistan, increased U.S. ties with India, India's role in Afghanistan and Pakistan's growing economic reliance on China.

Richard Boucher, a former U.S. assistant secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs who attended the talks, said Pakistan and Afghanistan must control their borders to achieve peace.

Boucher acknowledged that Pakistan has expanded its control of its territory, especially into the tribal areas, but stressed that the government "still needs to control its border to prevent fighters and supplies from moving across in both directions."
In his South Asia strategy US President Donald Trump not only criticised Pakistan but also sent a clear message to Afghanistan that the US military and financial support towards the country was 'limited'. He also demanded of the Afghan government to take more responsibility towards peace and economic development. Trump also called out Pakistan by asking it to act against 'alleged' terrorist safe havens, and demonstrate its commitment towards 'civilisation, order and peace'.

One surprise in Trump's speech was India's 'forced entry and role' in Afghanistan's future development and stability. While appreciating USA's strategic partnership with India, Trump 'hoped' that New Delhi would help the US in ensuring long-term peace and stability in South Asia, especially because India made 'billions from trade' with the US. On Taliban's front, Trump also kept the door open for reconciliation in the future. "Someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan," said Trump.

Pakistan's only silver lining on Tuesday was China's explicit support of Pakistan and snub of Trump's statement, calling on the international community to acknowledge Pakistan's efforts and sacrifices in counter-terrorism in the region.

In the wake of these developments, Pakistani civil and military leadership, in recent talks with US and Afghan officials, has conveyed a few categorical messages such as:

* Pakistan remains committed to peace in Afghanistan as much is for its own soil. Additionally, Pakistan would also unconditionally support any regional initiative, be it the Quadrilateral Support Group or Moscow initiatives, in order to pursue some breakthrough in the stalled peace process.

* Pakistan continues to believe in and pursue regional economic activity, very much in the spirit of its partnership with China through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is also one such initiative through which, by bringing Afghanistan on board, the aim of regional economic activity could also be achieved.

* In terms of foreign military policies, Pakistan does not agree with the Afghan demand of a third-party verification of counter-terrorism actions either here or in Afghanistan. This is because third-party verification and monitoring is complicated and fraught with risks due to absence of trust between the two countries. Pakistan wants to develop a bilateral engagement mechanism in the light of the March 15 meeting between Sartaj Aziz - the then adviser to prime minister - and the Afghan National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar.

* On border control, Pakistan wants to institute a bilateral border management mechanism to strengthen controls over cross-border movement of terrorists. Apparently, Afghan leadership wants to address the issue of security first. This is rooted in the raging Taliban-Daesh (IS) insurgency that claims dozens of lives every day. In early August, a joint Taliban-Daesh attack in Mirza Olang village in Sayyad district of Sari Pul killed dozens of people. Even though the Taliban categorically denied any such joint operation, local witness accounts contradicted Taliban's claims. Such operations could pose a major threat not only for the security forces in Afghanistan, but also for major regional stakeholders who had previously treated both the militant groups with a different prism.
Understandably, it makes it difficult for Afghan President Ghani and other leaders to push the peace process. Afghans are also wary of abrupt border closures by Pakistani authorities. Thus, this leads to the question of why should Pakistan make its policy contingent upon that of the Trump administration?

Never before has there been a greater convergence among USA, India and Afghanistan, presumably against Pakistan and its allies. And they speak with the same tone as far as their view on Pakistan is concerned. With such narratives, it also makes it difficult for the Pakistani policymakers to formulate a joint regional security policy.

But setting aside these messages, Pakistan's foreign policy woes are not confined to US-Afghanistan-India alone. Of late, even Chinese leaders have been politely asking Pakistan to do something demonstrable as far as indiscriminate counter-terrorism measures are concerned. Chinese deputy foreign minister and other officials have reportedly referred to the negative perception - which they say the Indo-US-Afghan narrative on Pakistan - that keeps generating in important capitals.

Pakistan, thus, needs to have a clear and direct policy-oriented approach if it needs to take its allies on board and implement effective counter-terror policies on the Pak-Afghan border.

Pakistan remains beset with its own internal dynamics and lack of a clear vision on terrorism and extremism. It is still fearful of a direct confrontation with the Afghan and Pakistani proponents of 'jihadism', ie Taliban and al Qaeda.

With a semblance of control over the spiral of terrorism, officials are afraid of un-ruffling the hornet's nest at home. These fears, thus, reinforce the Chinese officials' concerns of Islamabad's dire need of formulating a clear counter-terror policy - both domestic and regional - if it needs to achieve across the board consensus on the issue. In terms of Afghanistan's future and peace, Washington might have finally acknowledged that a military solution would never prevail in Afghanistan. Therefore, regional diplomacy initiatives - involving China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan - with active participation of USA, India and Afghanistan could provide a viable solution to a war that currently appears endless. Anything to the contrary is only likely to fuel conflict more than ever and keep the entire region on tenterhooks.

**Angry senators ask govt to block US air routes, cancel FM’s visit – Daily Times**

* Rabbani warns Washington of Vietnam- and Cambodia-type outcome in case of any ‘misadventure’ against Pakistan

24-Aug-17
By Ijaz Kakakhel

**ISLAMABAD:** Strongly reacting to US President Donald Trump’s statement against Pakistan, lawmakers in the Upper House of parliament on Wednesday demanded that the government cut off air routes provided to US forces in Afghanistan and also cancel foreign minister’s scheduled visit to the US.

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani warned US of Vietnam- and Cambodia-type situation in case of any ‘misadventure’. “Pakistani people have characteristics and customs like that of people in Vietnam and Cambodia … if Trump wants Pakistan to be a graveyard of the American army, we will welcome them”. He asked Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan whether foreign minister was going to the US on his
scheduled visit even after anti-Pakistan statement by Trump. “If yes, he must postpone his visit to give them a befitting response,” he opined.

The House witnessed emotional speeches on the US president’s remarks against Pakistan and maintained that it was right time to forge national unity. The senators were of the view that Trump was totally wrong in pointing fingers at Pakistan but while rejecting his arrogance, Islamabad must also look inwardly whether time had not come for abandoning the failed policy of selective treatment of the militant groups.

Taking part in the discussion, Senator Farhatullah Babar deplored that the US was blaming Pakistan for its failures in Afghanistan. “But at the same time, we must also revisit the policy of nurturing some militant groups to advance our security and foreign policy agendas in the region,” he said.

Sherry Rehman regretted that the government issued a very weak statement in response to US president’s remarks.

PML-F Senator Muzafar Shah demanded the government must review its foreign policy, especially towards the US.

Opposition Leader in Senate Aitzaz Ahsan was of the view that the government must summon US ambassador and register protest over Trump’s speech.

Earlier initiating the debate, Defence Minister Khurram Dastagir said Pakistan had played its role more than any other country in eliminating terrorism. He said that no country had suffered as much as Pakistan in the war against terror. Terming the Trump’s statement as disappointing, the minister said that the US president had ignored the unmatched sacrifices Islamabad had rendered in its fight against terrorism. He asked the US president to extend support to Pakistan in eliminating terrorism instead of talking about the ‘save havens in Islamabad’.

The debate will continue today (Thursday).

Trump’s Request for India’s Help in Afghanistan Rattles Pakistan – NY Times

By SALMAN MASOOD
AUG. 22, 2017

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — President Trump’s appeal for India’s help on Afghanistan set off alarm bells on Tuesday in Pakistan, where officials warned that the approach risked jolting a tumultuous relationship. They also expressed relief that Mr. Trump did not call for abrupt reductions in military aid to Pakistan, which the United States has long accused of going easy on militants.

As part of Mr. Trump’s new plan for addressing the 16-year United States conflict in Afghanistan, he asked India — which Pakistan has historically seen as its enemy — to “help us more,” especially with economic assistance.

Mr. Trump also reiterated his predecessors’ calls that Islamabad crack down on militant groups that have waged attacks from bases in Pakistani territory.
“We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting,” Mr. Trump said on Monday, although he stopped short of cutting off military aid, as some Pakistani elites had feared.

Pakistan and the United States have long had a troubled relationship, increasingly strained by differences over Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan. Even before American military and intelligence operatives tracked down and killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011, American officials chided Pakistan’s military and intelligence agency as harboring or turning a blind eye to militants.

Pakistani officials, in turn, have cited Indian influence as a primary cause of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. Officials in Islamabad accuse India of supporting a hostile political regime in Kabul and funding militants, who use Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks inside Pakistan.

Even before Mr. Trump unveiled his strategy on Monday, Islamabad was apprehensive and concerned.

The Pakistani military has been at the forefront of formulating the country’s foreign policy and has taken the lead in defining the contours of Islamabad’s relationship with Afghanistan and India. The civilian government has very little say, if any, in these policy initiatives.

Pakistani officials said they expected private contractors to take a more dominant role than troops already in Afghanistan. Senior Pakistani security officials stress that an all-inclusive engagement is the only option for peace inside Afghanistan. More troops inside the country, along with blaming Pakistan for harboring terrorists, will not work, they said in background interviews.

However, there was no formal, official response to Mr. Trump’s speech by Tuesday evening. Pakistan’s foreign minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, is to leave for the United States in the next few days to hold talks with American officials, a spokesman said.

The military also decided not to put forth a formal public response. In what could be viewed as a pre-emptive move, Major Gen Asif Ghafoor, the military spokesman, had said in a press briefing earlier on Monday that no terror group was operating inside Pakistan.

Sehar Kamran, an opposition senator who leads an Islamabad-based think tank, said Mr. Trump’s plan appeared to be “more of the same, under much more colorful language and contradictory bluster.”

“The shift from a timeline-oriented approach to a condition-based one, I think, is only the vocalization of a longstanding practice,” she said, adding. “What is concerning for Pakistan, however, is the contradiction within his statement that expresses both an acknowledgment of the country’s sacrifices while simultaneously downplaying them by continuing accusations of ‘sheltering terrorists,’ and doing not enough with billions and billions paid by America.”

Ms. Kamran said that pushing India to play a stronger role inside Afghanistan would isolate Washington’s friends in Islamabad “without realizing, understanding or perhaps deliberately underestimating the impact of increasing Indian presence on Pakistan’s western border.”

“An unnecessary flexing of military muscles and the deployment of additional troops at this time will only undo much that has been achieved over many years diplomatically, and serve to further antagonize regional countries like Pakistan, China and Russia,” she said.

Analysts said Pakistan’s dependence on American aid had declined in recent years — partly as China flexes its military might in South Asia — giving policy makers in Islamabad more room to maneuver.
“Pakistan is prepared to absorb the impact of a more assertive U.S. policy toward the country,” said Arif Rafiq, a nonresident fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington. “It’s the most economically stable that it’s been in a decade, thanks in part to massive Chinese investment, and it has managed to secure much of its border regions despite the withdrawal of most U.S. combat forces.”

Mr. Rafiq said that Pakistan also knows that it has several options to counter punitive actions by Washington, including closing supply routes to Afghanistan.

“I think what Pakistan hopes for is the U.S. to engage it as a partner in Afghanistan, rather than as a contractor deputed to arrest or kill insurgent leaders named by Washington,” Mr. Rafiq said. “That requires coordination on border security and a structured dialogue process with the Taliban. I think Islamabad will remain rather firm in steering its engagement with both Kabul and Washington in that direction.”

Other analysts offered an even more scathing view of Mr. Trump’s speech.

“By inviting India to be more active in Afghanistan, Trump has confirmed the worst fears of Pakistan’s generals: that America is in cahoots with India against Pakistan,” said Mosharraf Zaidi, a foreign-policy analyst in Islamabad.

“There may never be a perfect approach to convince Pakistan to abandon the Haqqani network, but this speech was a terrible attempt,” Mr. Zaidi said, referring to the Pakistan-based militant group that has been blamed for most of the deadly attacks inside Afghanistan.

However, Maria Sultan, a defense analyst based in Islamabad and director general of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute, said the Trump policy was “not as bad as we were expecting. The responsibility has been essentially shifted to Afghanistan.”

She warned that intelligence-based operations against groups inside Pakistan might increase. “This will further reduce the space for cooperation between Pakistan and U.S. and will be counterproductive for a long-term relationship,” Ms. Sultan said.

**AP Explains: How Pakistan fits into Trump's Afghan plans – AP**

22 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD (AP) -- In announcing his strategy for Afghanistan, U.S. President Donald Trump lashed out at neighboring Pakistan, an ostensible U.S. ally, ordering it to stop giving sanctuary to "agents of chaos, violence and terror."

His predecessors have aired similar complaints, and U.S. officials and analysts have long accused Pakistan of playing a double-game with Islamic extremists -- supporting those that threaten its rivals in India and Afghanistan while cracking down on those who target its own citizens.

Pakistan has been at war with the Pakistani Taliban and homegrown extremists for years, but it has long tolerated the Afghan Taliban and the allied Haqqani network, which are battling U.S. troops in neighboring Afghanistan.

Pakistan has also struggled to combat other forms of extremism. Blasphemy against Islam is punishable by death and has been known to incite mob lynchings. Around 1,000 women are murdered each year in so-called honor killings, and attacks on Shiites and other religious minorities are on the rise.
How did the U.S. come to ally itself with Pakistan, and where do they go from here? The AP explains.

A LONGTIME ALLY

The U.S. backed Pakistan during the Cold War, and in the 1980s the CIA used it as a staging area for efforts to aid the Afghan Mujahedeen, who were then fighting to drive out Soviet troops. At the time, the U.S. viewed the Mujahedeen and Pakistan's president, Gen. Zia-ul Haq - a military dictator who promoted a harsh version of Islam - as allies.

The U.S. renewed the alliance after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, as Pakistan again emerged as a key staging ground and supply route in the war to overthrow the Taliban and eliminate al-Qaida. The U.S. has since given Pakistan billions of dollars in military aid.

A DOUBLE GAME

Since the days of Zia and the Mujahideen, Pakistan's security apparatus has supported or turned a blind eye to extremist groups in Afghanistan and the disputed Kashmir region, viewing them as a weapon against India, its main rival.

Pakistan has long feared that Afghanistan would ally with India against it, and sees the Taliban as the best tool for thwarting such an alliance. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were the only three countries to recognize the Taliban when they ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s.

That approach became increasingly problematic as the U.S. waged its war on terror. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency is widely believed to maintain close ties to the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network. Their leaders live relatively freely in Pakistan -- as long as they aren't seen as acting against Islamabad's political interests.

The ISI has long said it has limited influence over such groups, and uses it to pursue regional stability.

BIN LADEN AND A BREAKDOWN

Al-Qaida's top leaders, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri, also found refuge in Pakistan after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, but they went into hiding. Whether Pakistan was ever able or willing to track them down remains the subject of heated debate.

U.S.-Pakistan tensions came to a head in 2011 when American commandos killed Bin Laden in a secret raid in Abbottabad, just a few miles away from one of Pakistan's premier military academies. Pakistan once again insisted it had no idea about his whereabouts, and expressed anger over the U.S. carrying out the raid without giving it prior notice.

Shortly after the raid, Pakistan arrested a local doctor accused of running a fake vaccination program in order to gather DNA from Bin Laden, which he then allegedly passed on to the CIA. Pakistan has refused U.S. demands to release the man.

STILL A POWER BROKER

Relations remained chilly in the following years, as the U.S. repeatedly pushed Pakistan to do more to eliminate militant sanctuaries and trimmed military aid when it did not.

But Pakistan remains a major player in Afghanistan, and will need to be on board if Trump hopes to end America's longest war. Pakistan has used its close ties to the Taliban to bring them to the peace table in
the past and could do so again, but it will want to preserve its own interests, which appear to be in conflict with the U.S.-backed Afghan government.

Kabul and Islamabad routinely accuse each other of turning a blind eye to Islamic militants operating along their porous border, and relations plunge with every deadly attack.

LIMITED OPTIONS

Senior administration officials said ahead of Trump's speech that he was considering further cuts in aid to Pakistan unless it reins in the Taliban and the Haqqanis, but that approach has failed in the past. Pakistan could respond by revoking U.S. transit rights, shutting off the main supply route to U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Trump said he hoped to pursue closer ties with India, remarks that were sure to anger Pakistan. But whether that would lead Islamabad to re-evaluate its ties to militant groups - or double down on its support for them - remains to be seen. A tougher U.S. line might also push Pakistan into the arms of Russia, China and neighboring Iran.

**Trump's Afghanistan Policy to Focus on Operational Results – VOA**

22 Aug 17
Ayesha Tanzeem

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN — When President Donald Trump announced his long-awaited policy on Afghanistan, his remarks Monday hinted the plan was a compromise between his instinct, to “pull out,” and advice he received that “a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including IS and al-Qaeda, would instantly fill.”

The broad strokes of the policy appeared to be the same as the Obama administration - beat back the Taliban, increase pressure on Pakistan and demand reform from the Afghan government.

Shamila Chaudhary, the team director for Afghanistan and Pakistan for President Barack Obama’s National Security Council from 2010-2011, pointed out her team also had the goal of going after al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks using, as Trump said, “all instruments of American power - diplomatic, economic and military.”

Trump’s policy, however, includes changes at the operational level.

The Pentagon, for example, is shifting "from a time-based approach to one based on conditions” as well as an expansion in authority for ground commanders to carry out battlefield decisions without micromanagement from Washington.

No longer will timelines of troop withdrawals, or troop levels, be divulged in advance. Critics of Obama’s strategy said announcing withdrawal dates ahead of time gave the Taliban an incentive to wait it out.

**Pakistan criticism**

Trump was harsher in his criticism of Pakistan. “We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond,” he said.
While recognizing Pakistan has been a partner and has suffered from terrorism, he added, “We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting.”

He said that had to change “immediately.”

When asked about Trump's speech, Pakistani Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal told VOA his country has "neither any tolerance nor an safe haven for any terrorist."

"Pakistan has paid the highest price for [fighting] terrorism," Iqbal said Tuesday. "So, we are fighting terrorism not for any country's sake but for our own future and for our country's sake."

For years, the United States has demanded Pakistan do more against the Afghan Taliban taking shelter on its territory, particularly the Haqqani network. Pakistan has said it is doing all it can, including conducting military operations against “all terrorists.” Behind the scenes, however, Islamabad has said if it cracks down too harshly on the Afghan Taliban, they would join anti-Pakistan militant groups and turn their guns on Pakistan.

“The U.S. could not exclude Pakistan and it could not accept this Pakistani explanation,” said Hasan Askari Rizvi, a political analyst based in Lahore. He added the United States understands a solution to Afghanistan is not possible without Pakistan.

**Tools for change**

During his speech late Monday, President Trump offered Pakistan a carrot and a stick approach, saying, “Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists.”

Trump also indicated he would increase India’s role in Afghanistan.

Ahmad Majidyar, a senior fellow with the Washington-based Middle East Institute, said Trump mentioned India for two reasons - first, as part of his belief other countries should shoulder more of the burden of international crises and, second, to pressure Pakistan, which has always been wary of Indian influence in Afghanistan.

Islamabad does not want its rival to become so influential in Afghanistan that it confronts Pakistan from the west. Pakistan has often accused the Afghan intelligence agency of working with India to support insurgents in its restive Balochistan province.

But Awais Laghari, a leading member of Pakistan’s ruling party and Cabinet member, says, “If you want to extract something positive (from Pakistan) you can’t do the stick policy. It has not worked so far. We have our own limitations,” he added.

Kamran Bokhari, a senior fellow with the Center for Global Policy and a senior analyst with Geopolitical Future, said the Trump administration could also make it difficult for Pakistan to find money, from international lending institutions like the IMF or the World Bank.

Other policy options could include increased use of drone strikes or Special Forces operations to take out targets on Pakistani soil; but, such past actions have led to a rise in anti-American sentiment in Pakistan. Some analysts say it provides propaganda tools for militant recruiting.
Afghan responsibility

Trump also put Afghanistan on notice, saying it is time for the country to take ownership of its future, remarks former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who was in power for nearly a decade until 2014, took issue with in a series of tweets.

"I very strongly oppose the new U.S. strategy towards Afghanistan as it is against peace and the national interest of #Afghanistan," Karzai tweeted Tuesday. "The strategy excludes bringing peace and prosperity to Afghanistan and is focused on more war and rivalry in the region. U.S. must seek peace and stability in Afghanistan rather than extending conflict and bloodshed in #Afghanistan and the region."

A statement by U.S. embassy Kabul Special Chargé d’Affaires Ambassador Hugo Llorens clarified U.S. expectations.

“The Afghan government must redouble its reform efforts and deliver on vital promises such as holding parliamentary elections next year and presidential elections in 2019, rooting out corruption, and enacting the tough reforms necessary for meaningful private sector-led economic growth. To maintain stability in the face of insurgent threats, Afghanistan’s leaders must also increase outreach to all ethnic groups and seek greater diversity and inclusivity in the government.”

Infighting between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah’s camps since the 2014 elections has delayed meaningful electoral reforms. Meanwhile, rampant corruption has made efforts to govern, control the narco-trade, or even fight the Taliban insurgency harder.

Jawaid Faisal, the deputy spokesman for Abdullah, acknowledged Afghans need to deliver on reform, adding Afghanistan is “committed to becoming a self-reliant state.”

Ghani deputy spokesman Najibullah Azad says the country has undertaken reform. "We have successfully drafted a four-year security plan; top Afghan officials who were accused of corruption have been sentenced."

Trump said the days of America trying to create a society in its image are over, adding, “We will not dictate to the Afghan people how to live, or how to govern their own complex society.”

Majidyar said this gave rise to fears the administration might withdraw support for civil society and reduce emphasis on women’s rights, promotion of democracy, and development of political institutions. “Most Afghans want peace, but not at the cost of all the gains made in 16 years,” he said.

Tillerson to meet with top Pakistani diplomats, discuss new Afghan war plan – Washington Times

22 Aug 17

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will meet with Pakistan’s top diplomat in the coming weeks to discuss the White House’s new Afghan war plan, a strategy that calls upon Islamabad to take a larger role in combating terror groups within its own borders.
The scheduled meeting between Mr. Tillerson and Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Mohammed Asif in Washington comes after President Trump flatly accused the Pakistani government of harboring extremist groups in the country.

“We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond,” Mr. Trump said during a primetime television address Monday night, outlining the administration’s new Afghan strategy.

“Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists,” the commander in chief told the crowd of U.S. service members at Fort Myer in Arlington, Va.

American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale met with Mr. Asif in Islamabad shortly after Mr. Trump’s speech, in which the president repeatedly accused Pakistan of protecting groups like the infamous Haqqani Network and other “organizations that try every single day to kill our people.”

Pakistani officials declined to respond specifically to Mr. Trump’s comments in an official statement released Tuesday. Rather, Pakistani officials emphasized the country’s “desire for peace and stability in Afghanistan.” the Associated Press reported.

Washington and Islamabad have been uncomfortable bedfellows in counterterrorism operations tied to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan since the American invasion of Pakistan’s neighbor in 2001.

The relationship has been rife with allegations that Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate, has been covertly training and financing extremist terror groups. Islamabad has fired back counter-accusations that Washington’s heavy military and political support for India has undermined regional stability efforts, spearheaded by Pakistan.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Joseph Votel said the first tranche of new American troops called for in the White House’s new Afghan strategy will begin arriving in country within weeks. The influx of new U.S. forces into Afghanistan, which are part of the reported 4,000-man force Mr. Trump is ordering into the country, should begin deploying “pretty quickly,” the four-star general told reporters while traveling in Saudi Arabia.

“What’s most important for us now is to get some capabilities in to have an impact on the current fighting season,” he said, according to the AP.

Aside from more troops, Mr. Trump’s new Afghan strategy also called for expanded authorities for U.S. forces in the country to go after extremist groups operating in the country, effectively restarting the American combat mission in the country that officially ended in 2015.

The decision to expand the rules of engagement for U.S. forces in Afghanistan falls in line with the administration’s strategy for American forces supporting ongoing offensives against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Afghan forces have waged war against the Taliban and now the Islamic State’s faction in the country, with U.S. troops only providing military assistance. Under Mr. Trump’s new plan, American forces will be able to engage against terror groups “that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan,” he said, adding that “retribution will be fast and powerful.”
'Now, Pakistan okay with India's involvement in Afghanistan' – ANI

23 Aug 17

United States President Donald Trump's request for India's help in Afghanistan has rattled Pakistan.

Reports suggest that Islamabad, which sees New Delhi as bete noire, is now contemplating involving India in Afghanistan peace process.

The New York Times reported that President Trump's appeal on Tuesday for India's help on Afghanistan set off alarm bells in Pakistan, where officials warned that the approach risked jolting a tumultuous relationship.

It further added that "Pakistani officials also expressed relief that Mr. Trump did not call for abrupt reductions in military aid to Pakistan, which the United States has long accused of going easy on militants".

Speaking from the Fort Myer military base in Arlington, Va., Trump said, "We will develop a deeper strategic partnership with India, but we want them to help us more in Afghanistan."

He further added that "India makes billions of dollars with the United States in trade; we want them to help us more in Afghanistan."

The US President's outreach to India has not gone down well within Pakistan. To make the matters worse for Islamabad, Trump said that Pakistan was needed to show more commitment to fight terror.

"We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting," Trump said on Monday.

The New York Times said although Trump stopped short of cutting off military aid, "as some Pakistani elites had feared".

Even before Trump unveiled his strategy on Monday, Islamabad was apprehensive and concerned.

"The Pakistani military has been at the forefront of formulating the country's foreign policy and has taken the lead in defining the contours of Islamabad's relationship with Afghanistan and India. The civilian government has very little say, if any, in these policy initiatives," reported The New York Times.

Citing background interviews, the report said that "senior Pakistani security officials stress that an all-inclusive engagement is the only option for peace inside Afghanistan. More troops inside the country, along with blaming Pakistan for harboring terrorists, will not work".

The New York Times report said that "Pakistani officials have cited Indian influence as a primary cause of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. Officials in Islamabad accuse India of supporting a hostile political regime in Kabul and funding militants, who use Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks inside Pakistan".

Trump's desire of India's bigger role in Afghanistan and warning to Pakistan has left Islamabad dumbfounded.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry issued a statement after Trump's speech saying it is committed to fighting terrorism, and it called allegations it provided safe havens to militants "a false narrative."
It added that a military solution is not possible, saying "only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned politically negotiated solution can lead to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan."

Pakistani Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal told reporters that his country "has rendered unmatched sacrifices in the war on terror. Our war against terrorism is not because of the United States; we will continue this war."

However, Pakistan, a US ally in War on Terror, is accused of misusing the US aid mean for fighting terror.

US defense secretary Mattis said in July that the US has decided to block $350 million in coalition support funds to Pakistan as it had not taken "sufficient actions" against the dreaded Haqqani terror network which has been behind terror attacks in Afghanistan.

In July, the US listed Pakistan among the nations providing "safe havens" to terrorists saying terror groups like the LeT and JeM continued to operate, train, organise and fund-raise inside the country.

"Pakistan did not take sufficient action against other externally focused groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad in 2016, which continued to operate, train, organise, and fundraise in Pakistan," said the annual 'Country Report on Terrorism' from the US state department.

**Pakistanis alarmed at Trump’s new policy on Afghanistan – pri**

*22 Aug 17*

Pakistanis are not happy with President Donald Trump's remarks on his Afghanistan policy. Trump singled out Pakistan for sheltering terror groups and destabilizing the region. He also threatened to cut US aid and to make an alliance with Pakistan's mortal enemy, India.

The US has long expressed its concerns privately, but Trump is the first president to openly put Pakistan on the spot.

The government in the capital city of Islamabad has not formally responded to the president's remarks. In a news conference before Trump spoke, a spokesman for the Pakistani military, which dominates Pakistani security policy, emphasized that Pakistan does not provide safe havens. Critics, however, point out that al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, was found in Pakistan.

The BBC's Pakistan correspondent, Secunder Kermani, points out many in Pakistan object to Trump’s comments as so many of the nation’s citizens and soldiers have themselves fallen victim to terror groups.

**Pakistan rejects ‘disappointing’ US criticism – Nation.PK**

*23 Aug 17*

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan yesterday asked the United States to stop relying on the ‘false narrative’ of ‘safe havens’ and work with Islamabad to eradicate terrorism.

US President Donald Trump’s strategy on Afghanistan and South Asia was discussed in the late night meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.
The meeting was briefed by Foreign Minister Khawaja Mohammed Asif over Trump’s hostile comments about Pakistan.

Sources said Foreign Minister Khawaja Mohammed Asif told the cabinet that he would forcefully take up Pakistan’s case in his upcoming visit to Washington to meet his US counterpart Rex Tillerson.

The cabinet members believed that anti-Pakistan lobby was misleading President Trump against Pakistan.

Prime Minister Abbasi assured the ministers that his government will never compromise on the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

He directed the foreign minister to carry details of Pakistan’s efforts so far against the menace of terrorism and the sacrifices by the people of the country in the recent years.

An official statement issued by the foreign ministry said the cabinet had mandated the prime minister to take up the issue in detail in the meeting of the National Security Committee, already scheduled to be held on August 24, for a comprehensive policy response to Trump’s policy.

“Pakistan has taken note of President Trump’s statement outlining elements of a new US policy on Afghanistan and South Asia. No country in the world has done more than Pakistan to counter the menace of terrorism. No country in the world has suffered more than Pakistan from the scourge of terrorism, often perpetrated from outside our borders. It is, therefore disappointing that the US policy statement ignores the enormous sacrifices rendered by the Pakistani nation in this effort,” it said.

The statement said Pakistan had been and “will continue to be part of the global counter terrorism efforts.”

It said: “Pakistan and the United States have been close allies in the fight against terrorism, which is a common threat for all nations of the world. As a matter of policy, Pakistan does not allow use of its territory against any country. Instead of relying on the false narrative of safe havens, the US needs to work with Pakistan to eradicate terrorism.”

The statement said the threat to peace and security cannot be isolated from the complex interplay of geopolitics, continued existence of festering disputes and pursuit of hegemonic policies. “Non-resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains the primary obstacle to peace and stability in the region,” it said.

Pakistan reiterated its view that there was no exclusive military solution to the crisis in Afghanistan. “The military action during the last 17 years has not brought peace to Afghanistan, and it is not likely to do so in the future. Only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned politically negotiated solution can lead to sustainable peace in Afghanistan,” the statement added.

Pakistan, it said, was committed to working with the international community towards the common objective of defeating the forces of terrorism and to promote peace and stability in the South Asian region.

PIA CEO APPOINTMENT APPROVED

A separate statement released by the Prime Minister’s Office said the cabinet approved appointment of Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan International Airlines for a probationary period of 90 days with a two-year contract.
The cabinet directed the Secretary Aviation Division to ensure submission of a business plan for profitability of PIA within 60 days of the appointment of Chief Executive Officer.

The Cabinet approved increasing and refixing of the number of commissioners in Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan to seven.

Approval was given to exempt from payment of taxes, duties and levies under the grants received from global fund to fight Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The maximum retail prices of life saving drugs were approved and the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination Division was assigned the task to ensure availability of quality life saving drugs within reasonable pricing to the common people in commensurate with the national drug policy.

The cabinet approved the execution and completion of ongoing gas development schemes.

The cabinet also approved initiation of negotiations on Inter-Government Agreement between Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources and the government of Nigeria on the Cooperation in the field of oil and gas.

**It’s about time Pakistan blocked roads for US supplies to Afghanistan – Nation.PK**

23 Aug 17

*Sana Eqbal*

Pakistan is no foe of the United States but by constantly blaming the former for its own failures in Afghanistan, Washington is slowly severing its ties with Islamabad.

US President Donald Trump’s crude speech in which he committed the United States into an open war with insurgents in Afghanistan and lambasted Pakistan for ‘harbouring militant safe heavens’ has emerged as the first diplomatic challenge for the nascent government of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

Trump, in his hard-hitting speech at a military base in Washington, called on Pakistan’s arch-rival India to aid the US in its longest war in Afghanistan, and said his administration would assist New Delhi in building infrastructure of the war-torn country.

Analysts say Trump’s open invitation to the Modi regime is aimed at tackling China’s growing influence in Afghanistan. But a Washington-New Delhi cooperation, which is no longer behind closed doors, means Islamabad has to act cautiously. Sticking to the rhetoric that Pakistan has lost so much in the so-called war on terror won’t convince Trump to scrap his Afghan policy.

Pakistan need not to remind the international community what its contributions are to global peace and security. Thousands of its troops are deployed as part of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in various parts of the world. The Trump administration may have pioneered an aggressive policy that is aimed at beating the insurgents to the table but it was Islamabad that helped install the Afghan National Government and brokered the peace talks between the Taliban and Kabul.
It’s about time the United States realised that long wars always result in endless bloodshed. Adding more troops to the already deployed 8,400 in Afghanistan, a country bathed in blood of both foreigners and locals, only adds fuel to the fire. Trump has vowed “victory in Afghanistan”. His version of victory, however, is a fight to the death. Homecoming seems a long lost dream for the US troops fighting against the Taliban and other insurgents, who vowed they would “continue our jihad”.

Pakistan should cash in on its ‘diplomatic aggression’ card; by blocking its roads to US for supplies to NATO troops in the landlocked Afghanistan, giving Washington a taste of its own medicine. Pakistan is no foe of the United States but by constantly blaming the former for its own failures in Afghanistan, Washington is slowly severing its ties with Islamabad; a mistake which would lead to disastrous consequences.

**Trump’s policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan – Daily Times**

*Pakistan, already under constant threat of a two-front war which includes domestic and the eastern borders, now has the sole super power threatening the western borders as well*

23-Aug-17
*Shaukat Qadir*

So finally Trump has dropped the other shoe. A young journalist had booked me for my views on Trump’s announcement many days before it actually came. When it came, he asked me to point out what was new. Here is the gist of my thoughts.

After a rambling introduction, Trump claims to have reached three conclusions on “America’s core interests”. In my view, the second and third “conclusions” merely complement the first. In effect, Trump acknowledges that pulling out will be an acceptance of defeat; an acknowledgement which is unacceptable to him. This is the first ‘First’ of his speech.

The second first of his speech is that, there is no longer a time limit on this war, nor any limit on the forces that will be deployed. And, even as he has acknowledged that Afghanistan’s future should be an Afghan decision but, that will come “ultimately”. For the present and the unspecified future, the course for the ultimate decision on an Afghan-led Afghanistan will be in US hands. And, therefore, it will be only after a decisive military victory that, at some future date, some sort of negotiated settlement may be considered.

Apparently, the decisive victory is defined by him as, “*We must stop the resurgence of safe havens that enable terrorists to threaten America, and we must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us, or anywhere in the world for that matter*”. As open ended a definition as is possible.

Third, in no uncertain terms, Trump has put Pakistan on notice. With a mild acknowledgement of Pakistani sacrifices, he has cited the billions that US gave Pakistan which, according to Trump were US sacrifices and not a small portion of recompense for what we had spent. And, followed it up with an unambiguous warning.

Four, unconcerned by Pakistan’s security concerns, Trump not only called on India to increase its ‘partnership’ with US in Afghanistan. And put icing on Delhi’s cake with the acknowledgement of India’s status as a strategic ally.

This has never been so bluntly stated before by any US president.
Finally, and most troublingly, he had this to say about the conduct of the war:

“I have already lifted restrictions the previous administration placed on our warfighters that prevented the Secretary of Defence and our commanders in the field from fully and swiftly waging battle against the enemy. Micromanagement from Washington, DC does not win battles. They are won in the field drawing upon the judgment and expertise of wartime commanders and frontline soldiers acting in real time, with real authority, and with a clear mission to defeat the enemy (my italics).

That’s why we will also expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan. These killers need to know they have nowhere to hide; that no place is beyond the reach of American might and arms. Retribution will be fast and powerful (my italics).”

Coupled with his promise of providing all means, with no limits on forces or time, this is the most worrying part of Trump’s speech. The biggest problem here is that victory, according to Trump, is open-ended.

With no limit on time, the quality, quantity, or type of forces to be employed and a victory defined as loosely as this one, by no less a person than the Commander in Chief of the US, it is entirely a ‘judgment call’ for any field commander.

No one could be a stronger advocate for greatest possible liberty of action in the battle field, particularly in this kind of war, than I. The German concept, which is now a preferred one in all militaries, of Auftragstaktik meant ‘mission oriented tactics’. This is intended to give even tactical commanders their mission and let them decide how to achieve it. It’s the best for the type of warfare currently underway.

But, conscious of the fact that the US’ war methodology of total dependence on the concentration of firepower, armed with weapons like the ‘mother-of-all-bombs’, this is the ultimate ‘license to kill’ that he could offer.

With no limit on time, the quality, quantity, or type of forces to be employed and a victory defined as loosely as this one, by no less a person than the Commander in Chief of the US, it is entirely a ‘judgment call’ for any field commander.

And, since the lowest level for which the term ‘Field Commander’ is applicable unspecified, I assume that the Chairman Joint Chiefs will specify it. Whichever level he chooses to end it at, it will be up to the local formation commander to decide. And since “retribution will be fast and powerful”, without warning, which act deserves what level of retribution will also be the discretion of the field commander.

This means that repetitions of Salala and the Abbottabad attack may be frequent.

In my view this means that then level of threat to Pakistan, in particular, and the region, less India, in general, has increased incrementally. Pakistan, already under constant threat of a two-front war which includes domestic and the eastern borders, now has the sole super power threatening the western borders as well.

I see dangerous times ahead.
‘Pakistan desires peace and stability in Afghanistan’ – The News

23 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, a day after US President Donald Trump’s announcement on his administration’s future policy for Afghanistan and South Asia, saw Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif reiterating the government’s consistent stand while remarking, “Pakistan’s perspective and desire is for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan’s immense sacrifices in the enduring fight against terrorism, will continue as it desires to work with the international community to eliminate the menace of terrorism”.

Khawaja Asif made these remarks in a meeting with US Ambassador David Hale on Tuesday, while awaiting his government’s formal and detailed response to Trump’s policy.

Meanwhile, Pakistan feels that there certainly has been no innovative nor any ground breaking revelation in President Trump’s latest review on Afghanistan and South Asia, despite the fact that Monday’s announcement has been eight months in the making. Interestingly, even after eight months in office, there appears to be no adviser to explain to Trump that there is no prime minister in Kabul, rather a president.

Khawaja Asif was also assured that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson looked forward to meeting the foreign minister in the next few days to have an in-depth discussion on the state of play in the bilateral relationship as well as the new US policy on South Asia.
Peace in Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s interest: Aizaz Chaudhry – The News

23 Aug 17

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is facing negative impacts of war-weary unstable Afghanistan for 38 years, therefore, peace in the neighbouring country is in the interest of Islamabad, said Aizaz Chaudhry.

Reacting over President Donald Trump’s Afghan policy, Aizaz Chaudhry, Pakistan’s Ambassador to Washington said, “ Pakistani leadership had been clarifying there is no safe havens for any militant on its soil.”

“Pakistan wants to continue dialogues with United States in constructive manner to bring durable peace and stability in the region,” he said.

The Pakistani envoy reiterated dialogues only under the leadership of Afghan could restore sustainable peace in Afghanistan, however, Pakistan made unprecedented efforts in counter terrorism.

Chaudhry went on to say Pakistan had been facing negative impacts of unstable Afghanistan for 38 years, adding that Islamabad had always supported efforts of international community for stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

Chaudhry said he would the US officials to ascertain details of new policy announced by President Donald Trump Monday.

Media urged to highlight Pakistan’s position on Afghanistan – The News

23 Aug 17

Islamabad : Experts on Tuesday has said Pakistani media should also come forward to support Pakistan’s position on Afghanistan, as our country should not be treated as a scapegoat for failure of US policy in Afghanistan.

Talking to 'The News', Dr Usman Ali, a university professor has said that the much awaited Trump policy on Afghanistan and South Asia is out. While acknowledging Pakistan’s efforts and sacrifices in War on Terror as a US ally, Trump said that Pakistan has "much to gain" from partnering with the US, but also warned "it has much to lose by continuing to harbour criminals and terrorists." However the State Department came up with a much more practical and diplomatic statement.

He said that new integrated strategy for the US approach to South Asia will require diplomatically engaging Pakistan, Afghanistan and India to create the conditions for stability in the region. It signals clear support for the Afghan people and government and security forces in their fight against terrorists and prevent the reestablishment of safe havens in the country.

Another university Professor Wajid Hussain has said that the signals emanating from White House, Capitol Hill and mainstream media on ‘US policy on Afghanistan’ point to a rather frustrated and confused mindset.

Trump in his speech also addressed a divided domestic polity; however it is expected that some Pakistani, Indian and international media outlets would use cherry picking to assault law enforcement agencies. “We should be ready to bear the heat and develop a counter narrative,” he added.
He said that Pakistani media should also come forward to support Pakistan’s position on Afghanistan, there is a need to build a strong national narrative and convey to international community that Pakistan should not be treated as a scapegoat failure of US policy in Afghanistan.

Dr Usman Ali said international community should also ponder on the prolonged Afghan conflict; If US led military alliance of 46 countries could not stem the tide of insurgency after spending almost one trillion dollars over a period of 16 years, what do they expect from Pakistan? On her part Pakistan army has done a tremendous job by successful fight against terrorist on her soil.

Pakistan Reacts to Afghan Strategy: ‘We Must Reject Being Made Scapegoats’- breitbart

22 Aug 17

Afghanistan and India have welcomed the Afghan war strategy recently unveiled by the U.S. president, but Pakistan came out on the defensive, rebuking Donald Trump for admonishing Islamabad over its affiliation with jihadist organizations.

China, which borders Afghanistan, came out in defense of its ally Pakistan, saying the country was on the front line in the struggle against “terrorism” and had made “great sacrifices” and “important contributions” in the fight, reports Al Jazeera.

“We believe that the international community should fully recognize Pakistan’s anti-terrorism,” Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for China’s foreign ministry, told reporters, adding that China hoped “the relevant US policies can help promote the security, stability, and development of Afghanistan and the region.”

President Trump urged Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to step up their commitment to finding a solution to the 16-year-old war.

Some Pakistani leaders rejected Trump’s sharp rebuke of Islamabad and his efforts to expand India’s involvement in neighboring Afghanistan.

“We must reject being made scapegoats for the policy failures of the US and India,” proclaimed Imran Khan, chief of Pakistan’s Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) political party, reports Dawn. “Just as India blames Pakistan for the indigenous Kashmiri uprisings when these are a result of its own failed policy of military repression in India-held Kashmir, the US again blames Pakistan for its deeply flawed and failed Afghan policy stretching over a decade.”

Maj. Gen. Asif Ghafoor, a spokesman for the Pakistani army, reportedly dismissed the president’s comments, claiming Islamabad has targeted terrorists operating on its soil.

“There are no terrorist hideouts in Pakistan,” claimed the military spokesman.

Despite the criticism for Trump’s Afghanistan agenda stemming from Pakistan, Khwaja Muhammad Asif, the country’s foreign minister, reportedly met U.S. Amb. David Hale and emphasized Islamabad’s “desire for peace and stability in Afghanistan,” according to a statement by the foreign ministry.

Asif “underlined Pakistan’s continued desire to work with the International Community to eliminate the menace of terrorism,” noted the statement.
Meanwhile, New Delhi welcomed Trump’s strategy, particularly his administration’s willingness to pressure its rival Pakistan to stop lending support to Islamic terrorists, some of whom are also known to operate in India.

In a statement, India’s Ministry of External Affairs noted that it embraced Trump’s “determination to enhance efforts to overcome the challenges faced by Afghanistan and in confronting issues of safe havens and other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists,” notes Al Jazeera.

Without explicitly naming its rival Pakistan, the ministry added, “India shares these concerns and objectives.”

New Delhi reaffirmed its policy of lending reconstruction aid to Afghanistan. Since the start of the Afghanistan war in October 2001, India has provided an estimated $2 billion in aid to Afghanistan.

Trump’s new war strategy was also received well in Kabul.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani lauded the plan, saying it would improve the capability of the training mission for Afghan security forces, which includes military and police units.

The speech is proof that the United States is “with us, without any time limit,” Ghani told Afghan troops on Tuesday in southern Kandahar province, the birthplace of the Taliban located along the Pakistan border.

“I am grateful to President Trump and the American people for this affirmation of support for our efforts to achieve self-reliance and for our joint struggle to rid the region from the threat of terrorism,” said President Ghani in a statement. “The U.S. Afghan partnership is stronger than ever in overcoming the threat of terrorism that threatens us all. The strength of our security forces should show the Taliban and others that they cannot win a military victory. The objective of peace is paramount.”

During his speech, Trump blasted Pakistan but praised its rival India for its support for Afghanistan, saying it was a “critical” component of his South Asia strategy, referring to his war plan.

“For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror,” declared the U.S. commander-in-chief. “The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict. And that could happen.”

“We appreciate India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development,” added President Trump.

US Ambassador Calls on Pakistani Foreign Minister After Trump New Policy

– ATN News

23 Aug 17

U.S. Ambassador David Hale has briefed Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif about U.S. President Donald Trump’s latest statement on the US policy review on South Asia and Afghanistan, according to a statement issued by the Pakistani Foreign Office.
“David Hale conveyed that the Secretary of State Rex Tillerson looked forward to meeting him in the next few days to have an in-depth discussion on the state of play in the bilateral relationship as well as the new US policy on South Asia,” the statement said.

The Pakistani Foreign Minister stated that he had accepted the invitation when the Secretary of State called him on 14th August and looked forward to his early interactions in Washington.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif reiterated Pakistan’s perspective and desire for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

He underlined Pakistan’s continued desire to work with the International Community to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

**Trump’s Afghanistan strategy – Daily Times**

*The privatisation of security in Afghanistan must not be an option*

21-Aug-17

*Khan Zaman Kakar*

Donald Trump’s much-awaited strategy for Afghanistan and the South Asian region, which was reviewed for a final decision at Camp David on Friday and said to be announced ‘shortly’, is as unpredictable as his language. While keeping in view the absolute nature of US administration and the constraints of neoliberalism, this so-called first post-modern US president is unlikely coming with a deconstructive mind to the past ill-coordinated US policies regarding Afghanistan and the region, completely refraining from the culture of trading in chaos and disabilities in the third world.

Among other policy considerations on the South Asian region, the Trump Administration is also considering an awful idea of contracting out the war in Afghanistan. It’s after 16 years of US involvement in the process of state-institutions-building and the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, that a mercenary proposal, which reportedly involves 5,500 private military contractors and 90 aircraft, appears as a considerable private sector input to arrangements in US new Afghan strategy to break, accordingly, the stalemate in this war-torn country through a financially cheaper mechanism.

A policy shift towards bringing a regional political and diplomatic consensus on protecting Afghanistan’s sovereignty is the only durable solution to the country’s many problems

If the Trump administration agrees to ratify the proposal, it could bear unanticipated outcomes for Afghanistan and the region. The regional players, who have developed stakes in the region through the prolonging of bloodshed in Afghanistan and were always unwilling to accept Afghanistan as an independent state, would get a ground to discursively and politically diminish Afghans’ war for their survival as Blackwater’s war for profit. The Jihadi apparatus in Pakistan can easily exploit such a situation for its own nefarious designs in our strategically key region.

In the case of privatisation of American security partnership with Afghanistan, the public representation of it could badly weaken Afghans’ morale in their struggle for survival.

Most importantly, the privatisation of security could strengthen divisions within Afghan society over the question of Afghanistan’s strategic and security partnership with the international community, especially the future status and legitimacy of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between Afghanistan and the
United States, and subsequently, it could disrupt the ongoing process of the intra-Afghan reconciliation and functioning of the present national-unity government in Afghanistan.

It’s worth mentioning that legal status of the private military firms (PMFs) is the most important issue which the academic studies have focused all over the world. There is also no agency or legislative oversight in the way there might be on traditional militaries. Other than its shareholders, there are no real checks and balances on a PMF.

Surely, if a private resolution was preferred by the US administration to its Afghan problem, the first question would be raised on its legality and its relation to the Bilateral Security Agreement.

In this regard, Hamid Karzai, former Afghan president and presently one of the most influential public figures, seems started publicly opposing the dual nature of US policies, their apologetic approach to Pakistan’s interference in Afghanistan and the alleged abuses in US-led NATO operations in the country.

While opposing the outsourcing of war in Afghanistan to the private security firms, Karzai termed the proposal a ‘blatant violation of Afghan sovereignty and constitution, that will be prolonging and intensifying the bloodshed in Afghanistan’. “On the contrary, the US government should end the violence against the Afghan people and seek peace. I call upon Afghan government to oppose and denounce this anti-Afghanistan project”, emphasized Karzai in his tweets. Even though the state nationalism, nonviolence and democratic ideologies are the dominant trends in today’s Afghan society, the situation is bad in terms of the lack of an influential political front — one of the most serious weaknesses of the state system in Afghanistan.

If the Trump administration really seeks to break the stalemate, it should collaborate with the Afghans in strengthening the parliamentary system, political mobilisation and democratic culture in the country. Otherwise, the war in Afghanistan could face a dead end as the war in Iraq. Hence, the privatisation of security must not be an option.

The history of the Afghan War (the so-called Jihad) is replete with evidences showing how US and Pakistan cultivated Afghan religious groups as their proxies aimed at collapsing the state institutions and infrastructure in Afghanistan. To set the record straight, Pakistan’s interference in Afghanistan through training and recruiting Afghan Jihadi groups started during the Bhutto era, not with or after the arrival of the Soviet troops to the Western border.

In the Post-Cold War context, the US-led neo-liberal security politics has used it as a norm to fail a state, to create a vacuum over there and to fill it with private militias, militants, corporations and NGOs. Afghanistan of 1990s is, however, one of the worst and first victims of that policy.

Pakistan’s flawed Afghan policy has played a big destructive role. Truth be told, Pakistan’s security establishment has never disconnected itself from its 40 years old coercive policy of controlling Afghanistan with proxies. In the post 9/11 context, the United States have time and again threatened Pakistan with enormous pressure tactics including cutting-off aids and imposing sanctions but they have so far failed in changing the minds of Pakistani policymakers regarding Afghanistan. A policy shift towards bringing a regional political and diplomatic consensus on protecting Afghanistan’s sovereignty and guaranteeing it internationally against the violations is the only answer to the world’s Afghan question.

To conclude, if the international community genuinely feels an unstable Afghanistan is a threat to the global peace, there is a political solution to it. The state in Afghanistan is now a hard reality, and the world should help it getting harder in terms of economy and democratisation.
Come October, America’s crude war of revenge on Afghanistan will enter its seventeenth year. Despite the fact that it is the longest war America has ever fought, success is yet a dream. One thing that American-led forces have achieved in Afghanistan is the destruction of the limited socioeconomic infrastructure of the country already in tatters.

With Trump’s occupation of the White House, there was confusion about what policy will be preferred in Afghanistan. In the mid of this year, reports speculated that either more troops would be sent to the conflict zone or to avoid growing discontent at home; the war will be privatised. However, a few weeks ago reports surfaced that suggest a complete American withdrawal from Afghan soil.

Twitter obsessed President, Donald Trump, tweeted early on Saturday, “Many decisions made, including on Afghanistan.” However, no elaborations on “Many decisions on Afghanistan” have come from White House. It seems that it will take some more time for the Trump administration to come up with a comprehensive policy on Afghanistan. Delays in formulating a policy regarding Afghanistan is an indication of disagreements within Trump’s camp on how to deal with the situation in Afghanistan. Therefore no exact time has been set, though it was expected that by the end of July, the Trump team would make their policy public on Afghanistan.

Many observers, including top American generals, have suggested that the war in Afghanistan has reached a stalemate and is unwinnable. However, the same cannot be said for insurgents. They have carried far more deadly attacks on Afghan soil this year. In the first five months of 2017, almost 2500 Afghan police and troops have been killed as result of insurgents’ attacks.

Meanwhile, a military delegation on a two-day visit to Pakistan headed by General Joseph L Votel stressed on the need of military cooperation with Pakistan. Though the General has appreciated Pakistan’s efforts in combating terrorism from the region, yet he repeated the clichéd rhetoric that Pakistan should not allow its soil for terrorists to carry attacks against its neighbors.

The US approach towards Pakistan is that of a carrot and stick. The Pakistani Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, rightly told the delegation that Pakistan wants a peaceful Afghanistan for a peaceful Pakistan. However, what Pakistan needs to do is to stop accepting dictation from Americans. Instead, Pakistan should ask America to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan quagmire. The most intelligent step that American can take will be to call for all the groups and persuade them to play their part in reconstruction of the war torn country.
US Afghan policy and Pakistan – PT

21 Aug 17

Need to end cherry picking

None of the three options presented to Trump to resolve the Afghan conundrum has pleased the US President. The first involves more troops and an open-ended commitment. It enjoys maximum support in the administration and in Congress, but the president has so far failed to agree to it. The second option is some version of Blackwater founder Erik Prince’s security contractor proposal that involves scaling back U.S. troops, and the third is for a complete U.S. withdrawal. As brainstorming started at Camp David, Centcom Chief Gen Joseph Votel visited Pakistan along with a military delegation. Votel held delegation level talks with COAS Bajwa and called on Prime Minister Abbasi. While Votel underlined the need for cooperation between the US and Pakistan, like Senator McCain he too emphasised that Pakistani soil must not be used to plan or conduct terrorist attacks against its neighbours.

Discussions have been further complicated at Camp David by differences over the extent of a hard line on Pakistan for failing to act against the Afghan Taliban. According to US media quoting US officials, under one proposal the US would begin a review of whether to designate Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism unless it pursues senior leaders of the Afghan Taliban and the allied Haqqani network. Such a designation would trigger harsh U.S. sanctions, including a ban on arms sales and an end to U.S. economic assistance.

There is a near unanimity among US generals beginning with CICS Gen Joseph Dunford to Gen Votel that peace in Afghanistan and the region hinges on Pakistan’s cooperation. The visits by the Congressional delegation led by Senator McCain and the military delegation under General Votel indicate that there is a fairly widespread acknowledgement of the sacrifices Pakistani nation and its security forces have rendered in fight against terrorism. What creates problems for Pakistan is the persisting view that it is closing its eyes to certain terrorist groups. Pakistan would do well by taking across the board action against all terrorist networks.

The graveyard of wrong policies – Nation.PK

21 Aug 17

Durdana Najam

The Taliban has written an open letter to the US President Donald Trump asking him to leave aside the war mongering congressmen and warlords in Afghanistan and instead sit with the Taliban and work out a solution to the war that the US has failed to make even a sense of after 16 long years. The Taliban, in a negotiating tone, has called the National Unity Government (NUG) a bunch of corrupt people and the Afghans the real harbinger of peace. From what the letter reveals, one may understand that the Taliban are not willing to hold peace deal with the government. They are aware that the real power resides with the US and that the NUG is just a shadow of many powers vying for influence in Afghanistan.

Presently the Afghan government is surviving on foreign funds, foreign aids, and external grants. The presence of the IMF is just another way of subscribing to the international community for more financial assistance. According to the latest figures unveiled by the World Bank, Afghanistan has two million jobless people.
Every year 400,000 aspiring youth enter the job market. There are not enough jobs.

All the talks about infrastructural development by the Indians and other countries are not lending enough vibrancy to the Afghan economy because the private sector is not developing.

Private sector’s growth depends entirely on the business environment sans violence, unpredictability and malfunctioning institutions.

This is where the international community, especially Pakistan, stands factually correct when it says that Afghanistan has to take ownership of its policies.

The Afghan-led and Afghan-owned solution requires getting in touch with the realities.

It also requires trespassing greed, personal aggrandisement and rising above ethnic division.

While weighing different options to handle the Afghan war, the US is also mulling to hire a private army to handle Afghanistan imbroglio, which means pulling out all the US soldiers.

So far the Afghan government has not objected to this option, which would be a recipe for more crisis in the country.

If the Taliban could defeat the US, the 5,000 Blackwater officers would be easier to delude.

The US has been looking at the Afghan problem from a wrong position, and therefore the blame for most of the unrest in Afghanistan is laid on Pakistan.

Many US delegates have visited Pakistan in recent months, General Joseph Voted, Commander United States Central Command has already paid three visits to Pakistan as Commander, former US vice President John McCain was also in Pakistan and on his return to the US had drawn up his own policy to solve the Afghan issue.

The underlying message every delegate brought to Pakistan had been laced with the advice that our soil should not be used against Afghanistan.

Pakistan’s effort against terrorism, though appreciated, has failed to reimburse the trust deficit both the countries had developed over the years, especially when the war on terrorism was in full swing after 9/11.

Pakistan was accused of giving the Taliban tactical and strategic support to defeat the US-led NATO forces in spite of all their technology and advanced war tactics.

Another major element that had led to the division between the US and Pakistan was the formation of the Hamid Karzai government heavily composed of the Northern Alliance.

Musharraf had been on record insisting on bringing in the sane minds from Taliban in the Karzai government if a long-term solution to the Afghan problem was required.

But the composition and disposition of the Karzai government exuded anti-Pakistan vibes resulting in a more stringent policy on Pakistan.

India’s leading role may not be a problem, but giving India a larger than life role in Afghanistan that could become detrimental for Pakistan is something that does not go well even with the region.

China has been in support of Pakistan in this matter.

In spite of all its haggling India had not bee able to get Masood Azhar declared international terrorist by the Security Council.

China had vetoed the attempt on every occasion.

India has been trying to establish Pakistan a country that produces and exports terrorism.

This narrative does not only draw India and the US closer, but it also lends India a bulwark to persist with its atrocious policies of inflicting inhuman treatment on the people of Kashmir.

In a recently held Senate Armed Services Committee hearing regarding Washington’s Afghanistan policy, the National Intelligence Director, Dan Coats, said that, in case the US allowed India a deeper role in Kabul, (such as letting India send its army in Kabul), to protect its interest in the region Pakistan could forget about the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned philosophy.

It is in the US interest to keep India from taking a tough posturing against Pakistan in Kabul.

It is amazing that after having spent billions in Afghanistan, the country has no financial structure in place to sustain rising economic demands.

Most police pertaining business and investments are made in silos.
In the case of persisting ignorance of the international community, which is focusing only on bringing in more army to Afghanistan or more war advisers, terrorism would remain a pestering wound.

The region is fast changing with the ‘One Belt One Road,’ initiative. Let Afghanistan become part of this changing dynamics, and engaged in economic activities rather than in war mongering. Afghanistan’s solution lies in talking to the Afghans that includes all the stakeholders even the Taliban and the ordinary citizens who are looking at the US strategy to send more troops as another mistake that would only extend miseries in Afghanistan.

‘Do more Pakistan’ syndromes of USA – The News

20 Aug 17
Senator Rehman Malik

We are pro-peace nation. Immediately after independence, Pakistan chose USA as its friend as against the then Soviet Union through a first ever State visit of the then Prime Minister of Pakistan. Since then Pakistan stood as a friend with USA – whether it was SEATO, CENTO, handing over of Buddhher airport for its covert operations against the then Soviet Union or providing our shoulders to fire at Soviet Army in Afghanistan in 1979. The covert operations against USSR earned Pakistan hostility and enmity of erstwhile USSR while it provided opportunity to India to get more close to it. Pakistan faced the wrath of this enmity in 1971 when the friend of Pakistan acted as a mere spectator to disintegration of Pakistan.

The invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Army in 1979 was perceived as politico-economic threat by USA and its allies, majority being Muslim states including Pakistan. USA invited Pakistan to help them to oust Soviets from Afghanistan. Pakistan played that part very well and deployed its military and organised Afghan Mujahidin to kick Soviets out of Afghanistan. But, the mistake Gen Zia made was, he induced some Islamic sentiments to his expedition, which was totally counter-productive to international politics and diplomacy, for the times to come.

USA recruited Afro-Arab militants, trained, armed and funded them to fight along Afghan ‘Mujahedeen’ and Pakistan provided them logistic and base camps. The war, besides other fallouts, triggered mass migration of Afghans to Pakistan putting additional financial burden on Pakistan. Pakistan had maintained its GDP growth rates more than that of India most of the times until the Soviet-Afghan War. By the end of 2001, there were over four million Afghan refugees and the UNHCR reported in February 2017 that about 1.3 million registered Afghan citizens still remained in Pakistan.

With the withdrawal of Soviet Army from Afghanistan in 1989, USA also withdrew from the region leaving Pakistan alone to take the brunt of millions of Afghan refugees, both in social and financial terms. Abandonment of ‘Mujahedeen’ – created by USA – without any exit strategy also put Pakistan in critical security situation. These unemployed ‘Mujahedeen’ spread across the country, engaged in sectarian clashes and other crimes but the creator of this class remained indifferent to the fact that these unemployed ‘Mujahedeen’ could one day emerge as monsters, whenever they would get a chance.

The emergence of Taliban on the horizon of Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul in 1992 provided another opportunity to the foreign militants as well as Pakistani religious militants to enter the arena. Their influence and doctrine spread across Pakistan coupled with unabated terrorist operations against civilians, army and law enforcement agencies. Now Pakistan is the lone victim of terrorism with highest number of causalities being 50,000 and yet is blamed as responsible for it.
During the September 11 attacks in 2001, 2,996 people were killed and more than 6,000 others wounded. These immediate deaths included 265 on the four planes (including the 19 terrorists), 2,606 in the World Trade Centre and in the surrounding area, and 125 at the Pentagon. It is a matter of record that out of 19 hijackers, 15 were nationals of Saudi Arabia, 2 of UAE and 1 each of Lebanon and Egypt and none from Pakistan. We, Pakistan, have a right to demand to know where the involvement of Pakistan in 9/11 is and those countries whose nationals were involved are still friends of USA and even Jordan provided platform to train Daesh.

Pakistan had been extending help to US to ensure peace and stability across the globe and in the South Asian region, in particular, but US rather than recognising the support and efforts of Pakistan, has entered a syndrome of repeatedly demanding Pakistan to ‘Do More’ vis-à-vis terrorism, for the last 10 years. USA perhaps forgets that it has always used the shoulder of Pakistan to fire the RPG against its enemies in the region and still asks us to “Do more”. We helped them in Soviet War and now “We” are facing both, terrorists label and the Taliban’s attacks, just because of helping USA in its global war on terrorism.

Perhaps the time has come to ask the US Administration to come out of “Do more” syndrome as far as Pakistan is concerned. It is the time to ask the USA to “Do more” to stop terrorist operations from the soil of Afghanistan against Pakistan; to pressurise Afghan Administration to ensure that Afghan soil is not used against Pakistan; to ask the Afghan Administration to prevent its intelligence and security agencies to carry out subversive activities in Pakistan through their own officials and the paid agents; to pressurise India to stop funding, providing trainings and logistics to anti-Pakistan elements at its own soil and at the soil of Afghanistan.

I would like to refer a meeting with President Bush in the White House where I participated as Interior Minister of Pakistan where I heard the demand of President Bush asking Pakistan to ‘do more’ and my abrupt response to President Bush was that it is time for USA to ‘do more’ as Pakistan has done a lot whereas USA has failed to strategise a common strategy against our common enemy. Beside others, Ms. Rice the then Secretary of State was present so this generic words ‘do more’ has become standby American slogan against Pakistan.

According to a Pakistani government assessment, more than 90% of terrorist attacks in Pakistan are traced to Afghan refugee camps and several Afghan nationals have been arrested for involvement in the attacks. Afghan militants sometimes enter Pakistan's border regions for shelter. Due to Pakistan's porous border with Afghanistan, it is difficult for local authorities and security agencies to track the movement of Afghan militants into the country. After the December 2014 Peshawar school massacre, the deadliest terrorist incident in Pakistan's history, two Afghan militants were involved in this attack. Mr President Trump, can you refuse that we are not still victim of this war.

Historically India had been enjoying good relations with Afghanistan for decades minus Afghanistan under Taliban rule and after the election of Hamid Karzai as president of Afghanistan, India had once again renewed these relations with common objectives of keeping Pakistan on defensive. India established its terrorists’ network under the diplomatic cover along the Pak-Afghan border, which has since been the hotbed of terrorism inside Pakistan backed and supported by RAW and NSD. It was no less than President Karzai who admitted in response to my question that Indian training camps are there along with Pak-Afghan border but showed his inability to finish it till he gets the clearance of USA. Now it is USA, which needs to ‘Do more’ to pressurise India to stop arming, funding and backing the terrorists to carry out their activities inside Pakistan from Afghanistan.

In the end, Mr President, every time you and your predecessors have pressurised Pakistan to ‘Do more’ based on faulty intelligence provided by our opponent.
Haqqani network was/is the assets of West and not of Pakistan. With the start of Zarb-e-Azb by Pakistan Army, Afghanistan was warned of possible crossing over of terrorists to Afghanistan with the request to seal their border to deny them such opportunity but Afghanistan chose the other course. Had Afghanistan sealed the border, the majority of the terrorists would have been eliminated thus ensuring more peace in the region. Who wanted to ‘Do more’ – Pakistan or Afghanistan or USA? I can state with full authority that under my direct orders the hideout of Haqqani and Mangle were destroyed under my direct supervision in Fata.

It is strange that PM Modi meets Baloch anti-Pakistan leaders followed by Afghan president, which is taken as an open support to these insurgent and now recently we witnessed US Congressman Dana Rohrabacher meeting the anti-Pak proclaimed offenders based in UK. The question is as to who actually is supporting terrorists/insurgents?

Mr. President you need to ‘Do more’ to stop the international anti-Pakistan intrigues. We have already done much more for the international peace and fed more than 2 million refugees in return of death supply from Afghanistan. According to a Report of UNODC published by BBC on 23 October 2016, the “opium production in Afghanistan has increased by 43% in the past year” [2015] and “the area used to farm poppy plant increased by 10% to 201,000 hectares”. The increase in the poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and smuggling of heroin in Pakistan had devastating effects in terms of daily deaths of the addicts, which are estimated at 700 deaths daily which are greater than the deaths as a result of terrorism. The smuggling of heroin/contrabands is, in fact, bankrolling for the terrorists. Mr. President you need to do extra more to stop the poppy cultivation and supply of drugs from Afghanistan, which is militarily and administratively under the control of your Army. This is no more secret world is suffering hugely because of this export of drugs to the West and Mr. President will you continue to like this death supply to the world via drugs passing right under the nose of American Army.

Mr. President consider to stop drug production from Afghanistan then your 90% terrorism will finish automatically as drug proceed going to terrorists will immediately dry down -- this will be the real "Do more" by you Mr President which will be great present particularly to this region and in general for the world.

Mr President, please revisit your intel briefing which will change your mind. So Mr President I hope that my above facts may convince you that Pakistan is a victim and not a perpetrator. And I hope that the cries of innocent children will convince you that we are victims and not the supporters of terrorism.

I will be very happy to have a debate either with you or your top media and will prove that Pakistan is an enemy of terrorists and a friend of humanity.

The writer is former interior minister and chairman of think tank "global eye"

**No good news for Pakistan in US new Afghan policy – The News**

*20 Aug 17*

ISLAMABAD: President Donald Trump has finally made a decision on his new policy for Afghanistan and the region but is keeping it under wraps, though the White House says an official announcement in this regard will be made shortly.

There is certainly no good news for Pakistan with several US media outlets reporting that officials are speaking about Trump’s strategy which sees sending nearly 4,000 additional troops to Afghanistan while all military aid to Pakistan could also be stopped.
Trump an addict of Twitter through which he announces all major policy decisions said in a Tweet, “Important day spent at Camp David with our very talented Generals and military leaders. Many decisions made, including on Afghanistan”.

However, the Foreign Policy has reported that one of the reasons that draws Trump into this land-locked country is “abundant natural resources”.

The FP speaks about a meeting in July with the head of an American chemical company that transformed his view of the US military presence in Afghanistan. Exploiting the country’s abundant natural resources could result in an incredible economic windfall, Trump was told.

The publication points out that it was in this meeting that “Trump learned of the enormous wealth buried beneath Afghan soil: perhaps more than $1 trillion in untapped mineral resources in the form of copper, iron, and rare-earth metals.”

“Trump wants to be repaid,” said a source close to the White House. “He’s trying to see where the business deal is”, notes FP.

According to the publication in May, Erik Prince published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal calling for an “East India Company approach” with a “viceroy” and private contractors.

Prince, whose idea captured the eye of Trump’s chief strategist, Steve Bannon, and other officials, was invited to the White House to outline his ideas.

Prince has since presented his case to lawmakers on Capitol Hill and in a Washington media blitz, arguing that it’s time for a new model after years of failure and frustration.

The tantalizing idea that Afghanistan’s mineral potential could transform the country and save the fragile Kabul government has proved elusive.

Gen. David Petraeus, who was commander of US-led troops in Afghanistan in 2010-2011, touted the country’s mineral wealth as offering “stunning potential.” But Afghanistan lacks the infrastructure of roads, trains, and bridges needed to extract the minerals, not to mention the security required to ensure private companies can operate safely the report adds.

Coveted rare-earth minerals in Afghanistan are located in Helmand province in the country’s southwest, most of which is now controlled by Taliban.

Moreover, commodity prices for iron and copper have sharply declined in recent years, and the Afghan government has been accused of corruption in some of its mining ventures.

“Whichever military proposal wins out, the mining idea remains a top priority for Trump. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is currently conducting an overall assessment of mining opportunities in Afghanistan, while Tillerson, the former head of ExxonMobil, is looking at whether the country would be stable enough for long-term American investments”, notes FP.

Silver, the chemical executive who pitched Trump on the idea, said Afghanistan’s mineral wealth could provide a similar boost to the one China experienced during the 1990s.

“When China opened to the world in the early ’90s under Deng [Xiaoping]’s policy of global engagement, the sale of minerals formed the backbone of their GDP growth,” Silver told FP.
But the report cautions that though “Trump may want a deal that brings peace to Afghanistan, paving the way for economic opportunities, but it’s unclear how the White House believes it can persuade Kabul, regional powers, and key players — including Pakistan, Iran, China and Russia — to help broker a peace agreement.”

**U.S. CentCom chief visits Pakistan as Trump weighs relationship** – Reuters

19 Aug 17

The chief of the U.S. Central Command visited Pakistan on Saturday, as President Donald Trump's administration debated the future of its relations with Islamabad, part of a review of the war in neighbouring Afghanistan.

General Joseph Votel met Pakistan’s powerful army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and toured an area where the Pakistani military fought a campaign to drive out Islamist militants, according to the U.S. embassy and Pakistan’s military press office.

"Military cooperation, and even stronger cooperation with Pakistan, is very important, and we deeply appreciate the hospitality and willingness to continue an honest and open relationship," Votel was quoted as saying by the embassy.

Votel stressed that Pakistani soil should not be used to plan or conduct terrorist attacks against its neighbours, the U.S. embassy said.

The U.S. relationship with Pakistan has been under scrutiny in Trump’s lengthy review of a new strategy and troop levels in the fight against Taliban and other Islamist militants in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials say the Afghan Taliban are supported by elements of Pakistan’s military and top intelligence agency, a charge Islamabad denies, pointing to its own losses fighting Taliban-allied militants in North and South Waziristan.

Under one proposal, the United States would review whether to designate Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism unless it pursued senior leaders of the Afghan Taliban and the allied Haqqani network, considered the most lethal Afghan extremist group, U.S. officials said. Such a designation would trigger strong U.S. sanctions, including a ban on arms sales and an end to U.S. economic assistance.

Others argue that nuclear-armed Pakistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, is too crucial to the war’s success to completely alienate.

Washington and Islamabad have long had a rocky relationship, including over 2011’s secret U.S. raid inside Pakistan that killed Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, architect of the September 2001 attacks in the U.S.

It was the Taliban’s hosting of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan that led Washington to invade to topple the-then Afghan government in 2001.

In 2016 a U.S. drone strike killed Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour as he was traveling by car in southwestern Pakistan. Islamabad has denied sheltering either Bin Laden or Mansour.
Stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s interest, says PM Abbasi – PT

19 Aug 17

PM visits Quetta to discuss law and order situation, development project

Prime Minister (PM) Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, while talking to United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph Votel on Saturday, said that stability in Afghanistan is in Pakistan’s interest.

General Joseph is on a two-day visit to Pakistan.

Abbasi said that Pakistan supports the peace process in the neighbouring country and over five million Afghan refugees in Pakistan are an example of this fact.

He also said that conflict in Afghanistan has also affected Pakistan.

On the other hand, PM also arrived in Quetta to discuss law and order situation and the development projects with the concerned senior leadership.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sanaullah Zahri welcomed the PM along with the provincial cabinet members and senior officials, including Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal and SAFRON Minister Lt Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, National Security Adviser Nasser Khan Janjua and Ports and Shipping Minister Hasil Bazenjo.

During the visit, the prime minister will hold meetings with the chief minister, Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai and the PML-N parliamentarians.

Pakistan continues to support Afghan govt, society, PM Abbasi tells US

General – The News

19 Aug 17

ISLAMABAD: The US CENTCOM Commander General Joseph L. Votel, who is on a two day visit to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Saturday, according to a statement.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Defence Khurram Dastgir Khan, National Security Adviser Lt. Gen.(R) Nasser Khan Janjua and Foreign Secretary Ms. Tehmina Janjua were present during the meeting.

The Prime Minister underscored that Pakistan had an important stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan as it has suffered the most due to conflict in that country.

He said Pakistan is committed to its support for the Afghan people. "This has been in evidence over decades including through the presence of more than 5 million refugees for over three decades, the Prime Minister said.

Pakistan continues to support the Afghan government and society in many ways including scholarships to Afghan students and infrastructural development. The Prime Minister expressed concern about the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan which could threaten all its neighbours.
General Votel underscored the importance that the US attaches to Pakistan and Pakistan’s importance for achieving the objective of peace and security in Afghanistan. He greatly appreciated the efforts being undertaken by Pakistan in fighting terrorism.

The Prime Minister also referred to the unacceptable situation of human rights in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir where a very large Indian military presence was used for the oppression of the innocent Kashmiri people, who only sought the realization of their right to self-determination.

The Prime Minister agreed with General Votel on the importance of working closely to address issues of regional concerns.

The Prime Minister also underscored that the South Asian review undertaken by the US would take into account Pakistan’s efforts in fighting terrorism and its commitment to peace and security in Afghanistan.

The US South Asia policy – Pak Observer

20 Aug 17

Maryum Nazir
SOUTH Asia as a region remains to be at the forefront of the United States’ regional interests and concerns. While the situation in South Asia remains static on conventional fronts, there is a change of administration in the US. President Trump’s administration has brought a mix of change and continuity in the country’s foreign and security policies, including those in South Asia. Ranging from the situation in Afghanistan to ever-tightened relations with Pakistan alongside the rejuvenation of relations with India, the United States has numerous interests to be protected via this region and concerns to be pacified. Alongside the approval of more troops for Afghanistan, the meeting between President Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi starts to shape up a somewhat unelaborated, unspoken and disfigured imagery of US’ policy towards South Asia in the last few months.

Certainly, with the signing of Indo-US strategic partnership, the power roles and statures in South Asia were changed. As Narendra Modi takes the lead in visiting the White House, the highlights of the meet up present to us the continuation of similar policies, initiated by the previous administration. As news media reports that the Trump administration is likely to unveil its South Asia policy in the coming weeks, there is certainly more homework for Pakistan to do, given the two-sided hostile front. Indicative of the previous United States’ policies in the region, the changing of power roles in South Asia could add to current imbalances and discrepancies. While both leaders term the bilateral relations to be stronger than ever before, Modi works for the acknowledgement of greater role in the region, as he calls for peace, stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region to be the main focus. Now, Indo-Pacific as a region is vast and this leap from the dominion of South Asia to a bigger region, tells about the future ambitions of India, supported by the designs of the US. In this regard, one cannot easily ignore the India Act East Policies and the way it has been expanding ties in that region. The meeting held between VK Singh and Rex Tillerson on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Manila a few days ago, caps a week of renewed engagement between India and the US.

With regards Indo-US Strategic Partnership, there was no indication at all during the 2016 election campaign that the outcome of the election would in any way negatively affect the bilateral ties. Besides, the conception of bipartisan consensus on sustaining and improving Washington’s relationship with New Delhi has existed in the US for years. Such Indian activism on ground could possibly have following objectives to achieve, i.e. first, the Trump Administration’s job creation and retention measures should not excessively hit the Indian workforce employed by American and Indian IT companies. Second, the economic nationalism of the Trump White House should not come on the way of Prime Minister Modi’s ‘Make in India’ initiative. Third, the Trump Administration’s Afghanistan policy should not clash with
India’s core interests in that country. Fourth, the Trump Administration should keep the Kashmir issue outside his political bargaining with Pakistan. Fifth, the Trump Administration’s disproportionate confrontation or measured cooperation with China should not outshine or overshadow Washington’s policy towards this region. Last but not least, Trump’s immigration policy should in no way hamper the interests of the Indian-American community.

Contrary to President Trump’s ambiguous and tacit Afghan policy, Modi clearly pronounces India’s concerns over increasing instability in Afghanistan and its commitment to bring peace alongside the reconstruction of state apparatus. In Afghanistan, while the military establishment in the US is calling the shots, President Trump has never been a supporter of war there, in the past. While, what matters to Pakistan besides the continuous demand of ‘do more’ and bilateral cooperation going away, is the pronounced use of Afghan soil by India against Pakistan. Amidst military operations against terrorists, the use of Afghan soil for nefarious designs and lack of this understanding on the other side of border has remained to be a huge hurdle. And an acknowledgement of such Indian aspirations in Washington does go with the policy objectives detailed above.

Similarly, on Kashmir, President Trump in his campaign reiterated his support for resolution of Kashmir issue. In April 2017, the US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said, “it’s absolutely right that this administration is concerned about the relationship between India and Pakistan and very much wants to see how we de-escalate any sort of conflict going forward,” followed by absolute silence. However, the US administration’s announcement declaring Hizbul Mujahideen chief, Syed Salahuddin as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, present to us a change of tone. As Indian media quotes this news as a diplomatic win for India, this avowal does not pave way for any de-escalation in foreseeable future.

The United States with India along its side, wants it to play a multi-faceted role in the region, one of which involves the engagement of rising Asian giant China. As India follows the course, we see the US’ moves heavily favouring India. Out of all the policy objectives mentioned above, US is ready to move forward with India to secure its key core interests. And these interests were certainly unattainable in its partnership with Pakistan. As diplomatic manoeuvring fades, Pakistan must examine this partnership and the prospective Trump’s South Asia Policy to gauge its effects on regional dynamics and security trends alongside the creation of any power imbalances.

- End -