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PAKISTAN

STATECRAFT and GEOPOLITICS in Today's WORLD

SHAHID JAVED BURKI



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Preface

I took several steps before I got to the point where I felt that I needed to tell Pakistan's story from the perspective of its relations with the outside world. My earlier writings were focused on domestic affairs; the only external factor I dealt with in these narratives was India's attitude towards its sister state. In this preface I will briefly analyse how relations between the two neighbours impacted the direction in which Pakistan was going. I have spent more than fifty of eighty-plus years of my life outside Pakistan. But distance has not reduced my interest in the country to which I once belonged. I have always been in favour of the idea of Pakistan—a Muslim country whose people had found it difficult to assimilate in the majority Hindu population. India's current move towards the adoption of Hindutva, or Hinduism, as the state's ideology, gives further credence to my belief in the wisdom that led to the creation of Pakistan.

I was barely nine years old when Pakistan became an independent state. The Burki family—my parents, my four siblings and I—heard Shakeel Ahmad, the newsreader on All India Radio, announce at midnight that he was speaking from Radio Pakistan. We were all thrilled and my mother, overcome by emotion, wept. Her dream and that of the entire family had been realised. The Muslims of British India had the opportunity to have a country of their own. The following morning, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the man who had led the Pakistan movement, was sworn in as Pakistan's first governor general by Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last viceroy of British India.

At the time of partition, when South Asia was divided into two independent countries, Mountbatten had indicated that he would like to be the governor general of both states. And while India agreed to such an arrangement, it was not acceptable to Jinnah, who wanted a complete break from India. He believed that only then would Pakistan survive as an independent state. After swearing in Jinnah, Mountbatten flew to New Delhi and was sworn in as India's first governor general on 15 August 1947. This is how Pakistan became the older of the two neighbouring countries that the British created when they—in the words of the late historian Stanley Wolpert—took a 'Shameful Flight'. Wolpert's book of the same title painted a grim picture of the situation created by Britain's departure. The result was a mass movement of people and dreadful genocide.

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> In mid-August of 1947 the world's mightiest modern empire, on which 'the sun never set' abandoned its vow to protect one-fifth of humankind. Britain's shameful flight from its Indian Empire came only ten weeks after its last viceroy, Mountbatten took it upon himself to cut ten months from the brief time allotted by the Labour government's cabinet to withdraw its air and fleet cover, as well as the shield of British troops and arms, from South Asia's 400 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.... Hindus and Sikhs rushed to leave ancestral homes in newly created Pakistan, Muslims fled in panic out of India. Each sought shelter in next-door's dominion. Estimates vary as to the number who expired or were murdered before ever reaching their promised land. A conservative statistic is 200,000; a more realistic total, at least one million.[1]

It was in those early years that I resolved to write about Pakistan. I had studied physics and mathematics for my master's degree at Government College, Lahore. However, I changed my focus to economics when I went to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar from Pakistan. The switch was made on the suggestion of Sir Roy Harrod, my 'moral tutor' at Christ Church, Oxford. He thought that since I had already joined the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), economics would serve me better in my vocation.

Before going to Oxford, I had spent a year at the CSP Academy in Lahore. I had joined the premier Civil Service of Pakistan, modelled after the Indian Civil Service (ICS). The ICS helped the British run their vast Indian colony. These government officers have attracted a great deal of academic interest. Of the many books on the ICS, Philip Mason's *The Men who Ruled India*, had a wide readership.[2]

Before leaving Oxford University, I had already begun to write the Pakistan story. In this endeavour I learnt a great deal from Professor Ralph Braibanti, who had taken leave of absence from Duke University and joined the CSP Academy as an adviser, 'to work in the field', as he put it. His main interest was to study how the better organised civil and military services dominate politically weak systems and take them in a direction that serves their parochial interests rather than promote the larger interest of the state. Since both of us were interested in studying how Pakistan had been shaped in the thirteen years between 1947 and 1960—the year Professor Braibanti came to Pakistan—we had a great deal to talk about.

My interest at that point was in understanding how those who held the reins of power during this period—first the senior civilian bureaucrats and after October 1958, the officers from the military who had placed

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the country under martial law—managed to guide Pakistan after the country faced several existential crises. The crises I had begun to study was the migration of millions of refugees from India, the Indian threat to reduce—perhaps even stop—the flow of water into the rivers that originated in India and flowed into Pakistan and a trade embargo that was imposed by New Delhi on Pakistan when the latter refused to devalue its currency like the rest of the Commonwealth countries. India also refused to release the funds the British had left as the compensation for the help their former colony gave them during World War II.

Over the years, in telling the story of Pakistan I have made the digressions needed to explain my journey across the country's historical landscape. I have reached the point in my work where I believe Pakistan is destined to play an important role in reshaping the geographic space in which it is located. Those guiding the foreign policies regarding the part of the Muslim world that extends from Morocco to Bangladesh need to fully understand this story.

I have been working on it for the last six decades, long before I published my first book on the country, about Pakistan's founding and how it manged to overcome several crises. Published in 1960, the book had an interesting backstory of its own. Urged by Professor Paul Streeten[3] (1917–2019), I had sent it to Macmillan for consideration. They liked the manuscript but not the title, *Politics of Economic Decision-Making: A Case Study of Pakistan*. The publishers told me that the book was not likely to sell many copies under such a title and that I had to choose something more exciting. And so, it was that the work was published under the title, *Pakistan Under Bhutto, 1971–1977*.[4] A month before this conversation took place, in May 1979, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's first elected prime minister, had been hanged by the military leadership that had assumed power in the country in July 1977. Bhutto was accused of ordering the murder of a political opponent. The charge resulted in the deposed prime minister being awarded the death sentence by the Lahore High Court. The sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court and Bhutto was hanged on 4 April 1979. On the cover of the book, the publishers showed a picture of Bhutto riding in a ceremonial carriage in the company of two senior generals. He was on his way to the president's house to be sworn in as prime minister. The military banned the book for sale in Pakistan. They didn't like the picture.

I stopped in Pakistan on my way to India on a World Bank mission and passed through Rawalpindi, which is the seat of the Pakistan Army. General Ziaul Haq, then the president, heard of my presence and asked

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me to see him at his residence that was also used as the office of the chief martial law administrator. He said that he had read some very favourable reviews in the Indian press of a book I had written about Bhutto. He said he had asked his office to get him a copy but was told that it was not available in the country as it had been banned by the government. 'Why was the book banned?' he asked me. 'How would I know?' I responded and added that it was his government that placed the ban on the book. He asked me if I could loan him a copy. 'I don't carry contraband items with me,' I quipped. He laughed and said that he was sure I had a copy. He was right. I sent him one before proceeding to India.

There was a call waiting for me from President Zia when I returned from India and spent a few days in Rawalpindi. I visited him again. He said that he had instructed his government to lift the ban on the book. He commented that while he had liked the chapter titled 'Insiders and Outsiders', I had been very kind and positive about Bhutto. Zia then took me to a side-room next to his office and opened a steel trunk that had files and computer discs. He took out a couple of files and asked me if I recognized Bhutto's writing. I said I did: He used green ink and wrote in a slant. I then read some of what he had written. There were orders to punish some of those who were opposing him, extending the state's retribution to their families including the wives of those who had offended him. Zia told me that it was the sense of decency that prevented him from including these orders and comments in the white paper the government published about how Bhutto had governed. I later learnt from the military secretary to the president that the general destroyed all the material that was in the trunk. It is interesting to note that while the chief martial law administrator had remarked that I had 'been favourable' to Bhutto, his daughter Benazir, felt I had not. She made that comment to Kamal Azfar, a very good friend of mine who was close to the Bhutto family.

Pakistan Under Bhutto was based on some of the academic work I had done while I was a student at Harvard University, where I had worked under the guidance of Alexander Gerschenkron (1904–1978), a premier economic historian in the US. Not knowing much about South Asia and even less about Pakistan, he wished to learn about this part of the world. He was interested in how Pakistan was created by the charismatic, secular, British-trained lawyer, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and what ultimately persuaded him to launch a movement for a Muslim state divided in two parts and located at the two ends of South Asia—West Pakistan and East Pakistan. He encouraged me to write about it.

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The chapter titled 'Insiders and Outsiders' was the work I had done under the supervision of Professor Gerschenkron. He asked me about how many people were involved in the migrations that resulted from partition of South Asia. When I told him that there were no estimates available, he thought I could contribute to Pakistan studies by coming up with some numbers. He taught me how to use the census data from the two countries to estimate the exchange of population. I calculated that 14 million people must have moved within a period of six months, that 8 million displaced Muslims came from India to Pakistan and 6 million Sikhs and Hindus went in the opposite direction. While the term ethnic cleansing was still to gain currency—it was applied to the large number of killings of Muslims in what was once Yugoslavia—the massacres in Punjab during partition were far worse. Hundreds of thousands of people (some estimates claim over a million) were slaughtered in this province in a period of three months. This dreadful carnage left a much a deeper impression in Pakistan than it did in India. Some simple arithmetic reveals the extent of the demographic convulsion produced in Pakistan by the 1947 exchange of population. When the British left their Indian colony, its population was estimated at 400 million people. Of these, approximately 100 million were Muslims spread across India, but concentrated primarily in two areas: the northwest and the northeast. At partition, the population of Pakistan was approximately 72 million and the Muslim population of India, 28 million. Of the 72 million citizens of Pakistan, 34 million lived in West Pakistan and 38 million in East Pakistan. Pakistan had about 7 million non-Muslims, 6 million of whom left for India. The exodus of non-Muslims would have reduced the population of West Pakistan to 28 million. The influx of Muslim refugees was approximately 8 million here and thus the total population of West Pakistan areas increased to roughly 36 million when the refugees were accommodated in the country.

I had labelled the 8 million Muslim refugees the 'outsiders' and the host population of 28 million the 'insiders.' The outsiders were mostly Urdu speaking while the insiders spoke a number of languages, including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Baluchi, and Kashmiri. Other than the multitude of poor villagers that primarily comprised the refugees from East Punjab, the outsiders were better educated and more urbanised and therefore moved quickly into the modern sectors of the economy. A considerable proportion of those who worked in the government belonged to the refugee community. Most of the refugees to Sindh settled in Karachi. This was the only proper port city in the new state and became its capital. Even

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after 1950, Muslims from UP, Hyderabad, and other states in India, kept migrating to Karachi. The population of this city more than quadrupled. In his book on Karachi, the American journalist Steve Inskeep called it an 'Instant City' and used this epithet as the title of his book.[5] The religious composition of Pakistan was also very different from the other areas of the new country. Before the exchange of population, the areas that became West Pakistan were 80 per cent Muslim; after the exodus of non-Muslims and influx of refugees of this faith this proportion increased to 93 per cent. With this change, West Pakistan sought closer relations with the Muslim nations of the Middle East.

The academics I came across at Oxford were interested in the process of economic development and political change in what was once the large British Indian colony. My extended stay at Harvard involved graduate studies in public policy at the Kennedy School and economics in the economics department. Later, I joined the Centre of International Affairs, then overseen by Professor Samuel P. Huntington, whose two books—in particular the second, *A Clash of Civilizations*—had created a stir in academic and political circles.

After writing *Pakistan Under Bhutto*, I worked on two different projects, both resulting in books. One was to identify the crises Pakistan faced after gaining independence and the other on creating a nation from diversity. The first appeared as a chapter ('A Country and an Economy in Transition') I contributed to the book I co-edited with Rashid Amjad[6] and the other, *Pakistan: A Nation in the Making*.[7] In 'A Country and an Economy in Transition' I identified the crises the country faced as it sought to establish itself into a functioning nation-state. In *A Nation in the Making*, on the other hand, I developed a thesis that Pakistan found it difficult to create a nation out of the diversity that existed in the country. The main problem was the presence of a number of different ethnic groups that saw themselves more as Punjabis, Pashtuns, Baluchis, and Sindhis than as Pakistanis. The breakup of the country in December 1971, following a bloody civil war and an Indian attack, resulted in the Bengalis seceding and East Pakistan becoming the independent country of Bangladesh. Ethnicity proved to be a much stronger basis of nationhood than religion.

There is a lot of turmoil in the world, particularly in the region of Pakistan and its neighbouring countries, including the area of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir. Serious domestic problems faced by some of its neighbours adversely affect this region, especially Pakistan. Even China, which has emerged as the world's second largest economy

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and is governed competently, is faced with an ethnic crisis. It has not found a way of accommodating the Uyghur population that accounts for 40 per cent of the population of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Pakistan shares its eastern border with this region.

Afghanistan is by far the most difficult problem for Pakistan and other neighbouring countries, where a civil war raged for over forty years and has created instability in the region in which the country is located. Since September 2020, negotiations proceeded in Doha, the capital of the state of Qatar, between the US, the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. These talks failed, and the diverse population of Afghanistan was unable to establish a more or less, stable way to govern itself. On 15 August 2021, then President Ashraf Ghani fearing that the Taliban were on their way to take Kabul fled the country. That brought Taliban as the country's new rulers. Towards the east, there is turmoil in the Indian part of Kashmir, the only Muslim majority state in the Indian union. On 5 August 2019, the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked the two key provisions in the Constitution of India—Article 370 and Article 35(A)—that had given the state of Jammu and Kashmir a number of special rights. Kashmir lost its status as an autonomous state and became a 'union territory' directly governed from New Delhi. This move is being resisted by the Kashmiri population.

By adopting Hindutva—Hindu nationalism—as the governing philosophy, the Modi government has moved away from what the Indian historian Sunil Khilnani had called the 'idea of India'.[8] This was the belief that a very diverse population such as that of India, could peacefully coexist only if the political and economic structures could accommodate all segments of the population. The practice of Hindutva has reduced India's 200 million Muslim population to a secondary status.

There are several reasons for writing the present book. One of them is to make those at the helm of affairs in Pakistan become conscious of the enormous change that is taking place in the region and the environment in which this country must function. Another reason is to suggest how Pakistan's developing political system could serve as a model for the Muslim world. Pakistan is a rare Muslim country in a community of more than fifty nations that seems to be succeeding in establishing a liberal and representative political order. It has been doing this since 2007 when the last military ruler of the country was persuaded to surrender the presidency to an elected leader. Pakistan has been governed by the military for thirty-three of its almost seventy-five years as an independent nation. Four generals have ruled: Field Marshal Ayub Khan (1958–1969),

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General Yahya Khan (1969– 1971), General Ziaul Haq (1977–1988), and General Pervez Musharraf (1999–2007). Some of them promised to return the country to civilian governance but could not resist the temptation to stay in office, which they had taken over by force.

In the books in which I covered these four periods of military rule I discussed why the military was able to stay in command of the political system for such long periods.[9] One reason for their political longevity was that they were able to preside over high rates of economic growth and also improve the lives of the poor in the country. Each time, for various reasons, they were helped by the US, which provided large amounts of economic and military assistance to the country. During Ayub Khan's period, Washington wanted to win Pakistan to its side. It became an important member of the alliances the Americans made to stop the spread of communism in Asia. Zia too was treated generously by the administration of President Ronald Reagan, because he organised a proxy war that led to the expulsion of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Moscow's withdrawal from Afghanistan in the spring of 1989 led to collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. General Musharraf received American capital flows after he agreed to join President George W. Bush's war on terror. These military governments generally utilised this foreign aid competently and achieved high rates of economic growth. But they did not result in political development. That only happened when the domestic political forces were able to challenge the military's domination.

In *Undaunted*, John O. Brennan[10] recalls his interaction with some of the authoritarian leaders in the Muslim world, in the chapter titled 'Oh, the People I have Met'. He had some interesting exchanges with General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Appointed to a senior position by Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, the general forced the elected president out of office and assumed control of the country. Brennan, on a visit to Cairo, spent several hours with the general. He writes:

> He was an engaging dinner partner, and I found him to be sophisticated observer of regional and world events.... At dinner, al-Sisi cited and gave me a copy of a paper he wrote in 2006 while studying at the US Army War College entitled "Democracy in the Middle East." The paper was surprisingly critical of the Mubarak government's control of media, tolerance of blatant inequality, politically repressive security forces and responsibility for Egypt's high illiteracy rate...I found the paper and al-Sisi's comments very refreshing, and I hoped that he would play an even more important role in Egypt's future. He has.

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Brennan's last meeting with al-Sisi was in January 2016.

> He had been president for eighteen months, and there were widespread reports of Egyptian political activists being jailed by his security forces. There were other signs of al-Sisi's reliance on authoritarian measures to crack down on opposition elements, and I was sent to Egypt to underscore the Obama administration's growing concern about actions being taken under his watch. 'Remember what you wrote in your War College paper,' I said to him as he walked me outside when our meeting concluded. 'Don't do the same things for which you criticized Mubarak.'[11]

But al-Sisi did not take Brennan's advice. A year later, in January 2017, President Barack Obama was replaced by Donald J. Trump, who had a predilection for strong and authoritarian rulers. Brennan was also retired, and his job was taken over by Mike Pompeo. As I write this in late November 2021, Joe Biden is the president of the United States, having defeated Donald Trump in the elections of November 2020. Trump refused to accept the result and his position resulted in what is generally called an insurrection when his supporters penetrated the Capitol, the house of the country's legislature, on 6 January 2021. On that date, Congress was set to ratify the election of President Biden. This incident has resulted in the United States finding it difficult to sell its system as a model for developing political systems such Pakistan's.

This book presents my view that Pakistan's dealings with the world outside its borders will not necessarily lead to political maturity, as that can only come from domestic developments. As suggested above, this has started to happen, and Pakistan could serve as a model for other Muslim countries in the western part of the Islamic world. Rulers such as Egypt's al-Sisi could look at Pakistan's experience and draw some lessons.

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Introduction

Why Focus on External Relations?

When I started writing this book, I decided to open it with an extract from a column by Thomas Friedman.[1] I follow his insights, which cover a number of areas pertinent for this work on Pakistan. The column to which I refer was about the botched effort by Britain to leave the European Union. He wrote:

> Seriously, the United Kingdom, the world's fifth largest economy...a country whose elites created modern parliamentary democracy, modern banking and finance, the Industrial Revolution and the whole concept of globalization...seems dead-set on quitting the European Union, the world's largest market for the free movement of goods, capital, services and labour without a well-conceived plan, or maybe without a plan at all.[2]

Some of the themes I explore in this book are globalisation, vital links with the world outside the country's borders, and the change brought about by technological changes in how people live and connect with the world. But a lot has changed since the onset of the global pandemic of Covid-19, which prompted Thomas Friedman to pen another article in which he states: 'There is the world BC—Before Corona, and the world AC—After Corona. We have not begun to fully grasp what the AC world will look like.'[3]

No country can exist in total isolation from the world outside its borders. This is starkly demonstrated by the global spread of Covid-19. Even island-states are affected by what is happening in the world, such as the pandemic and global warming. For Pakistan, because of its location, the world matters even more than for most countries. Pakistan was a Muslim state created by the partition of a predominantly Hindu South Asia and subsequently there has been enmity with India and the two have fought several wars with each other, mainly for the disputed territory of Kashmir. Currently, there are once again tense relations between the two countries, because of a couple of terrorist incidents that occurred in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. India claims that the attacks were organised by Pakistan while the latter says that India is now dealing with home-grown terrorism that has resulted from the way it has tried to deal with its problems in Kashmir. But the lingering

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dispute over Kashmir is not the only reason why Islamabad should take cognisance of the changing scenario in the world and how it affects this region. The world outside has changed over time and the situation is not likely to settle down anytime soon into a well-ordered structure of relationships. The world that Prime Minister Imran Khan must work with is very different from the one in which his predecessors operated. The country must learn to deal with this change.

What used to be called the 'India-centric' approach to the foreign policy of Pakistan has been replaced by the need to focus on a much more complex set of circumstances. The aim of this work is more than drawing attention to the need for Pakistan to stabilise its relations with India and Afghanistan; it must learn to work with its other two neighbours, China and Iran, and also with a number of countries and regions that matter, despite being a distance away. Although Kashmir is not an independent country—at least not yet—I will treat it as such in this work. Without giving it this status, a gap would be left in Pakistan's external boundary. In other words, in the perspective of this book, Pakistan has five rather than four neighbouring states.

For a study of Pakistan's external affairs, it is important to set the context by discussing the changes in the domestic political situation. In democratic systems, those in charge of policy-making in foreign affairs must respond to what the people want. For this reason, the dynamics generated by the 2018 elections will be discussed. In a brief conversation I had with the prime minister during a visit to Pakistan, he told me that he would like to have a more detailed discussion with me on economic issues after he settles some urgent matters concerning domestic politics. However, another axiom that forms the thinking behind this work is that domestic and foreign affairs cannot be separated; they are part of the public policy-making process.

In the first few months of his tenure, Imran Khan was out of the country a number of times and also received several senior foreign dignitaries from neighbouring and other states that are further away. It was obvious that he had to reconsider his election pledge to not travel abroad too much in order to focus on domestic priorities. There were good reasons for the prime minister to focus on foreign policy. The newspaper *Dawn* had it right when it argued in an editorial, 'as economic and fiscal realities become clear and regional security issues assumed a fresh urgency, it would have been troubling if the prime minister had remained disengaged and entrusted the handling of such matters to subordinates and other institutions.'[4]

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The Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and China and later Washington and New York. He would have liked to visit India but could not get an invitation from Narendra Modi. These visits were to secure financial help so that the need to approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could be put on the back-burner. It was the right decision.

I had recommended this course of action to the prime minister in a short note I prepared for him shortly before he assumed office. My postulation then and even now is that the IMF-assisted programs of economic reform and structural change would inevitably come with conditions that would make it difficult for Imran Khan to meet the aspirations of his electoral support among the urban youth. Even though the IMF had learnt from the mistakes it made in rescuing the East Asian countries from the financial crises of the early 1990s, because of its mandate its focus attaches greater attention to achieving short-term stability rather than promoting medium- and long-term growth. The fact is that Pakistan needs to focus on medium and the long-term targets. Joseph Stiglitz, who was a vice president at the World Bank, has published a book that is highly critical of the way the IMF handled the East Asian financial crisis.[5]

The Elections of July 2018 and Peoples' Aspirations

The subject of the 2018 general election and its impact will no doubt attract a great deal of academic and policy attention in the years to come. It was very different from the other nine elections that have been held under the Constitution of 1973.[6] They brought to the front of Pakistan's politics a party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), that has a different base of support than those that held power in the past. In 2011, Anatol Lieven, a journalist with a deep interest in Pakistan, developed an important thesis about the structure and functioning of politics in the country.[7] His book, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* attracted a lot of attention in the country. According to him, the country was 'hard' not because it was difficult to understand; it was hard because of the resilience it had shown ever since its birth as a state in 1947. Crises came at a regular pace, but the country was able to deal with them since the social, political, and economic life was managed by the system of patron-client relationships. This is known as the *biradari* system, in which those that sit at higher levels in the hierarchical structure win the support of people lower down since they could get the state to work for them. This system of

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dispensation of favours was the basis on which the traditional parties worked, such as the various reincarnations of Pakistan Muslim League—the latest being the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)—and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). But traditional politics were upended by the elections of 2018 that put the PTI and its founder-leader, Imran Khan on top of political pyramid.

What made the PTI success possible was the enormous social and demographic change that has occurred in the last couple of decades. Much of the social change had happened because of the large amount of remittances sent home by immigrants working in the Middle East. These resources made it possible for about 5 to 7 million households (out of about 40 million) to climb out of poverty and move into lower middle-class status. They were not beholden to the *biradari* system for support. They were looking for a new political ideology and many of them found it in the PTI.

They followed Imran Khan's slogan of '*Naya* (new) Pakistan'. One reason for their disillusionment with traditional policies was the way the old political parties had conducted themselves while in power or in the opposition. In an article published in *Dawn*, in December 2018, Sartaj Aziz, a veteran politician belonging to PML-N, told of his unsuccessful effort to have the parties sign on to a 'code of conduct.' He described the effort he made in November 2000 at the request of Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, who at that time was attempting to form a national democratic alliance to challenge the military-led government headed by General Pervez Musharraf. The effort was futile. Aziz wrote:

> The political process in Pakistan has suffered enormously from the lack of a culture of tolerance and the important democratic tradition of respecting dissent. This has led to a highly polarised and personalised pattern of politics and the recurrent breakdown of the democratic process. Relations between the government and the opposition in the recent past have been so tense that their members did not even attend each others' social functions.[8]

Imran Khan's constituency wanted a change in this culture.

It is important to understand that Imran Khan cannot ignore his constituency. He may never have held public office, but he understands the source of his political strength. During the election campaign of 2002, he asked me if I could come out with him and see the people's reaction on the street when they see him. 'I am the new Bhutto,' he said. 'My party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, will sweep the polls much as Bhutto

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and his party had done in 1970.' He won only one seat in the national assembly (his own). In this context, I have tried to identify the segments of the population that supported Imran Khan and his political party in the July 2018 elections.

In that exercise, I am looking at the demographic trends in the country and the age profile of the population. The rate of population growth turned out to be much higher than was generally believed by the government. The census of 2017 estimated the growth rate at 2.4 per cent, one-third more than 1.8 per cent on which most public policy was based. This means that close to 5 million people are being added every year to the population. As a result of the rapid population growth, 50 per cent of the total number of people are below the age of 25. The population is even younger in the large cities; young men from the countryside and small towns have moved into the metropolitan areas in search of better social services and better paying jobs. Between 2013 and 2018, some 25 million young people became eligible to vote. About 60 per cent of these exercised their right. A significant proportion of these reside in the country's large cities. Unlike most of the older voting public, the young have not attached themselves to patrons with money and power. They have kept themselves politically free. Many were attracted to Imran Khan and to the PTI, seeing this to be a new political system.

Why was that the case? What are the aspirations of the new voters and why are external relations important for maintaining the loyalty of this voting group? The answers to these questions would need a serious study involving psephology—a branch of political science that deals with the study and scientific analysis of elections. This discipline is not taught in Pakistan's educational institutions and very few people study it. But we don't have to wait for such an analysis to be done before forming some general impression about what distinguishes Imran Khan's supporters from those of the other parties.

The couple of months I spent in Pakistan in the winter of 2018–19, I talked to a number of people about what they were hoping to get from the elections of 2018. This was not a scientific inquiry based on the science of psephology, but merely impressions formed from a number of conversations I had, mostly in Lahore and Islamabad and a couple of small towns between the two cities. We can divide the Pakistani voting population into three large groups: those who voted for the PTI, those who cast their votes for other parties, and those who chose not to vote at all. It seems that a typical PTI voter was younger, more educated, and more informed about the world.

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I found that some of the needs of PTI supporters were obvious. They want education and training to enable them to earn a decent living. They are keen to work in the modern service sector rather than in factories or provide agricultural labour. They want relatively easy access to health facilities and decent public transport since they live mostly in the peripheral areas of large cities, whereas commercial centres are usually located in the hearts of cities. In addition to this, they want their country to be treated with respect by the outside world. It is the last aspiration that the new policymakers of this country need to understand and achieve. Imran Khan's constituency will follow him as long as he fulfils his promise to create a '*Naya*' Pakistan. But for him to meet his goals he will need a great deal of support from the world outside. This is the reason I believe it is important for the country's citizenry in general and the policymakers in particular to understand how the world is being reshaped.

The fact is that Pakistan has lost the respect of the international community. Restoring it is important for attracting foreign economic interest in the country. A rise in corruption in high places was one reason why the country was failing to attract direct foreign investment. Imran Khan understood this and in his election campaign he focused on eliminating corruption and the absence of good governance. The 2019 report by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) has accused former president Asif Ali Zardari and his close associates of having inveigled fake accounts amounting to Rs 35 billion 'through misappropriation of loans, stealing from government funds, kickbacks and proceeds of crimes.' This corruption was a reason why foreign investors—governments, firms and people—stayed away from the county. Now that Imran Khan has become the prime minister, his supporters expect him and his cabinet to enrich the country, instead of depleting its resources and augmenting their personal coffers. Joe Biden, America's new president elected in 20 November, takes pride in the fact that he knows the world well and can work with the world leaders to continue to move towards the strengthening of global systems. After taking oath of office on 20 January 2021 he called all the leaders he regarded important for fulfilling his ambition for his country and the world. Excluded was Prime Minister Imran Khan.

In addition to the costs of the loss of respect internationally, this book deals with a number of developments in the world outside and how they are likely to affect Pakistan. These include international migration, the role of Islam in world affairs, the politics of global warming and how the rapid advance of new technologies is likely to affect geopolitics and

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international diplomacy. International migration did not factor into global affairs before the crisis in Syria displaced millions of people, many of whom headed to Europe as asylum seekers. This mass migration involved more Muslims than followers of any other faith. This movement is affecting the structure of politics in the West, in particular those countries that are at the receiving end of this influx of refugees.

Inversely proportionate to this is the backlash of nationalism in the West, a trend to which the former American president Donald Trump may have contributed. He made it his mission to do away with the international order constructed over a period of more than half a century after the end of World War II. He concentrated in particular on quashing his predecessor Barack Obama's triumphs and accomplishments. Although he is aware of the history of nationalism in Europe and how it led to the holocaust and World War II, the former US president began to call himself a nationalist. The resulting Islamophobia has surfaced in several disturbing ways. As, I write this, the dreadful massacre that occurred in two mosques in Christchurch on Friday, 14 March 2019, flashes across my mind. That was probably the worst such incident.

Covid-19 in South Asia

As the year 2019 ended, an unexpected development took place: the sudden spread of the Covid-19 virus. By the end of July 2020, there was some fear that Covid-19 may develop into the one of the worst pandemics in world history. The disease was caused by a version of coronavirus that had done some damage to world health in the past. It was responsible for at least two epidemics in the past few decades. The SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and the MERS (Middle Eastern Respirator Syndrome), were caused by earlier versions of this deadly virus. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), SARS appeared in Asia in 2003 and spread to the US and the Middle East. A total of 8,098 persons worldwide contracted this virus and 774 died.

MERS had a longer life. Traced to Jordan, where it appeared in 2012, it continued to infect people, mostly in the Arab world, hence its name. By the end of May 2019, it had infected 2,519 people, of which 886 died. The coronavirus responsible for Covid-19 was first identified in December 2019, in Wuhan, an industrial city on the left bank of the Yangtze River in central China. Since it was genetically different from SARS and MERS viruses, it was a given a different name: the 'novel coronavirus.' The Chinese authorities initially supressed the news of the spread of the

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disease caused by the virus, convinced that it could be contained without causing much damage, as was the case with SARS. But examination of the virus's genetic structure at the state-of-the-art laboratory in Wuhan persuaded the Beijing authorities that the world needed to be alerted. This was done by bringing the WHO into the picture and declaring Covid-19 a pandemic. Simultaneously, the Chinese authorities locked down the whole province of Hubei and its capital Wuhan. This was in the last days of 2019. By that time the virus had infected people who travelled to the US and various other places in Europe and thus the virus gradually took the world in its deadly grip.

Asked by Jennifer Senior, a *New York Times* columnist, about the nature of coronavirus, the widely regarded Dr Anthony Fauci gave a sobering answer:

> You know, it's extremely unique, and I think that is one of the reasons why there is such confusion and misunderstanding about the seriousness of it. Of all the viruses and outbreaks that I have been involved with over the last four decades, I have never seen a virus in which the spectrum is so extreme. This disease goes from nothing to death! So that has really surprised me. There are extreme differences in certain diseases, but none that have exploded into pandemic proportions.[9]

Covid-19 spread quickly both inside China and globally. The countries initially most affected were those that had people arriving from, or going to, China. Iran was one of them. The virus reached Iran via the large number of Shiite pilgrims from the south of China who visited their holy shrines in Iran and Iraq. There they came into contact with Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan and India who carried the virus back with them when they returned. Religious congregations were one factor that played a part in spreading the virus in both India and Pakistan. The multi-million- member organisation called the Tablighi Jamaat held a large conclave in Malaysia, attended by people from China. These meetings were followed by ones in India and Pakistan and were suspected to be responsible for becoming one more source of the spread of the disease.

South Asia has done better than the US in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. Some countries in the subcontinent reacted quickly, but according to one review of the situation, 'researchers are also examining other factors, including differences in genetics and immune system responses, separate virus strains and regional obesity levels and general health.' China has recorded fewer than 5,000 deaths, or 3 deaths per million inhabitants. Japan has around 7 per million, Pakistan 6, South Korea and

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Indonesia 5, India 3, and Thailand fewer than one. Cambodia, Vietnam, and Mongolia reported zero deaths. On the other hand, Germany had 100, Canada 180, the United States 300 and Britain, Italy, and Spain 500. Several investigations have revealed that heat and humidity can slow down but not stop the spread of the family of viruses that cause influenza, coronavirus, and the common cold. Demographics also play a role. South Asia's younger population have proved to be more resistant to Covid-19.

> Scientists at Chiba University said a whole range of possible genetic factors might condition the body's responses to the virus and deserved further study—even while stressing that there is no evidence yet to back up the idea. Megan Murray, an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School, said another factor worth exploring is differences in microbiomes...the trillions of bacteria that reside in a person's gut and play a huge role in immune response. Microbiomes are very different in different places. People eat very different foods.[10]

Pakistan is getting a great deal of bad press in the West, in particular in the US, with reference to the handling of Covid-19.[11] Having resisted a national lockdown of the type India used to bring its Covid-19 situation under control, Pakistan left it to the provinces to decide how they wished to handle the pandemic. Sindh went for a lockdown; other provinces tried only partial closings. On 9 May, Islamabad lifted all closings, warning that it could no longer withstand the shutdown as it was causing a great deal of economic misery. The World Bank projected that Pakistan's economy will contract by 0.2 per cent in the next fiscal year (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021), and up to 18 million of the country's 74 million jobs could be lost. But even if the economic situation improves, the impact on health, due to the easing of lockdown, was severe.

Before reopening in early May, Pakistan recorded about 25,000 infections. A month later, the country recorded an additional 100,000 cases and the pandemic showed no signs of abating. It was reported that at least 2,536 people had died of Covid-19. By the middle of June, Pakistan was among the WHO's ten countries in terms of the number of reported infections. The Geneva-based organisation sent a letter to Islamabad on 7 June, advising that the lockdown be re-imposed, stating that the country did not meet any of the criteria needed to lift it. The government rejected the WHO finding.[12] By August 2020, it seemed that the country was being able to control the outbreaks as the number of new infections fell. But by end of November there was a second surge.

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Currently, India seems to be having a big city Covid-19 problem. Delhi's chief minister said coronavirus cases in the city would skyrocket from 35,000 in mid-June to more than 500,000 by the end of July. That meant the Indian capital would need 80,000 hospital beds for Covid-19 patients; about ten times the number available in mid-June.

Almost half of India's cases have been traced to just four cities: New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Ahmedabad. Bihar now has one of the steepest infection curves in India and troubling clusters have also been tracked to labourers travelling to their homes in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state. India's public health sector has always been overstretched, with around 0.5 hospital beds for every 1,000 people, according to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). By comparison, Germany has 8, Japan and Italy 13, and South Korea 12.3. In May, India's 'doubling rate' for new infections averaged 12 days, compared to 26 days in the US in May and 100 days in Italy.[13] It also suffers from a chronic shortage of medical personnel. The situation in Pakistan is not very different. In the summer of 2021, it was found that the virus had mutated to a different version which was given the name of 'Delta'. The spread of the variant hit hard the United States and India.

In late November 2021, a new variant was discovered in South Africa. WHO 'designated the new variant B.1.1.529...it was named Omicron.' Till the time of this writing, WHO continues to provide updates as new information becomes available.

Taking Stock of Global Change

A great deal has happened within and outside Pakistan since 2007, when the country moved from being a military state to one in which there was serious political development taking place. This book discusses the external developments in recent decades that are relevant for Pakistan and focuses on how the changes that are occurring outside the country are likely to influence the direction it takes in the future. But internal changes also impact relations with other countries. Therefore, some developments in the country need to be examined. The first of these is the enormous change in the Pakistani political and social landscape as a result of the 2018 elections. This, in my opinion, will have an immense impact on the formulation of foreign policy in Islamabad.

During a good part of Pakistan's history, the country was being managed by a military establishment that could connect with the world

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without giving much importance to public opinion. For instance, it took then president, Pervez Musharraf, only a few minutes to give in to the demands made on him by President George W. Bush to help United States deal with the post-9/11 scenario. Pakistan received a threatening message from the Bush administration: 'Either you are with us or against us' and further given the implication if Pakistan was 'against us' it could be 'bombed back to the stone age.'[14]

Pakistan's external environment is being shaped by a number of developments over which the country has little or no control, but these have to be factored into foreign policy. To begin with, it is necessary to gauge the global economy and how the changes in it will affect countries like Pakistan. As a result of the dynamics unleashed by the processes generally referred to as 'globalisation', the world economic system is being fundamentally restructured with supply chains spread across the globe producing parts and components for assembling final products. No major item of manufacture, ranging from aircrafts and automobiles to mobile phones, is being produced in one place and is now being assembled from the components brought in from scores of places. This dispersal of the production process has resulted in a sharp increase in international trade. An international institution, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), guides world commerce, stepping in to resolve disputes among the member states. But Donald Trump, believing in bilateralism rather than multilateralism, attempted to dilute the role of the WTO. In the summer of 2018, he launched a major trade war with China that began to affect the health of the global economy. These developments will be considered in some detail in most of the 'country chapters', especially those that deal with China and the US. The WHO is another global institution that was under attack during the Trump presidency, its crime being that it did not alert the world promptly about the spread of Covid-19 in China. After suspending its annual financial contribution to the WHO, Washington announced that it was likely to give up its membership in the organisation.

The rise of Donald Trump in the US and populist nationalism in many parts of the world introduced factors that must be borne in mind by Pakistan as it develops its own political system. Being the world's second largest Muslim country after Indonesia, it must also take cognisance of the tensions in the political systems being tried out in other countries—ones that, like Pakistan, have majority populations of the same faith.

Then there is the problem of global warming that will also affect Pakistan's relations with the world, in particular its neighbours. The

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recognition that the warming of the globe has reached serious dimensions means that some countries will have to work together to deal with the imminent danger. What is happening to the eco-system of the Himalayas will have serious consequences for China on one side of the mountain chain and Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, India, and Bangladesh on the other. Potential benefits from promoting regional trade—the subject of an earlier book by me[15]—may not have brought together the countries of South Asia, but climate change leaves no other option. They must work together to mitigate the effects of global warming and adequately deal with its many consequences. In one of my weekly articles in *The Express Tribune*, I suggested that Pakistan should take the lead in convening a regional conference on how global warming is likely to affect the countries that draw water from the Himalayas for agriculture and energy.[16] Had it done that it could have played an important role in the climate summit held in Glasgow that was attended by 200 countries. The growing rivalry between China and the US will have consequences for Pakistan. The arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a senior executive of the Chinese firm Huawei, increased the tension between the two superpowers. The executive was arrested by Canadian authorities, at the behest of the US. It was alleged that the Chinese firm had defied the sanctions imposed on Iran by the Trump administration. However, it appears that the Meng episode was not just the case of the US tightening the screw on Iran; it was also motivated by the desire to slow down the rise of Huawei, a Chinese technology firm that was gaining in global presence. External affairs are often influenced by more than one factor. The Chinese responded by picking up two Canadian citizens who were working in their country. This move seriously complicated relations between China and the US. It was only in November 2021 that this matter got resolved with Meng returning to China and the Canadians allowed to go home.

The fluid state of global affairs poses a constant challenge not just to Pakistan but the world at large. Covid-19 goes beyond Pakistan; it is changing the world order that was created after World War II. We may see a territorial conflict between two nuclear-armed states. This was demonstrated recently when Chinese and Indian troops literally came to blows on the border in Ladakh. Not a shot, let alone a missile was fired, but the standoff involved, 'chest bumping, pushing, and shoving and throwing stones at each other,' reported the BBC South Asian editor, Anbarasan Ethirajan. This is because the peace agreement between China and India after the Indo-China War of 1962 forbade armed conflict in Ladakh. However, it is feared that, something of an 'all-out' combat may

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follow soon. Clearly China wants to safeguard the security of its national territory as well as safeguarding peace and stability in the China-India border area.

In any discussion of statecraft and policy formation it is not advisable to give a strict or linear timeline. The fluid circumstances of geopolitics make it necessary for countries to constantly adjust to the new realities that emerge. This has never been more applicable than it is today. The kind of world that will follow is a matter of speculation.

Not an Impeccable World

President Barack Obama was an optimist by nature. Whenever faced with a difficult situation he was fond of invoking Martin Luther King Jr.'s assertion that, 'The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.' It was Obama's hope that this principle would see some fruition in the first part of the 21st century. But that did not occur. It may be recalled that the world observed the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I on 11 November 2018—on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year. On that occasion, there was much reflection on what went wrong in the period after the first global conflagration.

In this context, it is pertinent to mention a book written in 1909 by Norman Angell, titled *The Great Illusion.* Angell pointed out that open conflict between major powers was so costly that they would not go to war with one another. He argued that war was economically and socially irrational and between industrial countries it was futile because it was not profitable. The book became an international best seller, but despite the irrefutable logic of the author, just a few years after its publication in 1914, World War I broke out between the world's major powers.[17] Could something similar happen now?

After Obama, Trump was elected president of the world's most powerful nation; he was in many ways the antithesis of his predecessor. The US has the world's largest economy, the world's most powerful fighting force, most of the world's largest corporations, and it possesses an extraordinary ability to innovate. I focused on this theme in a book published in 2017, under the title *Rising Powers and Global Governance.*[18] However, the steady progress that characterises this superpower did not last beyond the beginning of the Trump era. He is important for global affairs since he has brought a new way of looking at the world. He calls himself a deal maker par excellence. His approach is what economists call

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the *zero-sum game*. According to him, in these games there are always two contestants: what one loses the other gains. Played this way, the global economy became a binary duel; a contest between two nations. Trump had no use for multilateralism. In the first two years in office, he became a disruptive force in a number of international gatherings: inter alia, at the meeting of the G7 in Canada in 2018; the Paris celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I; and at the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The world and many of its leaders watched these performances in horror.

There are statesmen in Europe who believe that we could stumble once again. President of France, Emmanuel Macron, had it right when he said, 'In a Europe that is divided by fears, nationalist assertion and the consequences of the economic crisis, we see almost methodically the re-articulation of everything that dominated the life of Europe from post-World War I to the 1929 economic crisis.' During an address in early 2018 to the European Parliament, the French president said, 'I don't want to belong to a generation of sleepwalkers that has forgotten its own past.' The president was drawing upon the work of the historian Christopher Clark in his book, *The Sleepwalkers*.[19] Fareed Zakaria, a *Washington Post* columnist and a CNN commentator, drew a parallel between what happened then and what is happening now.

> Economic growth and technological progress were accelerating then, as now. We are also seeing a surge in nationalism and the breakdown of cooperation which were hallmarks of the 1920s. New great powers were ascending, as they are now. Democracies were under strain from demagogues, such as Italy, where Mussolini destroyed liberal institutions and established control. And amidst all this was the growth of populism, racism and anti-Semitism, which were used to divide countries and exclude minorities as outside the 'real nation.' Of course, because of the pressures of the 1920s, we got the 1930s.[20]

In the second decade of the 21st century, the world saw charismatic autocrats make headway in Eastern Europe and Asia and they had an analogue in America's president, Donald Trump. Is this a temporary setback or has the world drifted away from democracy? Joshua Kurlantzick of the Council on Foreign Relations attempted to answer this question:

> Because many of these countries were, until recently, vibrant democracies, analysts and locals often insist that their political systems will ultimately

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> survive autocratic populism and that their democracies are resilient. Even in places where populists have already severely damaged freedoms, opinion leaders say democracy can be restored after those leaders leave.[21]

In these uncertain times, how should Pakistan, which is located in one of the most volatile parts of the world, shape its destiny? Some fear that war may break out involving Iran and the US. It was reported by then US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, that he believed Iran was behind the attack on 13 June 2019, on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, a vital passageway for a third of the world's petroleum. It was alleged that two powerful mines were attached to two ships, one of which was later removed. Yet, enough damage had been done to the vessels for the crew to abandon ship. Thus far, the most compelling evidence was a video shown by Washington of Iran's involvement in the June incident. Nonetheless, the video was not thoroughly investigated by the US intelligence agencies. But it did not deter Trump from issuing dire warnings to Iran. An in-depth discussion of this incident will follow in a later chapter, but not before an evaluation of what appears to be the broad trends in the way the world's major powers view global affairs.

Most of human history has been marked by war. Between 1500 and 1945, scarcely a year went by without some great power fighting another great power. Then, in 1945 that stopped. The number of battlefield deaths has plummeted to the lowest levels in history. The world has experienced the greatest reduction in poverty in history, as well as the greatest spread of democracy and freedom.[22]

It was the US that led the rest of the world in ushering in that long period of peace. Having participated in two world wars that had resulted in the deaths of millions of people and destruction of much of Europe, the US had leaders who believed that such carnage needed to be avoided. This new scenario contributed in creating a structure committed to increasing global welfare. Institutions such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, and ultimately, the WTO, managed their affairs based on rules that had been agreed upon. Regional institutions were also created to manage localised conflicts that had in the past repeatedly been responsible for many wars. NATO was by far the most important of these organisations. Western leaders were able to base these moves on broad popular support. The moves were made by a succession of leaders, from Harry Truman to Barack Obama, with some exceptions. Their task was facilitated by several members of the establishment elite, such as George Marshall and Madeleine Albright. Working together, they widened the circle of

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American concerns, but as Robert Kagan wrote, 'Very few nations in history have ever felt any responsibility for anything but themselves.'[23] Trump's 'America first' approach to dealing with the world fit into this long-term approach. The seven-decade period between 1945 and 2017 was an aberration in world history. There was a time when most policy analysts and policymakers believed that the world had, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, settled into one governing ideology that was Western style, participatory and liberal democracy. This development was greeted with enthusiasm by the sociologist Francis Fukuyama in his highly influential book, *The End of History*.[24] But the celebration proved to be premature. Fukuyama's later work was more cautious and less optimistic in projecting the global future.[25]

Which path should America choose? There is an answer to this question in the survey of 2,000 registered voters by the Centre for America Progress, a Washington-based think tank. The top priorities identified in the survey were protecting against terrorist threats; protecting jobs for American workers and reducing international migrations. The lowest priorities were promoting democracy; taking on Chinese aggression; promoting trade; fighting global poverty and defending and promoting human rights. The main conclusion drawn by the researchers is that the difference between those who believe in what they call 'American values' and those who opt for the pursuit of personal interests, is their level of trust in what they are told by those who occupy positions of power. Those who express high levels of social trust are much more likely to be people who want to see America as an indispensable nation and believe American values are universal. They will, most likely, support policies that preserve the liberal world order.

The change in the thinking of scholars such as Fukuyama is that they have begun to note the loss of trust on the part of America's citizenry. In fact, as David Brooks notes, there are two types of low-trust people: those on the extreme right and those on the extreme left. The first group is the 'Trumpian America Firsters' who want to cut immigration and break foreign alliances if they aren't clearly favourable to America and Americans. On the other side of the political spectrum are the 'New Doves' who are young and express strong interest in human rights. 'The America Firsters and the New Doves may think of themselves as opposites, but they wind up in the same place. America should not be abroad preserving the liberal order.'[26] This is a dark spiral and takes the country and the world out of its need for a leader who is able and interested in building a younger credible leadership class and bringing back optimism. It is obvious that

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Trump was not such a leader. On the contrary, he was partnering with leaders such as Vladimir Putin in Russia and Narendra Modi in India, who are nationalists rather than internationalists. They are pushing the world in an entirely different direction.

Applying this analysis to political developments in South Asia indicates some interesting conclusions. Both the BJP in India and the PTI in Pakistan have won the trust of the electorate. The people have voted against the established order. However, the BJP appeals to the Indian extremist Hindus while the PTI has won the trust of the youth looking for leadership that would cater to their aspirations. The BJP is nationalist, the PTI is internationalist.

But that will be a difficult task. Would this trend away from liberal democracy in several parts of the world affect Pakistan? The answer most definitely is "yes" and the reason for that will be found in the various chapters of the book.

Pakistan's Neighbourhood

As Imran Khan settled down in the PM's office, he must have looked at the world beyond the country's borders and been impressed but also troubled at the chaos that prevailed. Some of what was happening outside will have serious consequences for Pakistan. This includes the hostile attitude adopted towards the country by Trump and Biden, his successor in the White House. Islamabad was accused for not aiding Washington with its doomed efforts in Afghanistan. Washington's hostility came at the time when the government of President Xi Jinping in China had recognised Pakistan as the lynchpin in the trillion-dollar enterprise it called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pakistan thus became a pawn in the developing conflict between Beijing and Washington.

But that was not all. Pakistan lives in a volatile neighbourhood. To its north it shares a long border with the highly troubled nation of Afghanistan which, even after seventy-three years of Pakistan's independence, refuses to recognise the border between the two as legitimate. The Afghan government fought Islamic extremists for almost four decades but gave up the struggle when President Ashraf Ghani threw in the towel and fled the country on 15 August 2021. On the day of his departure, the Talban were back in power having fought the westernized Afghan elite and its America supporters for twenty years. Afghanistan always drew the attention of policymakers, not only in Islamabad but also in the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and

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Sindh. Relations between the two countries have not been easy, partly because the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in that country, also has a large presence in Pakistan. Of the 48–50 million people belonging to this group, 30 million live in Pakistan and 16 million in Afghanistan.

Towards the east is China, a rising power comprising the world's largest population and second-largest economy, after the US. It started its economic growth in the late 1970s when Deng Xiaoping opened up the economy and followed the model that the World Bank in its 1993 study would refer to as the East Asian miracle economies. The model relied on export-led growth in which activist states encouraged manufacturing enterprises to produce cheap items of daily consumption for the Western markets. First to make use of this approach were Japan and some of the smaller states in East Asia, including South Korea and Taiwan. South Korea is now regarded as a developed country.

China's rise was spectacular. In a bit more than a quarter century—from 1980 to 2007—the Chinese were able to increase the size of their economy 32-fold. It has since outgrown this model. This growth meant that the per capita income increased. As a result, China no longer has cheap labour and needs to diversify its markets and find new ways of reaching them. After President Xi Jinping became president (14 March 2013) he turned his attention to implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to build infrastructure in many nations to provide better connectivity, and China is, in my opinion, set to become not only the largest economy in the next couple of decades, but probably also a leader in the field of technology.

Pakistan's 'all weather' relations with China have been valuable for decades and now, under the BRI, these have culminated in the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). With the multibillion-dollar investment in improving the country's infrastructure, Beijing's footprint on Pakistan's economic soil is larger than ever. The 'all weather' description of these relations is meant to distinguish them from those with the US, which have been off-and-on for decades. At the time of this writing—November 2021—the relationship is in the 'off' mode.

China's rise is being challenged by the US and to some extent by Europe. Washington entered into a trade war with Beijing that will have damaging consequences for the world economy.

Moving down towards Kashmir there is the Line of Control (LOC), the boundary between the Pakistani and Indian-held parts of that disputed area.[27] The Indians are fighting a war against Afghan nationalists that grows in intensity as time passes.

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To the east lies the sister state of India. The two countries have many unsettled disputes that have led to several wars between them. Three of these were over Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority area in India. The rise of Hindu nationalism has complicated relations between the two neighbours. Narendra Modi, the head of the Hindu-nationalist BJP, does not seem inclined to work with Pakistan despite the signals of friendship sent by Prime Minister Imran Khan after he assumed office in Islamabad (18 August 2018). Preparing for the national elections that began in early April and ended in mid-May, Modi roused Hindu nationalism and anti-Pakistan sentiment. The two countries almost went to war in February 2019, following a couple of terrorist incidents in the Indian occupied part of Kashmir that New Delhi blamed on Islamabad.

To the west, the fourth neighbour, Iran, has not been prominent in Pakistan's thinking about foreign affairs. But that may change with the growing rivalry between the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the predominantly Shiite Iran. The former had the support of the Trump presidency, which adopted a very hostile attitude towards Tehran. It withdrew from the nuclear control treaty that President Barack Obama had signed with Iran, along with all other major world powers. The withdrawal came even though Iran was complying with the conditions of the pact. An escalation of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have enormous consequences for Pakistan that has the world's second largest Shiite population.

Pakistan's Non-Neighbours

While proximity should be the focus of Islamabad's attention as it looks to develop relations with the world outside its borders, relations with some near and distant countries also matter a great deal—perhaps even more than those with some of its neighbours. China, of course, is an exception, a neighbour that has already profoundly influenced developments in Pakistan and which will continue to do so in the decades to come. Close relations with China have offset those with the US with which Pakistan was closely aligned for more than half a century. During the time when Pakistan was aligned with the US, large amounts of American financial assistance became available. It was used to develop the economy and lend strength to the military. Washington relied on Pakistan to aid its efforts to block the advance of communism in Asia. That this was a real threat became evident in 1979, when Moscow sent in its troops to occupy Afghanistan and save the communist regime it had installed

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there from collapsing. Pakistan was used to fight a proxy war against the Soviets in its neighbouring country. This was done, but at a grave cost for Pakistan. It took various groups of Islamic radicals to push the Soviet troops out of the country, but the arrival of extremism was only one part of the legacy of that conflict for Pakistan. When the Soviets withdrew, the Americans unceremoniously pulled out of the war-torn, tribal, and underdeveloped country. Washington came back in that country following the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan's help was sought and given, but not to the entire satisfaction of the US, especially in the latter part of its second eighteen-year involvement in that country.

Under Donald Trump, the US distanced itself from Pakistan. Why did that happen? There are several answers to this question. The foremost among them was the increase in the sentiments against Islam and Muslims in the US. Pakistan, after all, is the world's second-largest Muslim majority country. Also important is the way Washington views China, now Pakistan's closest foreign partner. Trump and his hawkish advisers—in particular, John Bolton, who occupied the national security position in the White House for some time—saw China as a potential enemy whose unrelenting rise needed to be challenged. Former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, was also openly hostile to China and possibly contributed to India's China problem (discussed later).

The country's external environment was changing not only because of the souring of bilateral relations with the US, it was also the result of the breakdown in the political and economic order that brought global prosperity and world peace over a period of seventy years. The initial nudge came from Donald Trump and was motivated by his desire to move the US back to the times when it was White and more Christian. The racial and religious dilution is a direct result of demographic factors such as the large migration into the country and higher fertility rates among the immigrants. These were viewed with great concern by about 35 to 40 per cent of the US population. This population segment responded enthusiastically to Trump's election slogan, 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA). MAGA was understood by the Trump political base as 'Make America White and Christian Again.' This move also had repercussions in Europe, with the political rise of a number of strong men who were troubled by the arrival into their country of more than a million Muslims displaced by the civil wars in the Middle East and economic turmoil in North Africa. During his week-long visit to Europe in mid-July 2018, Trump spoke openly about the cultural and social damage migration was

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inflicting on Europe. He was advocating nationalism as a way to protect 'Europeanness' in both Europe and North America.

Policymakers in Islamabad have to be mindful not only of new political thinking but also with the way the world's major economies view the global situation. Here there was also an institutional breakdown; a definite move away from collective thinking and towards bilateralism. One example of the way large economies were relating to one another was the G20 Summit held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 30 November and 1 December 2018. The meeting underscored how the close entwining of global economic and political affairs pertain to international affairs in the contemporary world.

The latter part of this book deals with Pakistan's relations with Saudi Arabia, among other countries. The Kingdom is under a new Sheikh, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, heir to the throne and King Salman bin Abdul Aziz. The prince has begun the process of moving his country away from a total dependence on oil. But along with this and other welcoming moves—including the grant of more rights to the country's female population—the prince has brought in a more authoritarian and less tolerant system of governance. One clear sign of this was the brutal murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018. Pakistan looked to Riyadh for help when Imran Khan took office as Prime Minister, thus delaying the need to go to the IMF. But Islamabad will need to watch its relations with Saudi Arabia as the kingdom, with the full support of Washington, has adopted an extremely hostile approach to the Shiite state of Iran. With the world's second largest Shiite population, Pakistan cannot afford to ignite sectarian conflict in the country. Iran is a neighbour, Saud Arabia is not.

It is worth mentioning here that Saudi Arabia had to take 'strict, painful' measures to deal with the economic impact of Covid-19. They had to reduce 'budget expenditures' as they suffered from 'historically low oil prices.' Their Central Bank foreign reserves fell and in early May, Riyadh considered borrowing $26 billion to ease the burden on its exchequer. Saudi Arabia also had to suspend prayers at the Kaaba in Makkah and in the Holy Mosque in Madinah, to stem the spread of the pandemic. The kingdom scaled down the number of pilgrims attending Hajj, from 2 million to only 1,000 in 2020.

Turkey, another non-neighbour has always been important for Pakistan. Although the demise of the Ottoman Empire occurred more than a century ago, the Turks still remember the financial help the Muslims of British India provided when Kamal Ataturk, the founder of

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modern Turkey, was attempting to fight the European nations as they advanced into the heart of the country. In the 1950s, Pakistan partnered with Turkey to join the American-led alliance against the spread of communism in Asia. In the second decade of the 21st century, Pakistan and Turkey are two non-Arab states that are experimenting with different ways of merging Islam and political governance. While the former opted for Western style liberal democracy, the latter has chosen political Islam as the way of governing a fairly conservative population.

Like other countries, Turkey also had to shut down schools and universities and the Central Bank cut interest rate to 8.75 per cent to limit economic damage. According to a 15 May 2020 report by *Al Jazeera*, 'The lira, which hit a record low of 7.269 last week, stood at 6.917 against the dollar...showed that measures taken to curb the coronavirus pandemic weighed heavily on the fiscal budget.'[28] How its relations with Pakistan develop remains to be seen.

It is necessary to discuss the Arab world in a separate chapter. The region remains in political turmoil, with attempts to reconcile the authoritarian instincts of the establishment and the aspiration of its youth, with more egalitarian systems. The demographic transition of the region, along with the spread of modern information technologies, have given the youth the power to assert themselves. This has resulted inevitably in a clash between authoritarianism and, to coin a word, 'youth-ism'. The young have political, economic, and social aspirations that go against the grain of the region's authoritarian rulers. This clash led to the Arab Spring of 2011, but even though several long-serving leaders were forced to exit, the societies did not change. The youth were back on the streets in Algeria in early 2019 and may have greater success in that country.

The Middle East is, in a sense, a unique region in that some of its countries are dependent on imported workers/labour. This has led Ivan Szelenyi, in collaboration with Riaz Hassan and Vladislav Maksimov, to describe and analyse the region[29] and their conclusion is that such a model is not sustainable. I look at this concept in the context of Pakistan's relations with the UAE. There were several phases in the movement of people from Pakistan to that country. The first set of migrants went as construction workers, then as workers in the service sector and thereafter as investors and managers. Pakistan has come to depend on workers remittances from the UAE for meeting a part of the external finance gap. The money sent by workers to their families back home resulted in the elevation of 5 to 6 million households from

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poverty to lower middle-class status. The Covid-19 impact on the real estate market in the UAE and KSA is particularly grim. Dubai's property market was poised to move upward. The most important thing for any business during the crisis is to remain consolidated, limit the damage and keep moving forward. Understandably, it is hard for experts to predict when the market will recover.

Because of Covid-19, by the summer of 2020, over 21,000 Pakistani expatriates lost their jobs in the Gulf region. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis, Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari, told *Arab News*, 'Unlike the UAE, where companies are laying off workers and sending them on forced and unpaid leave, Saudi Arabia is not doing that. Instead, it is giving them full salary.' In the present situation the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis is a difficult task, but the government is determined to use its resources to manage it in an appropriate manner.

A separate chapter of this book deals with the return of Russia to the global stage as a major player. This has happened because of the strong leadership provided by the long-serving president, Vladimir Putin. For a variety of reasons still not fully known despite the report presented by Robert S. Mueller III on the Russian interference in the elections of 2016, Donald Trump's America was very accommodating towards Russia. Muller was appointed in May 2017 and worked on this case for twenty-two months, tasked with determining whether there was a conspiracy between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin.

A work on Pakistan's external relations would not be complete without a discussion of country's dealings with a number of international organisations. Of particular importance for the country are the development finance corporations. The World Bank Group played a special role in taking the lead to resolve a dispute that could have resulted in a war between India and Pakistan. This concerned the dispute over the division of the Indus River system, comprising the six rivers that flow from Kashmir and form the main water system of the subcontinent. During, Partition, the three rivers in the east were allocated to India, while the other three in the west, to Pakistan.

From the World Bank, India got the idea of building massive dams to divert water from the system's western rivers to those in the east. After the Indus Water Treaty was signed in 1960 by the two countries, India began to mobilise finance for the massive undertaking. It is essential to consider Pakistan's difficult relations with the IMF, the World Bank's sister organisation as well as with the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

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India's China Problem

India has problems with all the neighbours with which it shares borders on its northwest and northeast. These include Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Bhutan. The only neighbours it works well with are Bangladesh and Myanmar. Its problems with China and Pakistan have begun to overlap. The US—in particular, Donald Trump's America—resented China's ascent to becoming the world's second largest economy, destined to overtake the US in a decade or two, and its acquisition of serious military muscle which it has now begun to flex. For instance, it sent out its navy to challenge boats from Vietnam and Malaysia and one of its aircraft carriers sailed twice through the Strait of Taiwan.

Some analysts have begun to call America's sensitivity towards China's rise as the 'Thucydides's trap,' named after a Greek philosopher who analysed such situations centuries ago, viz. the conflict between a rising power and the prevailing dominant one. The Greek thinker applied his thesis to the growing conflict between Sparta and Athens in which the former replaced the latter after a war. Sparta became the region's dominant power after defeating Athens. Such adjustments usually involve wars. The term Thucydides's trap, was coined by Graham Allison, a Harvard University political scientist, who, after studying more than a dozen such conflicts in world history, authored a book on the subject.[30] The work excited a lot of interest among policy circles in Washington. Allison predicted that the growing conflict between the US and China could lead to a military conflict, albeit a limited one and of the type that reportedly occurred between India and China on 15 June 2021 in which New Delhi admitted to the loss of twenty soldiers. Ajai Shukla, an Indian defence analyst and former Indian army officer who has written extensively about recent tensions with China was quoted as saying that his country's leadership faces a serious crisis. 'The government of Indian Prime Minster Narendra Modi prides itself on toughness in matters of national security. After dozens of Indian soldiers were killed last year by a terrorist group based in Pakistan, the government launched a retaliatory cross-border airstrike. Now India must decide how it will respond to the clash with China,' said Shukla.[31]

It did not help India's relations with China when, after Narendra Modi's party's resounding victory in the elections in the spring of 2019, his deputy Amit Shah, told the parliament that India was determined to take back Aksai Chin, which China now considered its territory as well as all of Kashmir. 'To achieve these territorial goals India would sacrifice

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lives for this objective.' Shah was not the only one who was critical of China. Indian analysts are of the view that China's actions were another sign of its aggressive intentions in the region. There is a 'new edge' to China's attitude according to Nirupama Rao, a former Indian ambassador to China. 'This assertiveness, this readiness to throw away internationally accepted behaviour to advance their claims and interests, it's worrisome for so many countries.'[32]

Some of India's external problems have their roots in domestic politics. This is certainly the case with the unsettled status of the Kashmir border. The Kashmiri citizens have not accepted India's occupation of their state and have been engaged for decades in confronting the Indian security forces in their region. The same is the case, albeit to a lesser extent, with what are sometimes referred to as the 'seven sisters' in India's northeast. These are the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. Their total population is 46 million. I got a good impression of how the people in that area viewed India when I attended a meeting arranged in 2010, by the Institute of South Asian Studies based in Singapore. My participation was agreed to with some hesitation by the authorities in New Delhi. The meeting was held in the Indian capital and the discussion centred around the reasons for the relative backwardness of the Northeast.

There were about a dozen participants from the states in the northeast, who emphasised that they needed resources to develop the area. I suggested that the World Bank may help them in this regard and they should get New Delhi to approach the institution for assistance. There was no response to my suggestion even when I repeated it. During the coffee break, I was approached by a young woman who spoke excellent English. When I commented on that she said that she was educated in a local convent school. 'You must be Christian,' I said. 'No, she said I am an animist.'[33] She then told me the reason for the silence on my suggestion—New Delhi wanted to keep foreigners out of the area.

According to newspaper reports, 'Chinese troops have crossed several kilometres into the territory that India claims at multiple points in Ladakh. In particular, they have occupied an area in the Galwan River valley that overlooks a strategically crucial road for India. Monday night's (15 June 2020) deadly clashes took place in the Galwan valley, the Indian army said.'[34] Most of the lengthy frontier between China and India is not marked physically or delineated on any maps recognised by the two countries. Instead, the Chinese and Indian armies send patrols up to what

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they claim is the Line of Actual Control and then retreat. Altercations have taken place, but seldom on the scale such as that of 15 June.[35]

How can this conflict be resolved? It has happened before; India realises that Beijing is not likely to back down even if Washington encourages New Delhi to confront it. There was a clear warning from the Chinese given by Hu Xinjin, editor of the newspaper *Global Times*, who reiterated the official China-line. 'I want to tell Indians: do not misjudge China's restraint as weakness, and never be arrogant before China,' he wrote in his newspaper. 'China does not want conflict with India, but it is never afraid of conflict.' In June, Chinese military staged a drill that moved thousands of paratroopers within hours from central Hubei province to a remote Himalayan mountain range. The exercise, which was publicised by the People's Liberation Army, was designed to send a message that China was able to rapidly deploy reinforcements to the Indian border and fight in low-temperatures and low-oxygen conditions. China–India tension is not a Thucydides's trap but may become a component of it if Washington encourages New Delhi to become its surrogate.

Popular sentiment on both sides was hard and aggressive. 'This kind of provocation is aggressive, and we have no choice but to contain it,' said Yue Gang, a retired senior officer in the People's Liberation Army. He blamed border tensions, which flared up in May 2021 as a result of Indian Prime Minister Modi's political ambitions.

The two governments had their senior diplomats talk on the telephone and issued statements after the conversation had ended. In the call, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was said to have used harsh language with his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, which was revealed in a statement issued by Beijing after the call. 'The Indian side must not misjudge the current situation and must not underestimate China's firm will to safeguard territorial sovereignty.' Hours later, the Indian government posted its own version of the conversation, saying that its foreign minister blamed China for 'a premeditated and planned action that was directly responsible for the resulting violence and casualties.' One reaction came from Tanvi Madan, director of the India Project at the Brookings Institution in Washington, 'For years, India and China have said there have been no fatalities along the border. That they have crossed that threshold...that in itself makes this a significant incident.'[36] However, the expert consensus on the Indian side showed some concern, but it was expected that both sides would limit their exchanges to words, or economic measures. If the latter, India will get the short end of the

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stick. There has been a tradition in the subcontinent, of resorting to patriotism in difficult situations involving foreign governments or people. When M.K. Gandhi led the struggle for independence from British rule in the first half of the 20th century, one of the tactics he used was to call for a boycott of British goods. This proved an effective weapon and hurt the British textile industry that had become a major exporter to India. Following this tradition, after the fight in the mountains, appeals were made for boycotting Chinese goods. This, however, may prove to be difficult to implement since most of the mobile telephones in India are made in China. India–China trade has grown enormously in the last few years, from $3 billion in 2000, to more than $95 billion in 2018. And in 2021 the trade deficit between the two countries reached nearly $60 billion in China's favour.

It is hard to tell whether the boycott would work in producing a change in China's policy towards its large neighbour. *The Indian Express*, one of India's leading English newspapers, reported that India intended to cancel a huge railway contract that had been given to a Chinese company.[37]

The Entwining of Global Economics and Politics

One method of highlighting how global economic, political, and strategic interests are intertwined is to look at the working of the Group of 20 nations (G20).[38] The size of Pakistan's population and economy should have warranted it to be included as a member and it is a failure of its diplomacy that it has not been granted membership. The country's exclusion from the Group has contributed to the narrative that labels it interchangeably as a 'fragile state', a 'failing state', or 'a failed state'—a description that has been generally accepted by the West.

In most G20 meetings, the heads of state discuss economic issues, however, politics dominated the deliberations at the meeting in Buenos Aires (30 November and 1 December 2018). The health of the global economy in the pre-Covid-19 era was reasonable. The US was growing at a decent rate of 3.5 per cent, higher than that of all rich nations. The rate of unemployment had touched historical lows and inflation was low. The only problem the country faced was the poor understanding of economic issues by its then leader, President Donald Trump. According to Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman, 'Talking about what Donald Trump does not know is, of course, a vast task, since his ignorance is both broad and deep.'[39]

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The former president continued to focus his attention on the loss of jobs in the country's industrial sector, believing that they had been stolen by countries such as China. He did not know that in sustained development in rich nations, jobs normally move from the manufacturing to the service sector. Overall, jobs in developed economies have declined in the manufacturing sector. In 1970, this sector employed more than a quarter of the workforce, but now it comprises only 10 per cent of the total. Nowadays, the various components of the service sector employ a significantly larger proportion of the workforce. It is reported that four occupations could create jobs in the US, three include various types of nursing, and the fourth is that of food workers. Applying tariffs to the imports of goods from China will not significantly increase employment.

Although the trade spat involving the US and China was on the minds of the leaders attending the G20 meeting, nothing of substance was achieved in the area. Three political issues came up for discussion, mostly in the bilateral conversations between the leaders. These included US–Russia relations; the role played by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist of repute; and China's aggressive reach into its neighbourhood, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

Trump's cancelation of his planned meeting with Putin dominated the news in the Argentina meeting. Washington and Moscow had included a two-hour meeting in the schedules. Trump's cancellation of this arrangement was obviously a late decision, taken while he was already on his way to Buenos Aires. The announcement came in the form of a tweet issued by him from his plane. The language used in the tweet was obviously not the president's, but carefully drafted by members of the national security team who were on the plane with him. What prompted Trump to call off the meeting was most likely that he did not want to be shown associating with the Russian president because of the revelations made by his long-time associate Michael Cohen, regarding the various deals Trump and his family members had been making in Russia during his previous election campaign. (Trump had denied any such involvement). The international community was more concerned with Russia's expansionist designs in its neighbourhood. The latest move, in this direction was the capture of Ukrainian boats and sailors by the Russian Navy in international borders.

The second political issue in this summit focused on the world's view of Saudi Arabia. The US intelligence services had concluded that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had given the orders to kill

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Khashoggi.[40] Trump was not prepared to accept these findings. The US had longstanding and close relations with Saudi Arabia and that country was considered to be vital for US economic and strategic interests. There was the impression that the Trump family also had economic interests in the Kingdom. No one-on-one meeting was scheduled with Mohammed bin Salman. The G20 meeting was treated by Mohammed bin Salman as a 'coming out' event for the Saudi prince, following the Khashoggi affair. According to accounts, Emmanuel Macron, the French president, gave a strong message to Mohammed bin Salman, asking for an international investigation of the journalist's killing. The Saudis had developed a close relationship with the US which was proving instrumental in reshaping the Middle East.

Finally, the growing tension between China and the US occupied a fair amount of the leaders' time at the Buenos Aires Summit. Trump had a dinner meeting with Xi Jinping and came out speaking well of the relationship with the Chinese leader. He had entertained him earlier at Mar-a-Lago, his posh resort in Florida and had begun to refer to the Chinese leader as 'my friend'. 'But the relationship is very special, the relationship that I have with President Xi. And I think that is going to be a very primary reason why we'll probably end up...getting something that will be good for China and good for the United States.'[41] Xi responded by emphasising the global good that will come out of an understanding between the world's two largest economies. Trump had talked only about the US and China; Xi referred to the world in his response. 'Only with cooperation between us can we serve the interest of world peace and prosperity.' These remarks indicated that Trump's preferred approach for dealing with issues that arise among nations was bilateralism whereas the Chinese leader leaned towards globalism. At the dinner, the two leaders agreed that the US would postpone the increase in its tariffs on $200 billion worth of Chinese imports from 10 to 25 per cent that was to go into effect on 1 January 2019.

The Chinese, on their part, promised to increase their imports from the US. However, trade experts did not see much changing in ninety days. According to several analysts, 'The forces Mr Trump had set in motion with Beijing would be hard to restrain. The US is demanding sweeping changes in China's trade policy, which the Communist government might find politically difficult to enact and impossible to enforce.'[42] However, while the two leaders were dining at Buenos Aires, the agents of Canada were arresting a senior official working in a large Chinese technology

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company. This arrest was related to the American fear that it was falling behind China in the field of technology.

The G20 meeting at Buenos Aires turned out to be more productive than the meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group at Papua New Guinea. There, President Xi and the then US vice president, Mike Pence, had spoken intemperately about each other's countries. They could not agree to the language in a joint statement. In Argentina, the G20 issued a 31-point communiqué that reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris climate accord, even though the US reiterated its decision to pull out of it. The statement also expressed concern that the WTO should be reformed. The WTO is a favourite target of Donald Trump, since he believed that the policy framework that set up the organisation, cramps America's ability to use tariffs and looks the other way when China cheats in a number of ways. 'The system is currently falling far short of its objectives and there is room for improvement,' said the joint statement. Some developments in late 2018 and early 2019 changed the world and the international scenario for the Government of Pakistan. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic was one of the more important and unexpected developments. Another was the unpredictable way Donald Trump was dealing with the Middle East. While he had aligned himself with Saudi Arabia and was treating Iran as America's greatest enemy, the manner in which he had decided to handle Syria would weaken the former and strengthen the latter.

The US decision to withdraw from Syria was announced without any consultation with its allies who were deeply involved in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and was thus likely to have far-reaching consequences. American troops entered Syria in 2015, during the presidency of Barack Obama. They were part of a coalition fighting ISIS, which, at the height of its powers, controlled an area the size of Britain and with an estimated population of 12 million; half of that territory was retaken by the time Trump arrived in the White House. By the closing days of 2018, the hold of ISIS had been reduced to only one per cent of the territory, but it was estimated that it still had 20,000 to 30,000 fighters in the region. The Americans had won the Kurds over to their side by promising that once the areas occupied by ISIS were liberated, they would stay until a final settlement was reached.

The Americans were making the same mistake they made in Afghanistan; that after the Soviet forces were pushed out of the country, they had left without bothering about the succession to the Soviet-controlled regime in Kabul. In this context, I recall a conversation I had

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with President Ziaul Haq after he had fired Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo. This was after the prime minister had the Government of Pakistan sign an accord that led to the departure of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. 'I was against the move. I was of the view that the Soviet departure would result in a power vacuum in Kabul,' he told me. 'The groups that had successfully fought the Soviets had given no thought to governance. All hell would break out once the Soviet Union is gone.' The general turned out to be exceptionally prescient since that is precisely what happened and ultimately led to the emergence of Taliban and their control of Kabul for five years. The world is still dealing with the consequences of America's hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan. At that time, it was seen as the West's triumph over communism and the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union. As discussed in some detail in the chapter on Afghanistan, history repeated itself to some extent when the Americans pulled out of Afghanistan in August 2021. I say 'some extent' since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 took seven years before the Taliban were able to gain control of Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan. This time the Taliban were back in control of Kabul even before the Americans had taken out their entire fighting force. But there is one major difference between Afghanistan in 1988 and 2021 and Syria in 2019. Unlike the former, Syria now has the presence of two powerful foreign powers on its soil—Iran and Russia. Both will work to install the people and groups they are comfortable with. The result will be further loss of influence by the US in this part of the Arab world and increased presence of Shiitism. Steven Erlanger and Jane Perlez in an assessment of the global situation wrote, 'On Friday morning, as global leaders digested the news of the latest upheaval in Washington, the divided reaction was telling. Even as traditional allies were stunned and blindsided, Russia, Turkey and China offered praise.'[43] For Britain and France, it was a time to question their involvement in both Afghanistan and Syria under the US leadership. Florence Parly, the Minister of the Armed Forces of France, said that her country's forces were in the Middle East and engaged in Syria 'in the framework of a coalition that is led by the Americans.' But now it was clear that former President Trump's decision 'profoundly changes the situation'. Ivor Roberts, a former British ambassador said that Britain, with its troops fighting alongside the Americans, must also recalibrate. He further said, 'All around for America's allies, it's a matter of great dismay...Trump has given comfort to people I wouldn't think the United States would want to give comfort to: the Russians, Iranians and ISIS.'[44]

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'The leverage that might have been there for the United States in Syria is no longer there because now everyone knows that the United States will leave Syria unconditionally,'[45] said Joost Hiltermann, program director, Middle East & North Africa for International Crisis Group, a conflict and foreign policy research organisation. Trump's decision to pull out will have enormous positive consequences for Iran, the country he has identified as America's greatest enemy. Not given to deep reflection, Trump seemed not to have thought through how his Syrian decision would affect the larger Middle East.

Iran sent thousands of Shiite fighters to battle the Sunni-led ISIS. Their success created an important land bridge through Syria to supply weapons to Hezbollah, a Shiite group based in Lebanon. Its principal aim was to end the Israeli occupation of the land it conquered in the 1967 war with the Arabs. Already having a presence in Iraq, Tehran is carving out a Shiite domain in the Arab world.

It is too early even to speculate how the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and coming back of the Taliban would affect the country and its neighbourhood. There is no doubt that Pakistan will be faced with many difficult challenges.

The Coming Challenges in the Emerging Global Order

The new Biden administration in Washington faced a world order quite different from any that had existed after the end of World War II. This is the theme of a recent book, *The Rise and Fall of Peace*, by Michael Mandelbaum, emeritus professor at Johns Hopkins University.[46] The world that he describes is the post-post-Cold War era in which there will be a number of challenges that will have to be faced by whoever is in charge of the US government at the start of the third decade of the 21st century. The US president will need to navigate through very turbulent waters. Many foreign affairs experts believe that Trump lacked the temperament, skills, and patience that was required to deal with the emerging situation. According to Thomas Friedman:

> Among President Trump's greatest foreign policy weakness is his inability to build and maintain alliances. Few other countries want to follow him into battle.... That is not Trump's only poisoned legacy. The other is that he shows no interest in democracy promotion, and that, too, is more important than ever, because democracies are much less prone to war. But we're in a democracy recession now.[47]

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The turbulence anticipated by Mandelbaum is likely to be created by three huge geopolitical trends. All three are developing in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood, which means that Islamabad's policymakers need to remain alert. The first is the resurgence of three big regional powers: Russia, China, and Iran. All three are able and willing to use force to advance their strategic interests. However, I have a problem in having China described as a regional power. It is now operating on the global stage; nothing demonstrated this more than the visit of President Xi Jinping to Europe, when the Chinese leader recruited Italy, one of the founding nations of the European Union, to become a participant in the Beijing-led Belt and Road Initiative—the BRI.

But the other two currently are indeed regional players. Russia has used force to occupy the Crimean Peninsula that was part of Ukraine, thus defying the understanding among nations that force would not be used to change boundaries. In the Middle East, Iran has trained and funded proxy forces in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Also, in the regional context, Mandelbaum sees China focusing on claiming most of the Pacific Ocean, at least the Asian side, as its own territory. This is akin to the Monroe Doctrine[48] and Washington's claim that it would not tolerate outside powers' interference in Latin America, which it regarded as its backwater. The two regional powers, Russia and Iran, have structural similarities: both are authoritarian states trying to generate support among those they govern by using aggressive nationalism. The emergence of these powers would require a presence in Washington that can oversee their growing strengths; this was not done by President Trump during his first three years in office. In fact, as revealed by John Bolton in his detailed account of the time he spent as the national security adviser in the White House, he openly requested President Xi Jinping of China to help him with the White House in November 2020.[49]

The second trend noted by Mandelbaum is the weakening of a number of states around the world. They are: Venezuela, Haiti, and most nations in Central America; Myanmar in Southeast Asia; some nations in the greater Middle East, and several countries in East and sub-Saharan Africa. These states are suffering from a combination of circumstances that include predatory elites who have sucked capital out of their countries and deposited it in Middle Eastern and European banks or bought expensive properties in foreign countries. There is population pressure in practically all of them and problems of rapid urbanisation. Then there is climate change that is making some places uninhabitable. These weak states also affect the world's rich nations and societies. They

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are producing waves of migrations that are hitting the shores of Europe and US's southwestern border. The arrival of more than a million people from Africa and the Middle East into Europe has disturbed the political and social equilibrium in the continent.

The third trend is what Mandelbaum sees as the increasing strength of super-empowered small extremist, fascist, and other rogue groups that are taking advantage of development in information technology to propagate their ideals. These groups are exerting pressure not only on weak states but also in those that have well-established systems for the resolution of inter-group differences. This development is reflected in the pursuit of narrow objectives that are not endorsed by society at large. We have seen this happen in the case of white supremacists and Islamic ideologues. The riots in America after the brutal murder of George Floyd, an African-American, by a white police officer in Minneapolis are a good indicator of how various ethnic groups are exerting pressure on the state. Is the situation in the post-Cold War era worse than what it was after the end of World War II? For contemporary scholars—and Mandelbaum is one such analyst—the present always tends to look more challenging than the past. In 1944–5 there were a lot of countries that were badly broken. But the real difference was that policymaking in that period was in the hands of some extraordinary leaders who had the vision, the imagination, the compassion, and the fortitude to design financial and monetary systems at Bretton Woods resort in the American state of New Hampshire that worked for all. It worked for the victors in the war as well as those who had lost and surrendered. It worked for the countries that were rich as well as those that were poor. It worked for the nations that had been independent for a long time and those that were emerging from decades of colonial rule and domination. The system that was developed at the time had three key features: nations agreed to work with one another, rather than against each other; they agreed on the laws that would be followed; and they created international institutions like the IMF, that oversaw the working of international law. These very foundations, on which the old order was built, are now being criticised.

But as we head towards the opening of the third decade of the 21st century, the fate of the world is in the hands of petty politicians. America's Donald Trump exemplified this trend in leadership. These leaders exist not only in the US, but also in Europe, Egypt, India, other Asian and South American countries and in many African countries. What makes the present markedly different from the past is that leadership in many parts of the world lacks the qualities that are needed in these times.

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What do all these developments mean for Pakistan? They call for nimbleness to keep options open with regard to relations with the country's immediate and not-too-distant neighbours. For the moment, the Arab monarchs are helping Pakistan in its period of financial difficulty. The Saudi heir to the throne visited Pakistan in early 2019, followed by a number of other senior leaders from the Middle East. On the other hand, although there is rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the latter is gaining strength and it is also our immediate neighbour. Therefore, Islamabad must stay close to Tehran as well.

An experienced and nimble hand is needed to formulate foreign policy as the world hurtles towards new challenges posed by the pandemic. Pakistan will need to examine how the world is responding to it. Trump went to the extent of calling it a, 'Chinese Virus'. A new cold war seems to be emerging between the two superpowers.

It is indeed difficult to predict how those holding the reins of power in Pakistan will respond to these portended threats and the unprecedented crises of Covid-19. The pandemic is one problem that could not have been anticipated. This is a global challenge and unlike unanticipated natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes that subside and leave a trail of destruction in their wake, thus making it comparatively easy to manage their impact, Covid-19 does not seem to be going away any time soon, even though the vaccination process is well under way.

Already, there are fears that the recession that has resulted from the spread of Covid-19 may give rise to future conflicts between countries and nation-states. The future of warfare may change as it will become more lethal and destructive. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used in addition to conventional forces, and 'cyber space' will become the new frontier. This combination has the potential for future conflicts to be more far-reaching and devastating.

It is pertinent to remember that large-scale migrations into the country from its neighbours have affected Pakistan's relations with the world. In that respect, Pakistan is fairly unique among the world's nations. One way of highlighting this fact is that some one-third of the country's population of 210 million estimated for 2020, traces its origin not to the areas that currently constitute the state of Pakistan but to India and Afghanistan. Even China has contributed to the Pakistani population. In the 1930s, thousands of Uyghurs from the Xinjiang region of the country who were not comfortable with the thought that they would have had to live in a state dominated by 'godless' communism, immigrated to areas in what

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is now Pakistan. They mainly settled in the Gilgit-Baltistan region in northern Pakistan.

I would, at this point, like to quote Dr Manzoor Ahmad, who had served as Pakistan's ambassador at the WTO, from 2002 to 2008, as it is relevant for one of the messages of this book:

> ...[F]or too long, Pakistan has been following policies of isolationism. It is perhaps the only country in the world that has barbed wires along most of its borders. Pakistan has higher tariff walls than almost any other country in the world. Neither people nor goods can easily cross Pakistan's borders. It is never easy for foreigners to get visas for Pakistan.[50]

I could add more evidence of Pakistan's isolation. There are few direct flights to Pakistan. To reach the country, travellers to Pakistan have to go through stops in the Emirates, London, or Istanbul. For the country to move forward it will have to devise ways to end this isolation and become a part of the world.

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Demography and Geography: Pakistan's Destiny

An article by Andrew Korybko titled, 'Pakistan: The Global Pivot State',[1] went viral. It was tweeted and re-tweeted by people hungry for good news about the country to which they belong, or once belonged. 'Pakistan's promising economic potential, international connectivity capabilities, and unparalleled geostrategic location, combined with world-class military and proven diplomatic finesse over the decades, could turn the country into the global pivot state of the 21st century', wrote the author in the abstract to his long piece. He began by proclaiming:

> As astounding as it may sound to most observers, the global pivot state of the 21st century isn't China, the US, or Russia, but Pakistan. The South Asian state regrettably has a terrible international reputation as a result of the joint Indo-American info-war that's been waged against it over the past few decades, but an objective look at the country's geostrategic and domestic capabilities reveals that it's in a prime position to influentially shape the contours of the coming century. It shouldn't be surprising that China had the foresight to partner with it decades before anyone else did, but Great Powers like Russia are finally awakening to its importance, and this in turn is making Pakistan the most strategically sought-after country in world.[2]

This was welcome news for a country that had become used to a highly negative narrative not only in the Western press and policy circles, but also in Pakistan itself. Korybko's assessment about Pakistan appeared a day after a suicide bomber, a young man born in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, blew himself up along with an explosive-laden vehicle, as an Indian Army convoy was passing by. The attack killed more than forty personnel of the paramilitary force. The Indian leadership, including the country's prime minister, promised to avenge the attack, putting the blame on Pakistan. The threat was taken seriously by a number of foreign analysts, some of whom—including those from the Royal United Services Institute, UK, the oldest independent think tank—worried about the possibility of a nuclear confrontation between the two countries. Another attack followed in the same area, increasing the tempo of anti-Pakistan sentiment in India. While the Indians were hurling abuse and threats at Pakistan, the international community

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also levelled some charges. On 22 February, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a watchdog based in Paris, hinted that Pakistan could be placed on its blacklist if it did not take action to curb terror financing. The incident did result in a retaliatory air sortie by India, in which they suffered some losses and Pakistan acted magnanimously by allowing the captured pilot to return. This action was much appreciated by the world.

The FATF statement—a rare callout for the group—named Jaish-e-Mohammed specifically as well as the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, among the extremist organisations against whom Islamabad needed to move, in particular Islamabad needed to block their ability to raise finances from sources both inside and outside the country. 'Pakistan has not shown a proper understanding of the risks that terrorist groups pose and needs to undertake "remedial actions and sanctions" against the terrorist organisations operating from its soil.' It is against this darkening cloud that the light cast by Korybko brought so much cheer to the people in the country.

This chapter discusses some of the attributes of the Pakistani situation, in particular its demography and location, and how these two factors have influenced the country, both positively and negatively.

Demography

The Census of 2017, the first in seventeen years, surprised most people including experts, as far as the size of the population was concerned. Inclusive of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, the size of the population was estimated at 210 million, which made it the sixth largest country in the world, behind China, India, the US, Indonesia, and Brazil. The population was increasing at the rate of 2.4 per cent a year, a rate that would take it beyond that of Indonesia and Brazil, at which point the country would become the fourth largest in the world. Policymakers had assumed the population at about 180 million and the rate of growth at 1.8 per cent a year. In 2017, seventy years after the country was born, the population had increased 6.5 times. This has obviously been a burden on the economy. That said, it is surprising how well the country has managed to decrease the proportion of people below the generally accepted poverty line over the years.

When Pakistan was created in 1947, more than half of its population lived in poverty; the ratio to the total population has declined to about one-fifth, although there were about 20 million people below the poverty line in 1947 and now there are more than twice as many; almost 42

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million. Putting it differently, Pakistan has kept 156 million people out of poverty.

But possibly the most important revelation made by demographic records to Pakistan's progress is that they have highlighted the sheer size of the youth in the country. The median age of the population is 24 years, which means that in 2019 some 105 million people were below that age. The proportion of the young defined as those below the age of 30 years, is much larger in the country's two megacities, Karachi and Lahore. Giving the youth necessary skills could boost the country's progress. This will require an intense effort that should be undertaken to prepare the young for the future.

Pakistani youth have the same aspirations as the youth in the Arab world that produced the Arab Spring of 2011. These were political movements in several countries in North Africa and the Arab world that were primarily led by the youth. The Arab Spring of 2011 resulted in the fall of the military-led dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak. It also brought down three other dictatorships: in Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. More recently, its recurrence in the fourth country, Syria, has resulted in an exceptionally bloody civil war and has not been able to dislodge the ruler.

In 2019, there was also a resurgence of the youth against the coterie of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria (dealt with later in this book). Currently there is unrest in Algeria and Syria, Libya, Sudan, and Yemen. Ethiopia is also faced with political turmoil as a civil war rages between the government forces and a rebel group in the north. One of the questions I will attempt to answer in this work is why Pakistan, the Muslim world's second-largest country after Indonesia, is among the very few that is succeeding in developing social, political, and economic systems that are likely to produce long-term stability.

Location

Pakistan's location is exceptional, which is why the country could be called a global pivot; it could be the pivot that could rotate the globe towards a new global order in which the US, China, and possibly Russia could become the three poles of the evolving global system. Pakistan sits on top of India, soon to be the world's third largest economy; it stretches from China, destined to be the world's largest economy, and the Middle East that has the largest deposits of fossil fuel. Furthermore, it is the starting junction point between the world's largest unconnected landmass and the rest of the globe.

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The opportunities that have arisen because of the country's demography and the advantages of its location would require a new kind of leader at the head of a new kind of political party to transform these beneficial circumstances into intelligent public policy. The elections of July 2018 may have done exactly that. What is new about the current leader and his relatively new political party, is that neither are motivated by patron–client relations or dynastic politics, which were regressive features of the old political groups and their leadership.

Monumental Displacements of Peoples and Its Ramifications

Most writings on Pakistan's external relations have largely ignored how various large-scale migrations have influenced the country's attitude towards foreign relations. An exception in this regard is a book titled, *The Long Partition*, by Vazira Zamindar, who teaches history at Brown University in the US.[3] These massive movements of people have been important for the way they have influenced the country's dealings with other nations. They have also had a profound effect on the economy and political and social systems. Millions of people have come in from neighbouring countries and millions left the country for foreign lands. They settled outside and have formed a diaspora in the Middle East, UK, and North America; a new one is building up in Australia. After the influx during Partition, people who immigrated to Pakistan were mostly refugees, escaping conflicts in their home countries. Those who emigrated were looking for better economic opportunities. All these movements, even internal migrations, affected Pakistan's relations with the outside world.

The impact of immigration was not confined to worker-exporting countries such as Pakistan. They also profoundly affected the political systems in several Western states and brought difficulties for the members of the Pakistani diaspora in the US, Europe, and Australia.

These racial matters are important subjects that have inspired a great deal of scholarship, particularly in the West. In this chapter, I will touch upon a number of developments that have resulted from the movement of people. The first section deals with the arrival of 8 million refugees from India after the British left the subcontinent and handed power to the successor states of Pakistan and India. This is followed by a discussion of the arrival of millions of refugees from Afghanistan, to Pakistan, because of the conflict in that country and now over 1.4 million are registered immigrants who reside here. This was the second-largest flight

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of Muslims into Pakistan from a neighbouring country. Another section examines the circumstances that led to the creation of the Pakistani diaspora in the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Australia. And yet another section examines the recent movement of people from Africa and the Middle East to Europe and that of the Mexicans and Central Americans to the US in the context of colonialism.

Another subject taken up in this chapter deals with the impact of migration on foreign relations, which is something that may not seem obvious at first glance. Thereafter, there is an analysis of how former US president, Donald Trump, promoted anti-immigrant sentiments in the US. These actions and statements have impacted several countries in the West, including such unlikely places as New Zealand and Norway. Both countries have a sizeable Pakistani presence.

Flow of Refugees from India Following the Departure of the British from the Subcontinent

Economic historians writing on Pakistan don't give enough credit to the country's policymakers for weathering so many crises that hit it immediately after Independence. The British took 'shameful flight,' to quote the historian Stanley Wolpert, 'from their colony and the huge migrations both ways led to one of the most horrific massacres in modern history.'

As mentioned in the Preface, I was encouraged by my professor at Harvard, Alexander Gerschenkron, to write a book on the history of Pakistan—my first book, *Pakistan Under Bhutto* (1980). To find out the details of the above migrations, I used census data available at the Harvard University library system and deduced two estimates: one for the movement into Pakistan from India and the other for movement in the opposite direction, being 8 million Muslims and 6 million Sikhs mainly. There is no example in human history of the movement of such a large number of people and their successful assimilation in their new homeland. Most of these migrations occurred in the west wing of the country. In fact, there were two streams of migrations here. One of roughly 5 million people who left their homes at the time of Partition from what became the Indian state of Punjab and came to the Pakistani province with the same name. They were settled relatively quickly on the land the departing Sikhs had left behind because most of the land was owned by this community.

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Under the Land Alienation Act of 1901, the Hindus were classified as non-agriculturalists and could not own land in rural areas. On the other hand, most of the businesses and considerable amount of property was owned by the Hindus and which they too had left behind. The second stream that continued to migrate till the mid-1950s came mainly from the Muslim-minority provinces of British India, in particular the states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh—these are the names these states received after Partition—as well as Delhi, Bihar, and Gujarat. This stream of about 3 million people primarily headed for Karachi and some of the adjoining cities. Karachi was preferred because it was made the country's first capital. Although Lahore was the largest city at that time, it was felt that it was too close to the border with a hostile India, whereas Karachi was at a comfortable distance; it was a port and also the birthplace of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. These refugees were more educated and had more of a professional background than the indigenous people of Sindh. They became active in politics and government.

I traced the economic and political consequences of this large-scale movement of people.[4] For instance, of the fifteen or so persons who dominated the country's political and economic systems since the country's birth in 1947, only about half a dozen were non-migrants. Much of the indigenous elite was side-lined in Pakistan's early days, including the service personnel. The political system was under the control of the members of the *muhajir* (refugees from India) community.

In my first book, I did not examine what affect these two migration streams had on Pakistan's relations with the world outside. The present work fills that gap. Migrations have influenced Pakistan's relations with the countries in its immediate neighbourhood, as well as those that are at some distance from it. Usually, immigrants who have to flee their previous homeland develop an antipathy to their previous country. In the first decade of Pakistan, the formation of foreign policy was influenced by those with a strong anti-India bias.

One of the intriguing 'what if?' questions about Pakistan concerns this post-independence migration. What would have happened had a city in some other part of the country been chosen to be the country's capital. Undoubtedly, most of those who headed towards Karachi would have gone to that city. The first leadership groups that governed Pakistan were very suspicious of India's intentions towards the country which they had worked hard to create. This prejudice may have been diluted had the migrants found themselves in a Punjabi city where people had good social and economic relations with the Hindu community. This was

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not the case with the migrants who left India and moved to Pakistan. They brought with them attitudes and beliefs built over long periods of time. Be that as it may, the ethnic cleansing that occurred after the division of British India resulted in Pakistan becoming a state primarily comprising Muslims. At the time of Pakistan's birth, about a third of the country's population was made up of non-Muslims. The 1947 exchange of population increased the proportion to 95 per cent. This demographic change brought Pakistan closer to the Muslim world, in particular to the Arab nations. Also, Pakistan strongly supported the Muslim population of the portion of Kashmir controlled by India and this has been an important element in external relations. Later, the pro-Muslim inclination in foreign affairs was reinforced by the formation of a large Pakistani diaspora in the oil-exporting countries of the Middle East.

The Arrival of Afghan Refugees over a Period of Two Decades

The second largest movement of foreigners into Pakistan occurred after the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. The Soviet occupation lasted for almost a decade, but was ferociously resisted by the local population, especially the ethnic Pashtuns. The occupying forces responded by dealing harshly with the dissidents. The result was a mass exodus into neighbouring Pakistan that already had a large Pashtun population. Of the estimated 63 million Pashtun population in the world, two-thirds live in Pakistan. Afghanistan, with less than 15 million, has the second largest number. India has 3.2 million. UAE now has 338,000 and the US 139,000. At its peak, an estimated 3 to 4 million Afghans left their country, most migrating to Pakistan while a much smaller number went to Iran. Some, but not many returned to their homeland after the Soviet Union pulled out in 1989. However, Afghanistan remained unsettled, especially after the invasion of the country by the US in December 2001, after the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York on 11 September 2001, by Al-Qaeda, headed by Osama bin Laden, the renegade scion of a billionaire Saudi family.

The Taliban, who then ruled Afghanistan, had given sanctuary to Bin Laden and his group from where they had planned and attacked the US. Then president, George W. Bush, vowed to avenge the attacks and curb terrorism. He demanded that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden to the US and when they refused, US-led NATO troops attacked Afghanistan. They won the war quickly and occupied the country, but as was the case with the Soviet Union, the US's move into Afghanistan was also fiercely

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resented by the Afghan Pashtun population and twenty years down the line, the Americans found themselves still fighting the Taliban.

Washington began to hold talks with the Taliban to find a way to make an exit from the country. On 2 September 2019, Zalmay Khalilzad, the American envoy, and an Afghan–American who was in command and was conducting negotiations with the Taliban leadership, revealed that he had reached an agreement with the dissident group. Five days later, President Donald Trump announced on Twitter that he had invited both the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the Taliban leaders to Camp David in Maryland, to give final shape to the agreement, but then cancelled the meeting. The change of heart came following the death of an American soldier in a Taliban attack in Kabul. However, the deal reached on 29 February 2020, in Doha, the capital of Qatar, set a process in motion to bring peace to Afghanistan, a country that has been suffering conflicts for more than four decades. Unfortunately, there was no success in reaching a settlement between the warring factions and on 15 August 2021, Kabul fell to Taliban and the members of the American-supported regime fled.

According to the census of Afghans in Pakistan conducted by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), the ethnic breakdown of Afghans in the country was as follows:

Afghans (ethnic)	**Percentage**
Pashtuns	81.5
Tajiks	7.3
Uzbeks	2.3
Turkman	2
Balochi	1.7
Hazara	1.3

The refugee population[5] in the host provinces was as follows:

Province	**Percentage**
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	62.1
Baluchistan	20.3
Punjab	11
Sindh (mostly Karachi)	4.2
Islamabad	2
Azad Kashmir	0.4

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The Afghan exodus was made up of two different socio-economic groups: the well-to-do and those who came in without resources. The former were easily assimilated in the Pakistani economy and society, while the latter were housed mostly in UNHCR-assisted refugee camps. Pakistan tried to regularise the presence of the Afghan refugees by launching the 'Proof of Registration Card' (POR). The card had somewhat contradictory purposes: to make it easier for the refugees to live in Pakistan and operate in the country's economy and politics and to facilitate their return to Afghanistan. Following this drive, 357,000 refugees were repatriated back to Afghanistan but a large number—in particular, those who were living in Karachi—chose not to obtain the POR. The arrival of large number of Afghans into the country had enormous consequences for Pakistan's relations with the outside world, not only in regard to the country's relations with Afghanistan, but also with Iran, India, the Middle East, and the US.

When, on 5 August 2019, the BJP government of Narendra Modi, changed the administrative structure of Kashmir from statehood to a territory managed directly from New Delhi by repealing Article 370 of the Constitution of India (that had allowed the Kashmiris autonomy to manage their domestic affairs), there were fears that the move may result in creating another mass exodus of Muslims into Pakistan. Islamabad protested and hoped that it would get the support of the countries in the Middle East that had a large presence of Pakistanis. That did not happen.

Formation of the Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East

According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Pakistanis have the sixth largest collective diaspora in the world. Large Pakistani communities have been formed, over the years, in the Middle East, the UK, North America and more recently, in Australia and New Zealand. The largest of these is the one in the Middle East. According to the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, out of a total of almost 8 million Pakistanis who live abroad, over 4 million reside in the Middle East. Of the world's total, the largest number is in Saudi Arabia, with the 2017 estimate placing the number at 2.6 million. The UAE has 1.2 million people of Pakistani origin; Oman, 235,000; Qatar, 125,000; Bahrain, 112,000; and Kuwait, 110,000. Saudi Arabia is the source of most foreign remittances to Pakistan. A considerable proportion of those who live abroad moved, following the windfall gains in the oil-exporting countries in the Middle East, in the last quarter

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of the previous century, when they engineered a major increase in the price of oil. Policymakers in Pakistan had not anticipated the impact oil politics would have on the economy and on the country's relations with the outside world. The story of the oil-exporting countries cartel and its many consequences has been told by many analysts—one notable work is Daniel Yergin's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Prize*.[6] For Pakistan, the more important consequences were the creation of a large Pakistani diaspora in the Middle East; the large amounts of remittances sent by these people to their families back home; the occasional assistance provided by the rich oil states to Pakistan, when the latter faced serious financial stress and the rise of radical and extremist Islam in the country. The Pakistanis who moved to the Middle East were able-bodied young men who were, mostly, poorly educated. They were allowed to emigrate to provide labour for the rapidly expanding Middle Eastern economy, particularly the construction industry. They were not allowed to bring their families with them and could stay for short periods of time, not exceeding five years. The amount these workers saved was high which would be remitted to their families. Relatively short stays resulted in the rotation of workers, with new workers replacing those who were returning. Remittances helped the labour-exporting families to graduate from poverty to lower middle-class status. Probably as many as 5 million households out of the total of 30 million, were pulled out of poverty by the flow of remittances.

Imran Khan's government has played the most active role in mobilising support from the Middle East. Confronted by a large balance of payments deficit, the new administration was initially inclined to approach the IMF for relief. Many opposed this move, including myself. I wrote a short note to the prime minister, in which I indicated that the conditions the IMF was likely to impose in return for its support, would make it difficult for the government to provide the public services he had promised in the elections. He seemed to have taken that advice and made a number of trips to friendly countries in search of financial support. He visited three Arab nations—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. He also went to China, Malaysia, and Turkey. All this travel came in the first five months of his tenure as prime minister. The visits were productive. Among the Arabs, the Saudis, Emiratis, and Qataris promised substantial amounts of financial assistance, which came in the form of deposits with the State Bank of Pakistan, the country's central bank. Since all these were oil and gas exporting countries, help was also provided in the form of below-market prices for energy products. China agreed to redefine the

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content and scope of the CPEC investment program, while also providing a deposit in the State Bank. Malaysia and Turkey expressed an interest in investing in those areas in which they had a comparative advantage.

The approach to the three Arab nations meant walking a very tight rope. Imran Khan was encouraged by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey, to visit Qatar and seek help from Doha. Although a tiny nation, Qatar occupied an important place in the world of energy because of its large and practically inexhaustible gas reserves. Unfortunately, Qatar was boycotted by its Arab neighbours, on the grounds that it was allegedly supporting terrorist activities in the region. As discussed elsewhere in this work, the reason for this hostility was the sympathy the Qataris had for what is called 'political Islam'. This meant support for organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which was seen as posing a real threat to the ruling monarchies in the Arab world. Qatar relies heavily on imports for meeting its food requirements. It viewed Pakistan as a strategic partner but felt let down when it did not come to the country's rescue during the blockade imposed on it by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Iran and Turkey stepped in to ease the crisis. Pakistan had chosen to remain neutral, though Qatar had sent a high-powered delegation to Islamabad asking for help. Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan peace process widened the differences between the two countries since the Afghan Taliban had opened an office in Doha, the country's capital. Pakistan pressured the Taliban to hold discussions in Abu Dhabi in December 2018, that were attended by the Saudis and the Emiratis. Commentators in Pakistan took note of the difficulties the prime minister faced in dealing with the oil-rich Arab nations. 'Going forward would be a serious challenge for Khan's government to keep the Saudis, Emiratis, and Qataris happy [all] at the same time,' wrote Syeda Mamoona Rubab in an article for *The Friday Times*. 'He should not forget that their acrimony is so strong that the Saudis last year announced a plan to cut Qatar off from their mainland by digging a huge canal that would turn it (Qatar) into an island.'[7]

Another consequence of the millions of emigrants to the Middle East was the arrival of conservative Islam. The poorly educated Pakistani workers lived in crowded labour camps on the outskirts of major cities. The local mosques provided some relief, becoming quasi-community centres for migrants. In this way, they came into contact with the local *imam*s whose sermons were translated for them. This led to a religious ideological transformation of the workers, which they brought back with them to the homeland.

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The Pakistani Diaspora in the West

It was inevitable that the long rule by the European powers over colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, would later result in the people of these states migrating to the countries that had occupied their land. The areas that were thinly populated were occupied by the colonialists. The Europeans, on getting to the North American continent, called it the 'New World' although it had been inhabited for centuries by what came to be called the 'indigenous people'.

Of the four European colonial powers that entered Africa—France, Britain, Italy, and Netherlands—three subsequently terminated their relations almost completely with the lands they conquered but did not occupy. Only France maintained a relationship. This included a monetary arrangement, the use of French-backed currency known as the CFA franc, used by fourteen nations in western and central Africa. These countries together represent 14 per cent of Africa's population and 12 per cent of the continent's GDP. Luigi Di Maio, the Italian deputy prime minister (June 2018 to September 2019) and current minister for foreign affairs, held France responsible for the arrival of millions of Africans to Europe as refugees.

Pakistani migration to Europe was small-scale at first. The first large-scale migration began in 1965, during the construction of the Mangla Dam in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Over 280 villages around the towns of Mirpur and Dadyal were submerged leading to the displacement of over 110,000 people from the affected region. During that time, the government in London was looking for foreign workers to work in the industries in cities in north-west England, where there was a serious labour shortage because of the depletion of manpower caused by World War II. Britain granted 50,000 work permits to the people displaced in Azad Kashmir and they went and settled in Northern England between 1965 and 1970. Unlike the labour that went to the Middle East, these workers were allowed to bring in their families and it led to the creation of fairly vibrant Pakistani communities in Britain. There was no limit to the amount of time they could spend in Britain. All of them became British citizens. Some of them even got elected to the House of Commons.

The same pattern of demand for low-skill labour to man the industrial sector was repeated in several other European nations. In the summer of 2016, the Norwegian ambassador to Pakistan invited me to lunch in Islamabad. She had seen some of my published work on the Pakistani diaspora and wondered if I could do some research on the Pakistani

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community in her country. I was puzzled by the request since I was unaware that there was a sizable number of Pakistani immigrants in her country. She said that when she had arrived in Islamabad, the authorities here had been surprised when she requested that she wanted to visit the city of Gujrat. She explained to the officials in the ministry of foreign affairs that people from Gujrat constituted the largest non-European community of foreigners in her country. In fact, 10 per cent of the population of Oslo, the capital of Norway, were people of Pakistani origin. I asked the ambassador whether she had any specific issues in mind when she suggested my doing research on the Pakistani diaspora in her country. She told me that she was concerned about the stress under which many second-generation Pakistani women lived. 'Pakistani girls have done very well in my country,' she said. 'Many are highly educated and have moved into the country's modern service sectors. However, their parents insist on importing young men from Gujrat as prospective husbands. These men are not well educated and can get only low-level jobs. This leads to severe tension in these households.' She was of the view that to deal with such situations the Norwegian authorities needed to rely on serious social science research.

The second wave of migration from Pakistan to the countries in the West involved highly trained professionals, who went and settled mainly in the English-speaking nations: Britain, North America, and Australia. They were joined by the descendants of the early settlers and began to play important economic—even political—roles in their adopted lands. This happened over several decades. The easing of immigration into the US in the 1960s resulted in the arrival of millions of people from Asia into the country. Included in this movement were people from Pakistan. Since they were mostly professionals they were able to quickly build careers for themselves and form families. Family formation was made possible in the revised immigration policy that allowed those who were residents in the US, or had become citizens, to bring close relatives into the country. This came to be known as 'chain migration,' a process that Trump promised to do away with in the immigration policy he was promoting as president. The second generation of South Asian immigrants are not shy of discussing the difficulties they have faced in settling down in the West, in Britain, and the US. Some writers of South Asian descent have turned to fiction to write about the experiences of their people living in the West. There are many examples of this genre, including Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*. He tells the story of a community from a small town in Pakistan's Central Punjab that sought to replicate in a

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London suburb, the kind of life they had left behind.[8] This has become a recurrent theme in the later works of Salman Rushdie, who gained fame years ago by writing the novel *Midnight's Children*. His recent book, *Quichotte: A Novel*, the French spelling of Don Quixote, is the story of an Indian immigrant, a former travelling painkiller salesman, living in the US. He encounters the truths of contemporary America: the opioid epidemic, white supremacy, the fallout from the war on terror and more.[9] The most interesting writing on the subject of immigrants of colour in the West, is Suketu Mehta's book *This Land is Our Land: An Immigrant's Manifesto*,[10] which was written in anger at the anti-immigrant sentiment made popular by President Trump.

A number of them turned to politics to find a new place for themselves in their new homelands. The Indians have been more successful in legislature than the Pakistanis. Three politicians of Indian origin got elected to the Congress in the 2019 elections. In fact, Joe Biden's Vice President, Kamala Harris, is also partly of Indian origin. Migrants from India have also been more successful than Pakistanis in the corporate world. Some people of Pakistani descent are being recognised in the art world; for instance, Maria Qamar who exhibited her work at the Richard Taittinger Gallery in New York recently, is a Pakistan-born Canadian, who started her artistic career about four years ago after she was fired from a corporate job. She is a pop artist who depicts migrant life. The term Hinglish (a mix of Hindi and English) is used to describe the appeal of her work, which refers to pre-conscious images that are familiar to sub-Asian migrants. In an interview with *The New York Times*, she says, 'We moved to Canada in 2000, a year before 9/11. Being called a terrorist, a Paki ... [and being confronted by] direct racism and the violence that stems from it, was a huge surprise for me.'[11]

The different diaspora identified above have played varying roles in the development of the country of their origin. The one in the Middle East was the source of finance for the government. Pakistan has been perennially short of foreign capital. Remittances received from the workers in the Middle East contributed to lessening the huge balance-of-payments deficit. They also helped millions of poor households to climb out of poverty. The Western diaspora—in Europe and North America—has also started making investments in Pakistan, in banking and healthcare. However, Pakistanis and other people of colour, are now under pressure in their adopted homelands. Several Western countries are now taking stricter immigration measures and have become less

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amicable towards settlers. This would affect Pakistan's dealings and relations with these countries.

International Migration and Political Systems in the West

It is important for countries such as Pakistan, which have benefitted economically and socially from international migration, to understand some of the challenges these settlers face in the countries to which they have moved, or to which they might be moving. Their new homelands have benefitted from their cheap labour and skills that are otherwise in short supply. Most of the Pakistani workers in the Middle East are from underprivileged backgrounds.

Although, some countries in the West are taking full advantage of what migrants contribute to their economy and maintain accommodating policies, others have started to oppose their presence. Germany illustrates the amicable trend, whereas Hungary lies on the other extreme. The US, under Trump, meanwhile, occupied the space in between. Under Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany spread the welcome mat when a large number of migrants arrived to escape turmoil in their countries. The largest number came from Syria, where several opposing forces are engaged in civil war. Many Pakistanis also migrate to Germany.

However, it may be noted that nowadays there seems to be a trend in the West that has turned against immigration in the last several years. This was due to the open-door policy adopted by European nations when they formed the European Union (EU). The members of the EU signed the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which allowed citizens to move freely among the countries of the EU. This had a number of unexpected consequences; chief among them was the movement of a very large number of people from East Europe to Britain. Hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens migrated to Britain and took up low-paying jobs all over the country. This produced a backlash and ultimately led to the decision by the country's citizens to leave the EU.

A process that has come to be known as 'Brexit' was initiated soon after the 2016 referendum, in which a narrow majority voted to leave the EU by March 2019. Wars in the Middle East, in Syria particularly, displaced millions of people. The ease with which they could move to countries of their choice once they were in the EU, resulted in the arrival of more than a million people into the continent. Most of them went to Germany, the largest and the most dynamic European economy. This ultimately produced a political backlash led by the extreme right

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xenophobic countries that changed the continent's political landscape. The 'Brexit' decision was not motivated by other factors, apart from non-Europeans or Muslims immigrants into the country. But that was not the case with a number of countries in mainland Europe, in particular in the eastern part of the continent.

The anti-immigration sentiment was not confined to Europe. It took hold in the US as well, especially after Donald Trump became president. The 45th US president made no secret of his distaste for people of colour, in particular those who followed the Islamic faith. He was travelling the road that some countries in Europe had already embarked on.

Trump's first priority for his anti-immigration stance focused on neighbouring Mexico and Central America, from where very large numbers of immigrants were entering the US—many of them illegally. Trump made this a major election issue in the midterm contest in November 2018. 'Trump's efforts to whip up fear about the increasing number of immigrations in the closing days of the midterm cycle, may have helped some Republicans clinch wins around the country,' wrote Jack Healy and Caitlin Dickerson in *The New York Times*. 'But in places like the diverse Denver suburbs, it had the opposite effect...Within the country's increasing number of diverse suburbs, there was evidence that for many voters, Mr. Trump's closing argument on immigration had gone too far.'[12]

In the US, many among the white population were feeling apprehensive that their proportion in the country's population was declining and the presence of Islam was increasing. In the minds of many in the Trump base, the slogan, 'make America great again' was translated as 'make America white and Christian again.' According to Farhana Khera, president and executive director of Muslim Advocates, a Muslim advocacy group: 'The anger over immigration and the reference to Trump in the [El Paso] shooter's manifesto is a troubling confirmation of concerns that many in the US Muslim community have about the climate created by the president's rhetoric. Trump is not going out and carrying out these attacks, but he has a drumbeat of demonizing Muslims and immigrants saying that we should be feared and that we are violent and that we don't belong.' The reference to El Paso was about the attack by a white supremacist on those who were shopping in a large store in a border town in Texas. She pointed out that in the last couple of years, more than 70 per cent of the deaths caused in incidents that should have been labelled as 'terrorist attacks', were carried out by white nationalists. Muslim extremists were responsible for only 2 per cent. 'In

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this administration, we have not seen any indication that there is any kind of attention being given to the threat posed by white nationalists. If anything, what's particularly disturbing is that the nationalist threat has only become more brazen and more deadly.'[13]

Trump has a long history of making derogatory remarks about Muslims and their faith. In his campaign to become the Republican candidate for the presidency in 2016, he announced, 'Islam hates us,' in one of his rallies and he stated that he would ban the entry of Muslims into the US—a promise he kept when he moved into the White House. He issued an executive order banning the entry of citizens from several Muslim majority countries. In the manifesto posted by the man who carried out the attack on two New Zealand mosques—an incident discussed in some detail below—the killer posed a number of questions to himself. 'Were/are you a supporter of Donald Trump?' the reply: 'As a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose? Sure. As a policymaker and leader? Dear God, no.' Some of the language the Christchurch killer used was similar to that employed by the American president. He called immigrants 'invaders'; attacked 'mass immigration' and he hoped to 'directly reduce immigration rates.' Over the weekend, following the massacre in New Zealand, Trump 'had contorted himself into a victim of the tragedy, griping on Twitter: 'The Fake News Media is working overtime to blame me for the horrible attack in New Zealand.' He wrote dozens of messages targeting a number of people and institutions he saw as his enemies. Mohamed Elibiary, a Texas Republican who had served as a homeland security expert for the US government, said 'What I've seen in the right wing...people who haven't been as engaged in the political system until Trump came along, they really are taking his language very seriously....He is promoting this nostalgic vision of America.'

A February 2019 report released by the Southern Poverty Law Centre found 1,020 hate groups—an all-time high—across the US in 2018, as well as an increase in the death toll tied to the radical right, with the white supremacists in the US and Canada killing at least forty people. Many analysts and observers attribute this to Trump's rise in the US and his open support of nationalism. As mentioned above, he has demonstrated anti-Muslim sentiment both in words and deeds. At a September 2015 town hall meeting in New Hampshire, he pledged to kick Syrian refugees out of the country, since most of them were Muslims. The following month, in a television interview, he said he would 'certainly look at' the possibility of closing mosques. In the month after that, he toyed with idea of creating a database of all Muslims in the US. On more than one

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occasion during his campaign in 2016, he falsely claimed that during the 9/11 attacks, he watched Arabs in New Jersey cheer as the twin towers collapsed. Most pertinent in this regard, was the ban he proposed on all Muslims from entering the country. He is reported to have been even more critical in private. A person who knows Trump well, says that the president, 'thinks that Muslims are taking over Europe.' His combative stance about Islam and Muslims is reflected in the public's view of him. A 2017 Pew Research Centre Survey found that 68 per cent of US-based Muslims said Trump had them 'worried.' A July 2018 Quinnipiac poll also found that nearly half of the voters believed Trump was racist.

Muslim leaders in the US tried to reach out to Trump, but they were rebuffed. According to Oussama Jamal, secretary of the US Council of Muslim Organisations, an umbrella organisation, 'We tried. We said, "Regardless of what he says as president, regardless of our differences, we'd love to meet with him, we'd like to sit down and explain more about Muslim Americans, what we do, how much we have worked with previous administrations. We don't have to like each other but we have to communicate." The White House response was silence.'[14]

Trump's political governing philosophy has travelled across to Europe and to Latin America as well, particularly in Hungary and Brazil. In the former, under the political hold of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, nationalism has become the state philosophy. Orban has a vision of mono-ethnic Hungary. But the prime minister has run into some opposition, most notably from one part of the church headed by Reverend Gabor Ivanyi, who was a personal friend of Orban's, having conducted his marriage and the christening of his children. According to Patrick Kingsley writing for *The New York Times*, 'Ivanyi did not keep silent' as Orban's views about Muslim immigration into Europe became more strident. 'In both word and deed, he repeatedly challenged the prime minister, continuing to provide services to the homeless and refugees, even giving one Afghan a room in his home. And he often questioned Mr. Orban's presentation of Hungary as a mono-ethnic country, and his claims of governing by Christian principles.'[15]

This anti-immigration sentiment is not confined to the right of the political spectrum. Hillary Clinton also expressed similar views in a long interview with *The Guardian*. She was interviewed before the mid-term elections in the US, but it was published a couple of weeks after the poll. She stated:

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> I admire the very generous and compassionate approaches that were taken by leaders like Angela Merkel, but I think it is fair to say Europe has done its part, and must send a clear message....We are not going to be able to continue to provide refuge and support...because if we don't deal with the migration issue it will continue to roil the body politic.[16]

According to *The New York Times* her remarks drew criticism and a dose of surprise from left-wing and even some right-wing scholars, commentators and immigration advocates of the US and Europe.

> I was kind of shocked. If she's simply saying you need to cut down on refugees that are coming to Europe to ask for asylum because they have a well-founded fear of persecution, just to appease some right-wing political leaders, it's just not the right thing to do. [Eskinder Negash, President and Chief Executive of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants]

> [Mrs Clinton's perspective was] tragically misjudged. Ultimately, immigration is not actually the problem that inflamed voters: Much more foundational issues, such as austerity, are the real reason. Immigrants and refugees are simply the scapegoats populists have chosen to use to drive forward their ideas. [Professor Tanja Bueltmann, Chair in International History at the University of Strathclyde]

On the other hand, the right applauded Clinton's views. 'Maybe Hillary has understood the lesson,' said Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the far-right Brothers of Italy party, which has advocated an 'Italians First' platform and a hard line against migrants entering their country.[17] One result of the anti-immigration sentiment was the gains made by the extreme right-wing parties. Countries such as Hungary and Poland elected ultra-right politicians to their legislatures. When that also happened in Germany and Italy, it sounded alarm bells in the more egalitarian parts of the continent. Talk of nationalism replaced that of globalism. This worried politicians such as the French President, Emmanuel Macron. In a powerful speech delivered at the commemoration of the end of World War I, he talked about the millions of soldiers who perished in the conflict to defend the 'universal values' of France and rejected the 'selfishness of nations only looking after their own interests. Because patriotism is exactly the opposite of nationalism.' The French president made a series of attempts to stand as a vocal counterweight to Trump, who had called himself a nationalist and has moved to set the US apart by attempting to restrict immigration into his country and walked out of

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global treaties, including the Iran nuclear accord, the Paris climate deal, and a UN program for refugees.

Two of the three elements in the immigration policy under Trump affected the Pakistani diaspora. First, Trump had made it hard for immigrants to reach the US border to apply for amnesty. This is not the route Pakistanis coming to America take. Second, the administration had indicated its intention to restrict chain migration that helped many Pakistani residents in the US to form extended families. Third, there is growing Islamophobia that has begun to affect the lives of the Muslim community.

Several other Western nations developed strong antipathy towards immigration, particularly from Muslim countries. Australia is one of them. Scott Morrison, the prime minister of Australia, unveiled a plan on 22 April 2019, that he said would address a fundamental challenge faced by his nation of 25 million people. In detailing his plan, Morrison had borrowed the language of Trump. While addressing a rally, the American president had lashed out at immigrants, telling them to depart, because his country was 'full'. Morrison presented his plan as a reaction to crowding in the largest cities of his country, which has caused congestion and costlier housing. 'The plan is about protecting the quality of life of the (*sic*) Australians right across our country.'

According to one account, 'Such concerns are widespread as views in the country have turned sharply against population growth over the past year. There is worry, though, that these "quality-of-life" complaints have been amplified by—or perhaps have masked—a deeper ambivalence about a new wave of non-European immigration, especially from Muslim countries, along with Africa and Asia.[18] Religion coupled with the colour of the skin, were factors in the growing opposition to the admission of new people into the country. 'It is the kind of attitude that, according to many immigrants in Australia, still shapes the discussion around population growth in a country that barred non-white immigrants until 1971.'[19]

By no stretch of the imagination could Australia be described as 'full'. Its landmass is equal to that of the US with a population less than one-eighth as much. That said, the country's population has increased largely because of immigration. 'According to the 2016 Census, more than one in four Australians were born overseas, compared to 13.7 per cent of the population in the US and 14 per cent in Britain.' For these countries as well, migration had become a political issue.

Going by the politics in America and Britain, the reaction against newcomers was not related to their religion, or country of origin. The

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British were troubled by the arrival of large number of workers from Poland who had taken advantage of the provision in the laws of the EU that allowed the movement of people without any constraints. In America, immigration was mostly from Mexico and Central America. In both cases, the immigrants had taken low-paying jobs, hurting the native population at the lower end of the income distribution scale. But this was not the case in Australia. Most of the 4.7 million foreigners who have settled in Australia since 1980 were highly skilled, especially after 2004, when an average of more than 350,000 students and skilled workers arrived each year. Six out of the top ten source countries were in Asia, with immigrants from China (509,558) and India (455,385) being foremost.

By now, Pakistan has large expatriate populations in the Middle East, Britain, North America, and Australia. The number of Pakistanis arriving and living in continental Europe is also increasing. Each of these places that have Pakistani diaspora presents opportunities to those who have moved from Pakistan.

Some Western Leaders' Antipathy Towards Immigration and Islam

The warmth with which the then US president, Donald Trump, received Viktor Orban the Hungarian prime minister in the White House, said it all. Influential political figures in the West are coming together to fight what they view as a threat posed by international migration, to their culture, religion and, yes, their colour. Orban is one of Europe's leading nationalists and had been trying to get an invitation from the White House for years. He was rebuffed by the Republican president, George W. Bush, while Barack Obama was openly opposed to the idea of honouring a controversial figure in European politics. Trump had no such qualms. On 13 May 2019, he not only received Orban in the Oval Office, but heaped lavish praise on him. 'Viktor Orban has done a tremendous job in so many different ways,' he said, as the two were photographed sitting side by side in the Oval Office. 'Highly respected. Respected all over Europe. Probably like me, a little controversial but that's okay. That's okay. You've done a good job, and you have kept your country safe.'

Peter Baker, reporting for *The New York Times* on the Hungarian leader's visit, wrote: 'For Orban the American president's embrace was a welcome affirmation, not to mention a striking contrast to the chilly reception he often gets from European leaders who see him as a threat to their vision of a modern, integrated and pluralistic continent. Mr Orban

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has vowed to build an "alternative to liberal democracy", casting himself as a defender of the Christian homeland against Muslim migrants.'[20] Orban, in other words, has a great deal in common with Donald Trump. The two leaders, for instance, have total disdain for Muslims and the Islamic faith. For his part, Prime Minister Orban cast himself as a Hungarian Trump. 'We have some similar approaches', he told the press, 'I would like to express that we are proud to stand together with the United States on fighting against illegal immigration, on terrorism, and to protect and help Christian communities all around the world.' The last point was an obvious reference to Trump's effort to prevent an increase in the proportion of Muslims in his country. Trump then added: 'And you have been great with respect to Christian communities. You have recently put a block up, and we appreciate that very much.' Trump was envious of the successes achieved by Orban in Hungary. As David B. Cornstein, a long-time friend of Trump and the US ambassador to Hungary told *The Atlantic*: 'I can tell you, knowing the president for good 25 or 30 years, that he would love to have the situation that Viktor Orban has, but he doesn't.'

As mentioned earlier, one of the first moves by Trump after assuming office was to impose a ban on the entry into the US of people from a number of Muslim majority countries. The ban rested on the immigration code that gives the president the authority to issue such an order on the grounds of national security. That notwithstanding, the order suffered defeat after defeat in the courts, each time forcing the officials to go back to the drawing board to create narrower, more circumscribed restrictions. Eventually, it was accepted by the Supreme Court.

The American president did not make a secret of his worry that his country is losing its 'whiteness'. During Obama's political rise, Trump was worried that the American voters may be getting ready to send a black man to the White House. That worry led him to launch what came to be called the 'birther movement', which claimed that Obama was a Kenyan by birth. He maintained that according to the constitution, for a person to be elected to the White House he/she had to be a born citizen and therefore Obama was not a legitimate president. That of course was not the case. While his father was a Kenyan, Obama was born in Hawaii to a (white) American woman. Trump spread conspiracy theories on how Obama had concealed the place of his birth that began to circulate on conservative blogs and far-right websites. A meme encouraged people to display posters saying, 'It's OK to Be White'. They became popular with the group of people who came to be known as Trump's base. Trump campaigned to

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keep out immigrants from coming to his country, even if that meant building a high and expensive wall along the entire Mexico–United States border. Trump has managed to reverse the conventional wisdom that America was built by immigrants. Trump's obvious preference for white people—at one point he said he would prefer immigrants from totally white countries such as Norway, rather than from Africa and Latin America—has an interesting precedence in President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded President Lincoln after the latter's assassination. The 'accidental president' reversed a number of rights that the Civil War had guaranteed Negroes—in short, he was reversing Lincoln's mission. He was impeached by the House of Representatives but was saved from being convicted by only one vote. The story of this incident is well told by Brenda Wineapple in her book, *The Impeachers*.[21] Although the book's author did not explicitly draw the obvious parallel between Johnson in the mid-19th century and Trump in the early part of the 21st, it is all there in the way she tells the story. According to Jennifer Szalai, who reviewed the book for *The New York Times*:

> Johnson had been a polarizing president, cherished as well as deplored for his excitability, his stubbornness and his gift for demagoguery. A hair-trigger sensitivity to slights made him self-pitying and prone to corrosive paranoia. He railed against establishment elites and gave succour to white supremacists. He rejected congressional legislature and barrelled forward, declaring that he could hire and fire whomever he wished even though his impetuous dismissals drew complaints that he was obstructing justice.[22]

The book provides ample material to support the view that Trump, like Johnson a century-and-a-half before him, had a strong preference for white people. Like Trump, Johnson's bigotry was too brazen to ignore. 'Everyone would and must admit that the white race is superior to the black,' he once said. On one occasion, when a black delegation that included a black politician who had been working hard to improve the situation of his community in the post-Civil War era visited the White House to petition Johnson for voter rights for the blacks, Johnson's response was so contemptuous that afterwards, Adam Gurowski, an immigrant to the US, stated that he was 'ashamed of belonging to the white race!' Similarly, Trump's support remains solid in the areas where people are resentful of considering coloured people as being equal.

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Muslim Migrations and White Extremism

On 10 August 2019, the police in Norway foiled an attack on a mosque near Oslo, after a gunman in a helmet and body armour had opened fire. He was overpowered and taken into custody before he could do any damage. The mosque, al-Noor Islamic Centre in Baerum, was preparing for the celebration of Eid-ul-Adha. According to one account on the mosque attack, '[It] came amid a polarising debate in the country about immigration and Islam and prompted the authorities to order police officers to guard mosques in the city. Officers who generally do not carry weapons were armed for the rest of the weekend, the authorities said.'[23] The attack was thwarted by Mohamed Rafique, a 65-year old worshipper who was one of the three present inside the mosque at the time. Another, Irfan Mushtaq, a former director of the mosque, said, 'extreme right attitudes have become everyday matters for Muslims in Norway.' Prime Minister Erna Solberg said: 'This is not supposed to happen. Norway should be safe.'

Norway has a Muslim population of 200,000, out of a total of 5 million. Most of the Muslim migrants are from Pakistan. While the prime minister spoke clearly and strongly against expressing any sentiments favouring the racism of the attacker, she was inhibited somewhat by the fact that her governing coalition included the far-right, anti-immigration Progressive Party. The attacker had once written in an online forum that the gunman who killed fifty people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, was a 'saint', adding: 'It's been fun. Valhalla awaits.' He expressed admiration for several contentious Norwegian figures, including Vidkun Quisling, the Nazi collaborationist who was prime minister during the Norway occupation in World War II. It is interesting to note that the derogatory term 'quisling' originated from this premier.

The worst hostile act against Muslim immigrants was the one mentioned earlier, that occurred on 14 March 2019, in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Muslim population here is about one per cent of the total 46,000 out of 4.6 million. They are mainly made up of refugees from several parts of the world. This country welcomed them with open arms. The first Muslims to arrive in New Zealand were members of a British-Indian family, who landed in Cashmere, Christchurch, in the 1850s. Large-scale migration began in 1970s, with the arrival of families from the Pacific Islands. The region of Canterbury, which includes Christchurch, has seen a steady growth in Muslim population.

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That fateful day was a Friday and hundreds of people—men, women, and children—from the tightly knit Muslim community of Christchurch, went to two mosques to participate in the weekly prayers. They were attacked by a 28-year old citizen of Australia, Brenton Tarrant. He came armed with automatic weapons and shot the worshippers indiscriminately. When he was done, fifty men, women and children were dead and about as many injured. Among them were seven persons of Pakistani origin. One of them, Nadeem Rashid, 50, was planning the wedding of his son, Talha, in Pakistan. The video footage of the shootings showed Rashid trying to tackle the gunman before he and his son were killed. Back in Pakistan, Rashid became a national hero and was awarded an award for bravery by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The crime was meticulously planned. According to one account, 'the horror was designed specifically for an era that has married social media and racism...a massacre apparently motivated by white extremist hatred was streamed live on Facebook and calculated to go viral.'[24] The Facebook video, shot from Tarrant's helmet-mounted-camera, and a 74-page manifesto written by the assailant, pointed to an array of role models, from racist mass murderers to Oswald Mosley, the founder of the British Union of Fascists in 1932. The killer had special regard for Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian right-wing terrorist, who, in one of his attacks, murdered sixty men and women in Oslo in 2012.

The Muslim community was shocked by Tarrant's attack. Their leaders throughout New Zealand argued that police and intelligence agencies had for years been focused on keeping their communities under surveillance for signs of radicalism but had not bothered to check racist communities that might target Muslim and their places of worship. 'How was this not picked up by intelligence agencies?' asked Asif Koya, a former president of the International Muslim Association of New Zealand. He said he had raised this issue with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in a meeting after the shooting and requested a commitment that law enforcement agencies will work with the Muslim communities and share any crucial information on security threats.[25] *The Washington Post* got it right in its editorial published a day after the carnage:

> [It] must be called out by its proper name: a terrorist attack by a white nationalist bigot consumed by Islamophobia and impelled by the fervid extremism that suffuses the Internet's darkest crevices....The alleged gunman's racism—his rantings about the peril posed to whites of being 'replacement' by Muslims—is typical of that of other racist killers. That

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> he spent his days slinking through online cesspools and communing with like-minded social networks gives his crime a post-modern gloss.[26]

The newspaper warned that the circumstances that produced the killer and gave him the motive for his crime, needed to be addressed by the leaders in the West. That had to be done to prevent the situation from worsening. The killer evidently wished to instigate discord and sow divisions. He wrote that he wanted to 'incite violence, retaliation and further divide.' This sentiment has to be treated seriously and not brushed aside as was initially done by Trump in his response to the incident. He called the attack a disgraceful and horrible thing but didn't see rising white nationalism as a threat. The newspaper further wrote:

> It's critical that world leaders clearly and precisely denounce the ghoulish act. An attack on mosques, as on any place of worship, is especially sinister and dangerous. Online racists lionized the murderer as a hero and cheered his killing spree as he streamed it live. In fact, he is a monster who slaughtered innocent people...parents and children and, the old and the young.[27]

Many Western leaders were troubled by what they perceive as a rising trend of white supremacists in several Western societies. White extremists feel threatened by the influx of Muslims and other people of colour into the societies they have built in their respective countries and on the whole developed a bloc of the primarily 'white' and Christian countries of Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand, with which they identify their dominance. They have a conviction that they are superior by birthright to the other races, particularly coloured people and are usually even prejudiced against the Jews in their respective countries. They feel that immigration of coloured people is diluting their white culture and becoming a threat to Christianity; that this problem is now reaching a crisis level and these 'inferior people' will replace them. They have adopted the French writer Renaud Camus as their prophet of doom. His books, including the influential *You Will Not Replace Us*,[28] became bestsellers not only in France, but in many parts of the Western world. Camus expounds his belief that Europe's white majority was being replaced by North Africans and sub-Saharan African migrants, many of whom are Muslims. These ideas crossed the Atlantic and found supporters in America as well. The books have become important guides for white supremacists. Tarrant titled his manifesto, 'The Great Replacement'. He released this declaration of his

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philosophy shortly before embarking on his shooting spree. The long, angry text that Tarrant put out on the internet was motivated by his impression about what was happening in France when he visited that country in 2017. He was convinced that it was being 'invaded' by 'non-whites.' He wrote in his manifesto that it was evident that the final push was occurring in French cities and towns. 'For many years, I had been hearing and reading of the invasion of France by non-whites, many of these stories I believed to be exaggerations, created to push a political narrative. But once I arrived in France, I found the stories not only to be true, but profoundly understated.'

Many analysts attribute the growing tension between white nationalists and the religious minorities to pronouncements made by President Trump. As David Leonhardt, a *New York Times* columnist wrote a few days after the New Zealand massacre, 'Trump's words are still corroding democracy and public safety. His latest incitement fit a historical pattern, and one with "scary echoes".' Daniel Ziblatt who co-authored the book, *How Democracies Die* wrote, 'Trump doesn't deserve to be blamed for any specific crime. But he does deserve blame for the trend.' He continued the line of thought in Leonhardt's column. 'It isn't very complicated. The man with the world's largest bully pulpit keeps encouraging violence and white nationalism. Lo and behold! White nationalist violence is on the rise. You have to work pretty hard to persuade yourself that's just a big coincidence.'[29]

The 'replacement fear' of Camus has come to dominate white supremacist thinking. Camus warned of a conspiracy hatched by what he called the 'replacist elites', who were colluding against the White French and European people in order to replace them with non-Europeans—especially Muslims from Africa and the Middle East—through mass migration and demographic growth. He called this process 'genocide by substitution'.[30] Falling birth rates means that white populations around the world will not be able to replace themselves while the coloured people with high rates would overwhelm them by sheer numbers.

While Islamophobia is only one aspect of this perceived threat—albeit 'supremacists' often view them with greater hostility because they associate them with terrorism and a more alien religion and culture—this thinking is concerned with two other consequences: immigration from the south to the north and women's rights. Many of the white extremist groups have seized statistics showing a slowing birth rate in several Western countries. In the US, the birth rate is now about 1,765.5 births per 1,000 women according to Centres for Disease Control and

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Prevention, which is below the necessary level to keep the population stable without immigration. This is where anti-feminism comes into the picture. Annie Kelly, who is doing research on the subject at the University of East Anglia, 'What's gaining more of a foothold is the idea of reversing a woman's right to vote,' and also the right to get educated and join the work force. Thus, freed from civic and economic responsibilities, women will turn their attention to family formation. Arun Kundnani, a professor at New York University and author of *The Muslims Are Coming!* wrote, 'Look—Muslims have got their women where they need to be, and we're not doing a good job at that.'[31]

The New Zealand killer seems to have created a trend that could manifest itself in countless ways. On 21 March, when five mosques were vandalised in Birmingham, officials treated the attacks as being linked. Birmingham is home to one of Britain's largest Muslim populations. Sajid Javid, the British Home Secretary at the time, issued a statement on Twitter saying, 'It is deeply concerning and distressing to see that a number of mosques have been vandalised in Birmingham overnight.' He wrote soon after the news of the event spread. 'Let me be clear... hateful behaviour has absolutely no place in our society and will never be accepted.' Muslims make up slightly more than 4 per cent of the population of Britain, according to the most recent national census. The increasing Muslim population is mostly the result of immigration and is seen as a threat by the far-right groups in Britain. The Muslim community was the subject of an increasing number of hate crimes, according to Home Office statistics. There were 80,393 such offenses in 2016–17 compared with 62,518 in 2015–16. This increase was the largest since the Home Office began recording figures in 2011–12. The worst case to date occurred in 2018, when a white racist drove his van into a crowd outside a London mosque, killing one person and injuring several others. The cover story titled, 'How much immigration is too much?' in the liberal magazine, *The Atlantic*, provides some interesting data on the movement of people from what its author calls the global South to find new homes in the global North.[32] Throughout much of the 20th century, the US received relatively few migrants. In the sixty years from 1915 to 1975, the country admitted fewer than in the single decade of 1990. It was mostly a movement from the East to the West, from Europe to the US and Canada. Immigration accelerated from 1990 to 2015, when 44 million came to the North from the South. Britain received as many migrants relative to its population as the US. France and Sweden admitted an even larger proportion. Some 45 million foreign-born people who now live

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in the US, are in the country illegally. Initially, Mexico was the largest source of illegal migration; now, they are coming in mostly from the Central American countries. Experts project that by 2027, the foreign-born proportion of the US population will equal its all-time high in 1890, when 14.8 per cent of the country's population was of foreign origin.

Many migrants have perished in the sea trying to make the journey in rickety and non-seaworthy boats across the Mediterranean or crossing the desert in the American Southwest. Many are fleeing turmoil in their home countries; civil wars in Afghanistan and Syria and gang-related violence in Central America. But economics is a powerful motivator. Although extreme poverty, defined as a daily income of less than $2, has been reduced by two-thirds—there is promise of a better life in the North. The migrant-sending South will see a population explosion in the next few years—perhaps decades—while the populations in the North will rapidly age and in some cases even decline. The population of Africa in 2050 will almost equal the world population in 1950: 2.5 billion people. By then the population of Pakistan would reach 300 million, that of Bangladesh 200 million while the Central American countries will add 47 million people. It would be difficult for the West to resist this tide; it may not even be in its interest to do so.

Pakistan has been both a host and exporter of migrants. Its location in a severely troubled part of the world means that it would continue to receive refugees escaping turmoil in their home countries. Afghans will continue to seek refuge in Pakistan and so will the Kashmiris if the Indian part of what was once an autonomous state in India, becomes even more unsettled. It is possible that some Indian Muslims may begin to cross the border and move into Pakistan if the Hindutva campaign being pursued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his political party, gathers steam. India has already passed a citizenship law that makes the people of the Islamic faith the only group that won't be given citizenship if they can't establish that they are already citizens. China's campaign against the Uyghur Muslim population in the Xinjiang region, could also generate a migration wave.

While the number of people seeking refuge in the country might increase, the countries that have in the past served as escape valves for Pakistan, could become less welcoming. The Covid-19 pandemic has already resulted in the loss of jobs for a huge number of Pakistani workers in the Middle East. Tens of thousands of Pakistani workers who have lost their jobs there, are looking for ways to get back to Pakistan. The EU, particularly the countries in the south of the bloc that were being used

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as points of entry by people seeking to enter the continent, have adopted measures to close their borders. They were escaping the troubled spots in North Africa and the Middle East. Trump and his administration continued to look for ways to restrict the number of foreign workers entering legally and illegally. On 22 June 2020, Trump issued an order that would severely limit the number of foreigners allowed to enter the US, even if they have the skills the American businesses can't find in the local markets. In sum, people's movements would continue to play an important role in defining Pakistan's destiny.

Islam, Political Development, and Foreign Affairs

The subject of Islam and the formulation of a foreign policy automatically entail a number of questions. For instance, how much influence should Islam have on the foreign policy of Pakistan? With 'Islamic Republic' in the name of the country, there is an expectation that policymakers would follow Islamic norms. However, currently there are four contending political systems that different Islamic countries are following. These are identified below. Should the type of political system in each country inform the making of policy? Given the size of Pakistan and its location in a part of the world where all the four systems are in contention, how much of an effort should policymakers devote to resolving tensions between these systems? Broadly speaking, how much time should policymakers spend on determining the direction of an 'Islamic foreign policy'?

Foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations. At the time Imran Khan came to power in Islamabad, in August 2018, Muslim countries basically had four different types of political systems. The most prevalent was among these was that of authoritarian rulers who governed either as monarchs, or as the heads of powerful tribes. This is particularly true in the Arab world. In contention to this system was 'political Islam', which is favoured by some countries in the Muslim world. This system was espoused by movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood that had a brief tenure in Egypt after the Arab Spring of 2011. The Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt through the free and fair elections held in 2012, when Mohammed Morsi became president. That regime may have lasted, had it not abandoned the youth who were behind the Arab Spring. The Muslim Brotherhood government adopted a system that did not fit with the aspirations of the young people who had rebelled against authoritarianism of all varieties, including Islamic. They did not want one type of dictatorship to be replaced by another. When the

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military decided to move against the Muslim Brotherhood regime, it initially had the support of the youth. This was lost as General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi threw out the Brotherhood government and introduced a system that was even more restrictive than that of the former ruler, Hosni Mubarak. The third system is based on Western economic and political liberalism. This is the case with a small minority of Muslim nations and Pakistan is among them. Turkey was following this order, but with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan consolidating power in his hands, the country seems to be heading towards the adoption of 'political Islam'. The fourth political system is the most disruptive. It is advocated by extremist organisations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Taliban movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban governed Afghanistan for five years, from 1996, to 2001. They were ousted in December 2001, when the US invaded the country. However, they were back in contention as peace talks started between the Taliban leadership and the US. The talks concluded with the signing of a peace deal between the two. This was done on 29 February 2020, in Doha, the capital of Qatar, where the Taliban have an office. The agreement prescribed a deadline for the complete withdrawal of US troops and a schedule which included the freeing of prisoners held by each side. This was to lead to direct talks between the Taliban and the Kabul government. These talks eventually failed and the Taliban recaptured Kabul in August 2021.

Tensions Among the Systems

These four systems are in contention, especially after the choice was made by Trump presidency to favour authoritarianism in the Muslim world. Obama, his predecessor, had also dealt with the issue of Islam and the West that had received a great deal of analytical and policy attention in the US after the 9/11 attacks. The Al-Qaeda group that orchestrated the attacks wanted the differences in the Islamic world to be resolved by Muslims and without the intervention of foreign powers. In what has come to be known as the 'Cairo speech', delivered on 4 June 2009, from the Major Reception Hall at Cairo University, the then president, Barack Obama, chose to address the subject without dividing the Muslim world into several parts—some to be favoured and others to be challenged. The theme of his speech was to urge a better understanding of what the Muslim world wanted from the West, in particular from the US. It did not want contention; it wished for understanding. He quoted from the Quran, to be conscious of God and always speak the truth. Trump has

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adopted a different policy and in doing so, has been influenced by the state of Israel.

Israel successfully negotiated peace with the Palestinian Authority and Egypt, by signing the Oslo Accords between 1993 and 2000. The accords created a Palestinian Authority tasked with limited self-governance of parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Watching over these negotiations were the then military rulers of Egypt. The Jewish leaders came to the conclusion that they could deal with authoritarian regimes that did not have to bother with public opinion. People in the Arab world, by and large, wanted a fair settlement for the Palestinians who wanted back some of the land the European Jews had taken, when they were settled in Palestine after the end of World War II. Dictators and monarchs are able to ignore the wishes of the people. This could not be done by the regimes led by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The Trump administration's close working relationship with Saudi Arabia reflected this preference.

It is clear which side Pakistan is on, especially after Imran Khan won the elections. Supported by the youth, his constituency wants representative political governance in which the will of the people must prevail over the preferences of a few leaders. This belief is easily reconciled with the basic tenets of Islam. The government cannot be left in the hands of monarchs and dictators. In working out its foreign policy, Islamabad needed to work with like-minded states in the Muslim world of which there were not that many. It could also become the model for those that could be encouraged to follow this policy.

As discussed earlier, the Pakistani government turned to the Muslim world in trying to deal with the enormous economic difficulties the country faced when the new government took office. While it did approach Malaysia and Turkey, it was the energy-rich Arab states to which the prime minister turned for financial relief. However, in dealing with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar at the same time, he had to walk a tight rope. The first two were engaged in a bitter dispute with the third, in defining political governance in the world of Islam, particularly in the Arab world.

The effort of the Muslim world to develop a political and economic system that would satisfy a number of their respective constituencies and institutions was visible in 2020 in a number of countries. The sectors that would need to be served included the establishment, the youth, and those who were Islamic in their outlook. The establishment included the elites who had dominated their societies for decades, even

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centuries. In most places, the military was part of this group. The youth contributed a significant proportion of the citizenry because of rapid growth in population. In a number of these countries, those under the age of 30 accounted for two-thirds of the population. And then there is the issue of the role of Islam in governance that still needs to be defined. In these countries, where institutions had not developed to resolve internal differences, the three sectors were often in conflict with one another, leading to instability. In most cases, the establishment succeeded in keeping the other groups at bay. The challenge, when it came, was mostly because of the corruption of the ruling elite and popular resentment against public morality and the quality of governance. This was the case in Algeria, Turkey, and Pakistan, where the political systems were in states of flux. Algeria is a good example of a place where these conflicts are still being played out.

I will discuss the Algerian situation at some length, since it is relevant to Pakistan, where the military has stepped back but continued to keep a watch on political developments. What happened in Algeria is pertinent in this regard. There has been a resurgence of Muslim youth in that country. The 82-year-old president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who had been holding on to power for twenty years, was deposed in 2019. Earlier, in 2013, he had suffered a stroke and had been running the country from a wheelchair. He came to power in 1999, in the wake of the horrific civil war that started in 1991, when the military shut down legislative elections in the early 1990s, in which Islamists had won the early round of voting. The violence continued for almost a decade and some estimates mention that 200,000 people were killed. The conflict between political Islam and the establishment that then tore Algeria apart is now restive again, particularly among the youth. They did not experience the trauma of the earlier civil war. They account for more than half the population and the unemployment rate is 29 per cent.

Bouteflika had filed his papers from a hospital in Switzerland, to run again for the elections in 22 April 2019. It would be his fifth term. This decision was prompted by a shadowy cabal of businessmen, generals, intelligence chiefs, and politicians, including the army chief and the sick president's brothers. The group is known as 'le pouvoir' (the power) and it has been running the country. It is known for corruption. How he had done that was reported in the book, *The Bouteflika Mystery*, by the journalist, Mohamed Benchicou.[33] As *The New York Times* noted in an editorial:

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> The announcement that the president would run in elections scheduled for April 18 set off weeks of mass protests across Algeria, a relatively rare phenomenon again in a country that eluded the wave of Arab Spring protests in 2011. Many people have said the crowds were larger than any anti-government demonstrations since the 1980s. They grew in size as the days went on.[34]

Starting on 22 February 2019, crowds of tens of thousands of Algerians, mostly young people, held demonstrations demanding that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, step down from office and not contest the elections. Some in the West believed that the events in Algeria had reignited the yearning for liberal democracy in the politically backward Arab world. According to an editorial in *The Washington Post*, 'The Arab Spring appeared to wither away years ago and amid coups, civil wars and authoritarian restorations. But the powerful currents that created it—popular unrest with economic stagnation and corruption and yearning for a more open society—never disappeared. That much is clear from the new upheaval in Algeria.'[35]

Will the change that seems to be coming to Algeria have a lasting impact? 'Algeria has known democracy only in fleeting interludes,' wrote Adam Nossiter, who covered the fall of the president for *The New York Times*. 'The only election which clearly reflected popular sentiment was a vote for the Islamists in 1991, after which the army stepped in, cancelled a second round and unleashed a brutal civil war that killed more than 200,000 people.' Having done that, the men-in-uniform continued to wield power but stayed in the background. The 2019 revolution was peaceful and focused not on the role of the Islam, but on demands for radical economic, political, and social change.

It could have consequences beyond the country's borders. According to Nossiter, it is 'giving pause to authoritarian neighbours from Egypt to the Gulf and to Sudan who have managed to thwart the street and had hoped that this kind of revolt was behind them.'[36] The pressure from the streets forced the military to abandon its support for the president and for what the protesters called the 'system.' On 2 April, the military chief, General Ahmed Gaid Salah, said: 'We must find a way out of this crisis immediately within the constitutional framework.' With the military support gone, the president announced that he was stepping down. The military was an arbiter of political life in the country. The constitution had a provision to declare the president unfit for office by a two-thirds majority.

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The wily Bouteflika was hoping that there was still enough support for him in the legislature so as not to be forced out. The streets anticipating that move, demanded a change in the constitution. According to Sudarsan Raghavan, writing for *The Washington Post*:

> The Algerians who poured into the streets for the past six weeks seek a clean break with the current political order. To many Bouteflika's ouster is only the first notch in their struggle to bring about a democratic transition. They want to end the monopoly of military veterans, lawmakers, business tycoons and clan members that has backed Bouteflika for decades and still retains control of the country.[37]

At stake in Algeria is more than the future of a single North African predominantly Muslim state. It has and will continue to play a role in addressing regional conflicts, containing migration to Europe, and countering terrorism. The last is particularly important. In the 2000s, a breakaway group of Algerian Islamists who participated in the civil war pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and named itself 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb' (AQIM) with the goal of toppling the government in Algeria. The AQIM has emerged as one of the better funded groups. It raises money through kidnapping Westerners for ransom in West and North Africa. It could link up with the ISIS which dislodged from Iraq and Syria and is attempting to gain a foothold in sub-Saharan Africa.

Turkey is another example of a Muslim country developing a political system where there are conflicts between groups with very different agendas. The Islamist President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, thought he had established his control over the political system, but the old establishment staged a comeback. This happened when the Justice and Development Party, or AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi], which the president had built up over the years, increased its hold on power. 'Mr. Erdogan had surprised many with the ferocity of his campaign in the local elections in Istanbul and Ankara, and some analysts have pointed to the importance of the big cities as a source of wealth for his network of family and friends,' wrote Carlotta Gall of *The New York Times*, from Istanbul.[38]

The party lost the local elections in the cities of Istanbul and Ankara. Erdogan's party had been in control of Istanbul since 2002. The president had launched his rise in Turkish politics from that city. Ekrem Imamoglu, the opposition leader who claimed that he had won the mayoral election in Istanbul, promised in a news briefing on 3 April, an independent audit of the city books. He said that he had evidence that the city government

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had engaged a technical company to delete data from the city's computers. Erdogan had undertaken the implementation of several megaprojects in both cities and there were rumours that the contracts had been awarded to favoured companies, who gave kickbacks to the president and his party. 'What makes the loss heavy is actually a secret known by everyone,' wrote Cigdem Toker, an investigative reporter at the fiercely dissentive newspaper, *Sozcu*. 'We are talking about tens of thousands of bids that can be identified with hundreds of billions and authority to spend them.' In January, Toker published details of payments by the Istanbul metropolitan municipality, to foundations and charities run by President Erdogan and his children and their spouses. The stage was being set for the deepening of the conflict in the country. The president retained sweeping powers and could make life difficult for the incoming mayors, said Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the Ankara director for the German Marshal Fund. The conflict was resolved by the president allowing Imamoglu to become Istanbul's mayor after a more convincing victory in a repeat election.

The Arrival of Extremism in the World of Islam

The arrival of extremism in the world of Islam can be traced back to the mid-1970s, when the oil exporting countries in the Middle East started to make windfall profits. They became wealthy and very influential in parts of the Muslim world. They had the resources and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became actively involved in promoting their Salafi version of Islam and its related sects in the Muslim nations. The resistance to the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan that began in 1978 and lasted a decade, gave Saudi Arabia an opportunity to spread their proselytizing mission in the tribal belt between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Because of the Russian occupation war, millions of refugees moved into Pakistan from Afghanistan. They were accommodated mostly in the camps located in the Pakistani side of the belt.

The US, seeing the Russians were in trouble in Afghanistan, financed and provided weapons to the groups of fighters called the Mujahideen. They also backed Pakistan, who was supporting these groups.

These groups were from the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan, from the major community of Pashtun (about 42 per cent of the population) as well as Tajiks and Uzbeks, who were from the northern areas and a lesser minority of Shias who were supported by Iran.

Hundreds of schools were set up in the camps in Pakistan to educate the Afghani youth. The Saudis provided funds for these seminaries that

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were turned into training grounds for young men who were recruited by the Mujahideen groups to fight against the Soviet presence in their country. The groups eventually won but were unable to decide on the structure of government that would be placed in Kabul.

Another civil war followed the ouster of the Russians. This lasted for another six years and ended with the rise of a new force which eventually took control of Kabul. This was the Taliban, who drew their name from the local word for students. They were also the product of the Saudi-assisted seminaries strung along the long Afghanistan–Pakistan border and associated with the Pashtun Mujahideen groups.

In 1996, the Taliban moved into Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, their name for the state they planned to establish in the country. A cleric who had lost one eye fighting the Soviets became the head of the state. He was a reclusive figure, who went by the name of Mullah Omar (d. 2013). The Taliban controlled all but a small part of Afghanistan. The part they were not able to incorporate into the state was in the northeast of the country. It was under the control of a group that called itself the Northern Alliance and drew its support from the Tajik community, a sizeable ethnic minority in the country. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the charismatic leader of the Tajiks, was assassinated on 9 September 2001, two days before the 9/11 attack. His murder was believed to be part of a scheme that aimed to drive the West from the Muslim world.

The Taliban were in power for five years, from 1996 to 2001. In retaliation to 9/11, NATO forces led by the US attacked Afghanistan and used air power to help the Northern Alliance overthrow the Taliban from Kabul, in 2001. While the Taliban vacated Kabul, they did not leave Afghanistan and spread into the rugged countryside. Some of them went to Pakistan. From their sanctuary, which was initially in the Pashtun areas of the Pakistani province of Balochistan, they mounted a resistance to the government in Kabul that had been established by the Americans. The war against the US presence went on for twenty years, until the recapture of Kabul in August 2021. This war is covered in Chapter 5.

Extremism in Pakistan

Extremism emerged in Pakistan in stages. Initially, one reason for its rise was the ethnic cleansing that accompanied the partition of British India. The movement of 8 million Muslims from India to Pakistan and the departure of 6 million Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan to India, left

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Pakistan with a population that was 95 per cent Muslim. It was now a Muslim state rather than a multi-ethnic political entity. Jinnah, in his well-known address to the Constituent Assembly, on 11 August 1947, envisaged a multi-ethnic Pakistan, in which followers of various religions will not think of their identities in religious terms. It was his hope they would regard themselves as the citizens of a state in which religion did not govern. That might have been the case if the country was only 70 per cent Muslim—which it was at the time of Partition. With a 95 per cent Muslim population, it looked to the Islamic world—in particular to the Arab world and Saudi Arabia—for inspiration. Then, General Ziaul Haq pursued an Islamisation policy during his dictatorship. He governed Pakistan for eleven years as the country's third military president.

In the Zia period (1977–1988), Pakistan sided with the US and Saudi Arabia to expel the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Moscow's defeat was brought about by the Mujahideen groups trained in the seminaries largely funded by Saudi Arabia.[39] The graduates from these institutions were taught and adopted the highly conservative Deobandi and Wahhabi school of Islamic thought. Wahhabis are the followers of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who believed in the Salafi tradition, of which the Deobandi school of thought is an off-shoot. Wahhabism is the official religion of Saudi Arabia. When the Taliban began to rule Afghanistan, they claimed they would convert it into an Islamic state and were ruthless in imposing their version of the religion. They imposed many restrictions on women and disallowed music and any other form of entertainment. After their rule was deposed in 2001 by the US with the help of Northern Alliance, the Taliban fought the US for nearly twenty years.

These developments deeply affected Afghanistan's neighbour, Pakistan. It was not only the proximity to Afghanistan that brought extremism into Pakistan, but the fact that the two countries share the Pashtun ethnic group. The Pashtun population is estimated at roughly 63 million. Around 42 per cent live in Afghanistan and the majority in Pakistan. The Pashtun community was split by the Durand Line, which is the border drawn in 1893 by the British, between their Indian dominion and Afghanistan. This is one reason why Kabul to this day has not accepted the Durand Line as a legitimate border with Pakistan.

When the US attacked and ousted the Taliban government from Kabul in 2001, myriads of Afghans fled to Pakistan. Most of them settled in the tribal belt running along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. At the time,

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the government's hold on this area was weak. Several Taliban groups got together under an umbrella organisation called the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) under Nek Mohammad. Baitullah Mehsud became the leader in 2005. He was killed in a drone attack in August 2009. But the area attracted other extremist groups. The territory, referred to as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), became the seedbed for the growth of extremism in the country. Extremism's main objective was to target military and law-enforcing bodies, mainly in FATA and it later spread to Peshawar and other northern cities. Subsequently, attacks were made on other cities and on the civilian population and religious establishment. Terrorism began to take a heavy toll. It manifested itself in several different ways: radical Sunnis were behind the attacks on Sufi shrines, on the Shiite communities, and on crowded places like bazaars. They also tried to stop the polio vaccination campaign. Primarily, it was the TTP, but other splinter organisations also carried out acts. On 18 May 2019, a Sunni group that identified itself as Hizbul Ahrar—an offshoot of the TTP—attacked the venerated Data Darbar shrine in the centre of the historic part of Lahore. Twelve people were killed.

Since 2001, the army had been trying to remove the extremists from the tribal areas. Initially, its success against the TTP was hampered for several reasons. The TTP were able to organise themselves well in 2004, under Baitullah Mehsud. They had popular support in the tribal areas; therefore, there was no shortage of recruitment. Initially, the government was following a policy of leniency, selective targets and negotiations with the TTP and other groups. Up till 2008, primarily the Frontier Corp militia were employed against them. Only limited PAF and Army Aviation air power was brought in till Operation Zalzala, in 2008. Further, the army faced difficulties because each operation displaced hundreds of thousands of people. By 2009, 550,000 had been displaced and in 2014, in Operation Zarb-e-Azb, there were 930,000 IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). The following is a list of the major army operations against the TTP and other extremists:

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Operation	2001–2002	Against selective targets in South Waziristan
al-Mizan	2002–2006	Consisting of smaller operations in Wana, the capital of S. Waziristan, Sararogha, Orakzai, etc. Nek Mohammad died in 2004 and Baitullah Mehsud became the leader of the TTP. He signed peace accords on 2004, 2005, and 2006, all of which were broken forthwith.
Zalzala	2008	South Waziristan. This area saw the first full-scale army operation with helicopter gunships and PAF air support against the TTP, utilising the Frontier Corps with the 14 Infantry Division and a Mountain Brigade with a total strength of about 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers. Although the forces reclaimed all the territory and disrupted the TTP, Baitullah Mehsud had escaped and the Taliban dispersed.
Sherdil	2009–2010	This was another full-scale army operation, with helicopter gunships and PAF air support and roughly 8,000 soldiers in Bajaur Agency, against Qari Zia Rahman and others who had expelled all the *lashkars* (local peace keeping force) from Bajaur and taken over the government buildings. Bajaur and Mohmand Agencies were cleared.
Rah-e-Haq	2007–2009	Swat. A strength of 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers. The Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-Mohammadi (TNSM) declared their own government here. Peace was declared with the signing of the Malakand Accord in April 2009.
Rah-e-Rast	May 2009–2010	Swat. The TSNM broke the accord. The operation employed a strength of 28,000 to 45,000 soldiers against the group. The TNSM was routed and its leaders arrested. The operation re-established the authority of the government. The fighting caused 2.5 million people to be displaced, but they returned when peace was restored. After Swat, the force proceeded to South and North Waziristan to take action against Mehsud and other extremist groups.

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Rah-e-Nijat	2009–2010	S. Waziristan, in Wana, Miranshah and Jandola. Baitullah Mehsud had reorganised and stepped up his terrorist campaign in the country. In this operation, three divisions and Frontier Corps were used as well as air support and helicopter gunships. Total strength of 28,000 to 45,000 soldiers.
Rah-e-Shahadat	2013–2014	Tirah valley in Kurram and Orakzai Agencies.
Zarb-e-Azb	2014–2017	S. and N. Waziristan. Strength 30,000 army personnel. Action taken against several extremist groups that included TTP, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Movement, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda, and the Haqqani network.
Radd-ul-Fasaad	2017	There was a resurgence of terrorism and so a similar operation to the above was launched, in 2017.

Both the US and Afghanistan had been demanding that an operation like Zarb-e-Azb be launched, since the sanctuaries in the tribal agency were being used to launch attacks across the border, on NATO forces and the Kabul government. But the Afghan authorities were not satisfied with this operation. I met the then president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, in Kabul in May 2018 and he expressed his displeasure in no uncertain words about the military operations. 'What they have done is to push all the world's filth into Afghanistan. They should have killed them all,' he said.

In a meeting in Islamabad in the summer of 2015 with Sartaj Aziz, who was then adviser to the prime minister for foreign affairs, he described to me the complex infrastructure these groups had built in Miranshah, the capital of North Waziristan. He had visited the place after the military had declared that it had completed the operation, though there still remained some pockets of extremists. Actually, the main problem in fighting the TTP was that even after they were routed they would be able to recruit more fighters from a sympathetic population misled by their jihadist version of religion. Sartaj Aziz explained that, 'Much of the living and work was done underground; some of the structures they had built were several stories deep. Some of them were built under the mosques in the area. There were factories for the manufacture of "improvised

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explosive devices" (IED) that were deployed in Afghanistan against both the Afghan and foreign troops.' It was an IED that killed the son of General John Kelly, Trump's chief of staff. The loss the General suffered shaped his views about the war in Afghanistan and his anti-Pakistan sentiment. After Operation Zarb-e-Azb was concluded on 3 April 2016, another operation, namely Radd-ul-Fasaad, had to be launched on 22 February 2017, to clean out the remaining sleeper cells following a resurgence in terrorist activities.

The Pakistani military had drawn some lessons from the operations carried out in other areas by other armed forces. The Pakistani military implemented a military strategy called 'seek, destroy, clear, hold.' This involved seeking a target, destroying it, clearing the area of insurgents, and then holding the area that was cleared. The 'seek and destroy' component of the strategy was developed and deployed by the American forces in Vietnam. The 'clear and hold' part came from the American-led war in Iraq.

The effective removal of these sanctuaries reduced extremist activities in the country considerably. They diminished in number and scope but were not totally eliminated. Their geographic focus shifted and the relatively backward districts in the southern part of Punjab also provided sleeper cells and recruits to a variety of extremist groups. The government became aware that a great deal of financial support for these groups was coming from abroad; from official sources as well as private citizens. Anti-terrorism, therefore, meant more than the use of the military; it also meant managing the flow of funds to finance the extremist organisations that were involved.

On 18 December 2018, a committee headed by then finance minister, Asad Umar, approved a report prepared by a task force appointed by the PTI government, in response to the decision taken earlier in the year by an international group. The FATF had placed Pakistan on its 'grey list', which it could exit if it presented a report to the group on the sources of finance for extremism and developed a program for dealing with the situation. The FATF had asked for comments on a 27-point action plan that Pakistan had to implement in order to get off the grey list. The Financing Risk Assessment report was the result of the FATF action. It identified half a dozen primary sources of terror financing, with roots in both Pakistan and abroad. In addition to foreign funding, the report listed drug-trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, robbery, and bank heists as primary sources of funding for extremist activities.

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The Pakistani response stated that hostile agencies were funding terrorism activities in Pakistan, conducted by sub-national groups operating in some parts of the country. The obvious reference was to alleged financing by India of separatist activities in Balochistan province. The groups operating in the province were using terrorism to support their program. The report prepared by the Pakistani group was considered by the Asia Pacific Joint Group that met in Australia before sending Islamabad's response to the FATF meeting in February 2019. The February meeting kept Pakistan on the grey list and more action was expected from Islamabad before it could improve its position.

The FATF demanded action against Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, the two organisations blamed for terrorist attacks in India, one in Mumbai, in November 2008, and the other in Kashmir, in February 2019. On 4 March, the prime minister gave a background briefing to TV hosts in which he emphasised that the time had come to do more to crack down on such rogue elements. Pakistani officials said they planned to freeze the assets of extremist groups and to take control of religious seminaries that were affiliated with them. More travel restrictions would also be imposed on militant leaders. In an initial sign of the crackdown, the authorities detained forty-four people prominent in the ranks of the extremist groups. Those detained included the brother and son of Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaish-e-Mohammed. 'There is a total consensus across all state institutions that these religious militias represent a liability from the 1990s, a baggage of the past,' reported Salman Masood of *The New York Times*.

The arrests followed an initial announcement that Pakistan would issue a 'freezing and seizure order' in accordance with a long-standing UNSC Act. The government said the order would 'streamline' procedures for carrying out UN-mandated sanctions against 'designated' individuals and groups. As *The Washington Post* reported, 'Pakistan has technically banned numerous such groups over the years, but it has never made a concerted effort to stop their activities...in part because of their public support and influence, and in part because they serve as a covert complement to Pakistan's public rivalry with India.'[40] In an editorial, *Dawn* urged the government to be resolute:

> The relevant networks that have to be dismantled are formidable and it is likely that parts of the state apparatus themselves are unaware of the threat, a determination of which level of the state and which part of the security apparatus are to deal with specific aspect of the threat,

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> and a sequencing of the actions over the short to the medium term will be required. The external dimension—Pakistan's obligations under international law—will also be an important factor. There ought to be no illusions that vast networks built over decades and are thriving today will simply acquiesce to the state dismantling them. But there is no rational alternative path left.[41]

Currently, the grey list is hanging like a sword of Damocles over the Pakistan government.

Some extremist groups operated as legitimate political parties. One example of this was the emergence of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). The sudden rise of the TLP is a good indication of the state of flux of political Islam in the country. It found popularity, mostly among the poorly educated urban youth, who were easily convinced that Islam was in danger and that the liberal elements of the country had to be watched. The TLP espoused the cause of protecting the name of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from blasphemy and resisting any change to the blasphemy law. This slogan had a strong appeal to the religious-minded public. Originally, such a law was enacted by the British to contain the anger of the Muslims at the publication of a book that disparaged the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These laws were made more stringent by President Ziaul Haq. He added a provision to the statute, according to which, insulting the Prophet (PBUH) or Islam were offences punishable by death. On 4 January 2011, Salman Taseer, then governor of Punjab, was murdered in front of a restaurant in Islamabad, for his opposition to the very strict provision of the blasphemy law. The assassin was his own security guard, Mumtaz Qadri. He fired twenty-seven rounds from his AK-47, into the person he was supposed to protect. The assassin became a hero instantly among those who believe in an extremist version of Islam. The murder shocked the world. *The Guardian* described the killing as 'One of the most traumatic events in recent Pakistan history.[42] Qadri surrendered immediately after committing the murder and was tried and sentenced to death by the Anti-Terrorism Court on 1 October 2011. However, it took more than five years before the sentence was implemented. Qadri was executed in February 2016. The authorities feared a reaction to his execution and it came in the form of a new political movement, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP).

On 1 August 2015, Khadim Hussain Rizvi (d. 2020), the preacher of a small mosque, founded the TLP. The party is known for its countrywide street power and the ability to mount massive protests in opposition

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to any change in the blasphemy law. It also demands that Sharia law be introduced in the country through a gradual legal process. To that end, it entered the electoral contest in 2018 and won two seats in the provincial assembly of Sindh. When Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman who was charged with blasphemy and kept in solitary confinement for eight years, was acquitted and found innocent on 31 October 2018, by the Supreme Court, the TLP was back in the streets. Muhammad Afzal Qadri, the party's co-founder, called for the assassination of the three Supreme Court judges who had acquitted the woman. 'The Chief Justice and two other judges deserve to be killed by either their security guards, their drivers or their servants,' he said, obviously asking for the crime that took the life of Salman Taseer to be repeated.

On 6 February, the Supreme Court entered the debate on the space the country should allow extremists in the country. It issued a detailed judgment involving a case that arose out of 20-day long sit-in staged by the TLP that paralysed life in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The protesters occupied the Faizabad intersection that connected the two cities. The verdict came on a *suo moto* hearing by a bench of two judges. 'Those who resort to violence should never be pampered, instead they should fear the state, its police and intelligence agencies,' wrote the judges. They asked the federal government to monitor those advocating hate, extremism, and terrorism and prosecute the perpetrators under the law. A person issuing an edict, or *fatwa*, that harms or threatens another, should be tried under the Pakistan Penal Code, Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, or the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act of 2016. The court was referring to the hate speech uttered by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, to incite his followers. There were enough laws on the books to deal with the situation created by the TLP leadership. The judges saw no reason for action not having been taken immediately, after the flow of traffic was blocked.

The judges also emphasised that the constitution assigned responsibilities to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that must be carried out. If a political party does not follow the law that governs political parties, then the ECP must proceed against it in accordance with the law, which certainly was not cosmetic. Political organisations must account for the source of their funds. It does not matter if the parties—involved in receiving financial support to carry out acts of violence—occupied seats of power.

The court dealt at some length with the role of the media, print as well as electronic, in reporting incidents such as the occupation of the main road crossing between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It said that those

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who broadcast messages advocating or inciting violence were acting against the provisions of the PEMRA ordinance and the terms of their licenses and must be proceeded against. The court also gave a lot of space in its verdict to the role of the military in protecting the citizenry. It was reacting to the role of the ISI, which had sent its personnel to bribe the TLP agitators to vacate the Faizabad crossing. 'The Constitution emphatically prohibits members of the armed forces from engaging in any kind of political activity, which includes supporting a political party, faction or individual.'

The judgment concluded with quotes from Jinnah, who called upon Muslims to temper their resentment with reason and to beware of the dangers that may overwhelm our own state, 'It is of utmost importance that Pakistan should be kept free from disorder, because the outbreak of lawlessness...is bound to shake...its foundation and cause irreparable damage to its future.'

Despite the government often making concessions where religious sentiments are concerned, it decided to be strict in regard to the behaviour of the TLP. On 23 November 2018, it ordered the arrest of the leader of the TLP, along with some fifty members of his party.

The urgency for government action increased following the near-war situation with India, because of the 14 February 2019, terrorist attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir on a paramilitary convoy, mentioned earlier. Added to this there was pressure not to show leniency to extremist elements resulting from the verdict of the Paris-based FATF that had put Pakistan on its 'grey list'. Pakistan risked being put on the black list. Such a move would open the door to international sanctions that would be disastrous for the country's stressed economy.

TLP was also believed to have inspired the brutal killing of Professor Khalid Hameed, who taught English literature at Government Egerton College, Bahawalpur. He was killed as he entered his office on 20 March 2019, by a student named Khateeb Hussain, who blamed the teacher for having insulted Islam. According to *The New York Times* report that appeared six months after the crime was committed, 'the murder is seen as a horrifying new chapter in a campaign against liberal education which small but influential extremist groups in Pakistan consider unacceptable. Many of the teachers are now wary of speaking freely to their students.'[43] Religion is not the only reason for the rise of extremism. The practice of 'honour killing' is also a form of extremism, since it has its origin in tribal culture. Honour killing is the murder, or disfigurement, of women if they bring disrepute on the family or community. Many backward areas

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rigidly follow this tradition as if it is part of their religious culture, but the fact is that it has no basis in Islam.

Pamela Constable of *The Washington Post* told the story of Afzal Kohistani, who had dared to highlight the honour murders committed by members of his tribal village in a Pashtun area in Pakistan's north. The tribal elders saw five girls dancing at a wedding ceremony with his brothers. They were accused of bringing shame on their tribe and killed. The remaining brother told the journalist that the murder 'has destroyed my family. The girls are dead, my brothers have been killed and nothing has been done to bring justice or protect us.' He added, 'I know that I will probably be killed, too, but it doesn't matter. What has happened, and it has to change.' His prediction was correct: though he went into hiding in another city, he was killed three years after speaking to Pamela Constable.[44]

Islam in the West and the US

In a ten-page special report titled, 'Islam in the West,' *The Economist* took an in-depth look at the presence of Islam in Europe and the US. The first article in the report came tellingly, with the heading 'Here to Stay.' The main thesis presented by the magazine was that there is a generational shift in Islam in the West. 'Three generations after their arrival, they [the Western Muslims] are fashioning a theology for highly diverse societies and secular systems of government in which Islam does not hold power. In short, they are building a Western Islam.'[45] The Islamic community in the West has about 30 million members, with 26 million in Europe, and 3.5 million in the US. The European count does not include the Muslim population of Russia. In Europe, Muslims make up 5 per cent of the population; in the US about 1.5 per cent. Some Muslim organisations believe that the estimate for America is low. They carried out a survey, the results of which were published and showed the size of the community to be nearly twice as large, at approximately 6 million. The largest concentration of Muslims in Europe is in France, with 5.7 per cent belonging to the Islamic faith. Germany comes in next with 5 per cent, Britain with 4.1 per cent, and Italy with 2.9 per cent.

In Europe, the first generation was made up of the hundreds of thousands of migrant labourers from places such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. France turned to its former colonies in North Africa to meet its labour requirements. These migrants were devoted to their religion but

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since they did not have the resources to build mosques or provide *imams*, they let that be done by the more affluent Muslim countries.

America's Muslims have come a long way since some of their ancestors arrived as slaves from West Africa in the 16th century. A good proportion of them adopted the religion of their owners and Islam became a very small presence in this community. In the 20th century, well-educated Muslims came to the country taking advantage of the more open immigration policy adopted by the Reagan administration. These newcomers were from the Arab world as well as from South Asia. In a nation of immigrants, Muslims found it easier to fit in here than in Europe. Except in a few cities such as Dearborn, Michigan, Muslims in the US are thinly spread, which is one reason why they have not entered mainstream politics in the country. That began to change with the entry of two Muslim women into the House of Representatives, viz. Ilhan Omar[46] and Rashida Tlaib.

Ilhan Omar is an outspoken immigrant from Somalia, who began to speak openly about the discrimination and hostility being displayed towards the Muslim community in the US. In a speech at the fund-raising event by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) held in March, the Congresswoman suggested that the ill will towards Muslims and Islam could be traced to the 9/11 attacks. She referred to the incident as, 'Some people did something.' This was interpreted as belittling the tragedy that claimed nearly 3,000 American lives. Her remark did not become controversial until it reached the ears of a Texan Republican Representative, Dan Crenshaw, who termed it as being disrespectful. After he noted this, the conservative media pounced on this comment by the Congresswoman. The Rupert Murdoch-owned *New York Post* showed a photo of the falling World Trade Centre tower, with the headline, 'Here's Your Something.'

President Trump also joined the attack on Ilhan Omar. On 12 April, he issued a video in which he declared that her statement was a dismissive comment for the dead. He called her a 'sick monster'. These reactions made the liberal segments of the US society cognisant of the fact that anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and attitudes have a long history in the country, especially among the members of the Republican Party. 'It was an important force among Republican voters,' wrote *The New York Times* columnist, Jamelle Bouie. He recalled a poll in 2004, in which 40 per cent of self-identified Republicans said that Muslim Americans should be required to register with the government and 41 per cent said

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that Muslim-American civic groups such as CAIR, should be infiltrated by the relevant departments.

He recalled that when Keith Ellison became the first Muslim elected to Congress in 2006, Virgil Goode, at that time a Republican Congressman from Virginia, wrote to his district that he feared, 'In the next century we will have many more Muslims in the United States if we do not adopt the strict immigration policies that I believe are necessary to preserve the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America and our resources from being swamped'. Donald Trump shared these beliefs. Jamelle Bouie in his article, further stated:

> He [Trump] has taken everything coursing through the last 20 years of Republican politics and made it explicit. It now has an official seal of approval. And if Omar is a target, it has little to do with what she said and everything to do with who she is: A black Muslim woman—and an immigrant—whose very person disrupts the exclusionary ideal of a white Christian America. The difference between the pre-Trump era and the present, in other words, isn't the substance of belief but its expression—and the force of the venom, contempt and hatred behind it.[47]

There was also a marked difference in the way Trump handled the two extremisms: Islamists and white supremacists. After the San Bernardino attack, in which two extremists of Pakistani origin, Syed Rizwan Farooq and his wife Tashfeen Malik, killed fourteen people at a party in 2015, having been radicalised by consuming *jihadist* propaganda, Trump told a radio host, 'That looks like another Islamic disaster.' He said, 'No matter where you look, it's the same thing. Then when I say we have to practice vigilance and we have to look at people...and whether you're looking at mosques or not...we have to be smart.' Compared to this, his response to the killing of fifty worshipers at a New Zealand mosque, was mild. He didn't think that white supremacy was rising globally. 'I don't think [it is], really,' he told a journalist. 'I think it's a small group of people that have very, very serious problems.'

How do the Americans feel about the presence of Muslims in their midst? This question was answered by a survey sponsored by the Washington-based American Muslim Institute. While most of the survey's findings were not surprising, some were counter-intuitive. A large proportion of the US non-Muslim population seriously over-estimates the number of Muslims living in the country. While the generally accepted percentage is 1.1 per cent of the total—a bit more than 3 million in a population of 320 million—the general impression

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is that the Muslims constitute about one-fifth of the total population. While the survey did not indicate why a significant number of Americans believe the proportion to be much higher than the actual, this may be because of the greater presence of Islam in common discourse. The 9/11 attacks created the impression of a larger Muslim presence than the one that exists and confirmed the mostly negative impression of Muslims and their faith in the minds of Americans. This survey was conducted before Ilhan Omar made several controversial comments that were read as anti-Semitic and disrespectful to the way the American population had reacted to the 9/11 catastrophe. The survey sought to identify the attributes of the US population that have a negative view of Muslims and their faith. A significant proportion of these are Republicans who live in rural areas, have had little contact with Muslims, watch Fox News channels and are poorly educated. They are, in other words, members of the Trump vote bank. They appreciate his views about Islam and Muslims and are troubled by the growing proportion of non-white people in the US population. They responded vociferously to Trump's slogan 'make America great again'. The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Angus Deaton and his wife, Anne Case, conducted a research on the segments of the population that are falling behind the rest of America. They found that this was a social and economic section of American society that was a subject of concern.[48] These people identify Muslims in America as one of the groups that have polluted their environment. Their view is that Muslims, by and large, are not patriotic and their religion is not compatible with American values, laws, and culture.

How would these people react to the presence of Islam in their midst? The survey found that a large proportion of those who are uncomfortable with the presence of Islam would not like Muslims to move into their communities; would not like to see women in *hijab* moving around in their neighbourhoods, or the places where they work and they would resist mosques and Islamic centres being built in their vicinities. There are several instances reported in the press where attempts to build mosques and centres had been successfully resisted.

In the US, there are some websites, such as 8kun,[49] pandering to this racism to a dangerous degree and even inciting to murder. The Christchurch massacre intensified the debate on the subject of 'hate' and how to counter it in the US and brought up the question of such sites. People like the Christchurch assassin are probably motivated by these websites. Drew Harwell and Craig Timberg wrote in *The Washington Post*:

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> But the brazenness of the threats of racist and anti-Muslim violence posted on 8chan poses a striking new challenge to a foundational idea of the Internet: that in all but the most extreme cases, such as child pornography, those hosting sites are not legally or morally responsible for the content others upload to them. Terrorism experts say U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been reluctant to treat white supremacists and right-wing groups as terrorist organizations because they typically include Americans among their ranks, creating complex legal and political issues.[50]

Created in 2013, as 8chan, the site morphed into its present form to accommodate hate messages. A move to control 8kun would clash with a key factor in the Internet code, embedded in a 1996 US law, which allows Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and others to operate with minimal government interference. There is a provision in the Communications Decency Act to limit a platform's legal liability for the content its users post, however, American agencies have been reluctant to apply the same degree of oversight as that to which foreign players are subjected.

Extremism: Fight it or Leave it Alone

The West's first impulse after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, was to use extreme force to hit back at those who wanted to dislodge the political and economic order that had been built after the end of World War II. The well-studied and deeply analysed reasons for the hatred that had prompted nineteen young Muslim men to mount the deadly attacks on the US, that took almost 3,000 lives, were basically that they objected to the way the US was dealing with the Middle East. The West was supporting authoritarianism, since that form of governance suited its purpose: it kept oil flowing and recycled the profit back to their own financial centres. It supported the presence of the Jewish state in their midst. The authoritarian leaders of these countries, including the monarchs of the Arab states, kept this system going. If they needed help, including armaments, it would provide these.

This model worked until the rise of the Arab youth and the arrival of the Arab Spring in 2011. The results of the movement worried the West. While some dictatorial rulers were overthrown, some resisted, as was the case in Syria. The Syrian struggle produced a wave of Muslim migration to Europe, estimated to be a few millions. This enormous influx of people has disrupted societies in most of the countries there. It is a process that is still working its way through the continent.

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Despite all the rhetoric during his campaign for the American presidency, Trump wavered in his approach towards Islamic extremism. In late December 2018, he created a crisis in his administration, by announcing that he was pulling out of Syria and would significantly reduce military presence in Afghanistan. These decisions prompted the departure of Defence Secretary, James N. Mattis, from the administration. He could not persuade Trump to reverse this course of action. In his resignation letter, he left little doubt that that he viewed the president as a threat to the world order the US had helped create. This decision got played out along with several others the president had taken, such as shutting down the US government on 20 December, when Congress would not give him the money he needed to build a wall along the southern border with Mexico. The shutdown lasted for more than a month. Mark Landler, who writes on national security issues for *The New York Times*, argued:

> If there was a common thread in Mr. Trump's actions, it was his unswerving conviction that his political survival depends on securing his conservative base. Those supporters have pounded him relentlessly in recent weeks for his failure to build a border wall with Mexico—one of the bedrock promises he made during his improbable journey to the White House. He rejected the stopgap budget deal because it failed to fund the wall. He criticized the Fed because its policy is dampening the stock market, which until recently he viewed as a barometer of his success. And he pulled troops out of Syria because it fulfilled a campaign promise to extract the United States from foreign wars.[51]

According to Landler, officials said Trump had also decided on deep cuts in the 14,000 troops serving in Afghanistan—a war he long derided as a misadventure and only grudgingly agreed to continue, under pressure from Defence Secretary, James N. Mattis, among others. But Trump supporters working both inside and outside the White House, did not withdraw their support from the erratic president. His chief domestic adviser, Stephen Miller, said on CNN, 'Let's defend our national security. Let's put America first. Let's not spill American blood to fight the enemies of other people.' Miller was determined to shut America to most foreigners, by keeping out most of those who were seeking to enter the country one way or the other. Mattis's resignation letter did well to sum up the beliefs espoused by the policy establishment that constructed the post-World War global order.

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> One core belief I have always held is that our strength as a nation is inextricably linked to the strength of our unique and comprehensive system of alliances and partnerships. While the US remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies. Like you, I have said from the beginning that the armed forces of the United States should not be the policeman of the world.[52]

Trump was shown the letter but did not initially realise that it was a powerful rebuke of the president's approach towards global affairs. He was furious when the meaning of the letter was explained to him by those working on the extreme right of the political spectrum. As a consequence, he pushed Mattis out earlier than planned and appointed his deputy as the head of the department of defence.

But Mattis was not the only senior official upset by the Trump move. Another person who decided to leave was Brett McGruck, the special presidential envoy to the coalition fighting ISIS.[53] 'The recent decision by the president came as shock and was a complete reversal of policy that was articulated to us,' he said, in an email to his colleagues. He was referring to the decision to pull US troops out of Syria. 'It left our coalition partners confused and bewildered.'[54] Appointed to that position by the Obama administration, McGruck was comfortable with the stance the previous president had taken, with respect to the conflicts in the Middle East. Obama's core belief was that America's allies in the region must take the lead in recapturing territory that had fallen to ISIS. American forces were providing only air support and limited logistical assistance and most of fighting was being done by Kurdish forces. The spin-off was that the Kurds lost more than 10,000 troops, while the Americans lost only half a dozen people. But the Americans were expected to stay in advisory positions, providing both encouragement and advice to those who were doing most of the fighting.

The 'leave or fight' dilemma became acute as President Trump continued to struggle with his approach regarding the long war in Afghanistan. Some of the liberal thinkers in the policy circles were of the view that it would be disastrous for the US and the West if America decided to pull out of Afghanistan and Syria. Michael E. O'Hanlon, a senior fellow and director of research in the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, contributed an article to *The New York Times*, titled, 'Our Longest War is Still an Important War.' He did not accept the Trump case that the West's war against extremism had been

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won. He quoted from a UN report, according to which, the total current membership of ISIS in Iraq and Syria is between 20,000 and 30,000. Most of the 40,000 foreign fighters who poured into Iraq and Syria over the period 2014–2018 remain alive and well, dispersed throughout the region:

> Indeed, Washington should stop looking for an exit strategy and view Afghanistan as one pillar in a broader regional web of capabilities against Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and related movements that show few signs of dissipating...In particular case of Afghanistan, and South Asia more generally, the newest concern is ISIS-Khorasan, or ISIS-K. In recent years, it has probably become the strongest and largest ISIS affiliate outside Syria and Iraq and has set up shop in the mountain ranges of Afghanistan.[55]

Because of ISIS-Khorasan's ambition of establishing an Islamic caliphate stretching from Iran, to the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, to India and Pakistan, O'Hanlon was worried the new extremist group could someday collaborate with the Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan. He pointed out, 'Given the foreboding geography and weak government in Afghanistan, squelching ISIS-K might be less realistic than defeating ISIS in eastern Syria or Iraq. But with the bases we have now, we can watch and listen to this group and strike when we get a good lead on the movement of a key leader or when it gets too comfortable in any one location.'[56] This line of thinking meant a continuation of the US presence close to Pakistan and the use of drones to eliminate suspected militants. A US presence in Afghanistan completes the web the US has woven in the western part of the Muslim world to advance its strategic interests in the area. There is American military presence in Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait. There are US ships in the waters supporting operations in Iraq and Syria. American bases in Djibouti help Washington watch Yemen, Somalia, and other parts of the Horn of Africa. The Sixth Fleet and the American assets in Italy, provide a watchful eye over Libya and the rest of the region. Very little happens in the Islamic world that escapes the US.

The Emergence and Possible Demise of ISIS

The birth of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), has been the subject of a number of studies. As in the case of the Arab Spring, the demographic impact of the 'youth-swell' contributed to this because it was the youth that got attracted to the extremist group.

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By mid-February 2019, the Trump administration had begun to claim that it had finally killed ISIS. The movement that founded what it liked to call the 'Islamic Caliphate', was also known by other names: simply the Islamic State or by its Arabic name, Daesh. At one point, ISIS commanded an area the size of Britain; by mid-February, it was reduced to one village, Baghouz, that nestled on a bend of the Euphrates River close to the Iraqi border. After three days of fighting, there was quiet in the area as the US-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) gave the villagers a chance to flee or give up. The end of ISIS in its original form was near. According to Soufan Centre, a New York based research group, at its height, ISIS had been home to some 40,000 foreign fighters from 110 countries. Louisa Loveluck, a journalist working for *The Washington Post* who saw the exodus from the village, reported:

> At every screening point, the number of children was striking. They were sunburned and barefoot, and it looked as if they were wrapped in as many layers of clothes as their parents could manage. Several infants showed malnutrition, crying and straining as their skin stretched across cheekbones and limbs. Many were wounded.[57]

The success of the SDF did not mean the end of ISIS and extremist forces, or their impact on one part of the Muslim world. The elimination of the caliphate in its original form raised new questions about how IS might regroup across the troubled and often lawless stretches of Syria and Iraq. It can migrate to other Arab areas, where there is considerable resentment among the youth about the way the state serves them. And then there are areas such as borderlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan, that have many socio-economic conditions similar to those that gave rise to the ISIS phenomenon.

Once started, wars don't follow the planned course. This has raised the question of the future of thousands of men, women, and children from about fifty countries, who are being held in detention camps. Most of the countries from which they have come are looking the other way. One of the unfinished businesses from the loss of practically all territory by ISIS, is the re-entry of people from the West who had joined the extremist group. President Trump's abrupt decision to withdraw the US troops from Syria complicated the situation. The prospect of repatriating citizens who had joined the caliphate and of trying to either prosecute, or reintegrate them into society, has raised daunting problems. States have different reasons for their reluctance to take back citizens who had joined the ISIS ranks. Most are rooted in security concerns about such people and it may

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be difficult to successfully prosecute and imprison them with lengthy sentences. Even those who pose little or no security risks may be hard to reintegrate into society because of their ideology, or wartime experiences and children who had been part of ISIS through no fault their own, are likely to be stigmatised.

According to data tracked by the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, a small number of Americans—a few as old as 59—are known to have travelled to Syria to join ISIS. Apart from the men, the American and other women from European countries who joined ISIS pose a greater problem. According to Seamus Hughes, deputy director of the program, 'The foreign women of the Islamic State,...[fed] with simplistic narratives about "*jihadi* brides", "brainwashing" and "online grooming" aided and abetted many of the atrocities [that were committed] and in some cases directly perpetrated them.'

Those who have studied the rise of extremism and the loss of territory by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, know that it does not mean the movement that led to its founding has lost support. Therefore, these people—who joined ISIS then had to leave and seek repatriation—might still be zealots. On the other hand, if these citizens are not repatriated, people without a state can pose serious problems—political, as well as humanitarian. This issue drew attention because of the situation in which two young women found themselves. Shamima Begum from Britain was only 15 years old when she left home, travelled to Syria, and married an ISIS fighter. She now has a son and wants to go back home to Britain. The other is Hoda Muthana, 24, who left her home in the US, joined ISIS, married three times having lost two husbands in battle. She has children. Both are being held in detention camps by Kurdish forces in north-eastern Syria. Their current situation poses a dilemma for the countries to which they once belonged: What to do with such citizens, who voluntarily left their home countries to join ISIS? There are at least thirteen people identified as Americans—almost all of them women and children—who are facing similar issues as Muthana, with their citizenship being challenged on technical grounds.

This has set off a debate in both Europe and the US, over citizenship and the statelessness that might result from stripping some of their nationality. At least 10 million people are stateless, many of them in Pakistan. Two UN conventions on statelessness, in 1954 and 1961, prescribed basic principles of human rights for those without a nationality. They also sought to limit the deprivation of nationality in cases when it would make someone stateless. Some sixty-one countries

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signed the conventions. The US has its own precedence. In 1958, the US Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to make someone stateless. Although the US is more willing to accommodate those returning from Syria, however, Europe, in particular Britain, has taken a hard-line stance. According to Sajid Javid, then the country's home secretary, the government was not willing to take back Shamima Begum, but her son will not lose British citizenship. Hoda Muthana was born to a Yemeni citizen who was serving in the UN but had left the organisation when his daughter was born. Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, said that she was not an American citizen, although her birth certificate showed that she was born in Hackensack, New Jersey. Clive Baldwin of Human Rights Watch said that taking away citizenship on the whims of a minister is 'setting a bad precedent'.[58]

Even before what the Trump administration defined as the demise of ISIS, it had begun to make adjustments to the new situation it faced. One of them was to give women a more prominent role in the organisation, even in combat. Vera Mironova, a visiting fellow at Harvard University who studied the human resources of armed groups and accompanied the Iraq Special Forces for the battle of Mosul, wrote in *The New York Times*:

> The Islamic State has quietly shifted from insistence on a strict gender hierarchy to allowing, even celebrating, female participation in military role. It's impossible to quantify how many women are fighting for the group. Still, interviews with police forces in Mosul suggest they've become a regular presence that no longer surprises as it did two years ago.[59]

There was another problem that rose with the downfall of ISIS. Those who know the situation on the ground were aware that in its final days the group was returning to 'its insurgent roots by seeding sleeper cells across those parts of Syria and Iraq that it once controlled'. The story being told was a familiar one: the focus was on counterterrorism rather than counterinsurgency, whereas at this stage the latter was required rather than 'hunt and kill' missions; it was important to change the conditions that gave rise to ISIS in the first place. 'Researchers fear that long-standing grievances...combined with new ones resulting from the perceived collective punishment of Sunni-majority areas controlled by the Islamic State...could revive the groups appeal.'[60]

ISIS was not likely to disappear even though it lost the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria. It was well received wherever the local Muslim population was in a state of deprivation. Previously, by sowing

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roots in the southern part of the Philippines, it demonstrated that it could work in the deserts of the Middle East as well as the tropical forests of Southeast Asia. The Mindanao islands, not far from Malaysia and Indonesia had long been a haven for insurgents because of the dense wilderness and weak policing. The ISIS attracted a range of militant jihadists. According to one account:

> The group first made a big push for southern Philippines recruitment in 2016, circulating videos online beckoning militants who could not travel to its self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Hundreds of fighters poured in from as far away as Chechnya, Somalia and Yemen. The next year, militants who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State took over the city of Marawi in Mindanao.[61]

The ISIS claimed that two of its suicide bombers carried out an attack at a Catholic cathedral during Sunday Mass on January 2019. The attack killed twenty-three worshippers.

Liz Sly and Louisa Loveluck from Beirut wrote in *The Washington Post*:

> The US backed forces declared the final defeat of the Islamic State's self-declared caliphate Saturday [23 March 2019], bringing to an end the brutal experiment in state building that had lured foot soldiers from around the world and inflicted unimaginable suffering on those caught up in the militant's rampage through Iraq and Syria.[62]

The SDF said that 11,000 of its fighters died battling the caliphate army in Syria. The Iraqi military and militias that joined the battle against the ISIS probably lost as many people. The SDF estimated it had killed 12,000 ISIS fighters and taken 2,000 prisoners. The US military assessed that it killed 70,000 of about 100,000 ISIS fighters, out of which some 30,000 insurgents are still in Syria and Iraq. The US loss was minimal; only sixteen soldiers died. However, according to the Pentagon, the country spent $28.5 billion up till December 2018, in the war with ISIS. Thousands of fighters are in prisons, while tens and thousands of women and children are held in detention camps.

But the Syrian problem is more than just ISIS. As Rukmini Callimachi, who specialises in Islamic extremism, wrote for *The New York Times*, after the fall of Baghouz:

> Syria remains mired in a civil war in which the battle against the Islamic State is only one conflict among many. The future of the land the group

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> once held there, about a third of the country, is uncertain with the United States promising to withdraw its troops.[63]

The fierce battle for Baghouz underscored the danger that the Islamic State might yet retain considerable capabilities.

The future of ISIS seems uncertain after the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on 26 October 2019. He had proclaimed the creation of a caliphate from the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul, Iraq. An interesting assessment was made by Hassan Hassan of the Washington-based Centre for Global Policy, 'You are looking at something like another Taliban with them effectively controlling large areas at night-time and being able to reach any person in the towns and villages.' This pattern has already emerged in areas north and east of Baghdad. 'Currently, ISIS is regenerating key functions and capabilities more quickly in Iraq than in Syria but absent counterterrorism pressure, ISIS could likely resurge in Syria within six to twelve months and regain limited territory,' said a report submitted by the Pentagon's inspector general to the US Congress in February 2020. But Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi death has dealt a major blow to the extremist group. Trump's plans to withdraw most of the US troops from Syria would create a vacuum that ISIS might be able to fill. Such a consequence also occurred when President Obama pulled out troops from Iraq.

To keep the ISIS at bay will require an enormous rebuilding effort in both Iraq and Syria, where more than 5 million people fled their homes and at least 2 million are still displaced because they don't have homes to go back to. Uncertainty about the future will continue to produce migrants to Europe, while some of those in ISIS, who are still around, may head to places such as Afghanistan, which continue to witness turmoil. 'The group's leadership and foot soldiers see this as a setback, not a defeat' said Nathan Sales, the US State Department's counterterrorism coordinator, in a speech following the loss of the last patch of land by the insurgents. 'They're actively working to continue the fight from ISIS's worldwide branches and networks.'[64]

The ISIS offshoot called the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), set itself up right on the border with Pakistan. It is estimated to have more than 2,500 fighters spread in Afghanistan's eastern provinces. They are targeting not only government troops, but also the Taliban, which was probably the reason why the Taliban agreed to enter into negotiations. In 2018, the Taliban killed more than 200 Khorasan fighters; those who surrendered were turned over to the government. However, 'ISIS could

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scoop up any potential fighters alienated by the peace process,' said Jennifer Cafarella, the research director at the Institute for the Study of War, in Washington. North and West Africa are also areas that have the potential to provide the kind of space the ISIS is looking for. In the continent's west, insurgents are attacking Northern Burkina Faso and pushing along the border with Niger towards areas previously untouched by extremist violence, including the Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. The US launched thirteen drone strikes against Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in the first half of 2020. In the Philippines, the US Special Forces operation killed 900 extremists, including Isnilon Hapilon, who carried a $5 million bounty on his head.

Currently, Iraq and Syria are not entirely free of insurgents. The UN put the figure at approximately 15,000 to 20,000 underground insurgents, many of which are in sleeper cells. According to James F. Jeffrey, the American special envoy in Syria, 'The liberation of the declared caliphate did not eradicate the Islamic State's potency.'

ISIS showed its hand in Sri Lanka on 20 April 2019, when eight suicide bombers killed an estimated 350 people in different places. This was a dramatic reminder to the world that the militant group may not control territory, but remains a major threat nonetheless. The death toll makes it the deadliest attack since the one in Paris in 2015. Experts said, 'The group is not a membership organisation. It is skilled at reorganising and modifying its strategy to fit the evolving security landscape around the world.' A comparison between it and the Al-Qaeda is instructive: 'When the remnants of Al-Qaeda were driven from Afghanistan in 2002, the group was also forced to become more decentralised, turning to foreign franchises in places like Yemen, Iraq and northern Africa, to regenerate. But unlike Al-Qaeda then the Islamic State already has numerous affiliates around the globe, in the media, and thousands of fighters are still underground in the group's home base in Iraq and Syria.'

The ISIS has finances of between $50 and $300 million and a well-developed media operation that was able to distribute material produced professionally, right after the Sri Lankan killings. As the operations in the Philippines and Sri Lanka suggest, ISIS affiliates are able to exploit local ethnic and religious divisions. Sri Lanka is still recovering from the 26-year military campaign against ethnic Tamil insurgents, most of whom were Hindus and were said to have received help from the separatists. This might be one reason why the security forces in Colombo ignored the warnings from India that such an attack was imminent. 'Former ISIS fighters and sympathisers are rebranding themselves ideologically

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with other terrorists,' said Christopher P. Costa, a former senior director for counterterrorism on the National Security Council in the Trump administration. 'It's not just a question of the loss of a physical caliphate so much as considering exactly what the ISIS would look like as it tries to reconstitute itself.'[65]

It is in the realm of possibility that IS can remerge in some other place. According to Graeme Wood, staff writer for *The Atlantic* and the author of *The Way of the Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State*, the danger comes from ideas that can take root when the conditions are right for them to sprout. Arab veterans of the Afghan war in the 1980s influenced the generation that fought in Iraq. Nearer home, there is a lesson to be learnt from the Pashtun veterans of that war, who fought with the Taliban for the control of Afghanistan and established a government in Kabul that lasted five years. Even after they were defeated by a coalition led by the US, they did not disappear. They remain active in large numbers, with hideouts mostly in the mountains from which they descended and attacked towns and cities. Over the last eighteen years, they have expanded the area they control, which is now half of the country's territory. They are causing enormous problems for those who govern Afghanistan and may emerge partners in governance if their parleys with the government in Kabul are successful. Men and women who are prepared to give their life for what they believe in, may physically die for their cause, but their ideas don't perish.[66]

Several years ago, a sympathiser of the Islamic State told Graeme Wood when he was gathering material for his book, 'So long as there is one street in one village where the caliph carries out Islamic law, the *dawla* [Arabic for state] will be legitimate.' According to the sympathiser, all Muslims would remain obliged to travel there and follow the dictates of whoever has been recognised as the caliph.[67] The founders of ISIS were a splinter group of Al-Qaeda, who escaped destruction.

Tactical defeat served them well and despite the loss of territory in the early months of 2019, they have preserved the ideological techniques that made it possible for them to survive. They succeeded by positioning themselves as protectors of Sunnis, who did not trust the Shiite-led government in Baghdad, or the Alawite-led one in Damascus. Neither Iraq nor Syria has regained the trust of their Sunnis populations.

Nonetheless, the US has learnt lessons on how to fight extremists.

> In all, the fight against the Islamic State showed that the US is capable of leading effective counterterrorism campaigns, provided it partners

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> with local forces and focuses on supplying unique US assets, such as intelligence and precision airstrikes. A second lesson is that the costs of playing such a role are far less than withdrawing and allowing terrorist groups to rebuild.[68]

According to the Pentagon, the US and coalition partners carried out nearly 34,000 strikes between August and the end of January 2019. As of the end of 2018, the war against the caliphate cost some $28.5 billion, a fraction of the more than $1.5 trillion price of the ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Also, the US paid a very small price in terms of loss of soldiers; sixteen soldiers and one civilian were killed while the Kurdish-led alliance that fought the jihadists in Syria says 11,000 of its fighters were killed.

However, the resurgence of the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) remains a matter of concern. The title of an article 'What Does IS-K's Resurgence Mean for Afghanistan and Beyond'[69] underscores the fact that IS-K's and its affiliates recent attacks can, 'complicate an already precarious situation in Afghanistan. It suggests that ISIS's regional and transnational terrorism ambitions remain worrisome. The Taliban consider IS-K to be an enemy because while it claims to rule by Islamic law, it is also largely ethnic. The majority are Pushtun tribesmen whose ideology is based on combining an innovative form of Sharia with tribal codes. The IS, however has more global ambitions and that is why its arrival was not welcomed by the Taliban as it considers IS-K to be an impediment. Nevertheless, The Islamic States' capacity for 'violence, political cohesion and territorial influence' can pose a major threat to the international community.

The Islamic Model of Governance

The entry in Wikipedia on the Muslim world identifies those countries as Islamic states, 'that (are) officially ruled by Islamic laws, contrasted to Islamic monarchy.' Except for a few, all countries belong to the Arab world. While they profess to be Islamic states, none has defined exactly what that implies. The systems they have put in place have borrowed not only from the states that existed in the early years of Islam, but also from tribal practices. The Taliban in Afghanistan and the ISIS in Iraq and Syria, attempted to create Islamic states, but the substance of these experiments was different.

For nearly three years, ISIS controlled an area the size of Britain, with a population estimated at 12 million people. At its peak, it included a 100-

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mile coastline in Libya, a swathe of Nigeria's lawless forests, and a city in the Philippines, as well as colonies in at least thirteen other countries. By far the largest city under their control was Mosul. *The New York Times* in a special report titled, 'The ISIS Files', provided an overview of the way the experiment of Islamic governance worked in the conquered territory of Iraq and Syria. The report was based on 15,000 pages of internal ISIS documents, collected by Rukmini Callimachi.

The author of the report, during her five visits to the areas that were under the control of the ISIS, believes that the West should understand the system better. Since the organisation has not died after its defeat in Syria and Iraq, it is likely to move geographically. ISIS has changed the content of the propaganda it uses to draw the youth to its ranks. It said that it was now fighting 'a campaign that commences a new era of conquest' and women have a role to play that goes well beyond those the group had stipulated earlier. As the campaign against ISIS intensified in Iraq, women associated with the group would supply food and water to trapped men. They were not suspects. Women are also motivated, since the brutal campaign waged by the military often victimised them and they would want to take revenge. Vera Mironova conducted a survey in Mosul, in December 2018, at the height of the battle being fought to recapture the city and found that 85 per cent of the respondents said that women in ISIS were as radical as the men and played an important role in the organisation; 82 per cent said that women will be dangerous for Mosul in the future.[70]

What will happen to ISIS in Syria after the US pulls out of the country is a question that is hard to answer. Although the list of thirteen countries affected by the rise of ISIS, as identified by Rukmini Callimachi, did not include Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is no doubt that these too can come under the influence of the extremist group. '[O]nly for a finite amount of time [the ISIS] realized its dream: to establish its own state, a theocracy they considered a caliphate, run according to their strict interpretation of Islam.' The world found the Islamic State to be brutal; however, supporters of ISIS interviewed by Rukmini, claim that, '[It] built a state of administrative efficiency that collected taxes and picked up the garbage. It ran a marriage office that oversaw medical examinations to ensure that couples could have children. It issued birth certificates—printed on Islamic State stationery—to babies born under the caliphate's black flag.' They pointed out that ISIS used the foundations that already existed in the country to create the Islamic State and that there was active

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collaboration between the militants and the civilians under their control, even when the latter didn't accept the Islamic governance philosophy.

The main conclusion I would draw from the foregoing analysis is that in formulating its approach to the countries that make up the world of Islam, Pakistan has to be mindful of the differences that exist among them. Islamabad cannot assume that since the people in these countries follow the same faith, they can be treated in the same way. Even in religious affairs, there are differences among them and there is the threat that some could result in open conflict.

Currently, the US involvement in the Middle East has led to sharpening the Sunni–Shiite divide in the Muslim world. Washington has aligned itself closely with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while adopting an increasingly hostile posture towards Iran. There is a real danger that Iran and Saudi Arabia may up take up arms to advance their religious and geopolitical interests. They are already engaged on the opposite side of Iran in the destructive war in Yemen. There are also differences in the way various Sunni schools look at the issues of governance. The hope that led to the founding of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has not led to the articulation of a single approach to global affairs. Founded in 1972, it consisted of 57-member states, of which 53 had Muslim majorities. The combined population of the OIC states in 2015, was 1.8 billion.

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2

The Politics of Global Warming

A fairly detailed discussion of global warming may seem out of place in a work devoted to Pakistan's external relations. But that is not the case when we look a bit more deeply into the policy choices Pakistan faces in this area of international concern. Some of what Pakistan needs to do is in the context of the Paris Climate Accord, signed on 22 April 2016, by 157 nations of the world, after the conclusion of a high-level meeting in Paris. This was a historical event because of the urgency of the problem of the deterioration of the world's environment and it was the first international, legally binding agreement to protect against climate change. It was the culmination of serious preparatory work done by US and China. The accord did not oblige the signatories to achieve specified targets; they only committed themselves to present to the international community the programs they had adopted to control the rise in global temperatures caused by human action. The accord required the signatories to hold review meetings. The last one was held in Poland in the industrial town of Katowice, in October 2018.

Pakistan sent a small delegation to attend the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) that was attended by delegates from 200 countries. The choice of Katowice as the site of the conference was interesting as it is in the centre of the coal industry of Poland, which is the largest user of coal for producing energy in all of Europe and as we all know, coal is one of the worst pollutants to the environment. Aisha Khan, a member of the Pakistani delegation, wrote in a newspaper article that even with a small number of representatives, Pakistan's presence was felt at the conference.[1] This certainly is a change from the past and is the result largely of the work done by NGOs working in this area. Nonetheless, Pakistan is a developing country and needs to increase energy consumption while mitigating CO2 emissions from its energy sector. It plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by the year 2030.

For several decades now, there has been a consensus in the community of climate scientists, that human action has led to the warming of the globe. Pakistan has already begun to feel the impact, as detailed in a World Bank study released in July 2018.[2] The heat wave in Karachi in 2016 took more than 1,200 lives. While Nawabshah, Larkana, and Jacobabad have been known to sizzle, at and above, 51° C. Floods since 2010 have directly affected 20 million people. Ali Tauqeer Sheikh who

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is the CEO of the Leadership and Environment group in Pakistan and was a member of the country's delegation to the Katowice conference, assessed the situation in Pakistan after returning from Poland. He wrote, in an article in *Dawn*:

> Credible action by Pakistan will attract direct foreign investment, bring new technologies and spur growth...[and developing appropriate policies and plans to deal with global warming] should be an important plank of Pakistan's external relations and international diplomacy as climate change has emerged as the most immediate non-traditional threat to our security.[3]

On 15 December, the conference attendees agreed to keep the Paris agreement alive by adopting a detailed set of rules to implement the pact. There was also agreement that countries would step up their plans to cut emissions ahead of another round of talks scheduled for 2020. There were calls on the world's rich countries to be clearer about the financial aid for poor nations to help them install more 'clean energy' means of production and build resilience against natural disasters. According to one newspaper report, 'The United States agreed to the deal despite President Trump's vow to abandon the Paris Agreement. Diplomats and climate change activists said they hoped that fact would make it easier for the administration to change its mind and stay in the Paris Agreement.'[4]

Has the Time Come to Panic?

'The age of climate panic is here,' wrote *The New York Times* in a special report on the impact of global warming. The heat wave in 2018, that produced the fourth hottest year in the history of the US, killed dozens from Quebec in Canada to Japan. There occurred the most destructive wildfires in the history of California that reduced more than a million acres to ash; Pacific hurricanes forced 3 million in China to flee and devastated almost all of Hawaii's East Island; there were many other reports of climate-related catastrophes from around the world and these calamities continue to happen. A sharp rise in Siberian temperatures is another example of how global weather change is affecting the world.

On 23 June 2020, Verkhoyansk, a small town in north-eastern Siberia, set a record for the highest temperature in the Arctic Circle, with a reading of 100.4° F, or 38° C. The town is located at 67.5° north latitude, whereas the Arctic Circle begins at 66.5°. We are experiencing a world that has warmed 1° C since the late 1800s, when records had begun to

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be maintained. Scientists have determined that we are adding earth-warming carbon dioxide to the atmosphere at a rate faster than any other point in history since the beginning of industrialisation. Studies show that if carbon dioxide and methane emissions continue to rise at their current rate, the number of people needing humanitarian aid as a result of natural disasters, could double by 2050. A large number of the affected people will be in South Asia. But affluent nations will not be spared. A report from thirteen US federal agencies, issued in 2018, warned that not reining in warming could shave off 10 per cent of the country's economy by the century's end.

Scientists no longer quarrel about their findings. In October 2018, the UN Panel on Climate Change issued what has come to be called the 'Doomsday' report—one UN official described the document as 'A deafening, piercing smoke alarm going off in the kitchen'—outlining climate consequences at 1.5° and 2° C of warming. They have also begun to examine the consequences of temperatures moving beyond 3° to 4° C. In the latter case, the world that we know today would cease to exist. Unless action is taken to reverse the trend, it will be 3° C higher by the end of this century. Yes! It is time to panic. A UN report produced to help the COP24 delegates address the issues faced by their governments, found that humanity has until 2030 to implement a 'rapid and far-reaching' transformation of society if we wish to avoid the dire environmental consequences of global warming increasing to 1.5° C above preindustrial levels. The story the UN panel told is now well known. It is the one that scientists have been apprising us of for forty years, but few have been listening. Humans keep emitting greenhouse gases, temperatures keep increasing, and the look for the future keeps growing more and more bleak.

The year 2020 ranks as one of the hottest years on record. Ocean heat was at record levels and almost 80 per cent of global oceans experienced a marine heatwave. The most notable events caused by climate change this year include the forest fires in Turkey and Greece, the heat dome in Western Canada and north-western USA that pushed the temperatures to 40° C or 104° F for almost a week, raging fires in California and massive flooding in Germany and China. The Arctic was, '...warmed at least twice as fast as the global average' and Greenland continues to lose ice. The IMF stated that the 'current global recession caused by COVID-19...also presents opportunities to set the economy on a greener path.'

The Democratic party fully endorses an agenda regarding climate change.

> The United States under Donald Trump went back a great distance since the eight years of Barack Obama. There was a dramatic change in the United States' political climate as a result of the mid-term elections of November 2018. With a net gain of forty seats, Democrats gained control of the House of Representatives and the political clout to attempt actions in the areas in which the Trump administration had pulled back. Among the affected areas were pollution and climate change. In early February 2019 Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Edward Markey proposed a blueprint for fighting climate change. They sponsored the Green New Deal that was seen by the conservatives as 'the seizure of the economy's commanding heights in order to implement the most left-wing possible agenda.'[5]

The ideas they laid out aspired to power the US economy with 100 per cent renewable energy within twelve years and called for 'a job guarantee program to assure a living wage to every person who wants one,' and universal healthcare, partly financed by higher taxes on the wealthy. The idea of the Green New Deal was first proposed in 2008 in a book titled, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—And How It Can Renew America* by Thomas Friedman.[6] According to some on the left, the New Green Deal is an exciting idea. It is an extraordinarily complicated series of trade-offs that could be realised with extensive sacrifices that people are only beginning to understand. For instance, 80 per cent of America's energy now comes from relatively cheap fossil fuels. 'Replacing them with sources that do not emit greenhouse gases will cost trillion of dollars; potentially increase energy costs for millions of families and entail federal intervention in segments of the economy, like transportation, where there is already a mixed record of success.'

There were disagreements amongst scientists about the feasibility of the Green New Deal. Experts like Mark Z. Jacobson[7] believe that the deal's target of net-zero greenhouse emissions could be achieved by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2040 and 2050. On the other hand, Ethan Zindler, head of North American research at Bloomberg New Energy Finance, pointed out that 37 per cent of electricity in the US comes from zero-carbon sources, 20 per cent of which is nuclear. If no new policies are enacted and all existing nuclear plans are kept online, the US can rise to about 44 per cent clean energy by 2030, which is still much below the target of the Green New Deal.[8]

Even some on the left of the political spectrum were not supportive of the Green New Deal agenda. Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker of

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the House waved off the initiative as impractical. Those who supported the program were of the view that it had not been fully explained by its sponsors. Jedediah Britton-Purdy (author of *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*) made a strong case for the Green New Deal's approach, 'In the 21st century, environmental policy is economic policy. Keeping the two separate isn't a feat of intellectual discipline. It is an anachronism'.[9] He argued that carbon emissions are basically about infrastructure. Human beings have created an artificial world that cannot survive unless far-reaching policies are adopted.

Two senators, one from the state of Alaska (Lisa Murkowski, a Republican) and the other, Joe Manchin (a Democrat from West Virginia), teamed up in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to have the US use its strength in developing new technologies to deal with climate change, 'The United States is at the forefront of clean-energy efforts, including energy storage, advanced nuclear energy, and carbon capture, utilisation and sequestration. We are committed to adopting reasonable policies that maintain that edge, build on and accelerate current efforts, and insure a robust innovation ecosystem.'[10] They noted that cleaner energy technologies and integrating them into energy networks reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 28 per cent between 2005 and 2017 and lowered costs to consumers.

There are those who do not involve themselves in such technical details or debates on this issue by makers of public policy. They are focused on the dreadful consequences if the present trends continue and carbon dioxide continues to be emitted into the atmosphere. In a book titled, *The Uninhabitable Earth*, David Wallace-Wells provides tales about a future climate-changed world. The book begins: 'It is worse, much worse than you think.'[11] Wells warns that nothing will be the same and nobody will be spared. Wherever we live, we will be flooded, engulfed by fires, plagued by new diseases, choked by toxic air, deprived of water or impoverished as a climate in chaos leads to an economy in meltdown. 'The assaults will not be discrete.'

The interconnectivity of the global system is demonstrated in several ways. As the palaeontologist and entomologist, Michael S. Engel points out, 'By the sheer fact of their staggering diversity and vast ecological connectedness, insects are interwoven into the fundamental functions of virtually every ecosystem. An insect apocalypse is our apocalypse.'[12] There are a myriad ways in which insects support mankind's survival. Of the nearly 300,000 species of flowering plants, around 90 per cent rely on fauna pollination to complete their productive cycle. Approximately

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200,000 species of fauna provide this critical service of which 199,000 are insects.

Ever since the founding of our institution, The Burki Institute of Public Policy in 2014, we have been working to understand the world we live in. This understanding, we believe, should improve the basis on which those who hold the reins of power may formulate public policy. When we speak of the 'world around us', we adopt a wider view: our vision is that we should be fully aware of not only what is happening within the boundaries of the state of Pakistan, but also beyond our borders. In this perspective, the world is faced with a number of challenges. Among the most serious of these is climate change and global warming. Pakistan's citizens, as well as policymakers, should be made aware of what is hurting our planet. That, unfortunately, is not happening. We don't fully understand the dangers we face. We live in the part of the world where unchecked climate change will make life unliveable for millions of people.

Several years ago, a senior official from Pakistan came to Washington to hold discussions with his American counterpart. He asked me if there were any issues that I would like him to raise with the people he was to meet. I suggested that climate change should be one of the areas on which he should focus. His response surprised me. 'Why should we bother; it is their problem. It is of no concern to us.' He had probably not reflected on the consequences of rapid glacier meltdown in the mountains from which we draw most of the water for agriculture, industry, and public consumption. Water is essential for life. Frequent floods that have done a lot of damage to our agriculture, punctuated by droughts are also the result of climate change.

The sea is rising and is likely to inundate parts of Karachi. There are rising temperatures that are making several cities unliveable in the country's desert areas. In 2019, *Time* magazine had a long story on the city of Jacobabad, which experts believe is the hottest urban area on the globe. Most of the city's people would be forced to leave. Pakistan's history is marked by mass movements of people and now more are likely to occur, this time, because of global warming.

It is important to increase awareness among people and policymakers, about the danger climate change poses for us. On 20 September 2019, children all over the world observed a day of protest by not attending school and this event received front page publicity internationally. However, in Pakistan it received little attention. On 21 September, *The New York Times* on its front page featured a picture of a young girl from Islamabad, with 'Save Us' written in lipstick on her face.[13] However,

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none of the major newspapers in this country gave it much space: a couple simply carried pictures of the demonstrations but wrote little about it. *The Washington Post*, in a lengthy article that began on the first page wrote:

> In one of the largest youth-led demonstrations in history, millions of people from Manhattan to Mumbai took to the streets around the globe on Friday, their chants, speeches and homemade signs delivering the same stern message to world leaders: do more to combat climate change—and do it faster.
>
> From small island nations such as Kiribati to war-torn countries such as Afghanistan and across the United States, young people left their classrooms to demand that governments act with more urgency to wean the world off fossil fuels and cut carbon dioxide emissions.[14]

Megan Mullin, a political scientist at Duke University, believes that the real challenge for the global movement, such as the one launched by the world's youth, is to translate their activism 'into a kind of political pressure that influences government decisions. It needs to be translated to influencing decision makers who aren't already convinced.' One such politician, of course, is Donald Trump. He had overturned most of what his predecessor, Obama, did during his eight years in office. The most egregious of these moves was to overturn the gasoline-use standards that the automobile industry had accepted in part because of the pressure from such progressive states as California. The state refused to accept the Trump roll back and, along with fifteen other states, sued the government. What role should Pakistan play in the renewed effort to address the problem posed by climate change? The government should operate at different levels, local, regional, and international. At the local level, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of air in the country's large cities. This will require the removal of brick kilns that burn soft coal; banning the burning of crop residue after harvests and strict regulation of motor vehicles, including rickshaws, pertaining to the fuels they use and the quality of their engines. At the regional level, Prime Minister Imran Khan should seriously consider convening a conference involving all the countries that receive river-water from the Himalayas. This would mean inviting Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, and Nepal to a well-prepared regional conference. This effort would contribute to Pakistan playing a major role at the international level.

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International Action and Use of New Technologies

Serious international action related to climate change began with the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the UN Framework Convention on Climate (UNFCC) was adopted, together with two other conventions, the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and Convention on Combating Desertification (CCD). The UNFCC has emerged as the centrepiece of global action on climate and development.

Most of this was the result of the burning of fossil fuels that had led to the accumulation of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the upper atmosphere. While the amount of carbon that is now orbiting the Earth cannot be easily reduced, new emissions could be controlled by human action. The Paris agreement set a goal that the world should aim to reach, limiting global warming to 1.5° C. Initially, the goal was higher, but small island economies in the Pacific, threatened by rising sea levels, managed to get the global community to agree on a lower level.

There is little doubt that global warming will have serious consequences for all South Asian nations. There will be significant differences in the impact it will have on these countries. Pakistan will have unprecedented rains and floods. Temperatures will rise in most parts of the country. Higher than normal temperatures mean rapid melting of the glaciers in the high mountains on the China–Pakistan border. The normal melting that feeds the rivers in the summer months is likely to speed up. This will initially cause floods in the rivers, but ultimately, with a significant loss in the ice cover, the amount of water flowing down the rivers will decline, perhaps precipitously. If that happens much of Pakistan will become a desert.

India will suffer much the same consequences since many of its rivers draw water from the same ice-belt that feeds Pakistan. In addition, India, with a much larger coastline, will have to deal with rising seas. Parts of its three megacities, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai would become uninhabitable. Millions of people will move inland. Bangladesh will add to this mass movement of people. In other words, global warming would have serious demographic consequences for South Asia. It would perhaps reduce the size of its economy and lower the income per head of the subcontinent's population. To determine the scope of the likely change and lay the basis for public policy, the countries of the region should commission a study to assess the impact of global change and use it as the background document for the regional conference proposed above. What provides hope to those who are panicking about the consequences of

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global warming, is the rapid advance of some technologies, in particular those that are replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources of energy, such as solar and wind. The switch from coal to wind farms is transforming the landscape of places like Utah, where coalmines have left deep scars. It is not happening necessarily because of ideology, but because of mathematics. Wind and solar energy are now beating coal as the cost of wind operated turbines and solar panels continues to decline.

As mentioned earlier, the year 2020 is documented to be one of the warmest on record. Ocean heat was at record levels and the 'marine-heat wave' was experienced by a vast expanse of sea water. The most significant events caused by climate change this year included the forest fires in Turkey and Greece, the heat dome in western Canada and north western USA and wild fires in California and monumental flooding in Germany and China. Keeping in view the hazards caused by global warming and climate change, the policymakers of our country need to realise while Pakistan is a developing country and as such, needs to increase its energy consumption yet it should do it in such a way that it reduces or mitigates carbon dioxide emissions. In the context of the Climate Accord signed in Europe in 2016, Pakistan intends to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by the year 2030–38.

Climate Change and the Trump Administration

The consensus on climate change that the global community had reached did not impress Trump. He called 'global warming' a hoax thought out by countries such as China, to slow down the further development of the US. Those who had come out in support of Trump were led to believe that moves made to promote the process of globalisation had resulted in the loss of jobs and stagnation of incomes in what was once America's industrial belt. They also worried about the impact on the industrial survival of the already depressed areas in which they lived and worked, if the use of coal was cut as demanded by environmentalists. The 'globalists' had to be beaten back and this became the primary focus of the Trump presidency. He installed Scott Pruitt as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). While serving in a small state in the country's mid-west, he had opposed most actions taken by President Obama.

The new EPA chief went to work demolishing the regulatory system put in place by Obama. While Pruitt was busy in his job, Trump announced that the US would withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord. These decisions provoked a response by the US Congress to commission a

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report from the thirteen federal agencies involved in some way or another, in the area of climate change. In the hope to minimise its public impact the Trump White House released the 1,656-page assessment at 2 p.m., after the Thanksgiving holiday.

The report is the second issue of the National Climate Assessment. The first volume, released in May 2014, arrived at the same conclusions as the 2018 report, but not with as much precision as the new version. The earlier document influenced the Obama administration as it wrote a set of landmark climate change regulations. The following year, the EPA authored President Obama's signature climate change program, known as the 'Clean Power Plan'. The report also provided Obama data for galvanising international support for the Paris accord.

The 2018 report made a significant advance on the first document written four years earlier. It contained many of the same findings, but the conclusions are presented with greater scientific certainty. More and more of the predicted impacts of global warming were now becoming a reality. For instance, as the oceans have warmed, predicted disruptions in the US had begun to occur. The government report suggests assessing the effects of climate change by including how they have affected food supplies, water, and electricity generation. It gives several examples, including recent draughts in California and elsewhere that, in combination with population changes, have affected the demand for water and energy. The most telling conclusion reached by the report was that as a result of climate change, the US economy could lose as much as 10 per cent by the end of the century.

The change in climate was affecting a number of areas, including defence strategy. The melting of ice had made the Arctic Circle accessible to the world's militaries. The world's major powers were impressed by the known and expected natural resources available in this space. The US, Russia, and China began planning to establish their claims. Russia had more than forty icebreakers and the US military has two. One is called 'Polar Star' and is well past its twelve years of expected life. It needs more icebreakers to patrol the Arctic. For now, the US has stationed more troops in the region. China, meanwhile, is working on building its third icebreaker in 2018, after staking a claim as a 'near-Arctic state'. By taking this step it further injected itself into policy debates. 'We're obviously watching both the Russians and the Chinese quite closely,' Vice Admiral Linda L. Fagan told Dan Lamothe, who wrote a story for *The Washington Post*'s special issue on the Arctic Circle. She oversees coast guard operations in the Arctic and Pacific. 'Russia on their side

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of the Arctic as a part of the Northern Sea Route, is investing heavily in commercial and military infrastructure.'[15]

Public Policy and Global Warming: The Pakistani Case

Until now, Pakistan has been slow to act to address the issues raised by global warming. Public action can be divided into two parts: (1) policies that are in line with various global initiatives and (2) actions that the country's policymakers need to take to address the local consequences of climate change. As to the first, there is a mindset in some official circles that 'climate change is their problem...not ours.' 'They' of course are rich countries that caused the problem by burning fossil fuels without restraint and created the accumulation of carbon dioxide and other gasses that warm the globe. 'We' are the developing states that did not harm the environment much. For them to participate in any kind of global action, they must be provided financial assistance.

Imran Khan is the first Pakistani prime minister to make environment the focal point of his program to revive the economy. On 9 February 2019, he launched a countrywide plantation drive in the Balloki Headworks, Nankana Sahib District, Punjab.[16] This was a part of his drive to plant 10 billion trees during his first term in office.

The PTI government recently opened the Kartarpur Corridor[17] in order to facilitate Sikh pilgrims. It is interesting to note that while speaking at the opening ceremony of the tree-plantation project, Prime Minister Imran Khan named the proposed forest after Guru Nanak Sahib. He also announced the decision to establish a university named Baba Guru Nanak University, in Nankana. Probably the intention was to woo the Indian Sikh community; the assumption being that like the Muslim population in that country, the Sikhs must also be resentful of the rise of Hindu extremism in India. In fact, the Indian government didn't cooperate properly in opening the Kartarpur Corridor.

While reforestation would certainly help in arresting environmental degradation in the country, it would take time before results appear. Some aspects of public policy and its proper implementation could have immediate positive effects. The poor quality of air in Lahore and some other large cities could be improved by banning the burning of crop residue after harvesting. The use of soft coal in brick kilns should also be banned. Construction materials lying on the roadside should be covered to prevent particles from going into the atmosphere. There should be

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strict regulation of the fuel being burnt in vehicles, in particular in the ubiquitous rickshaws.

It would be appropriate to discuss here another issue related to the protection of the environment. This relates to the preservation of endangered species; an area in which Pakistan has a mixed record. Pamela Constable, in a story for *The Washington Post*, wrote:

> The photograph published last week in Pakistani newspapers was stunning. It showed a magnificent mountain goat, with huge symmetrically spiral horns, nestled on a rock and surrounded by breath-taking snowy mountains, with a man kneeling and smiling behind it.[18]

The magnificent animal, a wild Astor Markhor, had been killed by a Texan named Bryan Kinsel Harlan. He had paid $110,000 to get a permit for the hunt. The story drew immediate expressions of sorrow and indignation on social media in Pakistan. For decades, the population of Markhors, which are native to the Himalayan ranges, has been declining. They have traditionally been killed for their meat by locals. Deforestation, logging, and military operations have also taken a toll. There are only 2,500 of these flare-horned Markhors left in this region. However, while foreign preservationists are appalled at this bounty hunting, according to regional officials and conservationists, this system of hunting is helping to save the animal. Previously, trophy hunting was done not only by foreigners, but also by local hunters and there was poaching. Now, only foreigners can afford to participate in the auctions to obtain a hunting permit and only twelve or less are issued per year. Eighty per cent of the money collected from foreigners is distributed to the local population and this creates an incentive for them to protect rather than kill the animal and guard against poaching. So far, the effort seems to be paying off. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has reclassified Markhors as 'threatened' rather than 'endangered', which allows hunters like Mr Harlan to bring back trophies such as horns which can grow as long as 5 feet. Interviewed for this story, Harlan termed his trip a success. 'This is a perfect example of hunters and villagers coming together for a common goal of game conservation.'[19] Pakistan has had less success with saving the Houbara Bustard, because of the bird's popularity with rich Arabs who come to the country to hunt it. Pakistanis are banned from hunting this endangered bird. In 2014, a Saudi prince reportedly shot 2,000 Bustards, despite having been given a permit to bring down only a hundred. That incident created an international uproar.

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Will the Young Save the Planet?

The world's youth have given up on the older generation. They have come to the conclusion that those who hold the reins of power around the globe don't have the political will or the understanding to save the globe from the climate-warming catastrophe. If the youth wanted a voice, they found it in Greta Thunberg, an 18-year girl from Sweden. She arrived in the US in August 2019 and first addressed the US Congress on climate change. Then on Monday, 23 September 2019, she addressed the world leaders gathered in New York to attend a special summit of the UN. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) sought to revive the world's interest in adopting concrete policies to arrest global warming and arranged this UN Climate Action Summit, to which all world leaders were invited. Then US President Trump, after declining the invitation, showed up for only fourteen minutes.

Thunberg underscored the contrast between the slow pace of action and the urgency of the problem. 'People are dying; entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you! The eyes of all future generations are upon you,' she said, her voice quavering with rage, 'If you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you.' While former President Obama had heaped praise on the Swede, calling her 'one of our planet's greatest advocates,' she drew vicious attacks from the American right. Dinesh D'Souza, an Indian American, was particularly insulting in his remarks, calling her one of the 'children—notably Nordic white girls with braids and red cheeks—who were often used in Nazi propaganda. An old Goebbels technique!'[20] Trump was upset when Thunberg was put on the cover of *Time* magazine as the 'person of the year' for 2019.

Another teenager who gained prominence for championing the protection of the environment, is Alexandria Villasenor, a 13-year old girl from New York. Alexandria is one of a group of young, mostly female activists and a co-founder of the School Strike 4 Climate movement in the US. This was a climate movement inspired by Thurnberg's strikes in Sweden. With the support of some of the world's biggest environmental organisations, this movement became a global affair.

On 15 March 2019, more than one million protesters in 125 countries, skipped school, came out in the streets, and marched to demand that the adults who manage the affairs of the world must act to stop the deterioration of the world's environment. 'Their demands are

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uncompromising: Nations must commit to cutting fossil fuel emissions in half in the next ten years, to avoid catastrophic global warming,' wrote *The Washington Post* in a front-page coverage of the movement. 'And their message is firm: Kids are done waiting for adults to save their world. We are not going to let them hand us down a broken planet.'[21]

On 13 August 2021, *Dawn* reported that a competition was held, '[u]nder the Prime Minster Imran Khan's, Clean Green 10 Billion Tree Tsunami programme, children in Gujranwala planted 52,040 saplings in 40 seconds...broke the record of planting 37,000 saplings in one minute set by India.'[22]

Again, from 20 to 27 September 2019, coinciding with the UN summit session on climate, there was a week of world-wide strikes by the younger generation. These children's march represented a generational gap in the worry about climate change. In a Pew survey carried out in twenty-six countries, a significantly larger number of young people said they worried about the threat of climate change, compared to people over the age of 50 in the US, France, Australia, and the Philippines.

The World Meteorological Organisation concluded in its latest report that the period from 2014 to 2019, was the warmest on record. What is remarkable about the 2019 record is that it came in the absence of a strong El Niño event[23] in the Tropical Pacific Ocean. The average global temperature is 1.1° C higher than what it was in the mid-19th century.

Ahead of the climate summit, 200 major investors, managing a combined $6.5 trillion in assets, demanded that companies stop lobbying for policies that harm the climate. The world's biggest energy companies devoted just one per cent of their capital investment to low-carbon energy sources.[24] The energy companies held their own event in New York, to coincide with the world summit. At this meeting, they pushed their research on carbon capturing technologies as one way of dealing with the problem. However, in a 2018 report, the European Academies Science Advisory Council said that carbon removal offered only 'limited realistic potential'. According to the UN, oil and gas production needs to fall by about 20 per cent by 2030 and by almost 55 per cent by 2050, in order to stop the Earth's temperature rising by 1.5° C above preindustrial levels. Thomas Friedman was impressed by the youth's activism. He wrote:

> In this era when so much activism is online, when was the last time you saw a bottom-up, mass movement of young people in America and across the world—some four million in all—take to the streets on every continent as they did. Good leadership could make use of this initiative by

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> the young....In the 1960s, John F. Kennedy energized the country behind a 'space war': to make America the first nation to put a man on the moon. [Now] Democrats need to run against Trump in the Earth Race: to make America the leader in all policies and technologies that help men and women everywhere live sustainably here on Earth? These young people are telling us and their voting parents, that this issue is a political winner.... theirs is a movement in search of courageous political leaders.[25]

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3

Technology and Development: New Basis for Global Competition

The rapid development of new technologies has ushered in a new revolution referred to by some as the 'fourth industrial revolution.' In the line of world-changing technological developments in history, the first industrial revolution that brought the initial change in the progress of civilizations was the consequence of mechanisation brought about by the use of steam power. The second came about in the beginning of the 20th century, with assembly line-based mass production and electricity. The third occurred towards the end of the century and was the product of digitalisation, computers, and automation. The current, fourth industrial revolution, is taking place in an age where there is the ability for complete automation of traditional manufacturing and industrial practices; of 'smart machines' that can function without the need for human intervention; of enhanced communication and anthropomorphic mechanisation, that have provided innumerable new applications for industrial, personal, medical, business and investment, military and other uses and it is said that these innovations will change our way of life. The basis of this development started with the spurt in digitalisation and information technology that began in the third industrial revolution and it is characterised by the integration of these technological advances in processes that blur the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. They are referred to as cyber-physical systems and use the sciences of robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing biotechnology, machine-to-machine communication (MtM), the internet of things (IoT), the industrial internet of things, the fifth generation of wireless technologies (5G), additive manufacturing/3D printing, fully autonomous vehicles, and so on.

All the first three industrial revolutions had occurred in the West, mainly in Britain and the US. The location of the fourth may shift to China. The US government was urging its technocrats to move fast and not let China dominate the field. In an editorial, *The Washington Post* advised:

> President Trump's recently announced artificial intelligence does not include the word 'China'. But that country's progress in machine-learning supremacy has prompted calls for the United States to start running

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> faster.... Though Mr. Trump's plan is light on actual planning, the Pentagon released its own report last week that provides more details. Taken together the documents are promising.[1]

It is hard to predict as to when innovation is likely to happen, or its scope and content. Major advances happen suddenly and go on to remould economic, social, and political systems. In 1993, browsers were developed, and ownership of household computers multiplied many times in the US and subsequently the world over. Computers became a necessity, not a luxury, and a large number of new internet-related companies came onto the US stock market. This led to the 'dot.com boom', a term relating to the US stock market boom when internet-related companies mushroomed in the 1990s. The market peaked in 2000 and then suddenly crashed due to gross overvaluation of dot.com stocks by investors.

But the crash had several positive aspects. One of these was the arrival of entrepreneurs who built firms that, within a short period of time, were able to dominate the global internet economy, like Google, Facebook, eBay, and Amazon. Further, this surge in IT communication opened new vistas in technology, like IoT, MtM, AI, 5G, etc. Some of these were developed by those working within the extensive defence system of the US. Subsequently, thousands of technocrats working in research and educational institutions, found applications that could be built on these systems.

Initially, a vast majority of IT and IT-related firms were from the US, but in time this monopoly was challenged by a number of mostly private sector enterprises in China. The competition between America and China and the firms that operate out of these countries, will define the future and the content of the fourth revolution. Modern technologies are skill-intensive; the countries that have large armies of technologically well-educated and well-trained young people will have an advantage over those that are seeing rapid aging of their populations. Immigration can overcome this constraint, but it runs into all kinds of cultural and religious prejudices. By bringing in youth from overseas (as was done by the US in the pre-Trump era), countries with aging populations should be able to maintain economic and technological dynamism.

This is one reason South Asia, with its large population of young people, is likely to do well compared to other world regions. This is an area where Pakistan could benefit by taking advantage of the youth and its tradition of international migration.

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The President of China Xi Jinping told the Chinese Academy of Sciences in May 2018, 'Ever since the start of the 21st century, a new generation of industrialization is substantially reshaping the global economic structure.'

The Growing China–US Rivalry

The major battle for dominance in the 'fourth revolution' between the US and China, is being fought on several fronts. One of them is the development of Blockchain technology. Other fronts include gaining prominent positions for local firms and acquiring leadership in developing and applying G5 systems of communication. Some commentators believe that the US is losing to China on all fronts. The Blockchain is described as an 'open, distributed ledger that records transactions between two peers efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way.' It is core technology for Web 3.0, the infrastructure of the next generation of online connectedness. Properly deployed, this technology can be transformative in that it can be used to distribute power, which in turn can promote the rule of law, the fight against corruption and crime, and protect digital identity and privacy. It does all this by eliminating the middleman from all these transactions. A few days after President Xi's comment, the state-controlled media organ, China Central Television (CCTV), ran a one-hour special explaining, 'The value of blockchain is 10 times that of the Internet.' The Chinese government's vision for Blockchain was not 'decentralisation' but 'de-intermediarisation'.

Beijing's Blockchain strategy has been twofold: investing heavily in developing the new technology and implementing it, while cracking down on the Blockchain systems it can't control. Developing Blockchain is one part of China's 13th Five-Year Plan that ran from 2016 to 2020. Results of this attention are already visible. Through 2017, China filed more Blockchain-related patents than any other country. In 2018, the China Development Bank signed a memorandum of understanding for Blockchain research collaboration with Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa. China is applying this new technology for supply-chain management, tax collection, food and drug safety, and more. Beijing is investing huge amounts to develop Blockchain that would serve its dealings with the world at large.

The US conflict with China in the technological sector reached another front with a stand-off between the Trump administration and Huawei,

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the tech firm seen as an icon of China's rise as a world power. China has carved out an important place for itself in developing the 5G wireless technology, with speeds up to 100 times faster than what the 4G LTE in many smart phones is capable of. The company said in late 2020 that it had signed forty deals with wireless carriers to provide 5G equipment and had shipped more than 70,000 5G base stations, the sophisticated radios that allow 5G cell sites to communicate with mobile devices.

The US government's effort to block the Chinese firm came out in the open, when, urged by Washington, the Canadian authorities arrested Meng Wanzhou, the firm's chief financial officer, who also happened to be the daughter of Ren Zhengfei, the company's founder. She was transiting at the airport in Vancouver, when she was apprehended. She was charged with the firm doing business with Iran and bypassing the US sanctions. Washington took a number of other steps to block the impressive advance of the Chinese firm in the world market. It sought to persuade foreign governments to shun Huawei equipment and used a section of the 2019 National Defence Authorisation Act, which prohibits federal agencies and contractors from buying the firm's equipment. This was done on national security grounds. Huawei challenged the move in a court in Texas on 7 March 2019 and is fighting the case in the American and Canadian courts.

Discouraged from doing business in the US—the prohibition, in particular for the use of Huawei equipment for developing the 5G network—the Chinese company moved across the border into Canada. It had invested $500 million in research on projects including on 5G technology in leading Canadian universities. It has research facilities in Ottawa, Waterloo, Montreal, and Vancouver and is providing high- speed Internet to remote areas of the country. According to one estimate, it employs 1,100 people in Canada.[2] In order to develop a good image for itself in Canada, it advertised heavily on 'Hockey Night', which covered an important hockey contest in the country. Wesley Wark, an intelligence expert at the University of Ottawa, noted that universities were typically not vigilant when it comes to security issues. He added, that the current worries and scaremongering from certain sectors were misplaced, since both Canada and Huawei had much to lose if they spied on the West.

However, in the fall of 2021, Meng Wanzhou or the 'Princess of Huawei' flew back to China after a deal with the US. BBC News reported on 24 September 2021, 'The deal, which recommended she be released, allowed her to formally deny guilt for key changes while also acknowledging the allegations laid out by the Americans.' Amongst other things, the arrest

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of Ms Wanzhou, 'poisoned relations between China and Canada.' The latter accused China of holding two of its citizens, Michael Koving and Michael Spavor as 'pawns for negotiation.' But a Chinese tech-sector analyst Rui Ma said on record that Chinese companies were, '...hopeful that Ms Meng's deal with the US means no further deterioration of US–China relations.' Nonetheless, that has yet to be seen.

The US also pressured Europe not to use Huawei for developing 5G networks. For instance, according to one official report, the Chinese company will 'continue to be barred from the "core" of Britain's 5G network, as it is from the 4G networks, which contains routers and switches handling massive volumes of traffic. The limitations are also expected to include geographic restrictions near sensitive networks.'[3]

There were technical reasons why China was likely to forge ahead of the US in bringing new communication breakthroughs to different parts of the world. The US decided to use 5G infrastructure on a high band spectrum swath known as 'mmWave' (between 24 and 300 gigahertz) which is recognized to be inferior in range and penetration to the 'sub-6' spectrum being used for 5G by most other countries, especially China. The sub-6 will become the global standard. The US made the choice for security reasons, since this spectrum is used by the Pentagon. By relying on mmWave, the US will have to build more 5G cell towers closer together. American companies building out this system may not be able to compete in world markets operating on the sub-6 model. Some analysts likened the American situation to that of Japan, when new technologies were being worked upon to develop mobile phones.

In Japan, everyone knows the term 'Galapagos syndrome' is in reference to the country's isolation from the world's mobile-phone market. During the 1990s, Japan developed advanced mobile phones ahead of many other countries. But because the Japanese technical standards weren't adopted by anyone else, the rest of the world leapfrogged their early progress and left them behind. For 5G, the United States must not become isolated.[4]

How South Asia Might Turn the 'Fourth Revolution' into a Driver of Social Change and Economic Progress

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transformational. The fear that the robots will run and do the jobs real people do has substance, but it will also create new jobs that will require a more educated and skilled workforce. This transformation will encourage education and skill development.

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To see how that might happen, Thomas Friedman revisited Bangalore, the centre of Indian IT industry. He had visited it several years earlier and that had resulted in a book titled, *The World is Flat*.[5] The book popularised the notion of a world flattened by the rapid development of information technology. 'Transcription services' were one example of how the world was becoming flatter. Doctors in the US, for instance, wrote or recorded their interviews with patients and sent the transcripts over the Internet to India, where they were written into the computer and sent back. Another example were the call centres, where Indians trained in American English, could answer queries from people in the US. Relatively cheap Indian labour replaced much more expensive workers in America. But with the arrival of AI, these kinds of jobs can be done by robots which, having been fed millions of human responses, can pick the right response to a query. AI has made people in outsourcing and call centres redundant. But there need not be a loss of jobs.

Friedman, on revisiting India, saw AI working in three areas—two in Bangalore and the third in Mumbai—and was persuaded that there need not be a net loss of jobs. 24/7, a company set up a couple of decades ago, has transformed its call centre and now uses AI to do the job human operators did and in addition to the usual communications, also deals with queries coming from banks, accounting and law firms, media companies etc. If they get stuck and human handling is needed, they go over to 'chat bots', where data scientists enter the picture. These workers are skilled in AI and are called voice conversation designers.

In Bangalore, Friedman looked at another example of AI being applied to benefit people. EkStep Foundation has created a free, open source digital infrastructure called Sunbird, for making personal learning platforms.

The third example is from Mumbai, where Friedman visited an entity called Sagar Defence Engineering, which uses technology spun off from the defence industry, to create a simple vessel connected to satellites that trash pickers can use to collect the pools of waste that float atop so many Indian rivers and lakes.

The Covid-19 pandemic saw Pakistan use AI solutions to first 'track and trace' new cases, using a system originally developed as an Anti-terror tool.[6] Later AI was employed by the nation's apex COVID response body to model and predict the rise and spread of new Covid waves in the country.[7]

What all this means is that properly educated and trained manpower can take advantage of the new economic revolution that is underway.

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South Asia has a large, growing population. Its population is also young, with the median age well below the global average. The world's median age is 30.4 years, which means that one half of the population is below that age. Sri Lanka, with the median age of 32.8 years, is the only South Asian country of the eight in the region that has population older than the global average. Pakistan, with the median age of 23.8 years, has the second youngest population in South Asia. Afghanistan, with 18.9 years, is the youngest. The Indian average is 28.1 years.

The demographic advantage South Asia has over the developed world can be seen by noting the median ages of some of the rich countries who have rapidly aging populations. The highest median ages in the world are in Japan, 47.3 years and Germany, 47.1 years. The median age of the US is at 38.1 years. It is relatively low because of the high level of immigration. China is also aging rapidly with the median age at 37.4 years. The South Asian demographic situation, of Pakistan in particular, suggests that the countries in the area need to come up with a new development paradigm that focuses on using skill-intensive modern services to bring about economic growth and modernisation. The mode of cheap manufacture of goods produced by low-wage labour in what came to be known as the 'miracle economies' of East Asia, is no longer relevant for a country such as Pakistan.

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4

Possible Troubles Brewing in Pakistan's Neighbourhood

Pakistan's four neighbours that are recognised as independent states by the international community, are (moving clockwise) Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran. Following the country's borderline, this way of looking at Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood leaves a gap: The Line of Control (LOC), that separates the two parts of Kashmir, one controlled by Pakistan (POK) and the other by India (IOK). Is the LOC an international border, or just a demarcation of some kind? With some questions, the answer invites even more questions, and this is one such query. I have answers to this question in this book. I treat Indian illegally occupied Kashmir (IOK) as it is formally described by Pakistan: a foreign entity different from that of India. Treating the LOC as a quasi-foreign border increases the number of states in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood from four to five.

Two important facts, common to Pakistan's relationship with all its neighbours, need to be recognised. These are important for designing an effective policy by Islamabad, for dealing with the world outside its borders.

One, the US is involved, in one way or another, in all the five political entities on all sides of Pakistan's international frontier. **Afghanistan:** Washington had been engaged in a war in that country for almost two decades and found it hard for long to disengage itself from this long-troubled land. But the hasty withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in August 2021 took everyone by surprise. The political and social situation in the country is still fluid and hardly a day goes by without some development complicating the situation. The continuing troubles in Afghanistan have had serious consequences for Pakistan. They go beyond providing a home to the millions of refugees displaced by almost half a century of wars in the country. Although the Taliban are in power again, Pakistan is not relaxed about the group's takeover. Two decades ago, when the Taliban were in power, Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognise it. Yet, it has suffered hugely over the years, 'at the hands of Islamist terror groups launching attacks over the border from Afghanistan.'[1] Prime Minister Imran Khan is on record that after 9/11, when Pakistan joined the US as an ally on 'war on terror' it suffered massively at the hands of Al-Qaeda, TTP and the local ISIS-K. This is

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why, it is in Pakistan's interest that the new Taliban government does not allow Afghanistan to descend into chaos. **China:** There is trouble brewing between the US and the Far Eastern giant. Washington resents China's rising economy and under the then President Donald Trump, launched a trade war with it that is already adversely affecting the global economy. Further, the US is troubled by China's increasing military strength, particularly in the south-eastern part of the Pacific Ocean, an area long-regarded by Washington as its backwater. And then there is the enormous Chinese program for developing global infrastructure, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Washington has been exerting a great deal of pressure on Beijing on several issues. The most recent decision, to not allow China, along with three other countries, India, Japan, and Turkey, to import oil from Tehran, has landed Beijing right in the middle of the Washington–Tehran conflict. The fact that the coronavirus was first detected in China, gave the Trump administration another opportunity to blame Beijing for more wrongdoings. He called the disease a 'China virus' and 'Kung flu' and fuelled his electoral base's hatred of China. **Iran:** The enormous hostility displayed by the Trump administration towards Iran has destabilised the Middle East. Much of this is the result of pressure on the US by Israel and Saudi Arabia. And then there is the developing relationship between Narendra Modi's India and the US. This has resulted in the US ignoring the Hindu religious extremism that is increasing in India. The US, in other words, is deeply involved in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood. Even the new Biden administration has not made any attempt to hide its contempt for Pakistan. In order to live in peace, develop its economy, and modernise its society, Pakistan must formulate a careful policy regarding its dealings with the US. Islamabad will need to watch how the American situation develops. There is a virtual consensus among liberal analysts that enormous damage has been done to the international system by Trump while he was in office. This, however, may be reversible.

Second, is the use of Pakistan's territory by stateless groups to launch operations on the other side of the border. It is convenient for the US to forget that it used Pakistan and its territory to foster Islamic groups to wage a war against the forces of the Soviet Union when it occupied Afghanistan in 1979, to protect the pro-Soviet government in Kabul. After the Soviets were expelled a decade later in 1989, the US left, without settling any post-war issue. Subsequently, the Pashtun Mujahideen became the Taliban and ruled Afghanistan for five years (1996–2001). Then, after 9/11, the US defeated the Taliban and set up

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Hamid Karzai's government in Kabul. However, the Taliban launched an insurgency against the political order created in Afghanistan by the West, particularly the US. In short, the situation was reversed as compared to 1979, as this time Washington was on the other side of the fight. The US resented that Pakistan did not diligently eliminate the Taliban sanctuaries that they were instrumental in establishing.

It is worth remembering that Pakistan is not the only country that has used non-state actors to pursue its strategic interests. In this part of the world, India, Afghanistan, and Iran have also used this form of warfare. The point of this analysis is to emphasise that Pakistan lives in a very volatile neighbourhood. Much of this volatility has been caused by US's erratic behaviour particularly during the Trump presidency. How to deal with it should be the focus of the Pakistan government.

During the first few months of Imran Khan's government, bold measures were taken to facilitate sustained peace in Pakistan's neighbourhood. Only if peace is established will some of the country's neighbours and near neighbours invest in Pakistan's economic development. But that wish may not be achieved, largely on account of belligerence on the part of some policymakers in Washington towards two of Pakistan's neighbours—China and Iran—and the erratic policies it is pursuing in Afghanistan. Of particular concern for Pakistan is the tension caused by Washington's increasing hostility towards Iran.

According to several newspaper reports in the US, there were some powerful influences at work on the Trump administration to escalate the growing conflict with Iran as an active military confrontation with Tehran would impair that country's military preparedness. John Bolton, the then national security adviser, had opposed the nuclear deal when it was being negotiated. In an article published in *The New York Times*, he wrote: 'Time is very short, but a strike can succeed.'[2] Having entered the White House, Bolton was in a position to act on the ideas he had espoused. 'At the direction of its leader, John Bolton, the National Security Council asked the Pentagon last year to provide military options to strike Iran,' wrote Eric Schmitt and Mark Landler in *The New York Times*.[3] The request followed a statement issued by the White House that warned Iran against promoting attacks such as the one by drones on two oil installations in Saudi Arabia on 6 September 2019. 'The United States will hold the regime in Tehran accountable for any attack that results in injury to our personnel or damage the United States government facilities.'

Bolton asked the Pentagon to come up with options about a 'swift and decisive response' against such attacks. The request alarmed the then

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defence secretary, James N. Mattis. The Pentagon came up with some general options, arguing that an attack by militants was insignificant and could not be attributed to a decision by the authorities in Tehran to hit American assets, or to take American lives.

The kind of strike Bolton was looking for would have quickly escalated into a broad Middle East conflict. It could have prompted Iraq to order the US to leave the country, tilting that Arab state further in the direction of Iran. 'Since Mr. Bolton took over from H.R. McMaster in April, he has intensified the administration's policy of isolating and pressuring Iran—reflecting an animus against Iran's leaders that dates back to his days as an official in the George W. Bush administration,' observed Schmitt and Landler in their assessment. Bolton has explained in great detail his reasons for treating Iran as America's worst enemy in his book, *The Room Where It Happened*.[4]

Bolton succeeded in some areas: he was behind Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal. He initially succeeded in persuading his president to keep American troops in Syria's northeast, fearing that the vacuum created by the US withdrawal will be filled by Iran. Bolton was not the only Iran hawk in Trump's circle of advisers. The then secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, was another. In a speech delivered at the American University in Cairo in mid-January, he said, 'Countries increasingly understand that we must confront the Ayatollahs, not coddle them.'

Why is there a fixation on Iran and what would be the consequences for Pakistan if the Americans did carry out a military operation against Tehran? The focus on Iran is a result of the very close relations between the US and Israel. Israel considers Iran to be its most dangerous enemy. Under the influence of Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a conservative Jew, the US had taken actions that were unthinkable in the past. It has moved its embassy from Tel Aviv, to Jerusalem and stopped the UN from providing assistance to the Palestinians. Later, it supported Israel's program to annex a good part of the territory in the West Bank that was still with the Palestinians.

A US attack on Iran would further unsettle the Middle East. History forewarns that once shots are fired and bombs are dropped, it is hard to predict which way a conflict will go. The US may succeed in destroying Iran's military hardware and many of its defence facilities. What it would not succeed in doing is to curb the militia activity that would undoubtedly be unleashed by Iran's sympathisers. They will be as difficult to overpower as was the case with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Iran's retaliatory action would probably pull Saudi Arabia into the conflict. The Kingdom would

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be tempted to use its formidable airpower to strike at Iran. But as the war in Yemen has demonstrated, airpower unaided by boots on the ground, does not accomplish military objectives. What would ensue is a long drawn out struggle that would split the Muslim world.

All these activities would, directly and indirectly, hurt Pakistan. They would show once again that Pakistan does not fully control its destiny. They would distract Saudi Arabia at a time when it is getting ready to make large investments in Pakistan. And it would distance Iran from Pakistan. One hard-to-predict consequence would be China's position. Challenged by the US, Beijing is likely to side with Iran. If John Bolton had succeeded, the consequences for Pakistan would have been extraordinarily unpleasant.

There is no doubt that the worsening US–Iran and Iran–Saudi Arabia relations are a matter of great concern to Pakistan. The government will have to proceed carefully. Most elements of a balanced approach are already in place. Islamabad has indicated to Riyadh that it will not provide military support to the Kingdom, if it involved interventions by it in the affairs of other nations. It has kept out of the Saudi operations in Yemen. However, support would be available in case of external actions on the Kingdom's sovereignty. Similarly, Pakistan would discourage Iran to get involved in the affairs of the Arab states that are on its border. At the same time, Islamabad made it clear that it would be keen on economic cooperation with both countries. Islamabad should proceed with the completion of the gas pipeline from Iran, while accepting Saudi participation in the CPEC program.

Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government must be credited for their accomplishments in international relations, particularly the way in which they dealt with the countries in the immediate neighbourhood in the first couple of years of their tenure. Greater efforts have been made to improve important relationships, particularly to maintain good ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia; Pakistan's role in the Afghanistan peace talks has been appreciated internationally; the oppression of IOK's Muslim population is being projected to the world; Pakistan's image as a country fighting corruption has improved and considerable financial help has been obtained. 'There's been a positive spring in the steps in Pakistan's foreign policy after the elections,' wrote a notable blogger.[5]

As of late summer 2021, Pakistan is faced with a complex external situation. It is seeing a significant realignment in relations among the countries that have interest in the central location of Pakistan. Pakistan is also developing a political system that, unlike most other Muslim

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countries, has given voice to its large and growing population. The population with a median age of only 23.8 years is very young indeed. The youth want to be involved in the way the country is governed and how it relates to the world.

Since the speedy and unexpected withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent uncertain situation in that country, the areas that surround Pakistan have gained even more importance than before. Pakistan cannot choose to remain neutral at this time but must select a balanced approach. One important consequence of the political change in Afghanistan is the likely loss of India's influence in that country. With the Taliban in control and determined to bring religion into the way they govern, they are bound to be unhappy with the way the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India is bringing Hinduism as an important element in the governing philosophy. Also, when Ashraf Ghani was in the presidential palace, the Indians cultivated the Tajiks as their partners. The Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan with a more secular outlook towards governance.

Pakistan needs to steer its foreign policy carefully. It is going to be a difficult task indeed but an unwavering and steady hand at the helm that can access and respond to changing alliances and ensuing conflicts, is the need of the hour.

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5

Pakistan and Afghanistan

Great powers have tried but did not succeeded in bringing Afghanistan under their control. First Britain in the 19th century, then the Soviet Union in the 20th century followed by the United States in the 21st century, used military force to extend their influence over a country with a very difficult terrain. But it was not only the terrain that thwarted these efforts. The Afghan people also resisted, often at great human cost. With this as the background, it is not surprising that Afghanistan became such a puzzle for four successive American presidents who occupied the White House from 2001 to 2021. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, when George W. Bush, who had been sworn in as president in January of that year, ordered American troops into the country to avenge almost 3,000 deaths from the attack. Almost twenty years later in May 2021 President Joe Biden ordered all American troops to pull out of Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of 9/11. In other words, American heads of state have struggled to define the US's policy with respect to Afghanistan. In the campaign for the presidency, Joe Biden painted a picture of himself and his experience that would be different from that of President Donald Trump who he wanted to send out of the White House.

President Joe Biden redefined the meaning of the instrument of war in state craft. In a speech in April 2021, the president declared that the US had long ago accomplished its objective of denying Islamic terrorists a safe haven in Afghanistan. Having reached that conclusion, he announced that all American troops would be pulled out of the country and American bases would be vacated and handed over to the Afghans by 11 September 2021—the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the US. The president said that after nearly twenty years of war, it was obvious that the US military could not transform Afghanistan into a stable and modern democracy. Responding to the critics of his decision he asked: 'Let me ask those who wanted us to stay: How many more years? How many thousands more of America's daughters and sons are you willing to risk.' He admitted that the speed at which developments in Afghanistan had unfolded was not anticipated by him or by those who advised him.

At this point some reference to history may be warranted. In ordering his troops into Afghanistan, President Bush said the Taliban had rejected his demand to hand over the leadership of Al-Qaeda including Osama bin Laden to the US. He said that he wanted to bring the terrorist leaders to

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justice, adding: 'Now the Taliban will pay a price. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban.' Even then, the president warned, that what he had termed Operation Enduring Freedom 'would entail a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen.' By December 2001, bin Laden and other top commanders had fled to Pakistan. That same month, the Taliban spokesperson offered an unconditional surrender which the US rejected. In May 2003, Secretary of Defence Donald H. Rumsfeld announced an end to major combat operations in Afghanistan. In January 2009, Barack Obama succeeded George Bush as president and started to reduce the scope and extent of American involvement in Afghanistan. On 29 February 2020, President Donald Trump signed a deal with the Taliban after prolonged discussions carried out by Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-American who had served as US ambassador in Kabul and was now acting as Washington's special emissary on Afghanistan affairs.

In April 2021, President Joe Biden laid out a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. What followed the Biden move was chaos which may cause political damage for him and his political party. In the final week of August, Biden's approval rating dipped for the first time into the forties. Commentators found parallels between the political demise of Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960s following the way he handled the conflict in Vietnam and what Biden was faced with in 2021. According to Michael Kazin, Biden should draw two lessons from Johnson's political tragedy.[1] First, tell the truth, even if that makes the president look bad. Second, keep the coalition that elected the president united in its response to whatever crisis seemed to be endangering the presidency. The latter was particularly important for Biden's political future. His own party seemed to be pulling away from him. The Democrats in Congress threatened to carry out extensive hearings into the collapse of the Afghan government. The result of these hearings could provoke an intraparty battle.

President Biden explained his Afghan moves by saying that sources of terrorism could not be eliminated by occupying the space from which they acted. President George W. Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan to remove from the control of the Taliban the territory from which Al-Qaeda, the group to which they had provided a sanctuary, had planned and launched their attacks on America. Twenty years of occupation and war had not reduced that threat. Biden believed there was an alternative that was less costly. Explaining the new strategy, he said in a speech,

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'We've developed counterterrorism over-the-horizon capability that will allow us to keep our eyes firmly fixed on any direct threats to the United States in the region and to act quickly and decisively if needed.'[2]

The decision to exit Afghanistan brought about developments which the Biden White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department had not anticipated or planned to deal with. The Taliban changed their strategy; rather than extend their control of rural areas, they began to move into the cities. They entered first those that were at some distance from Kabul and then began to steadily advance towards the country's capital. On 15 August 2021, reading the writing on the wall, President Ashraf Ghani who had governed for seven years decided to fly out of the country, eventually arriving in UAE. His departure led to the virtual surrender of the Afghan security forces to the rapidly advancing Taliban.

Ashraf Ghani's departure and the quick dissolution of the security apparatus changed America's mission in Afghanistan. Instead of exiting the country in an orderly manner, the Americans quickly turned their attention to withdrawing their own citizens from the country as well as those Afghans who had worked for them during their twenty-year presence. Airlift was undertaken and by 30 July an estimated 120,000 Americans and Afghans were flown out of the country. Even this part of the operation did not proceed smoothly. It was put to the test when the followers of the Islamic State launched a suicide bomber and killed thirteen US armed forces personnel and scores of Afghans near the airport. The US responded by sending a drone and killing the mastermind of that operation. This raises three questions: (1) Why did the Americans lose yet another war, having lost in Vietnam, Iraq, and Syria? (2) What would happen to Afghanistan with the Taliban once again in power? (3) What are the likely consequences for Pakistan with the change across its north-western border?

As noted by Ryan C. Crocker, the veteran American diplomat who had served his country as ambassador In Kabul and Islamabad, Afghanistan finds itself again at the place where it was in 2002 after the country had been invaded by the US. 'When I arrived at Bagram Air Base in January 2002 to take charge of our reopened embassy, Afghanistan had nothing: essentially no government, no institutions, no army, no police – just a yawning vacuum, and vacuums in the in the greater Middle East tend to be filled by actors who do not wish us well,' he wrote in a newspaper article.[3]

With the US, its NATO allies, the UN and several NGOs helping out, Afghanistan made progress in terms of social development. In 2001 when the Taliban were defeated, there were 900,000 children in school, all of

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them boys. In 2012, the number of students was nearly 8 million, about 37 per cent were girls. But the donor community made Afghanistan dependent on foreign capital flows; 80 per cent of the budget came from foreign aid. There was rampant corruption. A good part of the donor aid went into private pockets and from there to private accounts in the banks in the Middle East. Now as the Taliban take over, $6 to $8 billion of the country's reserves have been blocked by US government as a part of the sanctions that have been imposed in anticipation of the takeover by the Taliban. Unless access to these reserves is provided, Afghanistan under the Taliban won't have the means to buy food and fuel for its citizens. The result would be a humanitarian crisis that could see tens of thousands of people starving to death or dying of diseases for which the country would not have the resources to buy drugs and other items of health care.

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan has been and will continue to be studied from several different perspectives. One of the early accounts was by Richard A. Clarke whose book drew attention of those who were following the US conflict with radical Islam.[4] Clarke appeared on the CNN on 20 August 2021 to remind his viewers of what he had written in his book. He said that it was the Inter-Services Intelligence, ISI, the premier intelligence agency that serves the various arms of the Pakistani military, that devised a way of saving Afghanistan from the ongoing immensely costly civil war. This had broken out among the seven Mujahideen groups that had fought the Soviet Union for ten years and driven the superpower from their country. The Mujahideen had the support not only of Pakistan's ISI but also of the US's CIA. A vivid fictional account of the relationship between these two intelligence agencies is to be found in George Crile's 2003 book, *Charlie Wilson's War*, a book that was made into a popular movie.[5]

Once the Soviets were persuaded to pull their troops out of Afghanistan, the Mujahideen groups fell upon one another. Since the groups now working separately had one common purpose—the expulsion of the Soviet Union from their country—they simultaneously headed towards Kabul destroying on their way much of the Afghan countryside and Kabul, its capital. The result was a destructive civil war that troubled Pakistan. To deal with the situation, the ISI created the Taliban, a group recruited from the students who had been taught in dozens of seminaries that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had set up along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. The US had supported that effort.

Familiar with the Afghan history and culture, the ISI drew up a strategy for the Taliban to follow. It was to do less fighting and more

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negotiations to win local friends and followers. Pursuing this approach, the Taliban quickly arrived in Kabul in 1996 under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar, an ethnic Pashtun. He became known as the 'one-eyed Mullah' because his right eye was injured during an explosion in the Soviet–Afghan War. He belonged to a poor unlanded family and later taught in a madrassah in the province of Kandahar. Under his stewardship, the Taliban established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, a state that was to be governed strictly according to what they interpreted as the Islamic law—the Sharia. Twenty years later, the Taliban followed the same approach. They did little fighting and more negotiations, especially when the US began to reduce the number of security personnel it had in the country. The ISI, in other words, worked closely with the Taliban, a tactic that was neither understood nor tolerated by the US leadership, in particular by those who took a very hard line towards Islam and the Muslim world. John Bolton who had served several Republican administrations including working as chief of staff of President Donald Trump, was dead set against working with Muslim nations unless they toed the American line in most matters. According to him Pakistan was among the top challenges American policymakers faced. He believes that for decades, Islamabad had recklessly pursued nuclear weapons and aided Islamic terrorism—threats the US policymakers have consistently underestimated and mishandled, he wrote in an op-editorial in *The Washington Post*. 'With Kabul's fall, the time for neglect and equivocation is over.'[6] He sees the military and the ISI as the real rulers of Pakistan—Prime Minister Imran Khan is just a pretty face. He recognized the US involvement in the war against the Soviet occupiers, but it was not based on deep thought or careful planning. 'Washington made the mistake of funneling much of its assistance to 'the muj' [Mujahideen] through Pakistan, thereby relinquishing control over which politicians and fighters actually received the aid.' Bolton is either ignorant of history or deliberately distorts the facts to read the 1980s war against the Soviet occupation that suits American current thinking. Americans left the planning and execution of the campaign against the occupying Soviet force to the ISI not because clever Pakistanis tricked them into taking that route. Their main reason for farming out the fighting to the Afghan Mujahideen was to limit their own exposure.

Bolton is one the several people who opposed the 2015 nuclear deal President Obama had signed with Iran. Dexter Filkins writing for *The New Yorker* visited Bolton's office for an interview, and was surprised to see a framed copy of Trump's executive order nullifying the US's nuclear

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agreement with Iran, hanging on the wall. Bolton had put the order on the wall, on the day it was issued. It was one of the proudest moments in his long public service, he told the journalist.[7] He sees Pakistan doing a great deal of mischief with its nuclear arsenal. 'Moreover, the prospect that Pakistan could slip individual warheads to terrorist groups to detonate anywhere in the world would make a new 9/11 incomparably more deadly.'[8] Although not putting it in exactly those words, Bolton would be happy to see Americans use all the power they could muster to take out Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The US should contemplate punishing Pakistan. 'The United States should eliminate its own aid to Islamabad; strike Pakistan from the list of "major non-NATO allies", impose anti-terrorist sanctions; and more. Our tilt towards India should accelerate.'[9]

Bolton is not the only person of some influence in the American policy circles who had taken such a negative view of Pakistan and the policies Islamabad is currently pursuing. Given his preoccupation with the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, it is not surprising that he is so concerned about Pakistan having piled up a sizeable nuclear arsenal. Again, he displays ignorance of history. Pakistan went nuclear not to aid Islamic groups but to counter India's move in that direction when in 1974 it tested a nuclear device close to the border with Pakistan. The then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had declared that since India was developing a nuclear weapon so will Pakistan even if that meant eating 'grass', meaning that his country would make any sacrifice to balance India's growing prowess. People such as Bolton are making a big mistake by choosing friendship with India at the cost of enmity with Pakistan. As I have argued elsewhere, the US and its Western allies would need Pakistan to work with the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan to not opt for extremist Islam as the country's governing philosophy. The resurgent Islamic State (IS) has already shown its hand by sending a suicide bomber to explode bombs that took thirteen American lives along with that of dozens of Afghan civilians, men, women, and children. The IS has developed a base in the province of Nangarhar, right on the eastern border with Pakistan. To address the growing threat Pakistan will need the help of the Taliban.

Pakistan has had to make adjustments to unexpected changes in the US's policies towards it and the geographic space in which it is located. The dilemma that has posed for Pakistan according to Ryan Crocker is that:

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> After the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan at the hands of U.S.-trained and armed mujahedeen in 1989, training that was facilitated by Pakistan, we decided we were done. We could see the Afghan civil war coming — the only thing holding the disparate Afghan groups together was a common enemy. But that was not our problem — we were leaving. On the way out, we stopped helping Pakistan in a key way: We ended security and economic assistance because of its nuclear weapons program, something we'd exempted before. So Pakistan, in its own narrative, went from being the most allied of allies to the most sanctioned of adversaries. That is why Pakistan threw its support to the Taliban when they started gaining ground in the 1990s: It could end a dangerous conflict along Pakistan's own unstable borders.[10]

Crocker while serving as the American ambassador in Islamabad from 2004 to 2007 tried to persuade the authorities in Islamabad to distance themselves from the Taliban. But given the American history of involvement in the area, Pakistan's policymakers were not convinced of the case the diplomat was making.

> The answer I got back went like this: "We know you, we know you don't have the patience for the long fight. We know the day will come you just get tired and go home – it's what you do. But we aren't going anywhere – this is where we live. So if you think we are going to turn the Taliban into a mortal enemy, you are crazy." We have again validated their skepticism.[11]

What are the options Washington has? Certainly not the one the Biden administration seems to be attracted to. As discussed later, it is building an alliance aimed at containing China. That way it will lose both Islamabad and Kabul. One more quote from Crocker since it has relevance for this discussion: 'We need to be engaged with Pakistan on ways to assess and deal with this enhanced threat. The prospect of violent destabilization of a country with about 210 million people and nuclear weapons is not a pretty one.'[12]

There are likely to be serious domestic consequences for Afghanistan following the exit of American troops from the country. One obvious outcome would be the exit of a class of Afghan people the country needs for advancing national integration, economic development, and modernizing society. There were reports that a thousand members of the country's security forces left their stations in the north and escaped into neighbouring Tajikistan. But American departure could create some interesting and welcome opportunities for Kabul in the international

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field. The country could become an important participant in what I would like to call the 'counter quad'. I would get to an explanation of that proposition a little later.

Now that the Taliban have taken control of Kabul, they may not be able to establish a strong presence in the country's capital unless they are prepared to work with those groups in the country who think differently. One of these issues is the role of women in society. The quick and unexpected moves in Afghanistan on 15 August 2021 created serious concerns about the future of women in the country. On that day, as the Taliban advanced towards Kabul, President Ashraf Ghani fled to UAE, accompanied by a number of close associates. On the day Ghani flew out, the Taliban entered the Presidential Palace, and its leaders addressed a press conference. They promised to govern the country differently than the last time they were in power (1996-2001). At that time, the Taliban forbid women to work outside the home or even to leave the house without a male guardian. They could not attend school and faced public flogging if they were found to have violated morality rules, such as failing to observe hijab. They imposed on the country what 'they considered' were Islamic ways. These policies drew a lot of attention outside the country but foreigners, even the more liberal Afghans, felt they were helpless.

In the final days of 2001, the Americans helped by a non-Pashtun ethnic militia that went under the name of The Northern Alliance, entered Kabul and sent the Taliban government packing. Most of the Taliban leaders escaped and went to the tribal areas of neighbouring Pakistan. The pro-modernization and pro-women policies pursued and programs implemented in the twenty-year period when the Taliban were out of power appreciably improved the status of women but there was still a great deal of catching-up to be done. Of the 4 million children who were out of school in 2021, 2.2 million were girls. A number of women who had gained prominence in Afghanistan in other parts of the Muslim world spoke about the possibility of the country slipping back into darkness.

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai[13] wrote, 'Afghan girls and young women are once again where I have been—in despair over the thought that they might never be allowed to see a classroom or hold a book again.' She was sceptical about the Taliban claim that once they had emerged victorious in Afghanistan, that they will follow a different path from the one they took in 1996–2001 when they governed the country. 'Some members of the Taliban say they will not deny women and girls education or the right to work. But given Taliban's history of violently suppressing

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women's rights, Afghan women's fears are real. Already we are hearing reports of female students being turned away from their universities, female workers from their offices."[14] Although the religious groups in Pakistan have turned against Malala and have declared her to be an agent of the Christian West, she appealed to her country of origin as well as other Muslim neighbours of Afghanistan—Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—to open their doors to fleeing citizens. 'That will save lives and help stabilize the region. They must also allow refugee children to enroll in local schools and humanitarian organizations to set up temporary learning centres in camps and settlements."[15]

Another prominent female voice joined Malala Yousafzai in urging Afghan women to adjust their ways to deal with the return of the Taliban. Speaking from her parents' home in Copenhagen, Denmark, Khalida Popal, 34, founder of the Afghan women's football team, urged Afghan girls to stay silent in order to be safe. 'It is very painful,' Popal said in her message, 'because for all these years, I have been fighting to empower women and girls, to earn the right to wear the jersey. I am now saying: Take them off. Destroy them.' From the start, Popal explains, Afghanistan's women national football team was intended as a platform for opposing the barbarism of the Taliban whose influence was felt long after its leaders were driven from power in 2001. Forming the team was itself an act of protest. 'The mere fact that Afghan girls dared fill their lungs with fresh air – that they ran, kicked a ball, fell down, cheered their teammates and learned to be brave, constituted defiance,' wrote Liz Clarke for *The Washington Post*. Popal was calling on everyone with a voice to raise theirs.

> My message to every single human being who is watching, witnessing what is happening in Afghanistan is: Raise your voice and ask the question, 'What about the women of Afghanistan? What about the generation of young people who had so many big dreams? What about them?
>
> What you hear from all the politicians is: 'Our mission has been very successful. We are taking our people out. We are done with Afghanistan.' There is no talking about 'democracy' and 'human rights' and 'women's rights'—all these words that they entered our country with as promises to the people and the women of Afghanistan.
>
> The women of Afghanistan feel abandoned by the world. They feel betrayed by the world. And that is painful.[16]

The rise of the Taliban will be challenged by several ethnic militias who were called into service by the government headed by President

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Ashraf Ghani. It was a move prompted by desperation. However, if a relatively strong authority emerges in the Afghan capital, it should be able to create a productive space for itself in the rapidly evolving global order. At the heart of this developing order is the growing rivalry between the US and China.

The Americans have established an association which Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister of Japan, first suggested and named it the 'quad'. This represented an understanding among four nations about military and economic underpinnings. In addition to Japan, the quad includes Australia, India, and the US. Its main objective is the containment of the growing influence and reach of China. Countering China's rise is one issue about which there is agreement between Democrats and Republicans in the American political system. Even though former President Donald Trump had entertained Xi Jinping, his Chinese counterpart, at Mar-a-Lago, his resort in Florida, and called him his friend, he used several public policy instruments in attempting to push China into a corner. By calling the virus that caused the Covid-19 pandemic, the 'Chinese or Wuhan' virus, he unleashed a dangerous anti-Asian-American sentiment in the US that hurt several people of that origin. However, it should have been expected that the Chinese would react to these verbal and policy assaults and this they have begun to do.

Cold wars have been around for as long as nations have been in existence. The most important of these was the one that was fought by the US and the Soviet Union from 1945 when the Second World War ended to 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and broke up into a dozen or so independent states. Another is now shaping up with the US and rising China. China is now the second largest economy in the world and is likely to overtake the US in a couple of decades. Even then, its income per capita would remain only a fraction that of the US.

The move towards creating another cold-war situation were initially made by the leadership in the US. Although several centuries ago Thucydides, the Greek sage, suggested that a rising power when it threatens the one that has been in the lead for a long time, open conflict is almost always the result. He based his conclusion after studying the conflict between Sparta and Athens which led to a war between the two Greek states. That conflict became the subject of a long account by Homer and was central to the thesis developed in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War.* The war ended with the defeat of Athens at Syracuse and the rise of Sparta as the dominant Greek state. Thucydides is generally regarded as one of the first true historians. The Thucydides

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thesis was updated by the Harvard University Political Scientist Graham Alison. Looking at several conflicts in recent times, Alison concluded that the US and China are destined for war or near-war.[17]

The Chinese responded to the moves by Washington in several ways. At the ceremony where the country's political elite celebrated the 100th birthday of the Communist Party, President Xi Jinping issued a clear warning to his country's detractors. Standing in front of the portrait of Mao Zedong that overlooks the Tiananmen Square, he told the world that China's rise was unstoppable. The country, he said would not be lectured to. And those who tried to block its ascent will hit a 'Great Wall of steel.' Several Western news correspondents listened to the words of the Chinese leader. 'The speech was laden with symbols intended to show that China and its ruling party would not tolerate foreign obstruction on the country's path to becoming a superpower,' wrote Chris Buckley and Keith Bradsher for *The New York Times*. 'Mr. Xi has been building on a rise of public confidence since China suppressed the coronavirus relatively quickly in 2020 while the United States, Britain and other democracies suffered waves of death. But the country must tackle challenges, such as an aging population that could slow growth. Mr. Xi suggested that the solution to any problem demanded staying with the party.' Party loyalty would help China overcome all the obstacles that would be placed in its way as it marched towards what was its destiny—a major world power.[18]

The Chinese leadership is fighting the West, led by the US, with more than words. This brings me back to a discussion of the role Afghanistan could play in world affairs. It could align itself with Beijing and other regional powers to break the monopoly of the West in the global system. China is already moving in that direction. It is investing trillions of dollars building a complex system of roads, railways, pipelines, and fibre optics cables to improve its connectivity with the world outside its western borders. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a part of what President Xi has called his country's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). There is expectation that with the Americans gone from Afghanistan, that country would find it attractive to join the BRI as a partner and embrace the aims of the initiative. Also, now that Kabul is fully in command of its own affairs, it may become a partner in a 'quad' arrangement that would include along with itself China, Iran, and Pakistan. The US has distanced itself from these countries, preferring to go along with those in Shinzo Abe's 'quad'. Such an arrangement would provide a counterpoint to the US-led association of countries in the Pacific. The US quad was designed to constrain and bind China;

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the Chinese-led quad could release China's energies to the world to its west. Including Turkey in the configuration would result in the proposed counter quad to become a 'quintet'.

Under Presidents Obama and Trump and now under President Joe Biden, the US is visibly ignoring Pakistan and drawing closer to India. As has been noted by a number of observers, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan is the only prominent world leader Biden has not reached on the telephone after taking office. A close association with India seems like an attractive proposition for Washington as it focuses on containing rising China. The 'quad approach'—a strategic alliance among the US, Japan, India, and Australia would not deliver what Washington expects of such a relationship. It would only destabilize South Asia adding to the turmoil that already exists in the restive countries of the Middle East.

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6

Pakistan's Increasing Dependence on China

There are several references to China in this work but given the importance the country now has for Pakistan, it would not be unreasonable to devote a full chapter to the subject. My purpose is to look at the future and to discuss how I believe the growing economic relations between the two countries will affect both. It is worth noting that in launching his austerity drive, Prime Minister Imran Khan made it clear that CPEC will continue to have the full support of his government. The main purpose of the discussion in this chapter is to place Pakistan's growing dependence on China in a number of different contexts. I will discuss how Pakistan's evolving relations with the US are placing Islamabad firmly in the Chinese orbit—a country various Pakistani leaders have called an 'all weather friend'. The orbit itself has been defined by China's relations with the US, which have never been as strained as they are in present times. The situation is a precarious one and the South Asian subcontinent as a whole might be influenced by the increasing tensions between the two superpowers.

US–China Relations: The Thucydides's Trap

Millenia ago, Thucydides, the Greek historian (and General), reflecting on the conflict between rising Sparta and declining Athens, predicted that such adjustments cannot happen without open conflict between the two competing powers. They would inevitably go to war. This assertion was examined in a research project managed by Professor Graham T. Allison (Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at Harvard University). The research team examined sixteen similar cases since as early as the 15th century, in which all but four ended in war. The conclusion of this research was published in a book in which Allison suggested that such a conflict could be avoided. The Greek sage may not necessarily have been right when he said that when one power is overtaking another on the international ladder, it will not be able to climb past without open conflict, even war. But this assumption that conflict can be avoided might not be applicable to the growing competition between the US and China.[1]

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The problem is that while China will show restraint, the US, under the outgoing President Donald Trump, opted for a sharp response to what it saw as the challenge from China. *The Economist* noted in its review of the Allison book, 'Mr. Allison does not say that war between China and the United States is inevitable, but he thinks it, "more likely than not". This alarming conclusion is shared by many in Washington, where Mr Allison's book is causing a stir ... China and America could blunder into war in several ways, argues Mr. Allison .... With Donald Trump in the White House, Mr. Allison believes that even a trade war might turn into a shooting war.'[2] It was believed that the growing confrontation may come to an end with the conclusion of the Trump era. However, Joe Biden has not made much effort to remedy the situation. The main focus of his administration is what is now defined as the 'Indo-Pacific' foreign policy frame work. It was, 'promoted by the Trump administration, [that] reflects the Biden administration's continued outreach to the region and the way US foreign policy has been recast by China's expanding influence... The continued references to the Indo-Pacific suggest the US has become increasingly focused on China.'[3]

If Biden succeeds in making alliances such as the QUAD (officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising USA, India, Japan, and Australia) then the freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region can challenge China. How this pans out is yet to be seen. Then there is AUKUS that is a trilateral security pact between Australia, UK, and the US. It is primarily a military alliance by which China feels threatened. Under this pact, UK has already given twelve nuclear submarines to Australia. The Chinese embassy in Washington accused the countries of a, 'Cold War mentality' and the foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, said that it undermines regional peace and 'intensifies the arms race'.

On 16 November 2021, Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping held a virtual summit at which the American president said that it was clear to him that there was an urgent need 'to establish some common-sense guardrails.' President Xi Jinping for his part called Biden 'my old friend' and used a nautical metaphor comparing the two countries to ships that must together navigate the ocean's wind and waves without colliding.' According to one assessment, 'bubbling under the surface, was acrimony that could prove difficult to resolve.'

China needs global stability to make progress to achieve its objectives. It is now engaged in redefining its economic ambitions and also determining the strategy it should follow to go where it would like to head. There are three elements in the current Chinese thinking that need

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to be noted. These have relevance for Pakistan. First, the period when China built its economy on the basis of exporting cheaply manufactured goods, is over. It no longer has low-priced labour and the Western markets, which imported most of its products, are not expanding as rapidly as they did in the past, because of the 2008 Great Recession, that had occurred in the decade prior to the Covid pandemic. China must now look for other ways and one of them is to develop an industrial base that depends on it becoming the leader in the new industrial age that is taking shape. This relies on linking production enterprises through supply chains that embrace the entire world, in both the developed and emerging countries. Apple Inc. products are good examples of the working of this evolving system of production. These products are designed in the Apple laboratories located in America. They are assembled in a giant Taiwanese-owned plants in China's south, from scores of parts and components imported from dozens of supply plants, mostly located in East Asia. The development of this system of production offers Pakistan an opportunity. It could develop its small and medium industries to enter the China-based supply chains. Second, China for demographic reasons, would want to move its population from the crowded east coast, to the almost empty west. But this will need access to the Asian countries that are on its west and through them, it would be able to reach the sea. For this to happen, it must open land routes and opt to promote land-based commerce. It is in this context that it has announced a massive program of investment to improve the infrastructure of the countries in its neighbourhood. It is this thinking that has shaped President Xi Jinping's BRI, which was launched by him in 2013 and announced during a visit to Kazakhstan. China plans to invest $1–3 trillion over the next thirty years or so, in sixty to seventy countries, to build six road and railway corridors across Asia, Europe, and Africa. The BRI has been written into the Communist Party Constitution. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the most important part of this trillion-dollar investment program. The BRI is a major component of the new economic development strategy the Chinese are devising to keep their economy growing, as the rise in domestic wages, factors it out of the markets in North America and Europe, for cheaply manufactured goods. These were carried over the sea to the many destinations in rich countries. The new approach is to develop land corridors, to transport mostly capital goods made in China, to the countries on its west. Apart from the land links, a chain of ports is to be developed by China to increase connectivity and transport bulk cargo, like import of crude oil from the Middle East that it direly needs

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to meet its energy shortfall. Third, China is pursuing relentlessly the objective of becoming the world leader in new technologies. If the US wants to stay in the lead, it will have to invest much more than what it is doing at present. The Chinese investment in this field, most of which comes from state-controlled institutions, is increasing at the rate of 14 per cent a year. This is more than three times than that of the US. This is an opportunity for Pakistan as well. The government should invest in imparting the skills needed to enter modern services to the youth. Then Pakistan could supply some of this trained work force needed for developing new technologies in China.

There are several ways of looking at China's rise apart from the size of its GDP. It may soon overtake the US and become the world's largest economy. China is gaining on the US in other ways. Mary Meeker's latest Internet trends study shows that five years ago, China had only two of the world's largest publicly traded technology companies, while America had nine.[4] Today, China has nine out of the top twenty. China's plan is to catch up with the US in artificial intelligence (AI). AI is built on how much data can be fed into the machines, and this requires research and developing more and more systems in this regard. The fact that China has a much larger number of people engaged in this field gives it a definite edge over the US. But as Thomas Friedman points out, 'The US has three huge assets that China doesn't have and is unlikely to acquire them any time soon. We should be doubling down on our strengths: immigration, allies, and values. Instead, Trump is squandering them.'[5] But what will really matter is which of the two countries will write the rules that will govern the new world order.

Navigating the rough waters created by the growing American hostility towards China, is a challenge for the regime headed by Imran Khan in Pakistan. The deepening US–China conflict came at a time when the Imran Khan's administration was still in the process of finding its diplomatic feet. The Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, addressed a gathering in Washington of about 150 Pakistani-Americans from all over the US. He emphasised Islamabad's desire to maintain good relations with the US. The fact that Donald Trump, the then US president, had spoken harsh words about Pakistan would not be allowed to affect relations between the two countries. He recognised that US–China relations were passing through some tense moments; these would not be factored into Pakistan's dealings with the two countries. However, the verbal duel between Washington and Beijing heated up in September 2018. In his two speeches at the UN—one in the General Assembly and the other in

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the Security Council—Mr Trump spoke openly against what he termed as Beijing's meddling in his country's internal affairs. He complained that in response to the imposition of tariffs by his administration on Chinese imports, Beijing had retaliated by imposing tariffs of its own, aimed at American farmers and other politically sensitive constituencies in the states that support him. After his two speeches, he told reporters, 'They do not want me or us to win because I am the first president ever to challenge China on trade, and we are winning on trade...we are winning on every level.' China stiffly denied the president's accusation. 'We do not, and will not, interfere in any country's domestic affairs,' said Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister. 'We refuse to accept any unwarranted accusations.' But Trump did not back down. He wrote in a tweet that the Chinese had placed a four-page supplement in a mid-west newspaper, *The Des Moines Register*, and some other newspapers, that highlighted the economic costs of Trump's trade battle with China. The latest tit-for-tat brought a formal rejoinder from the Chinese side. 'I believe the international community knows very well who is most used to meddling in the internal affairs of others,' Geng Shuang, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, told reporters. Asked about placement of the advertisement in *The Des Moines Register*, Geng said that to assert that this amounted to election interference was 'totally far-fetched and fictional'. But, as suggested by Anna Fifield in *The Washington Post*, by selecting Des Moines, Iowa as the area of focus, the Chinese showed their knowledge of the American political system. Iowa hosted the first vote during the presidential primary season, starting in early 2020, which gave it outsized influence over the US electoral process. 'Second, it has special status in the bilateral relationship. Long before he became China's president, Xi travelled to Muscatine, Iowa to learn about agriculture.'[6]

Mark Landler, a seasoned diplomatic correspondent working for *The New York Times*, wrote a long story for his newspaper, based on what happened at the UN meetings. He referred to his interview with a senior administration official who 'cited an array of other Chinese propaganda efforts, including pressure on think tanks and film studios that distribute material critical of China, intimidation of Chinese-language media organisations in the US and influence campaigns on college campuses with students and teachers.' But 'China would not be the first country to use trade to achieve political ends in the United States,' he wrote in his coverage. In the 1980s, the Japanese strategically placed auto plants and their suppliers in critical Congressional districts, hoping to head off any action against its auto industry.[7]

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Other American leaders joined the American president to be openly critical of China. In a speech delivered on 4 October 2018, at the Hudson Institute, a conservative, Washington-based think tank, the then vice president, Mike Pence, warned of a tougher approach towards Beijing. He accused China of using 'political, economic and military tools, as well as propaganda, to advance its influence and benefit its interests in the United States.'

The Chinese seemed to be getting exhausted by the constant attacks on their country by senior politicians in the Trump administration. They gave a cold reception to then US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, when he visited Beijing for five hours on his way back from Pyongyang, North Korea. Three meetings had been slotted for him, with the Chinese foreign minister, Yang Jiechi, a member of the politburo who had dealt with bilateral relations and finally, with President Xi Jinping. The program was scaled back. The snub was felt by Trump. That China was redoubling its efforts to protect its slowing economy from the effects of the trade war, provided fresh evidence to Trump that Washington enjoyed the upper hand in the deepening commercial conflict. In October, China's central bank, clearly nervous about a slowdown, pumped $175 billion into the economy by reducing the amount of money that some lenders are required to hold in reserve. But China has choices—in economic jargon, it is sometimes called the 'nuclear option'. It could use its balance of trade advantage as a weapon and blast the US debt. The Chinese are the biggest holder of the US foreign debt. It owns more than $1 trillion worth of US Treasury bonds that it has purchased. Beijing could take a step back from buying US Treasury bonds, or worse, dump what they own in the open market. As an analyst speculated, 'China has lately reduced its holdings of the US government debt and a growing number of financiers, economists and geopolitical analysts are quietly raising the prospect that China may look to its ability to influence interest rates in the US as its ultimate trump card.'[8]

The growing competition with China resulted in a reversal in Trump's approach towards foreign aid. In early October 2018, and with no fanfare, the US president signed a bill that created a new foreign aid agency, the US International Development Finance Corporation, and gave it the authority to provide $60 billion in loans, loan guarantees, and insurance to companies willing to do business in developing nations. In *The New York Times*, Glenn Thrush wrote, 'The move was a significant reversal for Mr. Trump, who harshly criticised foreign aid from the opening moments of his presidential campaign in 2015.' He mentioned that after

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taking office, Trump had proposed slashing $3 billion in foreign aid, eliminating funding for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and to take steps to scuttle the US Agency for International Development that provides $22.7 billion a year in grants around the world. 'The shift has less to do with a sudden embrace of foreign aid than a desire to block Beijing's plan for economic, technological and political dominance. China has spent nearly five years bankrolling a plan to gain greater global influence by financing big projects across Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa.'[9]

Senior officials in the Trump administration refuted aspersions that these measures are the whims of a leader who has been called reckless and thoughtless. They assert that behind this sudden largesse, there is a clear strategy. Peter Navarro, assistant to the president for trade and manufacturing policy and director of the National Trade Council, in an op-ed article for *The New York Times* wrote, 'President Trump's maxim that "economic security is national security" comes with an important corollary: A strong manufacturing base is critical to both economic prosperity and national defence.'[10] Navarro is well known for his hard-line on China and came to Trump's attention because of his book, *Death by China*.[11]

While Trump focused on the large trade deficits his country ran up with most trading partners, the real worry was about the decline in the country's manufacturing sector's capability. The president ordered an assessment of America's manufacturing and industrial base. The study was carried out by the department of defence and took a full year to complete. For the administration, the conclusion was worrying. It identified almost 300 vulnerabilities, ranging from dependencies on foreign manufacturers and looming shortages of workers with needed skills. It also highlighted what it called the 'single points of failure', involving the reliance on foreign manufacturers for critical equipment, or material. One strategic matter of concern identified in this report, was the problems the US could run into in case of a conflict with a major power. This production structure had depended on globalisation. Manufacturers, even of critical war material such as missiles, tanks, aircrafts, submarines, and aircraft carriers, depended on an intricate supply chains spread across the globe. The defence department report stated, 'Because the supply chain is globalised and complex, it is challenging to ensure that finished assemblies, systems [and systems for nuclear war utilise] trusted and discrete components.' But they had to rely on this 'due to the diminishing US based microelectronic and

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electronic manufacturing capability.' The broader recommendation was 'to diversify away from complete dependence on sources of supply in politically unstable countries that may cut off US access.' In that context, the report focused a lot of attention on China. The country 'represents a significant and growing risk to the supply of materials deemed strategic and critical to national security,' including a 'growing number of both widely used and specialized metals, alloys and other materials, including rare earths and permanent magnets,' wrote the authors of the report. Looked at from this angle, the Trump administration's imposition of stiff tariffs on aluminium imports, began to make some strategic sense.

In view of the very divergent paths the US and China are taking in global affairs, is a conflict between the two inevitable? And if it does occur, what would be its global implications? This is the question that Graham Allison and many people are concerned about. How would this increasing rivalry between the two superpowers affect Asia, in particular, the countries of South Asia? Indeed, we can see Thucydides's example of Athens and Sparta developing. Looking at the dynamics of the economies of US and China, one can't but be impressed with the reversal of roles that is occurring. For several decades after the end of World War II, the US spent time and effort creating a new world order, in which nations would play collectively by agreed rules. There would be collective decision-making and no country, no matter how powerful, would dominate the evolving system. Institutions would be established to mind the many aspects of the global economy: the IMF for managing global finance, the World Bank and the regional banks, for providing capital for development and eventually, the WTO, for the conduct of international commerce.

It took fifty years to complete the system, with the creation of the WTO, in 1995. China decided to stay out of the structure that was built; its leaders worried that China's ideology and the way it managed its affairs, could get contaminated by any opening to the outside world. That began to change with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the rise of Deng Xiaoping as China's supreme leader. China joined the world economic system, coming into the IMF and the World Bank in 1981 and into the WTO two decades later. It benefited enormously from this opening. In the quarter century between 1980 and 2007, the size of the economy increased 32-fold and the per capita income of the population grew 15-fold. It is now the world's second largest economy after the US. If the present growth trends in the two countries stay on course, it is believed, China may overtake the US in a couple of decades and become

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the world's largest economy. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 may change the pattern of global development in ways difficult to predict at this time.

US–China relations are caught in the midst of a downward spiral and the deterioration is rapid. During his two campaigns for the presidency in 2016 and 2020, Donald. J. Trump singled out China as the main reason for the economic and social problems faced by what came to be known as the 'Trump base'. It was made up of white, non-college-educated workers in the country's mid-West, who either lost jobs, or saw their wages stagnate. In the many well-attended rallies addressed by Trump, he promised to remedy the situation. China, he declared, 'will be punished as a currency manipulator.' According to his reading of history, Beijing had kept its currency undervalued, which had made it possible to cut deeply into the US's markets. But that was no longer the cased when Trump moved into the White House on 20 January 2017. This belief represented the thinking of Navarro, an influential adviser in the Trump White House.

Jobs were lost as some of the American industries relocated to China, from places such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio—the heartland of America's once formidable industrial base. Trump promised that those movements would end, and he would get these firms to come back to the US. The heartland voted for Trump in the elections of 2016. The main characteristics of the people who came to be called the 'Trump base', were identified by the husband and wife team of Angus Deaton and Anne Case. Their book, *Deaths of Despair*, was widely read in the US.[12]

Trump lost the US presidential elections in November 2020, to the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden. As of the time of writing (November 2021) it is still too early to speculate in what direction US politics will go, but with the end of the Trump era, the situation has not toned down, and Allison's Thucydides's trap is still relevant.

The Weaponisation of International Commerce

The global system is now dealing with two very different stresses. Donald J. Trump, the now former American president, is the source of the first. He had pronounced the 'America First' approach towards the world when he delivered his inaugural address, on 20 January 2017. The US would no longer be constrained by the need to accommodate the interests of other countries and regions in dealing with the world. The second source of global tension comes from Beijing, with the political rise of President Xi Jinping. He has succeeded in consolidating his hold over China and

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will remain in power longer than the two terms that became the norm in the post-Deng Xiaoping era. This extension in the presidential tenure, needed an amendment in the constitution. On 16 November 2021, the Chinese Communist Party issued a resolution that anointed Xi Jinping one of its revered leaders. The document was the third such document summarizing its interpretation of history of 100 years. The resolution had one goal: to cement Xi's status as a transformational leader essential for China's rise. About two-thirds of the document is devoted to Xi's nine years in power and the changes he has brought in politics, economics, and foreign policy. According to one reading of the document, Xi's name appears 22 times in the resolution; Mao Zedong gets 18 mentions, and Deng Xiaoping 6. Xi's immediate predecessor, Hu Jintao, who was in power for a decade receives little mention.

President Xi is now engaged in projecting China's power well beyond its borders. Some analysts believe that the growing rift between China and the US goes beyond economic interests. According to Nicholas Kristof, former *The New York Times* columnist, 'Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping are a bit alike, and that presents a danger to the global order. The American and Chinese leaders are both impetuous, authoritarian, and overconfident nationalists, and each appears to underestimate the other side's capacity to inflict pain. This dangerous symmetry leaves the two sides hurtling toward each other.'[13]

Will the uninterrupted Chinese rise be affected by what some trade analysts are calling an economic Cold War? By the end of September 2019, the US and China had slapped tariffs on the entire trade between them, which exceeds $635 billion annually. Trade experts anticipate 'an economic partition reminiscent of the globe-splitting divide between the United States and the Soviet Union following World War II.'[14] What is occurring, is a fundamental reshaping of US–China commercial relationship, after nearly four decades of growing interdependence. These growing links had ushered in a period of globalisation, with shared benefits by all those who participated in the process.

The emergence of a global economy shook financial markets and reordered business supply chains. The US–China annual goods trade almost doubled since 2006. If there is a real breakdown in the relationship between the two countries, it would affect about 40 per cent of the global economy. As President Trump said that he had resorted to tariffs to compel China to abandon a host of allegedly unfair trade practices, including making American companies give up their trade secrets in return for access to Chinese markets. Washington was also unhappy that

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China subsidises state enterprises that dominate the country's economy. The Trump administration believed that commercial relations with China did not take place on a level playing field.

The Trump administration moved a bit more cautiously than he had indicated earlier. He was concerned that the American consumers will be hurt and not vote for the Republican party in the November 2018 mid-term elections. On 24 September, a 10 per cent tariff was applied on $200 billion worth of imports, which was set to increase to 25 per cent if Beijing did not relent and adopt the changes in economic management desired by Washington. China responded by imposing tariffs on $65 billion of American imports. Beijing cannot match Washington dollar for dollar, since it imports much less from the US—$130 billion in US goods in 2017. Trump warned that if Beijing retaliated, that would spark another set of tariffs of $267 billion on Chinese goods. The Chinese official said that their country would keep fighting back with qualitative measures. American businesses took that to mean an array of regulatory measures: stalled visas, delayed licenses, and increase in port inspections. Kristof also wrote,

> [China] can play a nationalism card so that it becomes unpatriotic for Chinese citizens to buy McDonald's burgers, drink Coke or wear Nike shoes. Safety inspections can close American hotels; tax investigations can tie American firms in knots; and customs delays can hold up parts and idle American-owned factories.
>
> Chinese tourism to the U.S. can slow, students can be directed to Australian universities over American ones and rare earth minerals needed by American companies may develop shortages.[15]

Strengthening of the US dollar would reduce the impact on consumer prices. Since early February 2019, the dollar gained more than 6 per cent against the Chinese currency, eroding more than one-half of the new tariffs impact. The effect in China will be opposite to that in the US. The decline in that country's currency with respect to the US dollar will increase the impact of the retaliatory tariffs by Beijing. The Trump administration took other steps besides the imposition of tariffs that will have consequences for economic relations with China. It began to discourage Chinese investment in the US. Congress passed legislation, with the support of the White House, to investigate more closely potential Chinese acquisitions of American high-tech companies. According to Michael Hirson, Asia director at Eurasia Group, 'Some administration hardliners would be happy to see trade and investment restrictions lead to

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the decoupling of the US and Chinese economies.' According to Caroline Freund, a senior official at the World Bank, 'A 25 per cent tariff applied on all US–China trade that results in the withdrawal of investors, would reduce the American national product by 1.6 per cent—or $320 billion—while China would lose 3.5 per cent.' The Shanghai Composite Index, which is a good indicator of China's stock market, dropped more than 20 per cent since January 2018. Those who observe China, argue that President Xi cannot show weakness to his people in the manner of his response to the American moves. The Chinese president 'is trying to show strength on the world stage as the Chinese public, whose respect is crucial to his sustained power, increasingly bashes Trump online for picking on China.'[16]

Delving into history, Paul Krugman, the Nobel Prize winning economist, reminded the readers of his *New York Times* columns, that the trade system Trump had perverted was developed by the US over a period of more than eighty years. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had the US Congress pass the Reciprocal Agreements Act:

> Henceforth, tariffs would be negotiated via deals with foreign governments, giving export industries a stake in open markets. And these deals would be subject to up-or-down votes, reducing the ability of interest groups to buy themselves special treatment. The United States innovation became the template for global trading system, culminating in the creation of the World Trade Organization.[17]

Trump's moves resulted in bringing lobbying back into the trade game and with it came corruption. The firms that have the ability to undertake intensive lobbying began to win favours from the government. Apple Inc., which relies extensively on China for assembling its products, won concessions in the form of exemptions from the imposition of onerous tariffs. The Chinese reaction to these moves by the US took nationalist overtones. Chinese government issued a report accusing the Trump administration of a foreign policy based on 'trade bullying' and 'attempting to impose its own interests on China through extreme pressure.' 'It has brazenly preached unilateralism, protectionism and economic hegemony, making false accusations against many countries and regions, particularly China.'[18]

On 21 September 2019, three days before the US tariff moves, China cancelled trade negotiations that were scheduled a week later and scrapped military talks that were to start in Beijing. It was several months later,

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after he was sworn in that Joe Biden and President Xi spoke for about 90 minutes. *The Times* reported on 15 September 2021 that Biden suggested the, 'possibility of an in-person meeting with Xi Jinping...but the Chinese president declined to commit.' The reason cited was that he, 'avoids leaving his country, even for major gatherings amid the Covid-19 pandemic.' The tension between the US and China regarding Taiwan is also a major sticking point because the US wants China to abide by the Taiwan agreement. It is worth mentioning here that China considers Taiwan part of its territory while Taiwan claims to be an independent, democratic state that has the right to defend itself. This rising tension between the two superpowers is a matter of concern for Pakistan, even though the country is not well integrated into the global system of commerce. Under Prime Minister Imran Khan, the country wanted that international commerce should play a greater role in development. There was hope that Pakistan would develop new activities that relied on open and unconstrained global commerce. However, the growing tensions between China and the US would stand in the way of implementing the new development paradigm. As discussed in this book, China's reactions to the US moves are changing the world of commerce. Examples of this are China's policy in Latin America and Europe. The world in which Pakistan will need to move will be very different from what it was and the previous policies of economic and social development which were being followed and acknowledged, as given principles will require complete rethinking.

China Expands into Europe

Pakistan can expect to see a major change in its global links, with China focusing on developing infrastructure that would connect it by land to the rest of the world. Some of what China is doing by way of the BRI, will see Pakistan get closer to Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. In this context, it is useful to examine how China is handling its relations with Europe.

President Xi Jinping paid a three-day visit to Italy, beginning on 22 March 2019. The visit came when Italy was dealing with a complex set of economic and political problems. These resulted, in part, in the country accepting Xi's BRI. It became the first member of the G7 rich nations to take that step. As Jason Horowitz put it in an assessment of this move in *The New York Times*, 'The symbolism is striking...a powerful China drives a crack in the economic alliance that once dominated the globe and delivers a major blow to [the] Trump administration, that has been

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critical of the Belt and Road Initiative.'[19] But Germany and France were not enthusiastic about Beijing's plans for Trieste[20] being included in this project. They cited the example of the Greek port of Piraeus, which the Chinese had essentially bought. Reflecting on the Chinese move into Italy, John Bolton, when he was Trump's national security adviser, strongly criticised it. He tweeted, 'Endorsing BRI lends legitimacy to China's predatory approach to investment and will bring no benefits to the Italian people.' Another advisor of Trump, Stephen K. Bannon, in a discussion with a delegation of Italian politicians, called the Chinese initiative 'A British East India Company model of predatory capitalism.' While American pressure did not stop Italy from going ahead with plans to participate in the BRI, Washington was able to get Rome to go slow on a deal with Huawei, the Chinese technology giant, to develop the Italian 5G network.

There was growing concern that China had arrived in Europe not as an economic collaborator, but as an invader. In a paper issued on the eve of Xi's visit, the European Union called China an 'economic competitor' in critical industrial fields and a political 'systemic rival'. Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission's 12th president from 2014 to 2019, repeated the epithet, while Xi and his wife were being feted in Rome in the presidential palace, with arias sung by opera singer Andrea Bocelli. Juncker said, 'The Chinese market is not sufficiently open to European companies and we must change that.' He added that Europe did not want to be caught sleeping while the Chinese were advancing.

China's move into Europe was according to a well thought out plan. The first step was building a new pier at the deep-water Trieste port by the China Communications Construction Company, thereby making the historic port the Chinese gateway into Europe. In history, Trieste played a pivotal role as a harbour and then its importance diminished. Now, it was being revived by the arrival of Chinese companies, as well as tourists. Michele Geraci, the Italian economic development minister in charge of working with the Chinese, explained Beijing's interest in the Italian port as a means of transporting commodities from its vast network in Africa to China, by using both land and sea routes. The plan is to improve sea links between Trieste and Gwadar. Both are deep-water ports that China is developing under the BRI.

Xi's visit coincided with the observance of the 300th anniversary of Emperor Charles VI of Austria, declaring Trieste to be a free port. American businesses were also getting interested in the deep-water port but found that the Chinese presence might be a deterrent. Microsoft, for,

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instance, was exploring the possibility of constructing an underwater data centre that would cool its giant servers. They were looking at the site the Chinese were developing as a pier for their ships.

Defying pressures from both Washington and Brussels, Italy went ahead and signed an agreement that would make it formally a part of the BRI investment program. Along with this agreement, a host of Chinese and Italian ministers put signatures on twenty-nine separate documents at Rome's Villa Madama. The symbolism of these moves was not lost on those who observed and analysed the direction in which Rome had decided to move in a global system that was being restructured. According to one, it 'signalled waning American influence, a rising China, and tensions among the founding partners of the European Union.'[21]

There were also differences among the Italian policymakers. The interior minister, Matteo Salvini, once Italy's most powerful politician, was absent from the signing ceremony. He had publicly assumed a more American-aligned and sceptical posture towards the China–Italy deal, ridiculing the notion that China was a 'free market'. But his coalition partner, Luigi Di Maio,[22] the leader of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, was enthusiastic about the agreement. He had made several visits to China before President Xi came to his country.

Italy's detractors termed it a Trojan horse, by allowing China's economic and possibly military and political expansion into the European mainland. But those in favour looked to Beijing to help lift Italy's lagging economy, burdened with crushing debts by way of Chinese capital for investment and gaining access to China's large market for Italian exports. They believed that the agreement gave Italy a chance to catch up with other large European nations that did much more business with China. Zeno D'Agostino, the president of the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea, said it was only natural that Italians were looking at China, because the Trump administration had withdrawn from the world. He said, 'China is opening because it feels strong,' and a port like Trieste had to do business with dynamic parts of the world.

China had now become deeply engaged in Italy. After the signing ceremony, President Xi visited the Sicilian capital, Palermo, a port city well known for its oranges that it hoped to export to the large Chinese market. After the visit to Italy, Xi and his large entourage flew to Nice in France, where he met with the President of France (Emmanuel Macron), the Chancellor of Germany (Angela Merkel), and the President of the European Commission (Jean-Claude Juncker). His reception there was different.

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Xi did not have to travel to Europe to see and understand the enormous change occurring in the European continent and its relevance for China. Economic problems had still not gone after the Great Recession of 2007–9. The European Union experiment was not working for all nations in the continent, certainly not for Italy, the first port of call for the Chinese president. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia had begun to spread its wings and had appeared in places it had not been to before, even during the expansionist Soviet Union period. It had shown up in Africa, a continent of great interest for China. Then there was a massive movement of people from Africa and the Middle East, into Europe. The arrival of more than one million Muslim refugees was resulting in the demise of Western political liberalism. Italy and the countries of Eastern Europe were deeply affected by what some in Europe believed was the 'Muslimisation' of their indigenous cultures.

Taking the lead from the then US president, Donald Trump, the European leaders who greeted Xi in Paris, focused on grievances of Beijing's unfair trade practices. In this trip, he had planned to visit Rome, Monaco, Paris, and Florida, but in France, he cancelled the last leg of his journey. He cut out the fourth destination in his itinerary and flew back to Beijing from Paris. Xi was told of the difficulties he must have caused to his trade negotiators who were reaching an understanding with their American counterparts in Florida, by changing his travel schedule. There was no chance of Chinese and American negotiators striking any sort of deal to tempt Xi to travel to Mar-a-Lago.

The Europeans, again following the US lead, were also worried about the rapid expansion of China's technological capacity, Monaco had dedicated a 2 square kilometre test-bed for a new 5G mobile network by Huawei. Monaco promoted the deal as a part of a program to become a 'smart nation' and China was happy to have a display window next to Europe. But Europe did not have a uniform approach towards China's inroads. For instance, French telecoms tycoon, Xavier Niel, had joined other operators in France, to keep their distance from Huawei. However, he was a majority shareholder in Monaco Telecom, which had linked up with the Chinese company in this venture. Europe could see and hear the advantages of this system. But they preferred to look in other directions. The public sector European Investment Bank had given loans to Nokia to fund home-grown 5G developments and Brussels had set up a pilot scheme known as the European Innovation Council, to help start-ups in advanced technologies. In July 2020, after coming under Washington's

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pressure, London announced that it would not buy 5G components from Huawei.

There were other mixed signals from Europe regarding dealing with China. For instance, Beijing had poured in $6.5 billion into Portugal during its economic crash. China is also cultivating some of the East European nations such as Hungary that lie in the path of the BRI. The Chinese leader sought to assuage Europe's fears. In a joint press conference with Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, and Jean-Claude Juncker, Xi was unusually open. 'We cannot let mutual suspicion get the better of us. We must not be guarded against each other and worry that they may do something behind our back. That is very important. That is something we need to avoid.'[23] But EU president was not comforted. After Xi had departed, Juncker told lawmakers in the German state of Saarland, that the European leaders had explained to the Chinese leader that, 'It can't stay like this, that Chinese companies have free access to our markets in Europe, but we don't have it for the markets in China.' He went beyond trade issues since Chinese investments in his continent made it harder for European leaders to agree among themselves on important foreign policy issues. 'One country isn't able to condemn Chinese human rights policy because Chinese investors are involved in one of their ports.' This was an obvious reference to the Chinese effort to develop the port of Trieste, in Italy. He was also critical of the BRI, which he saw as a threat not only to Italian sovereignty, but to the independence of the entire continent.

What did President Xi achieve during his much-anticipated visit to Europe? Time is not on the European side and as the Chinese have shown time and again, they have the patience to wait. There was obvious comfort to be drawn by Beijing, for having enrolled one of the major European nations to become a full member of the BRI. With Italy onboard, the Chinese have gained a foothold into Europe. Once the BRI matures and a vast network of roads, railways, oil and gas pipelines, and fibre optics cables are built and laid, Europe will be well on the way to becoming an important partner of the rapidly expanding Chinese economy. Then there are demographic changes occurring, that would affect the world's future. Both China and Europe have aging populations—Europe more rapidly than China—that requires infusion of more youths into their economic systems. Immigration is not a solution the Europeans are prepared to accept. Their approach is to have better linkages with the parts of the world that have an abundance of young people. They don't have to move physically to get the manpower their industry needs. Furthermore, goods

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can move quickly if there is the kind of connectivity that BRI aims to create. Besides, the BRI has an important investment component in Pakistan, the CPEC, which would give the countries in the ambit of BRI, access to that country's large manpower resource. What we are witnessing, therefore, is a major global realignment in connectivity that is vitally important for the modern age. Land can be as important as the seas and oceans, to bring the world together. This is what the Chinese are hoping to achieve.

China's interest in Europe is not limited to the use of the continent's ports and penetration in the field of information technology. It also began to acquire some assets that were part of the continent's history. Investors from China bought chateaus in Bordeaux, France. 'There is perhaps no place more synonymous with France and its tradition of fine wines than Bordeaux,' wrote Adam Nossiter in *The New York Times*. But 'Bordeaux goes where the money is. And the money is now with the Chinese.'[24] The Chinese invasion of the region was not a new one for the region on the southwest coast of France. The region accommodated the English when it was under their domination in the 12th and 13th centuries and similarly, the Dutch, four centuries later.

China has entered the region for several reasons, including the growing consumption of high-quality wines in the country. China has become the destination for some 20 per cent of the wine produced in Bordeaux. As much as 80 per cent of the wine produced in the region by the Chinese owners goes to their home country. The invasion accounts for the ownership of 3 per cent of the roughly 6,000 chateaus in the region.

It is yet to be seen what impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was keenly felt in Europe, will have on these Chinese plans. It is possible, that Europe will be far less inclined to work with China after the outbreak. It is, however, still too early to tell.

China, Now the Champion of Globalisation

With China's aggressive outreach, it is not surprising that the country's policymakers are taking an active interest in globalisation. They have learnt a lesson from Deng Xiaoping, when he opened up China to the world. The benefits of Deng's move far exceeded expectations. This position was made clear by President Xi Jinping, in his oft-quoted address at the World Economic Forum at Davos, on 17 January 2017, in which he declared that Beijing would champion globalisation. 'The point I want to make is that many of the problems troubling the world are not

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caused by economic globalisation,' he told the Davos audience. 'Economic globalisation was once viewed as the treasure cave found by Ali Baba in *The Arabian Nights*, but it has now become the Pandora's box in the eyes of many. The international community finds itself in a heated debate on economic globalisation.' He made it clear on which side of the debate he and his country stood. 'As a line in an old Chinese poem goes, "Honey melons hang on bitter vines; sweet dates grow on thistles and thorns".' He continued his address in that vein. 'In the face of both opportunities and challenges of economic globalization, the right thing to do is to seize every opportunity, jointly meet challenges and chart the right course for economic globalization.' The speech was delivered three days before Trump's inaugural address, in which the American president expressed quite the opposite sentiment. The stage was thus set for a major conflict of ideas. After the election of Trump as the US president, Washington moved in the opposite direction from the one suggested by President Xi at Davos. Trump declared in his inaugural address, delivered on 20 January 2017, that he would follow the principle of 'America First'. That effectively meant that the US would go alone and not use the established multilateral organisations to deal with the world. The roles were clearly reversed between the US and China; the former going alone in the global arena, the latter essentially singing as a member of the choir of the nations.

China's interest in a rule-based global order, has made it into an active player in many parts of the world—as discussed above, in Europe, Africa, and Latin America. When Imran Khan became prime minister in August 2018, there was some hope that relations between Pakistan and India might improve. The possible easing of tensions between India and Pakistan will have to occur in a conducive environment. The consequences could be grave for South Asia if the conflict between Washington and Beijing sharpens. One of the more serious results could be to deepen the rift in the subcontinent. Already, China has a very large presence in Pakistan. It is not only investing more than $60 billion in building the CPEC, with between $8 and $10 billion coming in every year, it is also aiding Pakistan in several other ways. In 2018, it provided emergency financial assistance to help Islamabad handle its fairly severe balance of payments crisis.

But Pakistan is not the only South Asian country China hopes to have on its side. It is actively courting Bangladesh to join the BRI initiative. On the opposite side is the US's interest in India, whose association is being sought by both Washington and Tokyo, to partner them in what is called the Indo-Pacific alliance. If these competing interests materialise, South

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Asia could become the field where the new 'great game' between the two rival powers will be played out. That is obviously not in the region's larger interest. South Asia remains the only world region that does not have a working regional trade arrangement. For decades, South Asian countries have worked against each other rather than with one another. To put the blame for the discord on the lingering Kashmir problem is too easy an explanation. Overall, suspicion has hindered the countries from taking advantage of the obvious links between their economies, to better the lives of their citizens. Pakistan, for instance, has a one-sided transit arrangement with Afghanistan that allows the latter to use its well-developed road infrastructure to export to India. But India cannot use the same facility for trading with Afghanistan.

India, by far the largest economy in the region, has to give more to its neighbours than it gets from them. This is the basic principle of exchange on which all successful regional trade agreements involving one major economy are based. If there is one large economy in the arrangement, it is the one that must bend more. The ASEAN comes to mind as an example in which Indonesia, which has a much larger GDP than any other in this bloc, has not participated on the basis of its economic size. Similarly, Mercosur, a trade bloc agreement between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela, is another example where Brazil, the largest economy, did not use its size to design the agreement, or to influence the way it worked.

Several years ago, I was engaged to do a study for the USAID, to determine why the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA), was not working. I visited most of the member countries before meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh, who was then India's prime minister. He asked me how India's neighbours felt about his country. 'Not well,' I responded, 'The only country that is not really unhappy with you is Pakistan and the reason for that is there is little bilateral trade.' India is not an easy country to trade with; people in Colombo, Dhaka, and Kathmandu, complained to me how the samples of the goods they wished to sell in India were sent to distant places for testing and the results took months to arrive before consignments could be cleared. Dr Singh told me the reason for that. Countries between themselves can do a lot to hinder trade by using what in trade parlance, are called 'not-trade barriers', or NTB. Though international commerce is a central subject in the Indian Constitution, it is one of the world's most aggressive users of these particular trade-retarding devices. This is the main reason why Pakistan has not granted

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India the 'most-favoured nation' status[25] that it is obliged to do as a member of the WTO.

Soon after being sworn in, Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi, as Pakistan's prime minister and foreign minister, respectively, indicated their interest in improving relations with India. Both mentioned trade as an important area for discussions. According to Baqir Sajjad Syed in *Dawn*, 'In his first tweet on foreign policy issue, Prime Minister Imran Khan on [21 August] invited India for a dialogue on all conflicts with an offer to improve trade for normalising Pakistan–India relations which have for long been strained.'[26] It has always been suspected that the military in Pakistan was one of the obstacles that had to be overcome in improving relations with India. It was, no doubt, with this in mind that Foreign Minister Qureshi, while talking to the press about bettering relations with India, stated, 'Let me be clear: the foreign policy will be made here, at the Foreign Office of Pakistan. I will engage with all the institutions for the betterment of the country. That is the policy across the world. Feedback is sought from national security institutions.'[27]

But it needs to be emphasised that one way of countering the growing tension between Beijing and Washington is to develop a South Asian approach rather than promoting narrow national interests. A few years ago, I published a book for the Institute of South Asian Studies, in which I used a simple model to estimate the positive impact of not free, but 'freer' trade, on the regional economies. The results I reported in the book were encouraging.[28] With an open trading system, Pakistan would have benefitted the most in South Asia. The institute of South Asian Studies, an affiliate of the National University of Singapore that sponsored this study, sent me to New Delhi to present my findings. At one seminar chaired by an individual who had retired as a senior diplomat, I was accused of being a romantic and that my belief that India and Pakistan could work together within a regional framework, was unrealistic.

There was no appetite in India to work with Pakistan. That said, bilateral understanding between India and Pakistan has to be undertaken in the context of world developments. Islamabad and New Delhi will have to be mindful that the impending China–US trade war will provide the circumstances in which they will need to deliberate.

India is not comfortable with China's outreach. It is particularly concerned with increasing Chinese influence on Pakistan. Attempts to disrupt Pakistan's relations with Beijing picked up momentum after Beijing launched the ambitious CPEC investment program. There was suspicion in Pakistan that some of the terrorist activities, aimed at the

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Chinese working in Pakistan, were planned in India and executed with the help of Afghanistan. One such attack was carried out in November 2018, when the Chinese consulate in Karachi was targeted by three militants, who managed to penetrate the office compound. They were gunned down during a shootout by a contingent of security forces. Four people were killed; two police officers, and two visa applicants. The banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack. Aslam Baloch Achu, the alleged mastermind of the attack, was killed in suicide operation carried out in Kandahar, Afghanistan, but Pakistan's intelligence servicers were sceptical of the report. There was another attack on the Chinese workers, this time those engaged in constructing the Dasu Dam on the Indus River. A Chinese company had won the contract to do civil work for the project and, in keeping with the country's normal practice, had brought in Chinese workers to do some of the work. On 18 July 2021, a vehicle driven by a suicide attacker and laden with explosives rammed a convoy of Chinese workers headed to the project site.

The Emerging Trade War and its Global Consequences

Pakistan was one of the many developing countries that had not benefitted from the open trade system in the world. The previous governments had focused their attention on domestic policies, creating a system to meet domestic demand of a rapidly growing population. Prime Minister Imran Khan and his advisers wanted to change the focus of public policy. They directed their attention towards increasing Pakistan's exports. However, as discussed in some detail below, the international system was becoming less open. This was largely because of the growing dispute on trade between China and the US.

Since the end of World War II, regulated international trade was one of the more important drivers of global growth. Initially, major powers were unable to agree on the amount of national sovereignty regarding fiscal and tariff matters that should be surrendered to an international organisation that was charged for resolving trade disputes among nations. While institutions for managing some aspects of global finance and providing capital flows for development were set up in the mid-1940s, it took fifty years before an international trade organisation became operational.

After several rounds of trade discussions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) came into being in 1994, in Marrakesh, Morocco.

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The new organisation was based in Geneva and succeeded the General Agreement of Trade and Tariff (GATT). If a country or countries felt that they were not getting a fair deal on the flow of goods, they could refer the matter to the WTO for investigation and resolution. The WTO convened a panel that heard the sides involved in the dispute and gave its decision, which was binding.

The system worked well, and its reach and scope expanded as China and Russia were admitted as members. However, in January 2017 after his inauguration, Donald Trump indicated that his country will not like to be subjected to international controls. Adopting the 'America First' approach to the making of public policy, the Trump administration began to dismantle the international trade structure that had been constructed over several decades mainly championed by the US. The WTO had allowed the establishment of regional organisations, in which the member nations could depart from the 'most favoured nation'(MFN) principle of conducting international commerce. The MFN obliged countries to provide all WTO member countries to be governed by the same rules applied to the more favoured nations. The US took advantage of this provision, by first creating the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) that involved Canada and Mexico, in addition to itself. Later, President Barack Obama worked hard to conclude the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), among a dozen countries in the Pacific region.

By excluding China from the TPP, the US ensured that its regulatory system would be applied to the production of traded goods and accepted by all participating nations. These included provisions concerning worker rights and protection of the environment. Trump moved against both the NAFTA and the TPP. The former was renegotiated on terms more favourable to Washington, while the latter was abandoned altogether. The Trump administration indicated that it was inclined to restrict the application of WTO rules to its conduct of international trade, freeing Washington to act bilaterally.

It took a few months after Trump entered office for him to take on China. Initially, he tried a charm offensive and invited 'my friend', President Xi Jinping, to visit him at Mar-a-Lago, the president's Florida resort. His focus early on was on North Korea's Kim Jong-un, the country's all-powerful dictator. Trump had concluded that he needed China's help to push back North Korea's nuclear ambitions. After calling Kim Jong-un names, Trump attempted a gentler approach. He took the step of holding a summit with the North Korean leader, in September 2018, in Singapore, at which he believed that he had secured

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his agreement to denuclearise. To encourage Pyongyang to move in that direction, Trump took the unexpected decision to cancel joint military exercises with South Korea, an event that was held regularly to keep the American-trained South Korean army battle-ready.

But, as experts had predicted, moving North Korea from its nuclear ambitions would not be easy; the expected help from China did not materialise and Trump began to see China as a political foe. He initially turned on China and in 2018 imposed tariffs, on Chinese exports to which China retaliated by imposing tariffs on American goods, as detailed earlier. A trade war had begun.

The two countries began negotiations to avert a full-blown trade war, which had sparked anxiety among some US industries, in particular, among those in which China was a major competitor. Apple CEO Tim Cook, expressed his apprehensions in a conference call with analysts, saying, 'our view on tariffs is that they show up as a tax on the consumer and wind up resulting in lower economic growth and sometimes can bring about significant risk of unintended consequences.'[29] Though he acknowledged that some US–China trade relationships needed modernising, he said that the US and China had an 'inescapable mutuality' that tied their fortunes together. 'The world needs both, the US and China to prosper for the world to do well. We are hoping that calm heads prevail.'[30] The Apple CEO was not worried that, with the rise of Huawei, his firm had been pushed into third place as a manufacturer of mobile phones. Samsung was in first place. Apple relied on his firm's impressive ability to innovate and come up with new lines of products. Beijing and Washington agreed to resolve their differences through dialogue that began in earnest in early 2019. The US administration pressed Beijing to accept an agreement that would allow the US to unilaterally re-impose tariffs if it concluded that China had not adopted the promised structural changes in its economy. Washington also pushed for an enforcement mechanism that would include the right to re-impose tariffs on any category of goods in which imports from China surged.

In return, the Trump team, negotiating with the Chinese, agreed to roll back, to a certain degree, the tariffs Washington had imposed, though not all the way back to where they were before the trade war. Initially, the Chinese opposed the idea of a US-administered enforcement mechanism, but then suggested that both sides would have the right to use it. American firms working with, or in, China, were not in favour of the enforcement mechanism, as it would create uncertainty.

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Other trade deals the US had signed included different methods, like a special court that companies could use to resolve problems, but the administration was reluctant to go down that route. It saw that as a potential infringement on American sovereignty. There was talk of another Trump and Xi meeting at Mar-a-Lago, if sufficient headway was made by the negotiators.

By March 2019, it appeared that progress was being made and China was serious to open up its economy. That was the message President Xi took to Europe and was the main theme of China's Development Forum, the country's premier annual economic policy conference, held while Xi was in Europe. Addressing the conference, Han Zheng, a member of Communist Party Politburo Committee, said that his country wanted to keep increasing imports. 'We do not strive for a trade surplus,' he said.

The same theme was taken up by Yi Gang, the governor of the People's Bank of China, who said that China wanted more foreign investment and the government was looking for ways to accommodate foreign investors, trade derivatives, and other financial instruments, and limit their exposure to risk. Foreign financial institutions could hold larger shares in Chinese entities. President Trump insisted that no matter how much progress was made at the talks, he would not remove all the tariffs he had imposed; he would keep in place tariffs on $50 billion of imports from China. This was not well received by those attending the forum. However, they drew some comfort from the fact that corporate lobbyists in Washington mounted a strong campaign to repeal all tariffs.

For a country that had such ancient history, it is not surprising that modern policymakers in Beijing were always looking back. They want to ensure that some of the ugly things that were done to them in the past, would not happen again. As Henry Kissinger wrote in his book, *On China*, 'The Chinese leadership never forget their history.'[31] This was the former secretary of state's experience of working with the leaders of China, going back to Chairman Mao Zedong. For those in the Trump administration engaged in negotiating a trade deal with China, the Beijing leadership's obsession with history came as a surprise. Reflecting on some of Washington's demands, *Global Times*, the newspaper that speaks for the authorities in Beijing, wrote a story in May 2018, under the headline, 'Is it now 1840?' For US negotiators, this return to something that happened a century-and-a-half ago was curious. Five months later, China's news agency, Xinhua, accused the former vice president Mike Pence of being ignorant of China's past, after he said that Beijing opening its economy was merely empty talk. The Chinese reaction to comments

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such as these, were informed by history. According to Alan Rappeport, 'Behind the pushback is a long and painful history of China surrendering to Western powers, with origins in what the Chinese news media refers to as a "century of humiliation" that began with the "unequal treaties" of the 19th century after the first Opium War ... History has been haunting trade negotiations between the world's two biggest economies, which have dragged on for more than a year.'[32] He concludes with a quote by Michael Pillsbury, director for Chinese strategy at the Hudson Institute, 'The Communist Party was created on a narrative of standing up to, and ending, unequal treaties.'

For understanding the Chinese approach to the trade war, we should go back to 1839, when trade was at the centre of a dispute between Britain and China's Qing dynasty. As is the case with the US today, Britain then was worried by the large trade imbalance with China; Beijing did not buy much from Britain, whereas it took in large quantities of Chinese silk and tea. And so, Britain opted for sending opium from its Indian colony that created a large number of addicts in China. Beijing resisted, and London went to war that lasted for three years. It ended with the Treaty of Nanjing, that gave Britain control of Hong Kong and opened several new trade ports in China. British merchants were allowed to come to China and trade freely with no restrictions. 'That was just the beginning,' continues Rappeport. He relates how by the 1850s, the US, Russia, and France signed such treaties with China, allowing foreigners to sell goods at low tariffs and giving them privileged status in mainland China.

Rather than show respect for the superiority of Chinese culture, China was forced to adhere to the traditions of Western diplomacy. The influx of foreign culture reoriented China's economy, eventually leading to the Qing dynasty's downfall in 1912. In the current negotiations, the US demanded establishing an enforcement mechanism for the agreement with Beijing with non-reciprocity, i.e. the US could re-impose tariffs in case Beijing was not implementing its part of the treaty and China would not be allowed to take similar steps. It is not surprising that this approach reminded the Chinese leadership of the unequal treaties of the 19th century.

Washington also demanded that structural changes would be incorporated in a law to be passed by the Chinese National Assembly. Washington was pressing China to amend its laws to remove deeply embedded trade-distorting practices, such as subsidies for state-owned enterprises and forced technological transfers imposed on American and other foreign investors. There were also demands for greater digital

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openness. Beijing prevented foreign firms from transferring data they gather on Chinese customers, for storage outside the country. It had to be stored on servers inside China. On the other hand, China agreed to buy more agricultural and energy products from the US and give greater latitude to American companies to operate without Chinese joint venture partners. These conditions also smacked of the previous dictatorial impositions of colonial powers.

Negative consequences of agreeing to such conditions, would go beyond international commerce. China's relations with the US are very important for Beijing and for Xi Jinping, its most powerful leader in decades. He guards his image as a visionary leader, working to take his country to new heights. According to Paul Haenle, 'Xi is walking a tightrope... He is going to be the one that has to make the most concessions, and that makes all this more difficult for him.'[33] In an interview Zhang Jian said, 'If, say, Liu He comes back to Beijing empty-handed, and there's more tirades from Trump on his Twitter account, I think things could get really wild.'[34] Trade talks with the US had come a week or so after China marked the 100th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, commemorating students protests against the provisions of the Paris Peace Conference that ended World War I, in which a defeated Germany's colonial concessions in China were transferred to other countries. Chinese remember this as a period of 'great humiliation'. That was always at the back of the minds of the Chinese and they began to view Trump as being exceptionally arrogant.

The series of trade talks entered the conclusive phase on 11 May, when a senior-level Chinese delegation arrived in Washington following a visit by the US treasury secretary to Beijing. Trump announced that if the Chinese did not accept to bring about structural changes in their economy, he would impose higher and more invasive tariffs on imports from China. The threat was carried out on the morning of 10 May, when the US increased tariffs on $250 billion Chinese imports from 10 per cent, imposed earlier, to 25 per cent. The new tariff level would not be applied to the goods that were already on their way. This would allow some more time to the negotiators to work out a deal as the Washington talks continued.

What was the effect on the US of all this? The overall US trade deficit with the world increased 1.5 per cent in March to $50 billion. However, the administration believed that the negative effect will be negligible in comparison to that facing China, of a further slowdown in economic growth. However, most American businesses believed that

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the use of tariffs to bring about structural change in China, could be counterproductive. They warned that if tariffs increased, it would result in increased inflation, to which the Federal Reserve would respond by raising interest rates and thus tightening finance. A full-blown trade war would serve as a drag on global economic growth. Paul Krugman pointed out that Trump's moves would badly hurt America's large agriculture sector. American soybean producers export half of what they grow; wheat farmers export 46 per cent of their crop. China is a key market for US farm products. As already discussed, China had started looking for alternative sources of supply, such as Brazil, consequently, bringing grain prices to a 42-year low in America.

The eleventh round of trade talks failed to produce the results desired by the Trump administration, ending on 9 May 2019, twelve hours after the US tariffs increase went into effect. As David J. Lynch and Heather Long wrote in *The Washington Post*:

> Trump's enthusiasm for tariffs has been no secret since his calls during his presidential campaign for a 45% tariff on everything America buys from China. But his focus on tariffs is a striking departure from the policies pursued by his Democratic and Republican predecessors ... especially if he proceeds with his threat to apply tariffs to all $540 billions of annual purchases from China.[35]

Trump's use of tariff as a tool for conducting international commerce did not only apply to China. His measures reversed decades-old traditions in economic management in the US. The US was influential in moving the international community in the direction of open trade between countries. This was to be ensured by the WTO. With the adoption of the Trump tariffs, this was no longer the case. Since launching his tariff wars with a tax on washing machines, Trump applied higher import taxes on solar panels, and industrial metals. With these adjustments, Trump's tariffs covered 50.5 per cent of Chinese imports, 9.6 per cent from South Korea, 7.3 per cent from Canada, 3.8 per cent from Japan, and 2.5 per cent from the European Union. Asian nations were affected much more than those from other regions. In January 2018, the president had tried to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from Canada and Mexico, sparking a revolt among Senate Republicans who refused to vote for his new deal with these two countries replacing the open trade system adopted under the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA). Opposition was strong from the senators who represented the states

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hurt by the imposition of retaliatory tariffs. After the break with China, Trump withdrew these tariffs.

There was no doubt left that the president liked the tool; he began calling himself the 'tariff man'. The president's tariff moves increased the 'average weighted applied US tariff rate'—a measure economists use to gauge the openness of economies—once among the lowest in the world to 4 per cent, higher than the Chinese, Russian, and Turkish figures. Trump was of course wrong when he said that tariffs are good for the US economy. There were consequences of these moves that he and his advisers had not bothered to study. One of these was on income distribution, since tariffs fell heavily on lower income groups. A study by the Federal Reserve Bank provided some measures of inequality in the US, focusing on assets rather than incomes. Liabilities were about $15 trillion, leaving the estimate of net assets at $100 trillion. The net worth of the wealthiest 10 per cent in 2018, was 70 per cent, up from 61 per cent in 1989. At the time of this writing, 10 per cent of the richest people in US own almost 69.8 per cent of the country's total wealth. 'The coronavirus pandemic…has…expanded the wealth of the ultra-rich top 1 percent, which gained almost two percentage points in overall wealth distribution between Q2 and Q1 2021.'[36]

Reading items in the press, it is interesting to see how similar themes are reflected in different countries and show an interconnected world; how developments, and occurrences of various events in one part of the globe, affect several other parts. For instance, Niha Masih and Joanna Slater, in an article titled 'US-style political polarisation has arrived in India' told the story of a couple in the state of Uttar Pradesh that was deeply split about their views of Narendra Modi, who was on his way to re-election. Masih and Slater quoted a women's rights activist saying, 'people had different opinions earlier, as well, but the atmosphere was never so hostile. This is not healthy.' Looking for an explanation for this, Masih and Slater compared it to American politics. According to them, 'at the heart of the growing divide, stands the towering figure of Modi, who inspires either fervent loyalty or deep distrust, not unlike (the former) President Trump.'[37]

The root of the problem the US had with China during the Trump presidency, was its strong belief that Beijing had taken Washington for a ride. This belief dates from Trump's election campaign, in the states that once made up America's industrial heartland. There, he came across people whose economic and social suffering had not registered with the country's costal elite. This part of the country was often referred to as

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the 'fly over' region, by those who lived on the two coasts and only flew over it, not bothering to find out what was happening to the people who lived there. A large number of them had been unemployed or had seen their incomes stagnate. They told Trump that the factories that employed them, or the collieries they worked in, had either closed, or had reduced their output. Industrial jobs had moved to China and the elites' concern with global warming had cut down the output of coalmines. In all this, Trump saw a political opportunity. Successfully, he turned these people into his political base. He promised action on both fronts if those who were in economic and social distress sent him to the White House. They did, and Trump kept his word.

He took a number of steps to keep his support in this base. He threatened to use tariffs on trade to force Beijing to ease restrictions, not only on imports from the US, but also on the constraints under which American companies were made to operate in China. The Chinese leadership initially ignored the rhetoric. But by imposing tariffs, the Xi Jinping government agreed to negotiate. As several rounds of discussions did not produce a result the Americans would have considered satisfactory, more punishing tariffs were imposed. At the same time, it singled out one Chinese company to punish, to make the dispute costly for the Chinese people and its businesses.

China's Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. is the world's largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer that became the focus of American attention as the Trump administration continued to put pressure on China to change its economic policies. On 15 May 2019, Trump declared a 'national emergency' and signed an executive order that authorises the commerce department to block transactions involving communications technologies companies controlled by foreign adversaries that put US security at 'unacceptable risk'. The order was issued under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 1977, the law used by every president since Jimmy Carter, to impose sanctions on countries such as Russia and Iran.

The order was followed by Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security's decision to add Huawei to its 'entity list', which makes it virtually impossible for the targeted entity to survive since US firms are discouraged from doing business with it. In the world of international commerce, being placed on the entity list, is called the 'death penalty'. The move forced Huawei to obtain US government license to buy American technology. In 2018, President Xi Jinping personally requested Trump to remove the inclusion of ZTE, another Chinese

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telecommunications giant, from the entity list. This was done. Huawei smartphones use Google's Android operating system. The chips in the phones are also made in the US.

According to Li Yuan, 'China has spent nearly two decades building a digital wall between itself and the rest of the world, a one-way barrier designed to keep out foreign companies like Facebook and Google while allowing Chinese rivals to leave home and expand across the world. Now President Trump is sealing up that wall from the other side.'[38] To comply with the new rules signed into an order by President Trump, Google said on 20 May, that it would limit the software services it provided Huawei.

A new cold war had begun, and the US had lowered the digital curtain. China had several ways it could and will react. On 20 May, President Xi was reported by the Chinese state-controlled media to have visited a site that mines rare earth minerals that are essential for a number of high-technology products. This was a gentle reminder that China has a commanding presence in rare earths, which it could use to shut off supplies to the world. The new cold war was on; the last one took almost half a century to wind down. It is hard to predict how long this one will last. President Joe Biden, Trump's successor, has not abandoned his predecessor's approach to international commerce, especially as it concerns US–China trade relations.

There are other areas that were affected by the dispute between Beijing and Washington. One of these was tourism. Chinese tourists emerged on the global scene, after the country began to open up and the average income of the people began to increase. The US was one of the several favoured destinations. However, the trade war between the two countries affected the number of Chinese travelling to America. Figures from the US federal government showed a sharp decline in the number of Chinese who visited the US. There were 3.2 million Chinese visitors in 2017 but they decreased to 2.9 million in 2018, reversing the previous growth rate of 23 per cent.

Some advisories put out by the government in China, contributed to this downturn. On 4 June 2019, the Chinese government said that its citizens were 'interrogated, interviewed and subjected to other forms of harassment, by American law enforcement agencies.' This announcement came out when the US decided to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crisis, in which tragically a substantial number of student protestors had been killed on 4 June 1989, and this commemoration, during US–China rivalry, projected the brutal action by the Chinese government at that time. A day earlier, the

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Chinese Ministry of Education warned students bound for the US that they risked visa delays, or other potential disruptions, after the US State Department began requiring most visa applicants to provide detailed information about their past five years of social media use.[39] This was a difficult requirement to meet.

Was the government in China deliberately punishing the US to counter the aggressive measures adopted in the trade war with China? Some analysts noted that on previous occasions, China had weaponised tourism. In 2017, Chinese travel to South Korea fell by nearly 50 per cent, after Seoul deployed a missile system that China said could be used to spy on its territory. President Joe Biden has branded the US–China differences as, 'a battle between the utility of democracies in the 21st century.' The trade war between the two superpowers has indeed become a 'cold war.'

The Xinjiang Issue

China is ethnically homogenous. About 92 per cent of the country's population is Han. It was perhaps for that reason that China and its people have found it difficult to deal with ethnic minorities. But that cannot be the only reason. How China deals with its minorities became an important issue for policymakers in Islamabad.

Islamabad's relations with China have become more important as Washington distances itself from Beijing. China and Pakistan have maintained close ties for decades and have at times managed to navigate difficult waters in their relationship. In the changed world with which it must deal, the administration headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan had to find a way to tackle the problems arising from the manner in which China is dealing with its Turkic-speaking Uyghur minority community that inhabits the country's Xinjiang Autonomous Region. This is the only part of China that borders Pakistan.

The effort by China to make Xinjiang an integral part of the nation, has gone on for years. When I managed the World Bank's China program for more than seven years, from 1987 to 1994, I visited Xinjiang several times. Just before my first visit to the region, I was given a briefing by officials from the ministry of finance in Beijing. I was told that while my designated host would be the governor of the region, he wielded little executive authority, being a Uyghur. The government's affairs were mainly managed by the secretary general—a Han Chinese. It was

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suggested that I should discuss with him what the World Bank was planning to do in that region and act on his advice.

The troubles brewing in Xinjiang are a reason for concern for Pakistan's policymakers. Beijing would want to ensure that Pakistan does everything possible not to give any hope, let alone support, to the region's Turkic-speaking native population, who are primarily Muslims. There is also a small Uyghur community in Pakistan's northern areas. They arrived here after having fled from their native Xinjiang in the 1930s, when the communists advanced into their area. Later, some dissidents from the region joined the Islamic extremists and established themselves in Pakistan's tribal belt, bordering Afghanistan. There were Uyghurs also participating in the Taliban's war against the occupying American forces that arrived in the country in 2001 and left after twenty years in August 2021.

Xinjiang has a population of 25 million people and about 12 million of these are Uyghurs. Although the region represents just 1.5 per cent of China's population and 1.3 per cent of its economy, it sits on the western gateway of President Xi Jinping's signature development plan, the BRI. The region borders eight countries and serves as the crossroads for a railway link that leads to London and a route to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, to the Pakistani port of Gwadar.

According to Bloomberg's Peter Martin, who visited several of Xinjiang's urban centres, 'The government has spent vast sums building cities in Xinjiang to attract companies and fuel growth in the relatively poor region. Concerns about lawlessness in Xinjiang could chill investment. China's campaign against the Uyghurs is aimed, in part, at reassuring wary investors that Xinjiang is a safe place to live and work in.'[40] Beijing has decided that to develop the region, it must have total ethnic peace.

According to one analysis, 'Speeches, reports and documents online offer a clearer account than previously reported of how China's leaders set in motion, and escalated an indoctrination campaign aimed at eradicating all but the mildest expressions of Islam and yearning for an independent Uyghur homeland.'[41] Initially, the authorities in Beijing followed the Soviet model in which non-Russian minorities were allowed to use their language and follow their culture and religion. This mosaic approach was behind the designation of Xinjiang as an autonomous region. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and grant of independence to the country's ethnic areas, China rethought its approach. The academics advising the government in Beijing began

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to argue that the Soviet approach encouraged ethnic separatism. 'So-called "ethnic elites" must never be given an opportunity to become the leaders of the pack in splitting the country,' wrote Hu Lianhe, in a 2010 paper.[42] Those who study Xinjiang trace the current hardening of Beijing's approach to the visit by President Xi Jinping in 2014. That was the only time the Chinese leader went to that area. Hours after his four-day visit ended, extremists attacked a train with bombs and knives and killed three Han Chinese and wounded eighty others in Urumqi, the regional capital. After that President Xi decided to act and one of the steps he took was to reassign Chen Quanguo, the hard-line party chief in Tibet, to enforce the 'Hanisation' of Xinjiang.

Hanisation is the term used to indicate the dilution of ethnic minorities by settling Hans in this area. Chen was stationed as party secretary-general in Xinjiang and was promoted to the membership of the 25-person Party Politburo, in Beijing. 'Strengthen public identification of the ethnic group with the great motherland, with Chinese nationhood and with Chinese culture was the main aim of the policy,' said President Xi, at a meeting to discuss Xinjiang. According to a party document issued at that time, the authorities began building 'transformation through education' camps, to warn Muslim minorities of the evils of religious zealotry and ethnic separatism. Initially, the camps were small and only a few people were sent there for education and indoctrination. They have since become virtual prisons that keep a large number of people for months. According to James Leibold, a Xinjiang expert at La Trobe University in Australia 'What is happening in Xinjiang is the leading edge of a new, more coercive ethnic policy under Xi Jinping's "new era" of Chinese power.'[43]

The public was told to prepare for a long offensive that the officials call a 'campaign of intellectual emancipation'. The Xinjiang government decreed in late 2017, that the security drive would last for five years before achieving 'total stability'. This resulted in locking up as many as one million Uyghurs, almost 10 per cent of their population in the area. The world was slow to catch up with developments in Xinjiang. Anne Applebaum wrote about the way the Uyghurs were being suppressed. She used the details in a report produced in 2018, for Canada's parliament in this regard. 'Every tool that a future, larger totalitarian state may use to control citizens is currently being tested in Xinjiang,' she stated.[44] *The Washington Post* also took note of the Uyghur situation in an editorial. To get information on the situation, the editors interviewed Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress, who told the newspaper that 2

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million people belonging to his ethnic group, out of a population of 11 million, may be in the detention camps. Isa said that the word has leaked out from Uyghur families that detainees are being moved out to prisons elsewhere in China. The newspaper further pointed out in its editorial:

> Other nations, fearful of Chinese bullying and eager to preserve economic ties, have been slow to condemn or even acknowledge this on-going crime against humanity but on Saturday [9 February 2019], the government of Turkey, a large Muslim state with a significant Uyghur population, denounced China's practices as 'violating fundamental human rights' of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang and called the concentration camps 'a great shame for humanity'. Other governments also should speak out against this cultural genocide.[45]

However, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, on his visit to China in February 2019, went on state television to say, 'China has the right to carry out antiterrorism and anti-extremism work for its national security.' It was reported in a detailed story in *The New York Times*, that China had adapted its rapidly expanding network of surveillance cameras to identify and keep track of Uyghurs. Technology using algorithms to identify the race, or ethnicity of people, became relatively simple by the work done at leading artificial intelligence developers such as IBM. These facial recognition systems have been deployed to target Uyghurs in wealthy eastern cities like Hangzhou and Wenzhou and across the coastal province of Fujian. In China, a number of privately-owned companies had entered this lucrative field. They had received investments from financial and technology organisations, such as Fidelity and Qualcomm, to develop this technology. 'Chinese authorities already maintain vast surveillance networks, including tracking people's DNA in the western region of Xinjiang.'[46] Xinjiang was added to the issues that have become central to the growing tension between China and the US. According to one report in *The New York Times*, '[In November 2018 American legislators issued companion bills in the House and Senate] ... following months of discussions on how to punish China for its treatment of Uyghurs, including sanctioning specific officials and limiting sales of products from American companies to certain Chinese state agencies. The push came as China's treatment of the Uyghurs was under increasing scrutiny by Western news organizations and international agencies.[47]

The legislation introduced in US Congress called for the American government to invoke the Global Magnitsky Act to impose economic

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sanctions on Chinese officials, including on Chen Quanguo, the party chief in Xinjiang. He received letters from fifteen Western ambassadors, asking him to explain alleged rights abuses against Uyghurs. There were reports that officials had mobilised more than one million Chinese to occupy the homes of Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang. Also, centres were set up in order to indoctrinate and monitor them. Most of the civilians managing the centres were ethnic Han. According to one account that appeared in *The Washington Post*, based on numerous interviews with people who were hired to carry out Beijing's indoctrination approach, the police was also being recruited from among the Uyghurs and Kazakhs who lived in the area. Tahir Imin, a Uyghur activist in Washington, told the author of the story that four of his relatives worked as police officers in Xinjiang, only because there were few good jobs for Uyghurs. 'There are big problems between Uyghur police and ordinary police,' he told the newspaper. 'People hate them and consider them as traitors. They call them dogs of Chinese.'[48] It is not clear that this hard-line approach would work and persuade the Uyghur population to give up its religion, or ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the other element in this approach—bringing in Hans to settle in Xinjiang—seems to be producing results. Uyghurs, once the majority, were reduced to 46 per cent of the region's 25 million people, while Han are estimated to be at 40 per cent and Kazakhs at 7 per cent, according to government data.

In its annual report on human rights, issued on 13 March 2019, the US State Department gave a fair amount of space to the Xinjiang issue. This emphasis was repeated in the 2020 report. The then secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, in the preface to the report, declared that China was, 'In a league of its own when it comes to human rights violations.' A bipartisan bill introduced in Congress, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, would require the state department to report what the Chinese government is doing in Xinjiang.

There was some irony in the fact that the campaign against the Chinese handling of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang coincided with the 'Black Lives Matter' movement in the US. This gained impetus after the murder of a black man, George Floyd, by the police, in May 2020. There were widespread demonstrations in the US after the incident, on which John Lewis (d. 17 July 2020), the veteran civil rights leader, commented shortly before his death: 'It was very moving, very moving to see hundreds of thousands of people from all over America and around the world take to the streets…to speak out, to get onto what I call "good

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trouble". This feels and looks so different. It is so much more massive and all inclusive. There will be no turning back.'[49]

The developments in Xinjiang posed a serious problem for the policymakers in Islamabad, because of religious sympathy for the Uyghurs. On the other hand, some sectors were interested in what the Chinese authorities were attempting in Xinjiang. Although the methods employed were very different compared to what the Chinese government was doing in Xinjiang, they were in line with the aim of the government in Pakistan, with respect to the restive province of Balochistan. Both Xinjiang and Balochistan are large areas with sparse populations and enormous economic potential for their respective countries. One of the three routes that make up the CPEC—the western route—will connect Balochistan with Xinjiang. The two countries must ensure that this corridor transports economic goods, not terrorist activities. For its part, China has denied all allegations of human rights abuses in its country. Its contentions is that it is a system of 're-education', re-training and instructions to combat militancy and extremism.

In Japan, China Finds a New Friend

Beijing has also started to redefine its position on the global stage, with reference to Japan. In 2012, relations between Beijing and Tokyo were strained. Japan laid claim to islands in the East China Sea. They are mostly uninhabited small islands and have different names—Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. This claim sparked a hostile reaction from the Asian giant. According to one account, 'angry demonstrators filled the streets in dozens of Chinese cities to protest Japan's claim... surrounding Tokyo's embassy, overturning Japanese cars and in some cases even attacking sushi restaurants.'[50] Two years later, the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, met with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of an international gathering. The two unsmiling leaders shook hands for the cameras with reluctance. All that changed in 2018.

Among the things that changed was the formal end to the economic assistance program the Japanese launched after the end of World War II. Tokyo never suggested that aid to China was any kind of war reparations, when the occupying Japanese forces committed unbelievable atrocities in several parts of China. There was political sensitivity about formal war apologies. So, the aid was seen and advertised as assistance to a developing nation. But in 2010, China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy and providing economic aid made no sense. In

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the forty years that the aid program lasted, Japan provided China 4.65 trillion yen to support infrastructure and humanitarian projects and environmental protection. 'China hasn't been telling much about the Japanese aid to its people, but it was considered to have had a positive impact over the years,' said Yu Tiejun, of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies, at Peking University.[51]

On 26 October 2019, Shinzo Abe, the former Japanese prime minister, visited Beijing and was given the red-carpet treatment by his hosts, including a formal dinner at the opulent Great Hall of the People. As one American observer, Anna Fifield of *The Washington Post*, wrote: 'This was accompanied by the somewhat startling sight of Japanese and Chinese flags flying together along the wide central boulevard between Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, fluttering in front of the huge portrait of Mao Zedong, the father of Communist China.'[52] Abe's visit marked the 40th anniversary of the Sino–Japanese friendship treaty and was very different from the tone and content of the 2014 encounter between Abe and Xi.

The motivation for reaching out to Japan on China's part had to do a lot with the hostile attitude adopted by then US President Donald Trump towards Beijing. As already discussed, Washington had imposed tariffs on most Chinese imports into the US markets. This had begun to hurt the Chinese economy. In response, China was shoring up with other big markets. It is Japan's largest trading partner. For Japan, the fact that China's middle class was estimated at about 250 million people, double the entire Japanese population, represented an attractive opportunity for its country's consumer goods companies. Toyota Motor Company announced that it planned to build two car-manufacturing plants in China. The Abe visit produced a number of concrete results. Deals worth $18 billion were signed during the visit. The two central banks also signed a three-year credit swap agreement that would allow them to exchange $30 billion worth of each other's currencies, thus reducing the role of the American dollar in the trade between the two countries. They pledged to work together on joint developments in Southeast Asia and to promote a Chinese-led regional trade deal, called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

However, despite the cordiality displayed on this occasion, differences remained. China would like Japan to partner with it in investing in developing Asian infrastructure. But Tokyo was wary of the BRI. It could consider a partnership if international standards of transparency and fiscal sustainability mandated by the global watchdog, the Organisation

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for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), were applied. (Japan is an OECD member). Strategically, Japan is also positioning itself in Asia as a counterforce to China. It participated in war games in East Asia and, for the first time, a Japanese submarine visited Vietnam. Prime Minister Abe promoted the idea of 'The Quad', an alliance with Australia, India, and the US. This arrangement had the support of US that changed the name of its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command. Perhaps as a signal to China, Prime Minister Abe played host to India's Narendra Modi, after his return from Beijing.

The situation between Japan and China became less cordial in 2020–21 as tensions heightened when, Japan sent destroyer JS Suzutsuki, a P-1 maritime patrol aircraft and a P-3C anti-submarine warfare patrol aircraft to monitor the movements of the Chinese vessels which include an aircraft carrier, passing through the waterway between the Okinawa and Miyako Islands.[53] The report further states that Beijing's new 'coastguard law' allows Chinese ships to fire on what it deems to be threatening foreign vessels. Evidently, this is 'intensifying tensions with Tokyo.'

Tiananmen Square Decades Later

I learnt of the demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square while I was travelling with a group of World Bank staff, looking at the projects our institution was financing in some of the interior provinces of China. I was then the director of the World Bank's China Operations. The protests erupted in April 1989, when students gathered to mourn the death of Hu Yaobang (d. 15 April 1989), the general secretary of the Communist Party. He was seen as a reformist and students expected him to move their country towards Western-style democratic liberalism. Their commemoration grew into a six-week long agitation, with hundreds of thousands of protestors pouring into the square, demanding greater political freedom and an end to corruption. Finally, on 4 June, martial law was declared, and the military called out to disperse the crowd. It is reported that thousands were killed.

In the West, the action taken by the Chinese military to clear the Tiananmen Square of thousands of people, is described as a 'massacre'. The Chinese government, on the other hand, calls it an 'incident'. Its 30th anniversary received a lot of media coverage in the US. Nicholas Kristof, a columnist for *The New York Times* and the head of the newspaper's Beijing bureau at that time, observed the incident from the square, to which he bicycled furiously, after learning that the military had moved

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in to clear the area. He published a column on 2 June 2019, recalling some of what he saw. Like most of the commentators who write about modern China, Kristof was convinced that the political system would open at some time, in the not-too-distant future. The country will have to match its extraordinary economic performance with political development. He wrote: 'It is indisputably true that China has dazzled economically, and critics like me should be humbled that life expectancy is today longer in Beijing (82 years) than in Washington, D.C. (77 years). The 10 percent most disadvantaged Shanghai 15-year-olds score better in math than the 10 percent most privileged 15-year-olds in America. China is not like the old Soviet Union, which both impoverished and repressed people. Rather, China has saved lives, built universities at a rate of one a week and lifted more people out of poverty than any other country in human history.'[54]

According to some observers, China has chosen not to adopt Western-style political liberalism as the way of governance. That system is under great stress in several countries of the West. According to another story in *The New York Times*, '[China] has become increasingly authoritarian under Xi Jinping, the leader of the ruling communist party whose administration has rounded up rights lawyers, labour activists, students and Muslim ethnic minorities.'[55] The now 72-year old Zhou Duo was one of the 'Four Gentlemen of Tiananmen', who observed a hunger strike during the protest and when the military moved in, they helped to evacuate the square, otherwise the number of people killed would have been much higher. One image from the Tiananmen crisis continues to draw attention—that of the Tank Man—a solitary figure, clutching two shopping bags, standing defiantly in front of a column of tanks that had to stop moving forward. The man's identity remains unknown. Some believe that he might have been executed, but the then President Jiang Zemin, who rose to power after the political shake up following the crisis, suggested in an interview in 1990, that he had not been killed.[56]

The Chinese students had demanded a more liberal Western form of government, but that ideal has not necessarily proved itself to favour liberal modes of governance. 'President Xi Jinping may feel reassured. Authoritarianism has flowered around the world. The [previous] American president defends a Russian autocrat, a Saudi Mad Prince, a Philippine ruler who presides over a dirty war, a Hungarian authoritarian and others,' lamented Kristof in his article. Chris Buckley, writing in *The New York Times* about Zhou's reminiscences of the incident, said, 'But even more unexpected to Zhou Duo, one of the four Tiananmen gentlemen, were the troubles in Western countries that he admired as

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models of liberal democracy. The political divisions under President Trump and Britain's Brexit shambles showed that even mature democracies could fall prey to dangerous populism and demagogy.'[57]

Another story told the tale of a Chinese cartoonist, who was only three years old when the Tiananmen crisis occurred. He learnt the details of the event through an insert he saw in a movie. The insert was made surreptitiously, to bypass the active Chinese censors. He made cartoons in the Chinese social media about that tragic incident. Even though he subsequently moved to Australia and opted for citizenship there, he thought it was safer to hide his identity. He had 'gained popularity by posting his work under the randomly chosen pseudonym "Badiucao", on the Chinese social media site Sina Weibo. But the authorities in China moved quickly to limit his reach, and by his own count, his social media accounts have been shut down 37 times over the years.'[58] He now works on his art full time but continues to stay out of the limelight. He told Amy Qin, who interviewed him for *The New York Times*, 'I'm not brave; I call myself the most coward of the world's dissident artists. I choose to keep my identity hidden as much as I can while also making some noise with my art.'[59]

The 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square came at the time of heightened tension between the two powers. Harsh words were exchanged. The outgoing US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, issued a statement honouring the Tiananmen protesters and criticised what he called Beijing's human rights abuses. The Chinese Embassy in Washington responded by saying that the secretary's statement was made 'out of prejudice and arrogance' and 'grossly intervenes in China's internal affairs, attacks its system and smears its domestic and foreign policies.'

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor

Gwadar, in Pakistan, is the port being developed under the BRI, like Trieste in Italy, to be part of what some called the 'chain of pearls'. Not entirely unexpected, the BRI was looked at with some suspicion by the West as well as India. The US called the project predatory. India was upset because new Chinese-built ports on the Indian Ocean, including Gwadar in Pakistan, made it feel hemmed in by its richer neighbour and strategic rival. According to Jane Perlez, *The New York Times* Beijing-based correspondent who covered the international summit held in the Chinese capital, to review the progress of the program, '[Its aggressive expansion] has dented China's reputation.' Some countries complained

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about unsustainable debt, while others criticise the overwhelming numbers of Chinese workers imported for construction. In some places, such as Pakistan, the Chinese were targeted by some insurgent groups who were concerned that their local support would decline if the Chinese program brought social and economic development. For instance, China's State Grid, the Chinese company that was building power transmission lines in remote parts of Pakistan, had its workers do safety training in Beijing, which was provided by China's Public Security Guard Training Centre. 'Pakistan is the hardest hit by terror attacks,' Perlez quoted Lu Wei as saying. '[He is] a security expert at the company.'[60]

Among the groups in Pakistan that are opposed to the entry of China, was the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), which is engaged in an armed struggle to secure independence from Pakistan. On 11 May 2019, these insurgents attacked a five-star hotel, the Pearl Continental in Gwadar, which was being developed by the Chinese as a part of the CPEC. No Chinese was hurt, but a security guard was killed in the gunfight. All four assailants were slain. According to a newspaper report:

> Most of the hotel guests are attached to the government, multinational companies and Chinese involved in various projects. The Chinese employees of the Gwadar port project live in a separate location, though the hotel is often used for project-related meetings. Balochistan is also viewed by Pakistani officials and some analysts as the scene of a shadowy proxy war between regional and international powers, including India and Iran.[61]

The Chinese Embassy in Islamabad condemned the attack. 'The heroic action of the Pakistani Army and law enforcement agencies is highly appreciated,' it said in a Tweet.

Some of the governments who were working with Beijing to implement the program, became cautious. Malaysia, under the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was one of them. Malaysia is an important ally for China but even for it, the original price tag for some of the more ambitious projects, was too much to stomach. According to one account:

> [The Mahathir Mohamad administration] saw the splashy Chinese infrastructure projects like the East Coast Rail Link and a $2.5 billion gas pipeline deal, as opportunities for corrupt senior politicians to plunder government coffers. When Malaysia signed the agreement for the rail line, the Chinese state-backed company was under a World Bank ban because of a corruption scandal in the Philippines.[62]

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After renegotiation, the project cost is now expected to be $11 billion—roughly two-thirds of the previous amount of $16 billion.

The Beijing summit to review the BRI program, six years after its launch, was addressed by President Xi. Prime Minister Imran Khan was among the participants, but the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, did not attend the conference and instead sent Mehmet Cahit Turhan, his minister of transport and infrastructure. The Turkish leader stayed away as a protest of the forced detention in western China of an estimated one million Uyghurs. The Uyghur issue was raised by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, at the meeting. The UN official is an enthusiastic BRI supporter.

The summit began its session on 26 April 2019 and was attended by fifty world leaders. In attendance were also 5,000 invitees, who were addressed by the Chinese president. In his speech, Xi said that in 'pursuing the Belt and Road, everything should be done in a transparent way and we should have zero tolerance for corruption.' He indicated that the BRI projects will meet higher standards for environmental protection. The Chinese leader was responding to some of the criticisms of the BRI by the West and also by those who were expected to benefit directly by the Chinese financed projects. Prime Minister Imran Khan also spoke at the meeting and praised the Chinese program.

The CPEC is a vital component of the BRI corridor. It was launched in April 2015, when fifty-one agreements and MOUs were signed, covering $46 billion, to be spent in ten to fifteen years. Provincial distribution is available for $40.5 billion and planned investments for fifty-five projects. Of these, sixteen are in Sindh and estimated to cost $14.3 billion; eight in Punjab at a cost of $13.4 billion; seven in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at $6.1 billion; fifteen in Balochistan at $3.0 billion and seven in Azad Jammu and Kashmir/Gilgit–Baltistan for $4.1 billion.

There are twenty-four projects in the energy sector that will cost $30 billion, with twelve in Sindh to cost $12 billion, followed by four in Punjab ($8.6 billion). There are thirteen infrastructure projects at a total cost of $15.2 billion. Nine projects in Gwadar ($792 million) and nine Special Economic Zones make up the rest of the portfolio. China is committed to thirty early-harvest projects of which nineteen were completed by the middle of 2019, or were under construction, costing $23 billion. Rehabilitation of the Karachi–Peshawar rail line is the costliest infrastructure project, but the government scaled it down by $2 billion. The Lahore Orange Line was added to the portfolio, with a cost of $1.6 billion. The provinces will play a key role, as they will provide land for

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the projects. The power projects are to be executed under the Independent Power Producers mode, with the investors guaranteed a return rate of 17 per cent in dollars. The investments will be insured by China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (referred to as SINOSURE), against non-payment risk for a fee of 7 per cent. Repayments on the CPEC portfolio will start in 2022, with about $300–400 million a year and peak at about $3.5 billion by the fiscal year 2025. Repayments will be completed in twenty-five years.

Pakistan could become a major supplier of processed agricultural and animal products to China. Demand for food in China stands at $1 trillion and is projected to increase by $500 million in the next ten years. Following Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to China, agriculture and poverty alleviation investments were given high priorities in the CPEC program. Development of agriculture will need to focus on water for irrigation, a sector completely ignored in the program. Investment on last mile infrastructure (feeder roads) will also need attention. China imports $100 billion worth of food a year with Pakistan's share at only 0.4 per cent. China and Pakistan have agreed to strengthen comparative and competitive advantage in agriculture.

Given the size of the BRI and the fact that it was launched without being fully developed, invited a lot of commentary, some of it negative. A headline in a British newspaper referred to the BRI as 'China's $8 trillion program.' *The New York Times* put the size at $1 trillion. The fact that Beijing did not put a number on the program was not surprising. When, in the 1980s and 1990s, I headed the World Bank's China operations, I saw that this was a standard Chinese practice with large investment programs. The initiatives in which the Bank was invited to participate, came with the overall objectives the authorities wished to achieve and the details were left to be worked out after a lot of experimentation. This is the way Beijing is approaching the BRI. According to the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute, China has spent about $400 billion up to mid-2018. Viewed from the perspective of Asia's need for infrastructure, this is not a large amount.

Unfortunately, a bus that was carrying Chinese engineers and workers to the Dasu Dam was attacked in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Shortly after that a motorcade carrying Chinese workers was attacked by a suicide bomber—as a result of which one Chinese and several local children were killed—several hours later a Baloch terrorist group, the BLA claimed responsibility for this heinous act. Fawad Chaudhry, the federal minister for information said, 'Attack in [Gwadar] is just another

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expression of [a] game of sabotage against [the] economic vision of [the] great leadership of China and Pakistan...we will spare no effort to bring [the] culprits to justice.'[63] *The Global Times* reported that the Chinese embassy, 'condemns suicide attacks.' These security concerns have to be addressed because China has serious concerns that the resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan can spill over into the Xinjiang province.

As East Asia Forum reported, 'A stable Afghanistan is essential as access to the country's road and rail links will be critical to Beijing realising its plans to build the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).'

Prime Minister Imran Khan's Maiden Trip to China

Almost all developing economies have the problem of dealing with increases in their fiscal and balance-of-payments gaps. The economist Hollis B. Chenery (1918–1994) identified these in his 'two-gap model' formulated decades ago. To deal with these gaps, developing nations have to undertake far-reaching structural changes aimed at increasing domestic savings and exports. However, since such structural changes take years to yield results, the developed world was urged by Chenery and other economists to come to the aid of the developing nations. Most of the developing world is made up of scores of countries in Asia and Africa that previously were under colonial role. They needed time before they could develop their economies to the point where they could use domestic resources to grow their economies. The two-gap model became the framework within which bilateral aid agencies and multilateral development banks formulated their economic assistance programs. It was this model that led to the creation of the International Development Agency (IDA) the soft-lending arm of the World Bank. It also provided the basis on which rich countries promised to provide 0.75 per cent a year of their GDP to poor nations. For several years after 1968, Chenery served as the World Bank's chief economist.

However, Imran Khan, upon taking office, had to deal not with two but three gaps. The third was the wide gap between the aspirations of the country's youth and the ability of the new government to fulfil them. He inherited a critical financial situation in the country. The foreign exchange reserves had decreased to less than $8 billion, equivalent to two months of imports. The level had fallen below what is needed for a country to be creditworthy to borrow from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) window of the World Bank.

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The floating rupee plummeted to the highest devaluation in the history of the country. While the 'first hundred days' program released by the PTI, was focused on meeting some internal reforms that his supporters in the urban areas expected of him, he chose to give a great deal of his attention and energy, to solving the problem created by the balance-of-payments gap. Some of this had begun to be corrected by the sharp decline in the value of the rupee. That this was allowed to happen was a reversal of the policy adopted by the previous government. Ishaq Dar, the former finance minister, believed in keeping the rupee strong. That had resulted in Pakistan losing ground in such traditional exports as textiles and leather products. On top of this, the State Bank of Pakistan, the country's central bank, was using its foreign currency reserves to keep the rupee strong. This was manipulated by selling dollars to buy rupees. There was a great deal of commentary in the local media—inevitably picked up by the foreign press—suggesting that Pakistan was heading towards a major financial crisis. It was this widely held perception that prompted economic leaders of Pakistan to ask the IMF for help.

In September 2018, Asad Umar, the then finance minister, met the then IMF Managing Director, Christine Lagarde. She indicated that a team would be sent to Pakistan to develop a program of reform which, if acceptable to the authorities in Islamabad, would result in the thirteenth IMF operation in the country. This raised an obvious question: would the Imran Khan administration be able to reconcile the IMF's policy demands with what the people expected from the new government? Prime Minister Imran Khan seems to have been persuaded that his first priority should be to feed new financial resources into the coffers of the State Bank of Pakistan, rather than give his entire attention to satisfying the needs of his constituents and as mentioned earlier, he undertook several trips out of the country—to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. He also went to China, Malaysia, and Turkey during his first five months in office. The prime minister travelled to China for a four-day visit at a time when several influential voices in Pakistan had indicated that his presence was needed in the country because of extremist religious reprisals, following the acquittal of Aasia Bibi by the Supreme Court on 31 October 2018. Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman, was condemned to death on blasphemy charges. Her appeal, accepted by the Supreme Court in 2015, challenged the Lahore High Court's October 2014 verdict upholding a trial court's November 2010 decision sentencing her to death for committing blasphemy in 2009. Nevertheless, Imran Khan decided to go to Beijing and Shanghai to further develop the already strong

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relationship with China. However, the expectation that Khan would return with a package of support from Beijing, was not realised. There was considerable misunderstanding in the country about what the Khan team had accomplished in their talks with China's senior leaders. The prime minister succeeded in placing Pakistan–China relations within a longer-term framework of association rather than the provision of short-term financial relief many in Pakistan expected. Developing an institutional basis for formulating the long-term economic relationship was much more important than having Beijing deposit a large amount in the State Bank of Pakistan.

China–Pakistan relations have been the subject of several serious scholarly works. I will not go into the past, since this has been well covered in such studies as those by Anwar Sayeed[64] and Andrew Small.[65] Instead, my emphasis will be on the present. These relations were informed by three considerations. The first, was China's deep concern about the rise of Islamic extremism in Central and Western Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. There was a fear in China that, unchecked, this development could reach its western provinces, in particular the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, which has a large Muslim Uyghur population.

The second consideration was the role Beijing saw Pakistan playing in China's new development paradigm that focuses on land-based commerce as a way of diversifying its economy. The third apprehension Beijing had was concerned with the challenges posed to China by the US, in particular during the presidency of Donald Trump. He was convinced that China had begun to develop its own sphere of influence, centred on the countries with which it has common borders. Pakistan was one such country. China was worried about the emphasis Washington was placing in developing what it now called the Indo-Pacific region. These three considerations have put Pakistan firmly in China's orbit.

CPEC is the most crucial component of the BRI. The success of this initiative foresees future developments in China. While there will be significant changes in the content of the Chinese economy and also in the direction of the country's exports, the rate of economic growth would be maintained well into the future. The economy would not grow at the rate of 9 to 10 per cent a year, as achieved in the 1980 to 2007 period, it would still continue to expand at the rate of between 6 to 7 per cent a year.

Domestic demand in China will join the export sector as a driver of growth. Also, there will be a significant relocation of population from the crowded east coast and the eastern provinces, to those in the

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west of the country. The western provinces will need agricultural and livestock products to feed the relocated population. Pakistan would be an important part of the last component of this strategy. However, would this approach hold as according to some indicators and some experts the Chinese economy was likely to slump as the country comes face-to-face with new circumstances, especially the rapid spread of Covid-19?

By November 2021, the time of this writing, the Chinese economy was well on the way to full recovery.

The Arrival of Covid-19 in the World and in Pakistan

Covid-19 started in China and spread worldwide. When it broke out in America, the Trump administration acted quickly to isolate China. When the WHO alerted the world that it was faced with a pandemic, America banned the arrival of Chinese into the US. This move gave America the time that it could have used to control the spread of the disease. Instead, Trump used daily press briefings to play down and belittle its impact. He did not provide assistance to the states that were at the forefront of dealing with the pandemic. He also refused to follow the advice provided by known experts, such as Dr Anthony Fauci, that would have lessened the national impact of the virus.

There was a consensus among experts that the government should encourage people to change their behaviour in at least three ways: wear face masks; observe 'social distancing', i.e. maintaining a six-feet distance from other people and avoid crowded places. If need be, the state should make these precautions mandatory, but Trump refused to advise people, let alone enforce these actions. The result was devastating. On 11 April, the US had 522,286 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 20,389 having died from the disease. On 23 June, the number of cases had increased to 2,313,445 and the number of deaths to 120,451. A month later (22 July 2020), there were 3,935,211 cases, with 142,595 deaths. In total, all over the world the death toll increased to 618,894 and has continued rising, reaching 5.12 million as of the time of writing (November 2021).

The WHO did not advise member states to follow any particular approach to dealing with the pandemic. Neighbouring India and Pakistan followed entirely different strategies, with entirely different results. The Indian government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a national closedown, completely closing the economy. The result was economic chaos with the poor affected the most. Millions of people lost

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their livelihood and those who had relocated to work in large urban areas, had to return home without the availability of trains and buses.

In Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan left the management of the crisis to the provinces. They followed diverse ways of handling the crisis, ranging from partial lockdowns, to some form of restrictions placed on the congregation of people. According to Johns Hopkins University, which has kept watch over the damage done by Covid-19 pandemic by the Autumn of 2020, India had 1.19 million cases with 28,732 deaths. The corresponding figures, for Pakistan, were 267,428 cases and 5,677 deaths.

China and Iran

Faced with open hostility from the Trump administration and the renewal of sanctions, Iran moved to increase its options by approaching China and concluding a deal with it. This was detailed in a document titled 'Comprehensive Cooperation Program between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran' prepared by the two sides. Running over eighteen pages it took two years to draft. Its opening sentence refers to 'Two ancient Asian civilizations and two close partners in the sectors of trade, economy, politics, culture and security, with similar outlook and many mutual bilateral and multilateral interests that make them strategic partners.'

Work on the joint plan began in 2016 when during a visit to Tehran, President Xi Jinping proposed a China–Iran arrangement. It was approved by then President Hassan Rouhani's cabinet in June 2020 and announced by Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. When implemented, it would provide billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors, undermining US efforts to isolate Iran. In return, China would receive a regular supply of Iranian oil over the next twenty-five years. China gets about 75 per cent of its oil from abroad and is the world's largest importer at more than 10 million barrels a day. A good part of this oil would enter the planned Pakistan–China oil pipeline at Gwadar. The Chinese identified a number of BRI projects as a part of their Iran investment program, making the country an important part of the Xi Jinping initiative. The CPEC proposes adding Iran to its links westward.

China is said to be considering investing $280 billion in developing Iran's oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors and another $120 billion in upgrading Tehran's manufacturing infrastructure. According to Alex Vatanka, director of the Washington-based Middle East Institute, Iran is possibly taking advantage of the deteriorating US–China relations.

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India is also on the losing side of this developing equation. With the Pakistani port of Gwadar possibly becoming the anchor of the Iran–China program, the port of Chabahar, in south-eastern Iran, would lose its significance. This port was being developed by India.

After being leaked to the press in July 2020 at the draft stage and sparking significant controversy, on 27 March 2021, Iran and China signed a 25-Year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership cooperation.

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7

Kashmir: Pakistan's Fifth Neighbour

The growing dissident movement in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, has several aims but it has not settled on one particular demand. If it did, it might well be the demand for the creation of an independent country. If that happened, Jammu and Kashmir would join a number of other landlocked countries in West and Central Asia. The logic for this would not be very different from the one that was advanced by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan. His 'two-nation theory' was based on the notion that the Hindus and Muslims who lived in relative peace in British India, belonged to two different nations that could not live within the boundaries of one state once the British were gone. The two-nation theory was resisted initially by both the British administration in London, that had the ultimate say about the future of the Indian British colony and the Indian National Congress (INC), that did not believe that religion should be the basis of nationhood. Both the British and the INC ultimately gave in to the demand for the creation of Pakistan. In their haste to leave India, the colonial power showed little circumspection in drawing the boundary line that would separate the new states of India and Pakistan. The most sensitive line was in the province of Punjab, that was to be divided in a way that the Muslim majority districts should go to Pakistan, while those in which Sikhs and Hindus were in majority, should go to India. The most contentious line drawn was in the Muslim majority district of Gurdaspur, which was awarded to India. Pakistani historians maintain that was done to give India access to the state of Kashmir, a Muslim majority area ruled over by a Hindu maharaja.

Accession to India

After partition, Maharaja Hari Singh dithered about accession, mulling with the idea of independence. There was a tribal rebellion against him in the western part of his kingdom that was supported by the newly formed Pakistan Army. The tribes were from the North-Wester Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). They took over the western provinces and entered the capital, Srinagar. On 26 October 1947, the maharaja quickly

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acceded to India and New Delhi sent in troops to defend the city. A war was fought between Pakistan and India, in which the line between the western provinces and the areas of Srinagar, Jammu and Ladakh, occupied by Indian troops, solidified. This subsequently became the Line of Control (LOC) that divides the Pakistani and the Indian side of Kashmir. A formal ceasefire was declared on 31 December 1947.

The assumption regarding the accession of the states was that the principles of proximity and religion would be used in order for them to decide which country they should join; whether Pakistan or India. India used this principle selectively. In the case of Kashmir, the state had close proximity to Pakistan and the fact that Muslims constituted the vast majority of its population, should have meant accession to Pakistan. However, on the pretext of replying to the appeal of Maharaja Hari Singh, India used force to occupy most of the state. At the same time, it also used force in Hyderabad, which was the exact opposite of Kashmir: a large state ruled by a Muslim (the Nizam), with a large Hindu majority. At that time, Hyderabad was surrounded by the territory of independent India. When the Nizam dithered and toyed with the idea of independence, India reacted. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the powerful deputy of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, decided to use force to have the Nizam change his mind. Further, in the case of the tiny coastal state of Junagadh, whose Muslim ruler showed preference to accede to Pakistan, on the basis of the argument that while his territory did not directly border Pakistan, there was a close sea link. But New Delhi again employed force to oust the nawab. Although Patel was a senior leader of the secular INC, he was more sympathetic to the idea of a Hindu India. This is one reason why Narendra Modi spent a lot of money to build the world's tallest statue to honour Patel, whose political views matched those of his own. Moreover, like Modi, Patel also belonged to the state of Gujarat in India's west. The contested state of Kashmir is the main reason for poor relations between India and Pakistan. As *The New York Times* states, 'Still, for centuries Kashmir has been renowned for its beauty. It stretches between high Himalayan peaks, and in the summer, the meadows are carpeted with wildflowers.... But Kashmir is a depressed state, with little development, few good jobs and a sense of hopelessness. It has been down for decades, ever since then it began chafing for independence.'[1]

India and Pakistan have fought three wars over the state—the first, in 1948; the second, in 1965 and the third, in 1999. I will not go into too much detail about the history of the dispute, or the three wars, and instead focus on the way the situation presented itself to Imran Khan and

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his government, when he took office in August 2018 as prime minister. But before I do that, I will relate a conversation I had with Manmohan Singh, the prime minister of India from 2004 to 2014, who had taken up the position when it was denied to Sonia Gandhi, who had led her Congress Party to victory in the elections of 2004.

Some Personal Recollections

I had come to know Manmohan Singh well when he was engaged in various efforts to improve the position of the developing world in the global economic system. He was the secretary of the South-South Commission on which I represented the World Bank. I travelled to Paris and Geneva every month to attend the commission's meetings and often spent time with Singh discussing the issues with which the commission was involved. I sent him a note congratulating him when he was sworn in as prime minister. He responded by saying that if I was in ever in India, I should let his office know. He would love to get together with me to talk about India and Pakistan relations.

In 2005, I visited India and Aziz Khan, the Pakistan High Commissioner in India at the time, notified the prime minister's staff about my arrival. Later one evening, the prime minister's office called me, suggesting a meeting the following morning. Consequently, I went to the prime minister's official residence and was ushered in. I spent more than an hour with him and we talked about a lot of things. Included in the conversation was a discussion on Kashmir. He asked me how well I knew Pervez Musharraf, who was at the time the president of Pakistan. I said I knew him reasonably well. He then asked me if I could pass him a message:

> I have met the general two times since I took office; both times on the sidelines of international conferences. The first time we met, I said to him that since both of us were accidental leaders of our respective countries, we should do something good for our people. I told him that I was born in a small village in Chakwal, not far from Islamabad. My father was a small trader, with most of his work in Kabul. I often travelled with him and saw the poverty of the people and the poverty of the land on which they lived. Now, I am in a position to do something about it. But for that to occur, peace and a working relationship between India and Pakistan was essential.
>
> The general agreed with me, but said that in order for Pakistan to move, the Kashmir issue needed to be resolved. One way of doing that was

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> to divide the state in several parts, to accommodate various religious and ethnic groups that lived [there]. I responded to the suggestion by saying that India was a democracy and that meant that the will of the people could not be ignored. No prime minister has the authority to change the boundary of the country, certainly not a person like me, who was not directly elected by the people. The next time I saw him, he raised the Kashmir issue again. This time he had a map with him that showed Kashmir divided into seven parts. My response was the same as before. Please tell him that short of boundary adjustments I am prepared to move in a number of directions that would address the Kashmir problem.

I have kept contemporaneous notes of these conversations on which I can rely for writing about these issues. I related Manmohan Singh's message to Pervez Musharraf. He said that Singh had correctly recalled their two meetings. 'If you see him again, ask him why he has not accepted my several invitations for him to visit Pakistan. That has embarrassed me with my people. On the other hand, I have been to India several times.' I related that response to Singh in a subsequent meeting. His response was interesting. 'Musharraf is a military leader, not accountable to his people. I work in a democracy, where all important decisions have to have broad acceptance. He asks his orderly to pack his suitcase, gets into his plane and heads for India. I must have sixty-four people to agree with me that such a visit would make sense for the country.' I related that conversation to the Pakistani president. 'Manmohan Singh is such a bureaucrat. He is not a politician,' was Musharraf's response.

Pakistan seemed to have accepted Manmohan Singh's idea that he would be prepared to work on designing an arrangement that was short of a formal partition of Kashmir. That became the basis of the 'track-two dialogue' that was carried on for a couple of years. Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, who served Musharraf for a number of years as his foreign minister, recounts in some detail the near agreement reached between the two governments but abandoned after the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. Blaming the operation on Lashkar-e-Taiba, New Delhi suspended the dialogue with Pakistan.[2] That position has not changed for a decade; in fact, it has hardened since the Hindu hardliner, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, came to power.

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The Possibility of a Military Solution for the Lingering Kashmir Problem

Many historians claim that democracies don't go to war with one another. This means that people who use democratic means to hand over the reins of authority to leadership groups, don't want them to bring about the mass destruction modern wars result in. This explains why, with one notable exception, all the wars Pakistan has fought in its almost seventy-five years of independence, were initiated by military rulers. The only exception was the 1948 Kashmir War, the first of the three Pakistan has fought over the state. Then, both Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the country's ailing governor general and Liaquat Ali Khan, the first prime minister, were in charge of policymaking. The other wars, in 1965 and 1971, were during the tenures of army generals-turned politicians.

If democracies don't make wars but are pushed into it, then why and how does that happen? Who, in particular, is assigned the responsibility in democracies to wage war? The second question should be of interest to developing democracies such as Pakistan. It is the subject of enquiry by the historian Michael Beschloss in his book, *Presidents of War.*[3] The US has often gone to war in the last almost 250 years. The first war fought by an independent US, was in 1812, when the British briefly occupied Washington. It waged all the wars not against other democracies, but against those that threatened the political structure the country had built. The main issue in America has been to find the right place where the responsibility to wage war should rest. Should the US Congress, the country's legislature, have this responsibility, or should the elected president be allowed to start and manage wars? No clear answer has been found to this question in the US over the last 200 years or more.

Some Pakistani military leaders became impatient as the Kashmir issue lingered on. In the summer of 1965, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, when he was the foreign minister of President Ayub Khan, persuaded the military to try the military solution. He believed that the Kashmiris in the Indian part of the state were fed up with the presence of Indian troops and could be made to rise up if Pakistan sent in its soldiers in plain clothes to excite a rebellion. This was done, but the Kashmiris did not act; instead, India attacked Pakistan in a number of places, most notably the city of Lahore. The two countries fought a full-scale war in September, that exhausted both of them in seventeen days.

International intervention, in particular by the Soviet Union, brought about a ceasefire. In 1971, when General Yahya Khan became

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the Pakistani president, India encouraged a rebellion in what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Once again, there was a total war and another cease-fire. In 1999, General Pervez Musharraf, then the chief of army staff, sent his forces to occupy the Kargil in the northern part of Indian Kashmir. The idea was to improve Pakistan's strategic position. India threatened an all-out war if Pakistan did not pull back. Pakistan did, with the intervention of the then US president, Bill Clinton. These campaigns did not favour Pakistan in Kashmir. Some other means had to be tried. One way the governments attempted to keep the Kashmir issue alive was by observing 5 February every year, as the 'Kashmir day'. That this should be done, was suggested in 1990, by the late Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Qazi Hussain Ahmad. Since then, it has been observed as a public holiday and statements are routinely issued condemning India's actions in the state. The Kashmir issue came in the way as Imran Khan sought to improve relations with India. He told the Indian ruling establishment that he would take two steps forward if they would, in return, move one step in the same direction. But the Indians were not in the mood to reciprocate. While they were dithering, the situation in Kashmir worsened. Khan's government, no doubt, troubled by the reaction from New Delhi to its attempts to improve relations between the countries, played up Kashmir day more vigorously in 2019, than was done in the past. The prime minister sent Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to attend several Kashmir-related events, including in the British parliament. However, something more than observing a Kashmir day needed to be done but what that should be was not clear.

Local Kashmiris Join the Conflict

The Indian position has not changed, while the situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, altered in fundamental ways. The Kashmiri youths have become restless and joined the fight against what they see as foreign occupation. To write a detailed account for *The Washington Post*, Joanna Slater had to get a special permit for the trip to Srinagar. 'The permit received by *The Washington Post* for this story limited the reporter to Srinagar and added a condition that the reporter would not meet people engaged in "anti-national activities", without defining such actions.'

As the backdrop to her account, she used the example of Mohammad Rafi Bhat, an assistant professor of sociology, at University of Kashmir who suddenly disappeared and was killed in an encounter with the

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security forces as he had joined a group of state-bred militants. There were several who have followed his example, including the 19-year old boy who attacked a convoy of security forces in February 2019.

In 2018, 191 Kashmiri youths joined militant groups, according to an Indian Army official who spoke with Slater, on the condition of anonymity. This figure marked a 2 per cent rise since 2017, when 126 youths had joined. As recently as 2013, the number was only 16. Critics of the Indian moves under the BJP-led government in New Delhi, maintain, 'heavy handed tactics by India have bred anger and despair. Kashmiris describe a sense of daily humiliation, sometimes petty and sometimes grave, together with a feeling of suffocation by a conflict that shows no immediate improvement.'[4]

Narendra Modi won his first term as prime minister in 2014, after his political party, the BJP, won an unprecedented victory in the national elections. Backed by Hindu nationalists, he never concealed his anti-Muslim bias. He was accused of looking away as the Hindu extremists in the state of Gujarat, where he governed as chief minister, killed hundreds of Muslims. When he went on to become prime minister, one of the moves his Hindu followers expected from him was to fully absorb Kashmir into the Indian Union. Kashmir was the only Muslim majority state in India and had been given a special status in the Indian Constitution, by way of Article 370. One of the decisions expected of him by his followers, was the removal of this provision from the constitution. That stance alienated the state's population that was increasingly troubled by the heavy-handed way in which New Delhi was handling the Kashmir problem. There was considerable unhappiness when the BJP, having swept the polls in Jammu, the largely Hindu part of the state, joined a pro-independence party and then abruptly quit in the legislative assembly in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. This allowed the BJP government in New Delhi to impose direct rule from the Indian capital. Those who, in Kashmir, had derided Indian democracy as a sham, felt vindicated. *The Economist* wrote in its issue of 9 March 2019:

> Mr Modi's government has escalated the repression in the valley, bringing in extra troops, rounding up non-violent activists and banning a moderate Islamic group that runs scores of schools, employing 10,000 teachers. It has cut government advertising in local newspapers, their main source of revenue. Curfews and internet shutdowns have intensified. Senior officials speak alarmingly, of the need to 'instil India' in locals.[5]

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The magazine estimated that since the 1980s the conflict had claimed 50,000 lives. Kashmir was on the boil and as the unrest grew, it caught the attention of the press in the West. Oddly, this grave situation was largely ignored by the government in New Delhi.

The Incident in the District of Pulwama

Most of the time, aggressive diplomacy by India kept the Kashmir issue from featuring on the front pages of the American press. A rare exception was a story that appeared in *The New York Times* in late December 2018. This was an analysis of the changing nature of the resistance Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to it, the insurgency mounted by those who wanted India out of their state, or wanted an independent Kashmir, or wanted to join Pakistan, had acquired a new dimension and a new set of grievances. These insurgents were being picked up by the Indian forces, one by one—mostly, they were being killed when they resisted arrest. The newspaper wrote about the deteriorating situation in Kashmir and focused on what it called 'civilians' starting to come to the aid of the insurgents. To make a point about the expanding nature of the resistance, the newspaper told the story of a 19-year old young man (Noman Ashraf Bhat), who got on his motorcycle and rode to the area where a popular youth leader (Umar Majeed Ganai) was fighting the Indians. He was surrounded by security forces. A crowd had gathered to protect the freedom fighter and Bhat rushed in to help Ganai. Both were gunned down.[6]

That was not the only incident that drew the world's attention. The use of force by the Indian security forces at Pulwama, resulted in the deaths of eleven, mostly young men, on 10 December 2018. When public leaders in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir called for a protest march against the Indian action, security forces moved in again. The leaders of a Kashmiri organisation, known as the Joint Resistance Leadership (JRL), were arrested by the authorities. That such organisations were cropping up in the Indian Kashmir was an indication that the local youth were no longer dependent on organisational support from Pakistan; it could stay involved in other ways.

To internationalise the issue, Pakistan referred the Indian action to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), which responded by strongly condemning the Indian action. On 17 December, the general secretariat of the OIC called upon the international community to play its role in reaching a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Pakistan followed

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by appealing to the UN, where, in theory, the issue had been alive ever since it was first referred to the body, soon after partition. Pakistan's reference drew some response. The controversial highhandedness of the Indians was also picked up by several human rights groups. A number of statements were issued by some of them. The Indian reaction to these developments was not clear. This being the election period, the loss by the Hindu nationalist BJP, in five states, had shaken the government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had espoused an anti-Muslim approach as an important component to appeal to the masses. It was this resistance that produced the bomb attack on an Indian convoy of soldiers, on 14 February 2019. Kashmir once again posed a serious danger to peace in South Asia, when a convoy of 78 vehicles, carrying 2,500 Indian military personnel, was attacked by an 18-year old suicide bomber, killing almost 50 troops. This attack was claimed by Jaish-e-Mohammed, a militant group based in Pakistan and listed as a terrorist organisation by the United States Treasury. The group is led by Masood Azhar, who gained notoriety after ordering the beheading, in 2002, of a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl. The US had declared Jaish-e-Mohammed a terrorist organisation and imposed sanctions on it.

The suicide bomber who gave his name as Aadil Ahmad Dar, said in a video message that he had joined the Jaish-e-Mohammed a year ago and that he was from a region in the southern part of the state, which had witnessed sporadic violence since Burhan Muzaffar Wani, the charismatic leader of a Kashmiri militant outfit, was killed by the security forces in 2016. 'Don't think that because you have killed some of our commanders that we are finished. We will become your nightmare,' said Dar in a video.

The buses blown up in the attack were transporting troops belonging to the Central Reserve Force (CRF), a paramilitary unit loathed by the Muslim Kashmiris. They view it as an occupying force recruited from India, to suppress them. The use of pellet guns by the CRF against protesters, had blinded hundreds of people. By some accounts Dar joined Jaish-e-Mohammed after being injured in an action by the paramilitary force.

The Indian reaction was swift and predictable. Prime Minister Modi promised, 'the sacrifices of our brave security personnel shall not go in vain'. The previous attack, for which Jaish-e-Mohammed had taken responsibility, was in 2016, when its personnel launched a major operation targeting the Indian Army, in the town of Uri, in the Indian held part of Kashmir. That attack took nineteen lives and prompted the Indian

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military to launch what it described as 'surgical strikes'. The Indian claim of retaliatory strikes seemed to satisfy the extremist Hindu base of the ruling BJP, whose government was then in the second year of its five-year term. However, the authorities in Pakistan denied any intrusion of Indian troops into its part of Kashmir. Modi and the BJP faced another election in 2019, while the sentiment in India had moved considerably to the right of the political spectrum.

According to Rahul Bedi, a defence analyst with Jane's Information Group, a counterattack by the Indian forces in response to the Pulwama incident, was logistically not possible as heavy snow blanketed the mountains in the disputed border. Prime Minister Modi had 'very little room to manoeuvre. He can come down on the Kashmiri people in a harsher way, he can deploy the army, the police, the paramilitary. But he can do only more of the same.' Bedi went on to speak about the delicate situation India faced in Kashmir. '[The state] is a pressure cooker that doesn't leave the people with any way to channel their anger or ambitions.' He added that most militant groups in Kashmir are now 'home grown' and not slipping across the border, from Pakistan.[7]

In an editorial on the incident, *The Washington Post* urged India to be cautious in its response, while putting the responsibility for it on Pakistan, 'Mr. Modi's best course, however, unsatisfactory may be to avoid overreaction...including against the Muslim population in Kashmir and those in India who speak out on its behalf.' It equated Pakistan's alleged involvement in Kashmir, with its approach in Afghanistan:

> If the record of past terrorist attacks in India is any indication, Pakistan will not act even if evidence is provided....The same has been true of its response to terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, such as assaults on the U.S. Embassy and other Western targets by a faction known as the Haqqani network, which Pakistan is also believed to support.[8]

Nevertheless, several Indian analysts believed that the approach adopted by the Modi government was not working. *The New York Times*, in a detailed analysis of the situation, argued, 'The attack has prompted new questions about how tenable Mr. Modi's hardline strategy in Kashmir is...India has about 250,000 armed forces in Kashmir, making it one of the most militarized corners of the world. The armed presence effects everyday life for most locals, whose farmland, homes or schools are overshadowed by the military presence.' The newspaper report quoted Happymon Jacob, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New

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Delhi, who tracks the Kashmir conflict, saying that the number of youths opposing the Indian presence had increased during the Modi tenure. 'They aren't joining the militants from Islamic seminaries, but they're fresh graduates from engineering schools, or they hold jobs. For an entire generation to be so angry from India, says that Delhi's policy has been a failure.' Even senior leaders in the Indian Army expressed doubts of active Pakistani involvement in this particular incident. It was reported in the local press that Dar, the suicide bomber, had packed 750 pounds of explosives in the vehicle with which he struck the convoy buses. 'It is not possible to bring such massive amounts of explosives by infiltrating the border,' said Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda, an Indian Army commander and analyst. He believed that the explosives came from stores that were being used for blasting, during construction work in the nearby mountains, to widen the highway on which the convoy was travelling.[9] Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the senior leadership of the ruling BJP believed that the Pulwama incident could be turned to their electoral advantage. Quick and decisive military action would be extremely popular with the extremist Hindu base. The crisis with Pakistan had come at an appropriate time for Modi, who had lost a lot of his confidence when his party did poorly in several state elections held in 2018. Those elections had brought life back to the rival Congress Party. However, that calculation did not turn out the way the Congress had hoped.

The Near War in South Asia

The Modi supporters were not prepared to accept the conclusion that the Indian approach to the resolution of the Kashmir problem was not working. The news of the Pulwama attack brought Modi's supporters out in the streets of Delhi pumping their fists and waving signs that read, 'Attack Pakistan. Crush it'. Modi and the BJP were headed towards another election, in which they were not expected to do as well as they had in 2014. Thus, they could not totally ignore sentiments such as these. However, India's options were limited. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, it ratcheted up its diplomatic offensive against Pakistan, promising to isolate its neighbour. It withdrew the most-favoured nation status it had given to Pakistan; called the head of the Pakistani mission in New Delhi, to demand the removal of the Jaish-e-Mohammed and other 'terrorist groups' that it claimed were operating in Pakistani territory and recalled its high commissioner in Pakistan to New Delhi for consultation.

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Pakistan reacted by summoning its high commissioner back from New Delhi to Islamabad. The two countries were on the verge of a complete diplomatic rupture.

Washington's reaction to these developments was yet another indication of the widening divide in South Asia, with the US getting closer to India and Pakistan moving into the Chinese orbit. A day after the terrorist attack in Kashmir, the White House demanded that Pakistan end its support to terrorists, adding, 'This attack only strengthens our resolve to bolster counter-terrorism cooperation and coordination between the US and India.' It called upon Pakistan, 'To end immediately the support and safe haven provided to all terrorist groups operating on its soil whose only goal is to sow chaos, violence and terror in the region.' But China landed on the other side of the dispute. The US had tried to get Masood Azhar of Jaish-e-Mohammed to be designated as an individual terrorist by the UN Security Council, but China always blocked the move. It did it again when India once more demanded the move against Azhar and he was rebuffed by a foreign ministry spokesperson in Beijing.

That the attack on the security force could be the consequence of how India was handling its Kashmir problem, did not impress a sizeable segment of the country's population, particularly those who leaned to the right of the political spectrum. They were in favour of a stern response from the government. Arun Jaitley, then finance minister in the Modi government, warned that India would deliver an 'unforgettable lesson' in retaliation. This sentiment had the support of people such as Barkha Dutt, a journalist based in New Delhi, who is a global opinion contributing columnist for *The Washington Post*. On 16 February, the newspaper published a hysterical column, in which Dutt approved of Jaitley's statement, 'In an angry, outraged and cynical country, this is unlikely to be an overstatement. There will almost certainly be a strong military response from India, Pakistan has long operated on the assumption that the two nuclear states will not and cannot escalate their conflict above a certain threshold. It is this calculation that emboldens Pakistan's asymmetric war against India, in which terrorist groups are proxies for its deep state.[10] Pakistani politicians reacted with outrage to Indian accusations that their government was complicit in the attack. 'Islamabad makes no gains from such an attack,' wrote PPP Senator Sherry Rehman. 'Instead of a political response to years of brutal repression in Kashmir, hysteria is being amplified against Pakistan.'[11] Islamabad launched a diplomatic offensive in an attempt to stop India's march towards a military confrontation, by putting its armed forces on high alert. Foreign

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Secretary Tehmina Janjua invited the ambassadors of the five members of the UN Security Council, to discuss the fast deteriorating situation. According to a statement issued by her office, 'She noted a familiar Indian pattern of immediate and reflexive assignment of blame on Pakistan without investigations.' The foreign secretary said that Pakistan had pursued a 'constructive approach' towards India, it added, 'Pakistan's offer of dialogue and the Kartarpur initiative are a clear evidence of this.' 'Ratcheting up tensions in the region will be counterproductive,' she said. This standpoint was picked up in a similar vein by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in Munich, where he was attending the annual international security deliberations.

The Western commentary on the incident recognised that there was substance in the statement issued by Prime Minister Imran Khan's office that, 'India also needs to do deep introspection [to realize] why people of the Indian Occupied Kashmir, have lost fear of death.' While New Delhi was contemplating action against Pakistan, it continued to pursue an aggressive posture towards the dissidents in its part of Kashmir. On or around 22 February, the police arrested 300 activists, which India believed to be acting against its presence in the disputed territory. Police said that they went to the neighbourhood overnight and rounded up top leaders and known activists of mainly the Jamaat-e-Islami. By focusing on Islamic parties, India was giving a religious tinge to its approach in Kashmir. That would please anti-Muslim elements but could also set-off a reaction in the disputed state. They were nervous that the sweeping crackdowns could touch-off renewed anti-India protests and clashes with the security forces. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's threat to Pakistan materialised on the morning of 26 February, twelve days after the Pulwama incident, when the Indians sent their fighter planes into Pakistani territory, in three places along the Line of Control, as well as the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The intruding Indian planes were chased away by the Pakistan Air Force. According to one account, the intrusion into Pakistan lasted for four minutes. On the way back, one of the Indian planes dropped four bombs near the town of Balakot, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They did no damage. But the Indian authorities told a very different story. They said that their planes had destroyed a large training camp run by the extremist group Jaish-e-Mohammed, that had taken responsibility for the Pulwama incident. New Delhi said that its operation had killed 350 terrorists. Western newspaper reports discounted the Indian claim of having inflicted a great deal of damage.

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> Michael Sheldon, a researcher at the Atlantic Council, a think tank in Washington, said on Saturday that after studying satellite imagery of the area in Pakistan that India had bombed, he could see "no evidence any buildings were hit." He added, "It appears to me they didn't hit their targets." Instead, he said, all publicly available evidence and accounts from witnesses on the ground indicated that the Indian bombs had landed in an unpopulated forest and had taken out some pine trees. He set out his argument in an online article titled "Surgical Strike in Pakistan a Botched Operation?"[12]

Some in India were also nervous. In a front-page story, *The New York Times* reported, 'Indian opposition politicians seized on what they saw as the opportunity the crisis presented: 21 opposition parties issued a statement Wednesday (27 February) to condemn Mr. Modi for his "politicization" of the nation's armed forces and the current Pakistani misadventure.' A video circulated by opposition members claimed that Modi 'had no qualms capitalizing on national tragedy' and 'politicizing terror'.[13]

Though India and Pakistan routinely shell each other across the LOC, this was the first time since the war in 1971, that either side confirmed sending planes into the other's space. The following morning, Pakistan once again scrambled its warplanes and said that it shot down two Indian aircrafts. One pilot was captured, whose plane fell on the Pakistani side of the border. The pilot parachuted out and survived. Pakistani security personnel quickly rushed to the spot and took the pilot away as he was being battered by a small crowd of locals. 'The Pakistanis are bound to react, conventionally and not through a proxy like a militant group,' said analyst Rahul Bedi, 'Where they will react and when is something that only Pakistani know.'[14]

Prime Minister Imran Khan readied the nation for a possible fight with India. In an address to the nation, he stated, 'All big wars have been due to miscalculation. My question to India is that given the weapons we have, can we afford a miscalculation?'[15] On previous occasions, the US had stepped in to ease tensions between India and Pakistan. But President Trump had taken a hard-line on Pakistan, while drawing closer to India. Two days after the Pulwama attack, John Bolton, then US national security adviser, said the US supported 'India's right to self-defence.' The US involvement increased as the situation deteriorated.

Asad M. Khan, Pakistan's ambassador to the US, called on Washington to play a greater role in easing tensions between the two countries. It was reported that in addition to Mike Pompeo (secretary of state); John Bolton

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(national security adviser); Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr (chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff); and two senior military commanders, Gen. Joseph L. Votel (Central Command) and Admiral Philip S. Davidson (head of the Pacific Command), had made telephone calls to discuss this incident. Trump was in Hanoi meeting the North Korean President, Kim Jong-un. When asked a question about the India–Pakistan situation at a press conference, he advised the two countries to show restraint.

According to one newspaper report, 'Pakistani officials said they had appealed to the US to become more involved in the crisis, perhaps send a high-level official to shuttle between the two capitals. They bemoaned the fact that Washington appears distracted with multiple other crises.'[16] There was concern around the globe that with two nuclear-armed states, an escalating conflict could get out of hand. It may be noted that India has a no-first-use nuclear policy, stating that it will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike and that its weapons would be used only for retaliation, Pakistan's policy emphasises 'full spectrum deterrence'. Since 1998, when the countries tested their weapons, both have been adding to their arsenals. According to one count, Pakistan had 140 nuclear warheads in 2017, up from 120, to 130, a year earlier. It has more plutonium-production reactors than India and that gives it the capability to produce up to twenty nuclear warheads. As a proportion of government expenditure, Pakistan at 16 per cent of its budget, spends more on defence than India at 9 per cent. However, India has more advanced capability to deliver nuclear weapons. It had what is known as full nuclear triad—the ability to deliver nuclear weapons from the ground, air, and sea. The Agni-III missile has a range of 2,000 miles. The longer-range missiles were developed keeping China in mind. It has modified its fighter jets to deliver nuclear bombs. The confrontation following the 14 February incident in Kashmir, tested the deterrence theory.[17] Pakistan's foreign minister revealed that Mike Pompeo (secretary of state), had played an important role in reducing the level of tension. China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, Russia, and Turkey also got involved. The fact that Washington was actively involved, was also reinforced by the State Department's deputy spokesperson, Robert Palladiono, in his regular news briefing in Washington. 'A lot of private diplomacy is going on right now,' he said on 6 March. There were a number of critical voices raised by commentators of Indian origin. One of the more powerful statements was put out by Pankaj Mishra, who is an Indian historian based in Europe:

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> Modi's militant nationalism, loudly amplified by Indian television anchors....India's burgeoning military-intellectual complex deserves the world's close and skeptical scrutiny. One wing of this community consists of superannuated and clearly bored generals, titillating hyper-patriotic television anchors and themselves with visions of do-or-die wars and glorious victories. Their jingoism far exceeds the capacity of the Indian military....[18]

Western analysts who watch India and Pakistan, worried whether the two countries had crossed into dangerous territory, with India attacking Pakistan and engaging in aerial duels. *The New York Times* was concerned enough to write a long editorial covering the subject, titled, 'India and Pakistan, Ever on the Edge'. In this they mentioned, 'A solution to a conflict that touches on so many religions and nationalist nerves must ultimately come from within, through talks among India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir.'[19] It's a long shot, and the protagonists have shown no serious interest, but that's the reality nevertheless. But the editorial was not entirely correct; it did not accurately reflect the thinking of Pakistan's new leader, Imran Khan, who had repeatedly asked the Indian leadership, particularly Narendra Modi, to join him at the negotiating table. But the Indians did not take up that offer. The long- enduring Kashmir problem had provoked not only tremendous hostility towards Pakistan, but also against India's own Muslim population.

Pakistan seemed to have come off better in what the world hoped would be a short skirmish. It certainly won the public relations war. As the captured Indian pilot left for his home country, he paid a compliment to his captors. He said he was treated very well. 'I would like to put this on record and I will not change my statement if I go back to my country also. The officers of the Pakistani Army have looked after me very well. They are thorough gentlemen. This is what I would expect my army to behave as well. I am very impressed by the Pakistani Army.'[20]

A well-regarded Indian author, Arundhati Roy, wrote, 'Whatever Pakistan's role has been in the Kashmir conflict, Imran Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan, has acted with dignity and rectitude.' As for Modi, she called his actions 'unforgivable,' alluding to the always-present conflict between the states. 'He has jeopardised the lives of more than a billion people and brought the war in Kashmir to the doorstep of many Indians.'[21]

In the final analysis, the incident may be seen as more evidence that support a historian's assertion that democracies don't go to war with each other.

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The State of India's Military Preparedness

The US entered the picture ignoring the growing turmoil in the Indian part of Kashmir. It wanted to build India as a counterpoint to China's growing military strength, a development that was of great concern in Washington, among both policy analysts and those who formulated policy. However, several analysts, Indian and foreign, believed that New Delhi did not have the military prowess to beat Pakistan into submission, let alone challenge China. The US strategy in the Pacific was to have India balance the rising military strength of China. According Ajai Shukla, a leading Indian defence analyst, 'So far Pakistan has demonstrated it can match India, and this requires the Indian military to escalate the punishment to a level that Pakistan cannot match. However, decades of neglect and under-funding have hollowed India's military to the point where Mr. Modi cannot rely on its capability to punish Pakistan swiftly and relatively bloodlessly.' It was also noted that whereas the Indian penetration of Pakistani airspace occurred at night, the Pakistanis sent in their planes in broad daylight. The subject of Indian military preparedness and prowess was examined at some length in a front-page analysis in *The New York Times*. The newspaper placed heavy emphasis on the US strategy to rely on India as a check on rising China, 'The aerial clash, the first by the South Asian rivals in nearly five decades was a rare test for the Indian military...and it left observers a bit dumbfounded. While the challenges faced by India's armed forces are secret, its loss of a plane last week to a country whose military is about half the size and receives a quarter of the funding was telling.'[22] If full-scale war broke out, India could supply its troops with only ten days of ammunition. About 68 per cent of the army's equipment is so old it is officially labelled 'vintage'. American officials that have the responsibility of bringing up the effectiveness of the India military to face China's assertive approach in the Pacific, are frustrated. When the Americans gave their command in the Pacific the title of Indo-Pacific, they did it with great expectations. 'It's our primary combatant command,' said Jim Mattis, at that time the US defence secretary. 'It's standing watch and intimately engaged with over half of the earth's surface and its diverse populations, from Hollywood to Bollywood.' That implied an inefficient Indian military. The Americans were not happy with what they saw. They had to deal with a swollen bureaucracy that made arms sales and joint training exercises cumbersome; Indian forces are vastly underfunded; and the country's navy, army, and air force tend to compete rather than work together.

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In less than a decade, US arms sales to India increased from zero to $15 billion in 2018.

For Washington, what mattered was not a comparison between India and Pakistan, but between China and India. In 2017 and 2018, the Indian defence budget was $45 billion compared to China's $175 billion. India is now the world's fifth largest military spender. What worries analysts is what the money is spent on. A considerable proportion of the total amount goes into salaries and pensions. There was a pro-personnel bias in expenditure. India's military has long been a source of employment for a country struggling with chronic unemployment. Prime Minister Modi took office to create one million jobs a month. Cutting down the size of the Indian armed forces from 1.2 million and focus more on modernising the equipment, is not an option. There are also serious problems in the system of military procurement. It suffered from pervasive corruption. Prime Minister Modi was quite ferociously grilled by the opposition, over a murky deal to buy thirty-six Rafael fighter planes from France, at a cost of $8.9 billion. The purchase would have resulted in retiring the aging MiG-21 fleet. It was the MiG that Pakistan downed and whose pilot was briefly in Pakistan's captivity.

Another China–India comparison was revealing. Beijing followed a two-step approach; it first developed its economy before turning to increasing its military strength. Much of what the Indians were attempting to do now, China had done three decades earlier. But the American policy community was not giving up on India. 'India's sheer demographics, its long-term military potential, its geographic expanse...makes India worth waiting for,' said Jeff Smith of the Heritage Foundation, a Washington think-tank. Smith quoted from a number of surveys to suggest that China is not looked at favourably by the popular Indian mind. A 2010 survey by the Pew Research Centre, found that just a third of Indians think well of China; a Lowry Institute poll in May 2013, found that only 31 per cent of Indians surveyed believed that China's rise had been good for India. Some 73 per cent surveyed thought that war with China was a 'big threat' and 70 per cent thought China's aim was 'to dominate Asia'.[23]

War and Peace

The near-war situation arising out of the Pulwama incident, brings me to the question of what should be done to control the 'enemies' of the formal state structure of Pakistan. They have repeatedly put Pakistan on the

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brink of war on so many occasions. This is where the question of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism enters the picture. Following this crisis in India, in the early part of 2019, the Pakistani government announced its intention to move against extremist groups in the country. About four dozen activists were arrested and the ministry of finance announced that it would be moving to stop the flow of funds that finance the activities of these groups. The official line was that this action was being taken not because of Indian pressure; it was in response to an ultimatum issued by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It threatened to place Pakistan on its blacklist unless Islamabad took measures to stop the funds these groups receive from both abroad and within Pakistan. Policy circles draw a distinction between counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategies. The scope of the former is much wider while that of the latter is quite limited. Counter-insurgency entails more than the use of military power. It is trying to check all matters that give rise to terrorism; it entails financial measures to stop such groups from receiving funds; steps to try to prevent dangerous elements entering the country; arresting suspects; gearing up intelligence about these groups; reform the thinking that promotes extremists, like the teaching in seminaries and by religious leaders and even try to improve the economic, social, and political conditions of the people in areas that breed terrorists who get attracted to insurgency because of despondency and discontent with their environment.

Counterterrorism, on the other hand, is a relatively limited endeavour, focused on identifying and eliminating people and groups involved in terrorist activities. Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan is a counter-terrorism-based response. The efforts to reform seminaries and fatwas issued by responsible clerics against sectarianism, are counter-insurgency measures.

In his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, David Galula places emphasis on gaining the support of the population that is suffering from the wars being waged by insurgents.[24] That is not what President George W. Bush's war on terror set out to accomplish. The aim was to use overwhelming force to defeat the insurgents. By reviewing the history of insurgency in the 20th century Galula, points out that a martial approach has never worked. The US has opted for counter-terrorism as its strategy as it begins to unwind its operations in Afghanistan. This will leave the country's Pashtun belt under developed and would also have consequences for Pakistan.

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In early 2020, the US once again rethought its approach towards Afghanistan. The latest version of the shifting US strategy in Afghanistan came in late February 2020, while Zalmay Khalilzad was engaged in negotiations with the Taliban. The Pentagon prepared a plan that was offered to the Taliban, according to which all American troops would withdraw from Afghanistan over the next three to five years. The rest of the international force would pull out at the same time. The number of American troops would be cut by one-half from 14,000, in the next few months. It would give the 8,600 European and other international troops the task of training the Afghan force and shift American responsibility to counterterrorism. The plan would remain in place even if the peace talks fail. According to retired Admiral James George Stavridis, who was the top NATO commander at one point, the planned division of responsibility between Europe and the US, was appropriate. But the Taliban is not likely to accept a counterterrorism role to be played by the US—not for five years. What was the likelihood of saving Afghanistan from collapse once foreign troops begin to pull out of the country? According to one assessment:

> The track record for American supported governments after peace treaties or troop withdrawal is shaky at best. American-trained South Vietnamese fell to communist forces two years after the US withdrew from the Vietnam War in 1973. Large portions of the Iraqi army collapsed after the withdrawal of the American military and its trainers necessitating a return to Iraq by international forces.[25]

This as it turned out was a rather prescient warning, indeed it turned out to be too optimistic as Afghan Security Forces collapsed even before the American withdrawal was complete.

Water as a Weapon

The Pulwama incident and the near-war between India and Pakistan eventually led to the two countries going back to where they were before all that happened. This attack was followed by another, a few days later. They had struck a nerve in India. There was pressure by Hindu nationalists about moving against Pakistan. The Modi government was desperate to find a befitting reaction to what it complained was Pakistan's continuous involvement in encouraging the disgruntled Kashmir youth to hit at the Indian security forces. Many people in India were hungry

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for revenge. But India had few military options. Even the most jingoistic members of India's military elite were wary of escalating tensions. A military action could escalate into a confrontation, which neither side wanted. Some way had to be found to force Pakistan into submission.

National elections in India were approaching and some of the support that had put Modi and his BJP in power, had begun to erode. New Delhi had to act. On 21 February 2018, a minister in the Modi cabinet indicated that New Delhi was contemplating diverting water from the eastern tributaries of the Indus river, for use in the Indian state of Punjab and in parts of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Nitin Gadkari, India's transport minister, said in a Tweet, 'Our Govt. had decided to stop our share of water which used to flow to Pakistan. We will divert water from Eastern rivers and supply it to our people in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.' The reference to 'our share' was to the 1960 Indus Water Treaty signed in Karachi, then the capital of Pakistan, by the Pakistani President, Mohammad Ayub Khan and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Jeffrey Gettleman noted in his report:

> This is hardly the first time it has threatened to choke Pakistan's water supply. In 2016, after militants attacked an Indian base near the town of Uri, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, 'blood and water can't flow together' and his government threatened to do the same thing. Instead, the military staged what it called surgical strikes against targets across the border in Pakistan. This time around, India seems more serious about using water as punishment.[26]

However, Indian media reported that officials in the same ministry clarified that the minister's Tweet was not a new policy, but one that the country had pursued over a long time. Water allocated to India under the 1960 treaty continued to flow to Pakistan. Brahma Chellaney, a professor at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi and a student of the water treaty and an expert, believed that India had struggled to harness waters from the rivers it controls. 'This statement by the Indian government is an attempt by them to show to the country [in particular its supporters] that the government appears to be doing something. When in actual terms they have done nothing. This is more of a rhetorical statement being used to play to the popular anti-Pakistan sentiment.'[27]

The Indians had long argued that the treaty was based on the recognition of the principle of sovereignty. It claimed unfettered rights to the eastern rivers, the Ravi, the Beas, and the Sutlej. According to Daniel Haines in his book, *Indus Divided*, the Indians believed that their 'status

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as a sovereign state conferred complete freedom to use the rivers in India, without any interference from downstream Pakistan.'[28]

Internationalising the Kashmir Issue

On 5 August 2019, the special status of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir—given to it in India's constitution—was abolished through a presidential decree. The part of the state that was under India's control, was divided into two 'union territories', to be administered directly from New Delhi. The Muslim majority area of Kashmir and the predominantly Buddhist area of Ladakh, were to be the two Indian Union territories. Granting autonomy to Kashmir was part of the conditions of accession that India had agreed to with the Hindu raja, who ruled Kashmir when he joined India in late 1947.

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution guaranteed autonomy. That provision was like a contract that provided that Kashmir would be different from other Indian states and would have a say to what kind of federal laws could be applied to it. It would make its own laws by a parliament that was given much greater autonomy than the assemblies in the Indian states.

For years, India's Hindu nationalists had wanted to curtail the special freedom enjoyed by Kashmir. In keeping with this sentiment and after the unexpected and resounding victory for their party in the election of May 2019, Narendra Modi's government felt strong enough to move against the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy for the state of Kashmir. Just before 5 August, the government sent 10,000 troops, in addition to the estimated 600,000-armed personnel already stationed there. All phones, internet services, and cable networks were cut off and pro-India leaders placed under house arrest. Journalists were banned from entering the state.

According to a front-page news analysis of the situation, *The New York Times* wrote on 6 August, 'the voice of the Kashmiris was silenced, as the government cut off all communications from the area. Several top Kashmiri politicians were taken into custody including Mehbooba Mufti, a former chief minister of Kashmir.' In a statement that she was able to get out before all links with the outside world were cut off, she called the action a major betrayal.

The Indians took this course of action a couple of weeks after the American president had offered to help resolve the Kashmir dispute that has soured relations between India and Pakistan since partition. The offer was made in a meeting on 22 July 2019, on the occasion of the Pakistani

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Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit—for the record, that was the 22nd official visit to be taken by a Pakistani head of government to America. If Trump had been a deep strategic thinker, one would be inclined to find some clever reason for what can be interpreted as a major move, but of course there was none. With the developing ties between India and the US, it came as surprise, because India denies there is any sort of dispute. More surprising was that the American president claimed that his move was prompted by a request from Narendra Modi.

It took a nanosecond for India to deny that the Indian prime minister had asked the American president's help to settle the Kashmir issue. New Delhi has never accepted the idea of third-party interference in what it views as an internal matter. That is the Indian claim, but it is not supported by history. Outsiders have gotten involved whenever India and Pakistan have gone to war over the issue. This has happened thrice. The first outside intervention was in 1949, when the two countries fought a limited war—confined to the state of Kashmir. The UN stepped in and the Indian side agreed that the future of the contested state would be determined by a plebiscite, in which people would decide whether they would remain with India or join Pakistan. India, at that time was coming to terms with the idea of a Muslim state being a part of its territory. History justified a plebiscite. It was the people's will that decided that the then province of NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) would become a part of Pakistan and similarly, that the district of Sylhet, which was a heavily Muslim majority area in Assam, joined the eastern part of the new country at the time of partition.

The next intervention by a superpower was one that ended Pakistan's second Kashmir war with India. In September 1965, the two countries a bitter, seventeen-day conflict in which the main battleground was not in Kashmir, but in the areas around Lahore and Sialkot. A ceasefire mandated by the UN was accepted by both the warring fought countries. This time, Pakistan wanted a follow-up, not trusting the Indians to implement the first resolution on Kashmir. The Soviet Union then agreed to play the role of an intermediary. Alexei Kosygin, the then prime minister of the Soviet Union, met with the Pakistani president, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, and the Indian prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. The meeting took place in Tashkent. Not much happened in the meeting other than the agreement to restore the status quo. The strain of the encounter was too much for the Indian leader. He had a heart attack and died on 11 January 1966, in Tashkent, after concluding the meeting with Kosygin and Ayub Khan.

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The third time India accepted outside intervention was over the ill-advised penetration of the Pakistani forces at Kargil, a spot on the extreme north of the Line of Control that separated the Indian and Pakistani-held parts of Kashmir. General Pervez Musharraf was the commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army at that time. He hoped to bring India to the bargaining table by having the frontier militia take possession of the Indian defence structure in Kargil, when the Indian Army left them at the onset of winter.

This move was made after a briefing that could not be comprehended by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was negotiating trade agreements with India and had, around that time, signed the 'Lahore Declaration' with the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. India responded to the Kargil incursion by threatening an all-out war with Pakistan. In fact, they even began moving their nuclear assets. There was world pressure on Pakistan to withdraw. Sharif panicked but needed a face-saving solution to the problem. He sought a meeting with President Bill Clinton. On 4 July 1999, the holiest of America's holidays, Clinton met with Sharif in Washington and in return for the president's pledge to get involved in solving the Kashmir dispute, agreed to pull the Pakistani forces out of Kargil. The status quo was thus restored, but America did not get involved.

What is the lesson to be drawn from history? The Indians have welcomed outside intervention whenever things have gotten too hot to handle vis-à-vis Kashmir. Could the 5 August move produce the heat that would make India welcome America's offer to mediate? Here, I would like to digress a little. I was director of World Bank's China Operations Department, from 1987 to 1994. In 1989, I steered the World Bank through what Beijing called the 'Tiananmen incident'. I refused to buckle under the American pressure exerted on me in many ways by President George H.W. Bush's administration on that occasion. That brought me closer to the senior leaders of China. I had discussions with them on several issues, including the future of Kashmir. The Chinese prime minister said something very important. He told me that 'time was on Pakistan's side.' He took a cue from his country's history in the manner in which Beijing had handled the Taiwan issue. 'Taiwan will become a part of China,' the prime minister continued. 'Taiwan will never be an independent country. It will become part of China. That's what it was for thousands of years and will revert to that position for thousands of more years. Time is on our side; it may take five years, ten years, fifty years, and hundred years.' He drew this analogy in regard to Kashmir; that it

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cannot be the only Muslim majority state in a predominantly Hindu India. 'Kashmir will come to Pakistan for that is where it belongs. Time is on Pakistan's side.'

The Hindu extremists—who had a dominant position in the Indian government that came to power in New Delhi in 2014, and later won again in a landslide victory in the election of 2019—actually realised the truth of what the Chinese prime minister had said. That is why they took the step they did on 5 August, by removing the special status Kashmir had been promised and granted in 1947. An important part of the original contract was the ban on the acquisition of property by non-Kashmiris in Kashmir. With that provision gone, we are likely to see the repeat of the Palestinian situation in Kashmir. In the 1940s, the Zionist movement brought tens of thousands of moneyed Jews from Europe to Palestine and buy homes and lands from the Arabs. This move displaced tens of thousands of Arabs from their homes. They became refugees in the land that had once been theirs.

The view expressed by the Chinese prime minister is borne out by the harsh repressive measures being taken by India. The blackout was eased eight weeks after the change in the status and then foreign journalists were allowed into the state. The reports they sent to their newspapers painted a picture of non-violent resistance by the locals. However, in following this approach, the locals seem to be hurting themselves and their provincial economy. *The Washington Post* carried a long story titled 'Fear and anger sour Kashmir's apple harvest'—apples are the main crop of Kashmir. The article described the tense standoff between the Indian government and anti-India militants:

> It ensnared apple farmers whose crops represent a $2 billion business crucial to Kashmir's economy and supply more than 60% of India's apples. The resulting fear has left fruit trees across the state bent with ripe unpicked apples. [The locals were vigilant in enforcing the boycott.] In protest the locals have shuttered shops. In the apple belt, militant groups have ratcheted up tensions by threatening orchard owners with violence if they harvest and sell their crop. And Indian authorities pressure farmers to pick apples and conduct business as usual at local markets.[29]

I had argued in a short booklet I wrote for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington in 2005, that the cost of the Kashmir dispute was much heavier for Pakistan than it was for India. Pakistan's continued engagement in Kashmir has had a negative impact on its economy, including the GNP. I developed a model to estimate the

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foregone GDP growth rate. Pakistan's long-term growth rate could have been some 2.5 to 3.2 points higher than what was actually achieved. This conclusion was based on the aggregation of four elements I used in my model. Some 0.75 to 0.85 per cent rate of growth was foregone because of the high military expenditure occasioned by the conflict in Kashmir. Reduced military expenditure could have been used by the government for investing more in the development of the country's large human resource. Pakistan is at the lower end of the proportion of GDP spent on public institutions providing education and healthcare. More attention to the social sectors would have added to the rate of GDP growth. The greater intraregional trade that would have resulted, had Pakistan and India been at peace, would have added another 0.75 to 0.85 per cent a year, to the growth rate of Pakistan.

Economists use what they call the 'gravity model of trade', to show that trade with the countries in the neighbourhood, have a larger payoff than the trade with distant countries. Pakistan trades much more with distant places, such as the US, Japan, and Western Europe, than with its South Asian neighbours. Another 0.75 to 1.0 per cent would have resulted from larger amounts of domestic investment into the economy, while larger foreign direct investment would have added another 0.3 to 0.5 per cent to foregone growth. For Pakistan, to increase its sustainable medium and long-term rate of GDP growth, it needs to significantly increase the amount of investment going into the economy. Adding all these elements together, gave me a range of 2.25 and 3.2 per cent, in terms of missed growth because of the cost of the Kashmir dispute. These, by all accounts, show a great loss.[30]

I showed the draft of the USIP report to General Jehangir Karamat (retd.) who was Pakistan's ambassador to the US from 2004 to 2006. At his suggestion, I sent it to President Pervez Musharraf and discussed it with him a few months later, during a visit to Islamabad. I had expected that my conclusion, that Pakistan needed to put the Kashmir dispute on the backburner, would not sit well with the general. He had, after all, taken the Kargil initiative that almost brought the two countries to war, and as a junior officer had served several combat tours in Kashmir. However, he told me, 'I like what you have written. You write a regular weekly column for *Dawn*, why not write a series of articles based on your USIP report. We need to educate the people of Pakistan. You notice that I have now a different point of view about Kashmir, much closer to the one you have presented.' I was very surprised by this reaction.

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Back in Washington, I told General Karamat of Musharraf's reaction. He was both surprised and pleased and offered to pass on my study to the Indian ambassador in Washington and suggest an India–Pakistan workshop to be held in the American capital. Officials need not be invited to attend; attendance may be limited to analysts from private think tanks. The Indian ambassador consulted his government and New Delhi said it was not interested in this kind of initiative. It was feared that a workshop in Washington would draw the kind of attention New Delhi did not want. It did not want to internationalise the issue.

But the USIP did not give up; it got Pugwash, a think-tank, interested. Pugwash held a seminar in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where I presented my findings. The workshop was held on 15–16 March 2008 and was well attended. Those present from both India and Pakistan showed a great deal of interest in my findings. Moeed Yusuf, who is now national security adviser in the government headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan,[31] wrote the conference report, which presented 'a holistic plan for across Line of Control collaboration, in terms of human and economic exchange.' A number of avenues were explored, each of which can potentially bring gains in its own right. However, ideally, the sector-specific proposals need to be tackled within an overarching framework. On the other hand, if I were to write the USIP study again, I would come to a different conclusion. The loss-calculus in the new study would also include the cost to India of the Kashmir dispute. India is now paying a heavy economic, political, and social price for the way it is approaching the Kashmir issue. It is showing great stubbornness in not recognising that there isn't a military solution to the continuing insurgency in the region. This is not the way it should proceed. This is the conclusion reached by scholars who have studied insurgencies in different parts of the world.

It doesn't take much for the Indian authorities to take action against the Kashmiris. This happens even at the slightest display of what is viewed as insulting behaviour towards 'Mother India'. One such episode occurred when the Pakistani cricket team beat the Indian side in a convincing way. Gerry Shih, covering the way some in Kashmir celebrated Pakistan's triumph and Mother India's 'humiliation', wrote:

> For most fans in cricket-obsessed India, an unexpected loss in Twenty20 World Cup competition on Sunday to arch rival Pakistan meant heartbreak and despair. For a few Indians, cheering for the wrong team—Pakistan—brought serious consequences...police raided a hostel where

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medical students were seen cheering for Pakistan and opened an anti-terrorism investigation, local media reported.[32]

There were important voices raised against the way New Delhi and some of the leaders in the states reacted. A former chief economic adviser to the Indian government, Kaushik Basu, warned that the arrests did 'vastly greater damage' to India's national standing than the cheering that was being discouraged.

There is also a lesson to be learnt from the nearly two-decades-long war the Americans have fought in Afghanistan, where the use of great force did not bring the insurgency under control. India cannot gain the great power statues to which it aspires without finding a workable solution to the Kashmir issue.

The official Indian view is that there is no 'Kashmir problem' and that Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union. Any view that goes against this supposition, is regarded as an attack on Indian sovereignty. If there is a problem in Kashmir, it is of 'law and order' and that is why it is keeping a large force in the state. This was also the excuse, or justification, used by Narendra Modi even before he came to power and before the BJP, with the full backing of the RSS, began to push India towards becoming a Hindu state. The leadership in New Delhi was not prepared to work towards dealing with the anger and frustration the Kashmiris felt by the Indian presence in their state. New Delhi was not prepared to discuss the Kashmir issue in an international forum, such as the one proposed by Ambassador Karamat in 2006.

Under Prime Minister Modi, India has looked away from the problem it faces, which is becoming more serious by the day. One of its consequences will be to kill the 'idea of India', for which India had gained a lot of respect in the international community. That idea was the notion that the country had found a way of developing an inclusive system of governance that accommodated all its people. The hold of Hindu extremists on the Indian political system and society, is increasing in part because of the restive state of Kashmir.

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8

India: Pakistan's Sister State

Pakistan and India, since partition in 1947, have found it difficult to coexist peacefully. The relations between the two have been the subject of study on both sides of the border. Rather than cover the entire period since the two countries have been independent, I will focus in this chapter on how each has impacted the other over the last decade or two. My focus will be on the way the government headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan is handling relations with India.

The impact the two countries have had on one another was not always negative. Some of the influences were somewhat positive. Beginning with the positive, it is not often recognised that India had a great deal to do with Pakistan's slow and, in recent times, steady march towards establishing a liberal political order. If India, a more diverse country than Pakistan, could bring about internal political stability by creating a political system that was acceptable to all segments of the population, there was no reason Pakistan could not do the same. Sunil Khilnani, a historian of Indian origin, has called the Indian approach to nation building, 'the idea of India'.[1] However, as the Hindu-nationalist government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, began its second term in office after a landslide victory in the 2019 elections, India's stance towards Pakistan has hardened. Modi has realised that his nationalistic stance and the fanning of simplistic prejudices increases his popularity.

Keeping India Under Watch

Pakistan needs to keep a close watch on India, for several reasons. The first is that India's success in building a representative system of political governance, which influenced other South Asian nations, may now be on a downward spiral. If it goes too far in negating a democratic setup, it will have consequences for the rest of Asia.

The second concern is the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. For various reasons, the nationalist fever that is knocking down political systems in the West, has caught on in India as well. If the trend is not arrested, it will spread to other parts of the subcontinent.

The third concern is that the 'India first' approach in policymaking in New Delhi, will retard progress in South Asia at a time when the importance of physical connectivity is being recognised in other parts of the region.

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The fourth and final reason is that India may well be on the way to aligning its interests with the US. If that were to happen, New Delhi would bring a new Cold War into South Asia.

In *The Idea of India*, Sunil Khilnani developed a convincing case as to why India had taken the route towards such an impressive level of political development. It had done so by creating a system that accommodated some very diverse interests.[2] The long-enduring caste system, the Hindu–Muslim divide, and discrimination against women, were three of the most important reasons for persistent divisions in Indian society. These have begun to be noticed both inside and outside the country. The attention that these social inequalities have started to attract, is due to the new narrative that the Indian elite is creating, coupled with the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP.

This 'elite narrative' lauds India's attainment of global heights. It boasts about a positive change in the country, i.e. millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. The Indian economy is now one of the largest in the world. Everywhere in the country, there are new highways, new airports, and new infrastructure. Hundreds of dollar-billionaires dominate the domestic economy and are reaching out to the world. The Tata family has acquired Jaguar and Land Rover Motors. The Mittal group is the world's largest producer of steel. However, the reality on the ground is different. The conflict between what the elite like to believe about their country and what the common people have to suffer, can be highly unsettling.

The Economist's edition of 1 January 2022 analysed why large businesses are controlled by those who belong to the highest ranking of the four major Hindu castes. The article, 'Why Brahmins lead Western firms but rarely Indian ones' cites examples of how the top firms in the USA, such as Microsoft, Adobe, Alphabet, IBM, Twitter and a few others have CEOs of Indian origin. According to this article four of them are Brahmins and three are Vaishyas. It cites a report that claims that the surnames of corporate board members are commonly 'Agarwal' and 'Gupta.' Not surprisingly, *The Economist* has been accused by Indians of starting the new year with a, 'heavy dose of Hinduphobia.'[3]

The rise of Narendra Modi and the BJP had led to the expectation that a business-friendly government was finally in place in New Delhi. It would install a system of governance that would do away with the bureaucratic hurdles that had prevented the country from realising its potential. After decades of elections that brought minority governments into power through coalitions, the BJP won enough seats in the 2014

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general elections to form a government on its own. The Indian National Congress (INC), was reduced to winning in only three of India's twenty-nine states. On 11 December 2018, this process was reversed in some state elections. The BJP lost in the five states where they had won majorities in the general elections. In two, the regional parties came out on top; in the remaining three INC won. INC's victory in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, was in the Hindi-speaking heartland, with a combined population of 168 million people. Political experts felt this might be an indication that the BJP was losing popularity and they would lose the main Lok Sabha elections that were due in three months (11 April to 19 May 2019). However, in those general elections, the BJP won with an even greater majority. Nevertheless, INC's win in some states did not encourage it to pursue their traditional image of a secular, politically mature party. They too adopted Hindu nationalism. Rahul Gandhi had taken over the party's leadership from his mother, Sonia Gandhi. He visited Hindu temples during the campaign and promised to protect cows, punish those who hurt the sacred animal, and promote the healing powers of cow's urine. All this amplified the polarisation of the electorate along sectarian lines. As *The Economist* noted, 'Minorities, people of tribal origin, lower caste Hindus, jobless youths and farmers felt increasingly estranged from a party that promised the "best day" for them, but has delivered few jobs and no coherent response to rising inequality.'[4] These political trends show that Khilnani's 'Idea of India', which had significant influence on political discourse in South Asia, may have lost its lustre to Hindu nationalism. If that is indeed the case, it would become increasingly problematic for Imran Khan's Pakistan to deal with India. The new prime minister's peace overtures, made after assuming office, were soundly rebuffed by New Delhi. The hardening of India's posture in Kashmir was another indication of the Hinduisation of politics in the country. The Indian's don't seem to mind shedding blood in Kashmir to tighten their grip on the troubled state. On 11 December 2019, the Indian parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. The Act fast-tracks citizenship of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who arrived in India before 2015. It explicitly excludes Muslims from seeking citizenship.

There is a close connection between the third and fourth reasons I cited above, viz. (a) 'India first' policy and (b) US relations with India getting stronger. New Delhi looks with great suspicion at the large investments being made by China in developing the CPEC, and

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America further encourages this attitude. Both regard this project as China enhancing its strategic presence in Asia and the Arabian Sea. There are serious attempts to sabotage the Chinese initiative within Pakistan, especially in the restive province of Balochistan. Washington is also working to draw India into the Indo-Pacific grand alliance, which also includes Australia and Japan. If this initiative succeeds, it will bring the China–US confrontation to South Asia's doorstep.

How should Islamabad react to these developments across the border? Keeping a close watch is necessary, but something more is needed. There is no doubt that the 2019 elections in India mattered a great deal for Pakistan. With Hindu nationalism having been officially adopted as the state philosophy, it would be virtually impossible for a ruler in New Delhi to take steps that may be viewed as making concessions to Pakistan. This would affect India's policy towards Kashmir, Afghanistan, and China (*see* Chapters 5–7).

The BJP, with roots among Hindu supremacists, has emboldened its supporters to attack minorities, often in the name of Hinduism. According to national crime statistics, the number of caste-based crimes has increased 25 per cent since 2010, reaching nearly 41,000 cases in 2016 (the last year on record). This is a reversal of the historical trend, the one that so pleased Khilnani. Policies to reform caste segregation was one of the more impressive gains made by India since independence. The Untouchables, renamed Dalits, constitute 15 to 20 per cent of the county's population of 1.3 billion. They did the dirty work such as skinning animals or cleaning toilets. For decades, India has struggled to de-weaponise castes. The Constitution of India was written soon after partition with Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit, as its main author. He knew that the caste system was a sore spot that needed to be addressed and led to the adoption of affirmative action programs that have helped a fairly significant number of lower caste people to escape poverty and discrimination. But things have changed. Avatthi Ramaiah, a sociology professor in Mumbai, says:

> We have a mental illness. You may talk about India being a world power, a global power, sending satellites into space but the outside world has an image of India they don't know. As long as Hinduism is strong, and as long as there is caste, there will be lower castes. The lower castes don't have the critical numbers to counter-attack and the result has been violence that has been intimate, sadistic and cruel.[5]

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But the Dalits are not the only people targeted by the Hindu nationalists. The Muslim community are also in the crosshairs. According to a story filed by Annie Gowen for *The Washington Post*:

> Reports of religious-based hate-crimes have spiked in India since the pro-Hindu nationalist government of Narendra Modi came to power in 2014. The evidence of this comes from new data from India Spend, which tracks reports of violence in English-language media. The data shows that Muslims are overwhelmingly the victims and Hindus the perpetrators of the cases reported. More than half of the cases reported this year through October came from three states in northern India— Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, where Modi's BJP enjoys strong support.... Now in a string of incidents, his party members have been accused of supporting or even inciting violence against Muslims, leaving many in the country's Muslim community of 172 million...fearful.[6]

In the story, she recalled an incident on 29 June 2017, when a Hindu mob lynched Alimuddin Ansari, a poor Muslim villager who was suspected of smuggling beef across state lines. Ansari had been followed on WhatsApp and was attacked when he reached a local market. Those arrested for the killing, were let out on bail and were feted by the local BJP leaders.

Muslims were being especially targeted. On 19 February 2019, Human Rights Watch released a 104-page report, which stated that between May 2015 and December 2018, at least 44 people were killed.[7] Most of those attacked were Muslims accused of storing beef, or transporting cows for slaughter, a crime in most Indian states. As many as 90 per cent of religion-based hate crimes in the last decade occurred after Modi took office. Often badly mutilated, or burnt bodies, were hung from trees. In almost all of these attacks, efforts by the families of the victims to seek justice, were turned, or threatened. 'Indian police investigations into mob attacks are almost as likely to accuse the minority victims of a crime as they are to pursue vigilantes with government connections,' said Meenakshi Ganguly, the South Asian director of Human Rights Watch.[8]

Community divisive language in speeches shot up 500 per cent between 2014 and 2018, compared with the five years before Modi's BJP came to power. Ninety per cent of these speeches were from the BJP leadership. In 2018, India's Supreme Court introduced 'preventive remedial and punitive measures', to stem mob violence, noting that false rumours spread on messaging applications like WhatsApp, had worsened the problem. According to the journalist Kai Schultz, who covered the Human Rights Watch report for *The New York Times*, 'In August, after

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a long silence, Mr Modi spoke out against the attacks, saying "I want to make it clear that mob lynching is a crime, no matter the motive".[9]

Low caste people and Muslims are not the only targets of the Hindu extremists, women are also not granted rights equal to men. In October and November 2018, the Sabarimala temple, in the state of Kerala, became the symbol of a campaign by liberal women to gain equal rights. The temple draws millions of visitors a year, but women are not allowed to enter it. In late September, the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling, giving all women the right to worship at the temple. According to one report:

> The court's ruling set off intense protests and became a crucible for women's rights, religious beliefs and state rights in India. For months following the verdict, no woman, between the ages of 10 and 50 managed to enter the temple, despite at least a dozen attempts. Meanwhile women who publicly stated their intention to visit the shrine faced intimidation and threats.[10]

In January 2019, Kanakadurga, a 39-year old civil servant, along with another woman, accomplished a historic feat. Together, they climbed the three-mile road to the temple, prayed, and walked back. However, afterwards, it is reported:

> For Kanakadurga, the decision to make history came at a cost. When she returned home, her mother-in-law beat her sending her to the hospital. Her family locked her out of the house and refused to let her talk to her sons. All but one of Kanakadurga's five siblings stopped talking to her. Police now shadows her everywhere for her protection.[11]

Modi came to power with allegations of religious intolerance that dated back to as early as 2002, when he was chief minister of the state of Gujarat. He was accused of not doing enough to stop Hindu–Muslim riots that killed more than 1,000 persons, mostly Muslims. Physical assaults and intimidation are not the only weapons Hindu extremists are using to turn India into a Hindu political entity. *The Economist*, in its 'Banyan' column pointed out:

> The [Nehru jackets] popularised by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, tended to come in plain charcoal, ivory or, at a daring limit, a rusty maroon. Narendra Modi, the current prime minister, inclines instead to vigorous patterns or solid, bright pastels. The particular hue he favours,

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> the one that appears in countless posters touting every official project from e-government to subsidised cooking gas, is orange. The message is unsubtle. Orange is not only a stripe on India's tricolour flag; it also evokes the saffron robes of Hindu priests, and so symbolises a renaissance of India's ancient faith. In effect, Mr Modi has rebranded a standard item of apparel in keeping with his Hindu-nationalist political project.[12]

Modi's tendency also includes renaming of streets, buildings, and towns.

> Urdu Bazaar, a shopping street, became Hindi Bazaar. Ali Nagar morphed into Arya Nagar, Islampur into Ishwarpur. If he had a chance, he said, he would even rename the Taj Mahal, the 17th-century tomb of a Mughal queen that is Uttar Pradesh's most iconic monument, as Ram Mahal, after the Hindu god.[13]

The renaming campaign was specially implemented by Yogi Adityanath, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state. The monk-turned politician was chosen by Modi in 2018.

The Near-War Between India and Pakistan

India and Pakistan have gone to war three times over Kashmir, however, the near-war situation that arose after the Pulwama incident, in February 2019, was different for several reasons. Prime Minister Modi called it a dastardly act and held Pakistan responsible. At that time Modi and his BJP were heading towards a difficult election in April and May. Most analysts, including those writing from India, believed that this time responsibility for creating trouble in their part of the state of Kashmir, could not be pinned on Pakistan. While Jaish-e-Mohammed was based in Pakistan, it had developed a strong following in Indian Kashmir, especially among the area's youth. The Modi government had used force to control the insurgency in the state. With the presence of an estimated number of 600,000 soldiers in Kashmir, the state had become the most militarised area in the world. Most of them were from outside Kashmir and knew little about the local population. The use of excessive force had antagonised the Kashmiri youth. Many of them had joined extremist organisations. The man who struck the convoy and killed dozens of soldiers, was one such person.

Compared to previous occasions, when Pakistan initiated trouble in Kashmir, the country was now in a different situation. Prime Minister Imran Khan was elected on a reformist mandate. He had the support of

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the Pakistani youth, who make up a large portion of the rapidly growing population. The median age of the population is only 23.8 years, well below the world average of 30.4 years. In the urban metropolitan areas, it is even younger. In Karachi and Lahore 75 per cent of the population is below the age of 24. The aspirations of the youth of Pakistan are different from the youth of such troubled places as Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Syria. They want education, healthcare, and well-paying jobs that they believe Imran Khan and the PTI can deliver if it is not distracted by conflicts with the country's neighbours.

In response to the Pulwama incident in New Delhi, there was intrusion of Indian Air Force planes into Pakistan and a spate of bombings that proved harmless, followed by Pakistani retaliation the next day, resulting in two Indian Air Force planes being shot down and one pilot captured. In this tense situation, Pakistan wanted peace. The Indian pilot was released after a few days, as a gesture of peace and goodwill. On the other hand, the prime minister and the country's powerful military were giving a clear message to their own people. While they genuinely desired peace, they wanted the citizens to be ready for an open conflict. However, the first move would not be made by Islamabad.

Apparently, the BJP's jingoism accusations against Pakistan were sufficient to win Modi a landslide victory in the elections two months later. But unlike India, Pakistan did not want war. It was this strong desire for peace that had resulted in the Pakistani military being able to carry out successful operations against extremist organisations in the country's northern areas, bordering Afghanistan.

The policy towards India, of easing visa restrictions on the Sikh community so that its members could visit their shrines in Pakistan, continued. The Kartarpur corridor was first proposed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on the latter's visit to Lahore in February 1999, as part of the India–Pakistan bus diplomacy, but subsequently no action was taken with the breakout of the Kargil war in May that year. It was taken up again and completed by Imran Khan's government on 9 November 2019, when it promised to enable Sikh pilgrims to visit one of their holiest shrines, located in Pakistani territory. Islamabad was also interested in increasing the flow of trade between the two countries. Though this was a move that would benefit a section of India's population, their government did not cooperate properly to implement it. As Imran Khan said in his TV address, he understands that a lot of what the government of Narendra Modi had done since the 14 February attack in Kashmir, is to ensure that

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it does not lose the support of the extremist Hindus. The war between the two countries, while not fought on the ground, was fought in the airwaves. Imran Khan was judged to have come out as the winner. *The New York Times* wrote:

> In the propaganda war of the past few days, both countries were guilty of missteps.... But it is India that has suffered the more glaring contradictions. The government has yet to offer any evidence publicly for its claim that it downed a Pakistani plane, which Indian officials say crashed beyond their border. Likewise, India has offered no proof that its initial airstrike on Tuesday killed a 'very large number' of 'terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadists,' as India's foreign secretary has claimed.... Videos of crushed buildings filled with bodies that soon began circulating on social media in India were quickly debunked. The images were not from the airstrike but from an earthquake in Pakistan more than 10 years ago.[14]

The US's Indo-Pacific Strategy

There cannot be any doubt that the changing focus of the American position in South Asia, has affected Pakistan adversely with respect to India. Washington is developing what it calls the Indo-Pacific strategy. It used to call this part of the world Asia-Pacific. Charissa Yong wrote an assessment of the new thinking in Washington, for Singapore's *The Straits Times*:

> But in the realm of diplomacy, the region has since been renamed the Indo-Pacific since President Donald Trump's tour of the region last November. While the Asia-Pacific was a term that encapsulated US engagement in the region after the Cold War, the Indo-Pacific is the newer framework that acknowledges the rising importance of India and other Indian Ocean allies, say top officials.[15]

The genesis of this term is often attributed to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in 2013 in Jakarta, where he referred to the 'confluence of the two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific'. He called for Japan to strengthen its ties with the US, India, and Australia—a 'democratic diamond' of four maritime powers that would become known as the 'Quad'. Australia formally adopted this approach in its 2013 Defence White Paper. The strategic concept was cemented by Washington, when the United States

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Pacific Command was re-named United States Indo-Pacific Command, in May 2018.[16]

However, India the fourth member of the Quad, is cautious about fully adopting this line of thinking. It is concerned that it should not be seen as an effort directed at China. Modi made it clear in his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, in June 2018, saying, 'India does not see the Indo-Pacific region as strategy or as a club of limited members nor as a grouping that seeks to dominate.' The senior diplomats of the US were also more cautious than their president in describing this change in their country's position with respect to Asia. 'Our Indo-Pacific vision excludes no nation. We seek to work with anyone to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, so long as that cooperation adheres to the highest standards our citizens demand...,' said the US secretary of state, Michael Pompeo in a speech at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum in Washington, in July 2018.[17]

If India has the ambition to achieve great power status, it cannot afford to remain on war footing with Pakistan. According to Sumit Ganguly, a US-based scholar of Indian origin, India will have to make an earnest effort inside the country, before it can be recognised by the world as a global power. 'It is hard to envisage a future where the Indian state might harness the requisite motivation to propel itself to tackle various endemic problems that stand in the path towards a great power status. Indeed, it is tempting to conclude that to be the likelihood.'[18]

The rise of Hindu nationalism in India has affected its economic relations with the world. One example of this was a new law centred on the concept known as 'data collection', in which a country places restriction on public data that can be used to gain better control over it and these restrictions potentially curb the power of international companies. The law empowered the Reserve Bank of India to fine the companies that did not follow the new rules by 16 October 2018. American companies lobbied hard against data localisation around the world. Mukesh Aghi, the CEO of the US–India Strategic Partnership Forum, said the payment companies were frustrated with the regulators. 'They refuse to sit down and have a discussion.' In a letter written to Arun Jaitley (d. 2019), the then Indian finance minister, he also implied that corruption in high places was possibly involved in the implementation of the law. He suggested that the Reserve Bank of India was directing foreign financial firms to seek assistance from iSpirit, a technology think tank in Bangalore, with close ties to the government and Indian financial-service players.

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The American lawmakers were also concerned about the consequences for their country if the Indian government implemented the new law, following the timeline that was embedded in it.

> ...[The] co-chairmen of the India caucus, Senators John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, and Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, wrote to Mr. Modi warning that data localization "will have negative impacts on the ability of companies to do business in India, may undermine your own economic goals and will likely not improve the security of Indian citizens' data."[19]

A close relationship developed between Narendra Modi and Donald J. Trump. Both project themselves as strongmen. Trump advocates 'America first' and Modi 'India first'. Modi's policies are facilitated by his two sweeping victories in the Indian Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019. This trend of strong nationalistic thinking is globally consistent. The US, Britain, and several countries in Europe and South America, have moved their politics in this direction.

The Sikhs in India and the Kartarpur Corridor

The 1947 partition of the Indian British colony, into a predominantly Hindu state of India and predominantly Muslim state of Pakistan, affected the area's third largest religion, Sikhism, the most. The exchange of population that followed the departure of the British, resulted in the exodus of the Sikh community from West Punjab, which fell into the territory of Pakistan, to East Punjab in India. Why that community chose to go to India, had deep historical reasons. Founded by Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the religion taught living an 'active, creative and practical life of truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity.' Guru Nanak was succeeded by nine 'Gurus'. The tenth, Guru Gobind Singh, named the Sikh scripture Guru Granth Sahib as his successor. This move terminated the line of human Gurus, making the scripture, the eternal, religious, and spiritual guide for Sikhs. Sikhism spread primarily in the Punjab and the Sikh Empire ruled from Lahore from 1799 to 1849, when it was overthrown by the British.

The community was persecuted during the time of the Mughals, who were rulers of India at the time of the founding and early development of Sikhism. Two of the early Gurus, Guru Arjan (1563–1605) and Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675), were tortured and executed by the Mughals, after

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they refused to convert to Islam, although another theory is that Guru Arjan was killed because he blessed the Mughal Emperor Jahangir's son, Prince Khusrau Mirza, when he tried to take the throne in place of his father. When Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed by Emperor Aurangzeb, his son, Guru Gobind Singh, formed the Khalsa, a militia to protect the religion, which brought a streak of militancy into the religion. When the subcontinent was partitioned, Islam and Sikhism found it difficult to co-exist in Punjab. Most of the massacres that followed the departure of the British from India, involved Muslims and Sikhs in Punjab and it remained divided. Of the 6 million people who left Pakistan for India, the majority were Sikhs. There are now an estimated 30,000 Sikhs in Pakistan. An important point is that the western part of Punjab where most of the Sikh holy sites[20] are located was allocated to Pakistan in 1947.

Sikhs now constitute the third largest religious group in India, after the Hindus and Muslims; they number 21 million. In 1982, there was a movement for the creation of an independent Sikh state. Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had created a precedent for this in 1971 through military intervention to help create the independent state of Bangladesh. There was growing resentment among the Sikhs at not being given enough attention by the government in New Delhi. A small section of the aggrieved Sikh community turned to militancy. The Khalistan movement, a demand for a separate state for Sikhs, was led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale; he campaigned for greater autonomy for Punjab, which was a Sikh majority province in India. Chased by the security forces, the Sikh militants took refuge in the Guru Nanak Niwas (a free hostel for pilgrims), in the Golden Temple precinct, a holy Sikh shrine in the city of Amritsar. Arms were smuggled into the Niwas and the militants seemed ready for a fight. On 23 April 1983, a senior Punjab official was shot dead in the temple compound when he was on his way out after offering prayers. In June 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the army to enter the temple and arrest Bhindranwale and his supporters. The military used heavy artillery and tanks in the operation, which was code named Blue Star and the temple was severely damaged, including the Akal Takht shrine and Sikh library that had a collection of holy books. Several hundred, possibly thousands, of people were killed in the action. There was a deep reaction from the Sikh community to the government's action, including among the members of the large Sikh diaspora in North America, particularly against Indira Gandhi. The desecration of their holy temple was avenged. Two Sikh guards, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, who were detailed at the prime minister's

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residence in New Delhi, gunned down Indira Gandhi as she was walking towards her meeting room to meet the famous actor, Peter Ustinov. Both the assailants were shot by the other guards; Beant Singh died, while Satwant Singh recovered from his injuries to be hanged for his crime. After Indira Gandhi's cremation, there were public disturbances and anti-Sikh riots across the country. This tumult displaced more than a million members of the Sikh faith, while about 3,000 were killed by Hindu zealots who went on a rampage in the areas that had a large Sikh presence. For the time being, the movement for a separate Sikh state seems to have died down.

The lack of easy access to their shrines in Pakistan became a serious source of Sikh resentment in India. After 1999, the proposal of constructing a special corridor for Sikh pilgrims to visit their holy shrine, was taken up again in a conversation between Pakistan's Army Chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa and an Indian Sikh politician and former cricket star, Navjot Singh Sidhu, at the inauguration of Prime Minister Imran Khan, in August 2018. This temple is only 3 miles inside Pakistan, from the border that separates the two countries.

The plan for the corridor was to provide visa-free entry to Sikh pilgrims and the construction of a 4.7-km-long road from the Indian border, to the gurdwara. The idea was to complete it by November 2019, when the Sikh community all over the world would celebrate the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak and come to visit his resting place.[21] The gurdwara can be seen from India, through binoculars, from an elevated platform in a BSF post. Before the corridor was built, Sikh pilgrims had to cross the border at Lahore, after completing laborious procedures for obtaining a visa to visit Pakistan. From Lahore, the road trip to the gurdwara is 125 km. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the agreement to construct the corridor; he compared it to fall of the Berlin Wall. General Bipin Rawat (d. 2021), the Indian Army Chief, was less enthusiastic. He said that it should be viewed separately in the context of India–Pakistan relations.

While Pakistan was willing to grant ease-of-access to the Sikh pilgrims, India was less accommodating. What the newspaper *Dawn* referred to in an editorial as 'Kartarpur politics', was one more incident of the difficulties the two countries faced in working with one another.[22] What should have been a simple matter, got entangled in the complicated India–Pakistan relations. Pakistan wanted to ensure that those using the corridor would not move into the area permanently. Islamabad prepared a protocol to achieve that objective. It sent the document to New Delhi and

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invited the Indian government to send its officials to Pakistan to finalise the protocol. But Prime Minister Modi's administration took the position that there will be no formal contact between the representatives of the two governments on Pakistani soil. New Delhi invited the Pakistanis to visit the Indian capital and suggested the dates when they would be received. Pakistan's foreign office labelled India's response to settling matters regarding the Kartarpur Corridor, as a 'childish way'. Most India watchers explain India's behaviour as a way of maintaining the support of the large Hindu nationalist voting bloc. That may be one explanation, but it is not the entire story. As expected there was a standoff—a normal state of affairs in relations between the two nations. Eventually, an agreement was reached on 7 February 2019, i.e. the Pakistani delegation would first travel to New Delhi, followed by the Indian delegation visit to Islamabad. Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, Raveesh Kumar, Tweeted, 'We welcome the visit of Pakistan team to discuss and finalise modalities for the visit of pilgrims through Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, on March 13, to India. [A] follow-up meeting can be held in Pakistan as required.' Soon after the February/March tension between India and Pakistan eased, a team of officials visited New Delhi to discuss the details of the corridor. According to the statement issued by the two sides, considerable progress was made. There would be a follow-up meeting in Wagah, a small town near the border, where the agreement would be finalized.

The Kartarpur temple is currently managed by a Pakistani Sikh, Govind Singh, who was interviewed by Pamela Constable of *The Washington Post*, for a story on the building of the corridor:

> Singh said that all previous Pakistani governments had respected the Sikh religion and that Pakistanis had never shown to Sikhs the ill-will that historically marred their relations with Hindus. But even since the temple reopened, he said, only about 15,000 Sikhs a year have managed to come from abroad, including about 4,000 from India, because reaching the site was so difficult.
>
> Now, Singh said, "Sikhs all over the world are full of happiness. We pray that the bridge to Kartarpur will bring them all here."[23]

The Cow and Indian Politics

Arun Shourie, a former World Bank official and a former minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, once described India's ruling BJP as 'The Congress plus a cow'. According to *The Economist*,

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what Shourie meant 'By equating prime minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalists with their secular rivals, he was implying that, since both of India's biggest parties share such traits as cronyism and paternalist economics, all that really distinguishes the BJP is its displays of piety, such as reverence for cows.'[24]

On 30 January 1948, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, an assassin, shot M.K. Gandhi three times in the chest. The frail 78-year-old leader fell and died instantaneously. The ground on which he fell is now the 'Smriti' memorial. Smriti is a Hindi word that roughly translates into English as 'in memory of'. But the essence of that memory has changed remarkably as India is hurtling towards Hindu nationalism. Nathuram Godse was once a member of a Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to which Narendra Modi and many of his political colleagues also belong. According to one interpretation, Godse, not Gandhi, is modern India's real hero. Some Hindu nationalists have built statues of Gandhi's killer.[25] 'I am afraid Gandhi has become marginal,'[26] says Pratap B. Mehta, a political scientist and former vice chancellor of Ashoka University. As Jeffrey Gettleman, who writes on India for *The New York Times*, puts it: 'This political dance with Gandhi—sometimes embracing his legacy, sometimes pushing him away—doesn't surprise one of his most acclaimed biographers, "Gandhi is like Churchill, Napoleon, Mao, Lincoln, any great figure," Mr. Guha said. "His brand goes up and down. His legacy will be debated endlessly".'[27]

The marginalisation of M.K. Gandhi is the result of the rapid rise of Hindu nationalism in the country. Religion has entered the political sphere in South Asia, at least in the subcontinent's two most populous countries—India and Pakistan. This has brought nationalism to both countries. However, there are significant differences between the two nations. Nationalism in Pakistan has a degree of pan-Islamism, if not the caliphate as envisaged by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, but a lay interpretation of it that perceives some sort of kinship between Muslim nations that goes beyond the country's borders. This kind of nationalism has been talked about for decades but is still in search of an operational meaning. But Hindu nationalism is different. It is confined to a limited geographic space, where it can be defined in terms of what the state needs to do. This type of nationalism is described well by the journalist and author, Roger Cohen: 'Nationalism, self-pitying and aggressive, seeks to change the present in the name of an illusory past in order to create a future vague in all respects except its glory. Pregnant with violence, manipulating fear,

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it is an exercise in mass delusion.'[28] This describes well the conditions that afflict India today.

The rise of the Indian version of nationalism has a disturbing meaning for Pakistan. Its affects are being felt on a number of fronts. As already mentioned, it is having an impact on India's large Muslim population, the third-largest in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan; it has started to influence the Indian attitude over the contested state of Jammu and Kashmir, taking a heavy human toll and, it is affecting India–Pakistan relations, rebuffing friendly overtures.

I had a personal experience of the RSS hostility towards Pakistan. In late 2011, I had retired from the World Bank and had taken up an appointment as economic adviser, at a private equity fund called the Emerging Market's Partnership (EMP), set up by Moeen Qureshi, formerly of the World Bank and briefly caretaker prime minister of Pakistan from July to October 1993. The EMP was a cluster of funds to which various high net worth individuals and firms made contributions. Among the funds was one committed to Asia. A journalist friend of mine rang me up and told me that an Indian businessman, who worked out of Washington, wished to see me. When I met him, I didn't quite catch his name. He said that he was in charge of a large business that did work in a number of Asian countries, but not Pakistan. 'I hate Pakistan. I have told my colleague that any interest in Pakistan would be over my dead body,' he informed me. The comment surprised me, since he knew that I was a Pakistani. He then went on to tell me that he was raising money to invest in an expensive Bangladesh–India gas pipeline but needed an additional $50 million to close the gap. I told him that I was an economic adviser and did not deal on the investment side. However, Moeen Qureshi was looking at the possibility of raising a fund for investments in Muslim countries and the Islamic Development Bank was a possible anchor investor. One of the projects they would be interested in is the long-talked-about Iran–Pakistan–India gas pipeline. 'Would you be interested in that project and if so, I could arrange a meeting with Mr Qureshi.' He was surprised by my suggestion. 'I told you that I hate Pakistan and any involvement by my business in that country would be over my dead body,' he stated. He then went on to say that he noticed that when I was told his name I showed no reaction. 'Should I have recognised your name?' I asked. He said I should have, since he was a well-known figure in Indian politics. He was the head of the RSS, North America. It was an important organisation, since it raised a great deal of money for the BJP in India. He then went on to tell me that when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

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called him to tell him that he was planning to meet Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, on the side-lines of the UN annual meeting in New York, he had told him that he would be involved in that meeting over his 'dead body'. I couldn't help remarking, 'Aren't you offering your dead body rather casually?' He accused me of being flippant and not taking him seriously. To which I answered, 'How can I, given what you have been saying to me about Pakistan, the country to which I belonged.' He then spent a few minutes to explain why he and the RSS were bitterly opposed to Pakistan. He told me that by walking out of Mother India the people of Pakistan had destroyed the holy land for the Hindus. They could never be forgiven. That attitude shows how the BJP government in New Delhi sees Pakistan. A couple of years later, I called on Vajpayee at his residence in New Delhi, after he had retired. During the course of the conversation, I related my encounter with the RSS businessman in Washington. Vajpayee was amused. 'I know the individual you came across. He is important for the BJP but takes himself very seriously.'

The BJP's reliance on the RSS resulted in the growing tension with Pakistan as India headed towards another general election in 2019. As the date for the elections approached, New Delhi's attitude towards Islamabad hardened. This, as mentioned earlier, was reflected in the way the Modi government handled the Kartarpur initiative. On 31 January 2019, there was an exchange of strong words with the Indian ministry of foreign affairs. Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, had called the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, to update him about a conference being organised at the House of Commons, to highlight the 'grave human rights violations by India, against the Kashmiri people.' Predictably, India was angry and termed the telephone call an 'interference in its internal affairs, an attempt to undermine India's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity and a violation of norms of diplomacy.' This message was given to the Pakistan high commissioner, Sohail Mahmood, when he was called in to meet with Indian foreign secretary, Vijay Gokhale. The Indian official warned, 'Persistence of such behaviour on the part of Pakistan will have dire implications.' The 'dire implications' were not spelled out. Pakistan responded in kind. The then Pakistani foreign secretary, Tehmina Janjua, called the Indian high commissioner, Ajay Bisari and told him, 'The Government of Pakistan categorically rejects the objections raised by India, to the foreign minister's telephonic call.' Janjua further told him that the dispute had been recognised by the UN Security Council resolutions and numerous bilateral agreements, including the Simla

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Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. This exchange with the Indian high commissioner was followed by a statement by Dr Muhammad Faisal, the foreign office spokesperson, at his weekly briefing. He called the Indian reaction to the foreign minister's call, 'political gimmickry and electioneering.' He asked the Indian government to stop dragging Pakistan into their electoral politics. 'It is your election and you should not try to acquire votes at our expense,' he stated.[29]

Functioning economies become agitated when they head towards elections. That is not surprising, since elections are the only time when citizens have the opportunity to judge the performance of the people they have put in office. This is especially true of the countries where elections have brought about dramatic change. This happened in India in 2014 and again in 2019.

In the 2014 general elections, the BJP picked up more than 280 seats, giving the party a clear majority in the Lok Sabha of 542 members thereby replacing the coalition Congress government headed by Manmohan Singh. More than 500 million people voted in that election, making it the world's largest exercise in democracy.

Narendra Modi and the BJP won the 2014 elections, promising the electorate four things: (1) making India a Hindu political and social entity; (2) raising the rate of economic growth by giving incentives to the private sector; (3) carving an important role for India in global politics and economy; and (4) cleaning India by cleaning its rivers including the holy Ganges. These were positive moves when seen from the perspective of a Hindu-nationalist. But, have the party and its leader gone far enough to meet a reasonable level of the expectations of the electorate, or has the BJP failed its followers? Even Indian economists fear that the government has been playing with numbers to exaggerate the rate of growth of the economy.

In 2014, Modi and his political party, the BJP, had promised millions of jobs for the lower income groups in the country. However, that seemed not to have happened. The BJP had called India's labour force, 'the pillar of our growth'. According to data released by the Labour Bureau, a wing of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, unemployment in 2013–14, was 4.9 per cent. But an undisclosed study by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), an Indian government agency that conducts large-scale research, reportedly placed the figure at 6.1 per cent, a 45-year high. The Indian government was accused, on 31 January, of covering up the alarming report. According to one newspaper, two economic advisers resigned in protest, against concealing this information from the public.[30]

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But it is in the area of cleanliness that Modi and his government have been least successful. Nothing serves as a symbol of Modi's failure then the putrid waters of the Ganges at the point where the holy river meets the equally holy Jumna tributary. Modi had made cleaning up the polluted Ganges one of the election pledges in the 2014 campaign. However, his efforts fell far short of what was needed to truly clean the water.

The Elections of April–May 2019

The 2019 Kumbh Mela became significant for two reasons. It underscored India's turn towards extreme Hinduism and boosted Narendra Modi and the BJP electoral prospects. This was one more step towards the creation of the Hindu Rashtra, or Hindu nation. This Kumbh was a $600 million affair that brought nine new highways, 150 miles of roads, 22 pontoon bridges, 20,000 trash-cans, 40,000 LED lights, 122,500 toilets and one new airport terminal. However, according to a well-researched report in the *Financial Times*, Modi's critics question the claim that he has transformed India. They say his biggest skill is in staging spectacles—much like the Kumbh Mela—or making a spectacle of itself. In reality, many of Modi's pledges are far from realised, including the cleaning of the Ganges. Despite New Delhi's vow to spend $2.8 billion on the clean-up, the Centre for Science and Environment said that just 30 per cent of sewage flowing into the river was treated.[31] The festival also left India's minorities in a state of unease. 'At the Kumbh, almost everybody is a Hindu and people seem perfectly happy benefitting from the state sponsorship of their religion, while other communities are suffering out of sight.'[32]

Another election-related event was the acquittal by a court of all men accused of bombing a train called the Samjhauta Express in 2007. The railway line had been introduced earlier, to ease tensions between India and Pakistan. It was popular with people on both sides of the border. There was a large Hindu population in the district of Tharparkar, in Pakistan and other places in Sindh and now they could travel to India easily, along with those Muslims who had relatives on either side of the border. It was a symbol of the growing ties between India and Pakistan. However, it did not fit into the larger game-plan of the RSS. A member of the RSS was accused of being the mastermind behind the bombing. The bomb explosion killed sixty-eight persons, mostly Pakistani citizens, who were returning home after visiting India. At that time, the Congress was the ruling party in India and Dr Manmohan Singh was the prime

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minister; a Sikh, not a Hindu. The government had charged the men held responsible for the bombing, under the tough anti-terrorism law. This did not please the BJP, which was then in the opposition. The verdict was delayed and finally, in 2019, the suspects were all acquitted.

The ruling BJP was in favour of this verdict, seeing it appealed to its extremist base. Arun Jaitley, then India's finance minister and a senior BJP leader, applauded the court's decision. He said that the court had vindicated his party's view that the Congress Party had sought to smear Hindus by using the terrorism law. 'To establish their theory of Hindu terror, a wrong set of people were framed—innocent people lost their lives in the train blast, but the real culprits were not caught,' Jaitley had told reporters in New Delhi.

On 10 March 2019, the Indian Election Commission announced that it would conduct the next general election over a period of more than six weeks, beginning on 11 April. Voting occurred in seven stages. Some 900 million voters were eligible to cast ballots, to choose 543 members of the Lok Sabha. India waited to see who would lead them and more importantly, the direction in which the country would be steered.

Before the confrontation with Pakistan in the early spring of 2019, Modi was viewed as vulnerable. Economic growth had slowed, thousands of farmers were marching on New Delhi, dumping gallons of milk, for which they were getting a poor price, and unemployment had hit its worst level in forty-five years. Modi was shaken by the unexpected loss in five state elections, a few months earlier. In the aftermath of the India and Pakistan military confrontation, Modi tapped into the intense nationalist sentiment prevalent in India. This paid electoral dividends and returned the BJP to power, but it has pitted the large Hindu majority in the country, against the minorities. Among those targeted, are the country's large Muslim population, the lower caste Hindus, and women. Under the rule of the BJP, India has shed its image of a tolerant and inclusive state and has moved decisively towards Hindutva, a Hindu state.

Several Western publications began to focus on Hindu nationalism. For instance, *The Economist* ran a four-page 'briefing', in which it traced in detail, what it labelled as the 'orange revolution'.[33] Orange is the holy colour of Hindu extremism and Modi had begun to use it in the clothes he wears. 'Mr Modi's strident brand of nationalism, which pictures Pakistan less as a strategic opponent, than a threat to civilisation, puts him at the fringe even of his own Bhartiya Janata Party,' wrote the magazine.

It is only in the month-long tension with Pakistan that the Indian narrative, as told outside of India, began to change. The fact that India's

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air strikes on Pakistan missed their targets and a fighter jet was downed by the Pakistan Air Force, didn't seem to matter to most Indians. Their country was hit, and Modi hit back. 'Even if they go below seven seas, I will find them.' Modi said, in an election rally, referring to those who were opposed to the direction India had taken during his rule. 'To settle the score is my habit.'[34] The conservative Hindu voters seemed to be returning to the BJP fold, comforted by the fact that Modi's aggressive stance against Pakistan was not to pander for votes, but a reflection of his old passion and focus.

The Hindu leadership, in particular the RSS, has no problem being recognised as promoting the country's Hinduness. The RSS is a self-proclaimed world's largest volunteer organisation with a membership of five million (entirely male) people, however, women are (with some exceptions) relegated to a lower state. Founded in 1925 it embraced some of the organising principles of the Nazis. Using tight discipline, it remained cohesive. According to Vinay Sitapati, a historian, 'The miracle and also the design of the Sangh, is that they have not split—and that is their power.'[35] Modi had served as a *pracharak* in RSS, before moving into politics and continues to maintain his connections with it.

The RSS has penetrated all aspects of Indian life. Included in its close circle are the country's largest trade unions, as well as organisations representing farmers, students, teachers, doctors, lawyers and small businesses. The parent organisation runs India's two largest private school networks, educating some five million children. Their curriculum focuses on the basic tenets of Hinduism and how a Hindu state should be managed. In that respect, they have a lot in common with the madrassas in Pakistan, but the religious seminaries in Pakistan don't come anywhere near the scope of the RSS-managed institutions. Modi has inserted the RSS men into every part of Indian politics and the Indian state. As *The Economist* noted, 'RSS influence also extends to university deans, heads of research institutes, members of the board of state-owned firms and banks (including the central bank) and, say critics, ostensibly politics-proof promotions in police, army and courts.'[36] In picking candidates to fight on behalf of the BJP, the party leadership opted for extremists. A good example was Pragya Singh Thakur, who contested from Bhopal. She was described as:

> A Hindu ascetic who has boasted of her role in destroying a medieval mosque, valorised the man who murdered Mohandas Gandhi as a 'patriot' and is facing trial on a charge of terrorist conspiracy....A total of 159

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> elected Indian legislators have faced serious criminal charges, an increase of 109% since the 2009 elections. But experts on the country's elections said no major party had fielded a candidate charged under a terrorist statue in decades.[37]

Thakur was charged for plotting an attack on a mosque that killed six people and injured more than a hundred.

If India has ambitions of joining the world's great economic and political powers, it will have to forego the RSS agenda. The US, under the Trump administration, wanted India to be the anchor state in what it called the Indo-Pacific alliance. This could only happen if a couple of major changes are brought about in the way the country is managed. It will need to go back to following Khilnani's 'idea of India'. But the RSS will not allow Modi to do that. For instance, among the BJP's 1,400 state-level members of assemblies, only four are Muslim.

The other policy adjustment involves India's relations with its neighbour, Pakistan. During the February 2019 crisis, Modi took his antipathy against Pakistan to the extreme. That obviously pleased the RSS. For a few days that made the world nail-bitingly nervous; South Asia stood at the threshold of nuclear war. It pulled back, but the question remained whether Modi and the RSS had learnt a lesson.

Great power status will only come to India if it recognised Pakistan as, not its equal—it cannot be that—but one that matches it in several ways. Modi should look to the US and its neighbouring countries as an example. India and Modi cannot reduce Pakistan to be its Mexico; it will have to become used to seeing it as its Canada.

Even well-established electoral systems do not ensure continuity. This happened in the Indian general elections of 2014, Modi led the BJP to an unprecedented electoral triumph. He fought that electoral contest on his economic record in Gujarat, not on the way he appeals to Hindu extremists. He pledged he would make India economically great. He promised jobs and a corruption-free country. He emphasised his humble roots as the son of a tea-seller and his thirteen-year track record as chief minister of Gujarat state, where he oversaw rapid economic growth and the implementation of business-friendly policies. This won favour among both the country's poor as well as the rich. India's business community was jubilant. It looked forward to the lifting of the heavy weight of the intrusive Indian bureaucracy.

Under Modi, the rate of GDP growth did pick up but the promised benefits to the poor did not materialise. The unemployment rate rose

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to 6.1 per cent—a 45-year high. But the Modi government defended its track record by pointing to alterative measures of employment, which economists maintained were flawed, or incomplete. The official view was that the administration had implemented significant reforms, such as the introduction of a national goods-and-services tax, which previous governments tried but failed to adopt. His government adopted a bankruptcy law that allowed non-performing enterprises to exit. But some other initiatives proved to be highly disruptive. The government demonetised large denomination currency notes that seriously hurt small businesses that relied on cash for making all transactions.

As the weeks of electioneering began, some observers saw 'signs that voters are unwilling to give Modi another dramatic mandate.'[38] Seeing the same signs, Modi in his vigorous campaign before the beginning of the five-week lengthy process, switched his appeal, focusing more on India's long history of Hinduism. He hoped that Indian voters could be persuaded to focus on nationalist pride rather than on bread-and-butter issues in a campaign based less on hope than on fear.

He sold himself as the *chowkidar* (gatekeeper). In projecting himself as a saviour of Hindu nationalism, he focused, in particular, on the populous state of Uttar Pradesh, seen as the most important part of India's 'Hindu belt'. According to his aides, the prime minister held 142 election rallies and covered 65,000 miles. He concentrated not only on the Hindu-belt in the country's north, but also travelled to states such as the left-leaning Bengal, where he and his party did not expect to do well.

Though more than 2,000 political parties contested in the election, it was, essentially, a referendum on Modi. In the speeches at the rallies, he focused more on the campaign against terrorism. The Indian Air Force dropped bombs on Pakistan. But as *The New York Times* wrote, it didn't matter that according to 'independent security advisers the bombs had missed their targets or that Pakistan downed an Indian fighter jet the next day, jingoism engulfed India and Mr. Modi's approval ratings shot up. In the campaign's final days, he brought up the airstrike again and again.'[39]

The strategy paid off. The voting was completed on Sunday, 19 May and counting by the Election Commission began a day later. Although, most polls gave Modi a comfortable win, the landslide victory he won surprised most political observers, perhaps also Modi and his close associates. According to the Election Commission, the Modi group, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), won more than 350 seats in the 525-member Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament, with the BJP alone winning 303 more than the needed 272 seats for a majority.

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That Modi scored such a handsome victory was widely interpreted as a result of his attempt to revive Hinduism in a country where 80 per cent of the population follows that faith. However, some analysts saw the Indian election as one part of a global trend. Before the Indian election, was the victory of the incumbent Scott Morrison in Australia, who ran against the high cost of climate action. In Brazil and the Philippines, the political appeal of Jair Bolsonaro and Rodrigo Roa Duterte seem to be inversely related to their respect for human rights and the rule of law. The citizens of the two countries were tired of lawlessness and wanted leaders who could bring order to their lives.

Pulitzer Prize-winning American conservative journalist, editor, and columnist, Bret Stephens, placed Modi's victory in global context, the rise of right-wing populism, 'It's contempt for the ideology of others before us: of the immigrant before the native born; of the local and national interest before the global or transnational interest; or racial or ethnic or sexual minorities before the majority; of the transgressive before the normal.'[40]

Which way will an emboldened Modi take India? Even the prime minister himself might not know the answer. There was hope in some circles that, having used extreme nationalism to win the election, once in office, he would govern moderately. But moderation may not result in the easing of tensions with Pakistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed the hope that a strengthened Modi could play the role of 'Nixon in China.' In 1972, Nixon, the American hard-line anti-Communist leader, went to China, met with Chairman Mao Zedong and ushered in a new era of China–US relations. Imran Khan had hoped that Modi may be able to do the same for India–Pakistan relations.

Narendra Modi and the Muslim Communities of South Asia

I will conclude this chapter with some reflections on how the Muslim communities of South Asia are likely to be affected by the moves Narendra Modi's India has made towards taking his country to Hindutva, the philosophy of governance that places Hindus well above all religions.

South Asia's Muslim population is estimated at 620 million, about 40 per cent of the world total. Of this the largest, with 210 million, is in Pakistan followed by 200 million in India, 160 million in Bangladesh and 30 million in Afghanistan. India is the only country with a large Muslim population where the followers of the Islamic faith are a minority. In the remaining three countries, the Muslims are in majority. Those

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who govern in these countries have to respect the aspirations of those of Muslim faith. That said, there are many differences in the viewpoints of the followers of the several sects into which the Muslim population can be divided. For instance, the Shiites in Afghanistan have been victimized by the Sunni majority. With the Taliban, having taken over the country's governance, there is real fear that the Shiites will be discriminated again by the Sunni state.

There are also sharp differences in the Muslim population about the role of Islam in governance. For instance, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is a far right extremist political party founded in 2015 by Khadim Hussain Rizvi (d. 2020) that would like to see Sharia established in the country. Violence, or the threat, of it is its main weapon. It was banned in April 2021 and its chief Saad Hussain Rizvi was arrested on the orders of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The TLP responded by ordering its followers to march on Islamabad in mid-November 2021. There was a confrontation in which several policemen were killed. The government gave in and lifted the ban and released the TLP chief from prison.

Dexter Filkins who covers South Asia and the Middle East for *The New Yorker* has been perceptive about the direction Narendra Modi's India is taking.

> The big question is where Modi's campaign ends. The future does not look promising: Kashmir is an open-air prison, with Internet cut off, mobility curtailed, and soldiers crawling the streets. In Assam, the site of the new citizenship registry, the Indian government is planning to build a network of detention centers. The new path-to-citizenship law seems to herald a future in which Indian Muslims are accorded second-class status. Since 1947, the Muslims of India have been distinguished by their widespread refusal to embrace radicalization. If the present circumstances carry on, it seems likely that many of them may conclude they have no other choice. The campaign waged by Modi and his fellow Hindu nationalists has done immense damage to the legacy of Gandhi and Nehru and their vision of a secular Indian state. As the demonstrations there are proving, democracy may be the one thing that can save it.[41]

If Filkins is right, Islamic extremism and associated violence may also arrive in India as it has in Kashmir.

Not a day passes when the Western press does not report trouble in Kashmir. *The New York Times* carried a story about a clash between the Indian security forces and Kashmiri nationalists which left four people dead. 'Violence by militants has jumped in recent months, including

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against Hindu and Sikh civilians. In response, last week the Indian government said it had deployed an additional 2,500 paramilitary soldiers to the region."[42]

There is a growing belief among the Hindu nationalists that Islam does not belong to India. It spread slowly soon after the birth of the religion in Arabia through military interventions, but most historians agree that it spread because of the influence of various Sufi orders. The teachings of Sufi saints converted millions of people to Islam. The followers of Hindutva believe that their descendants should revert to Hinduism.

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9

Iran: Pakistan's South Western Neighbour

One of the major foreign policy challenges faced by successive Pakistani governments concerns the country's relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran. These two Muslim nations, one majority Sunni and the other mostly Shiite, have a deteriorating relationship and the former was supported and urged on in this policy by Donald Trump. Pakistan has the world's second largest Shiite population, after Iran. Former Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, was the first senior diplomat to visit Islamabad and meet Imran Khan after his 2018 election victory. Saudi Arabia was the first country Imran Khan visited after assuming office. Balancing Pakistan's relationship with these two countries is an important task for the PTI government.

An article in *The Economist* about the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, commented on the religious aspirations of Saudi Arabia:

> Saudi kings fancy themselves guardians of Islam, the "custodians of the two holy places", the shrines in Mecca and Medina. As Iran sought to export its vision of Islam, Saudi royals urged their clerics to follow suit. The kingdom started spending tens of billions of dollars to fund mosques, train imams and distribute religious texts in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. No official figures exist but estimates range as high as $100bn over four decades.[1]

Pakistan was one of the targets of this attention, in part because of its proximity to Shiite Iran.

The Early Years

Pakistan's relations with Iran started out well, after the country gained independence. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, was the first head of state to visit the country and was given a very warm reception. While trade and other economic contacts did not develop, for thirty years after independence, Pakistan and Iran were on the same side of the international divide. Both sided with Washington, in the latter's anxiety about the spreading Soviet Union influence in the developing world.

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Pakistan was encouraged to join a regional economic association that also included Iran and Turkey. The Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), was intended to bring economic progress to the three non-Arab Muslim nations that were on the periphery of the Soviet Empire and also to present a unified front against a possible advance by Moscow.

But proximity did not result in close economic contacts as should have been expected from the 'gravity model of trade.'[2] Pakistan has a serious shortage of energy. It could have looked to Iran for the supply of oil and gas. But that needed infrastructure, such as oil and gas pipelines, that neither country seemed interested in building. Pakistan continued to rely on the Arab world for the supply of these products. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, in 1979, drastically changed the regional dynamics. Under the regime headed by the Shiite clerics, Iran became an exporter of its own Shiite Islamic revolution.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was a long-time critic of the pro-US Shah of Iran. During Khomeini's exile in France, under the Pahlavi rule, the cleric had kept in touch with his followers, by recording and distributing audio discs that were played in the country's mosques. A movement started against the Shah and gained impetus. On 12 January 1979, having determined that he would not be able to stay in power, the Shah abdicated and left Iran. It took a few days for the clerics to fill the vacuum left by the Shah's departure.

Ayatollah took the plane back from Paris to Tehran and for some time it was not certain whether he would be allowed to land in the city. The air force threatened to shoot down the plane. Eventually, the plane landed, and the Ayatollah slowly walked down the stairs, helped by an Air France steward and was greeted in the capital by what some claim to be the largest crowd in history.

Many anti-Shah forces believed that the clerics would go back to their mosques and seminaries and leave power in the hands of the technocrats. That did not happen. On 1 April, the majority of Iranians voted to establish the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran's Islamic system is based on a contested Shiite doctrine known as Wilayat al-faqih, or 'guardianship of the jurists.' It remains opaque, although it has now been practiced for over four decades. Ideological underpinnings of the system come from Najaf in Iraq, the seat of power of Ayatollah Sistani, however, his doctrine is different in that it is averse to the idea of a supreme religious

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and political authority. Because of this the clergies—those in Iran and Iraq—have not been close.

The new government tried and executed a large number of people who had supported the Shah. Since the Shah had the support of the Western powers, in particular the US, the Islamic state declared America its enemy. America was called the 'Great Satan'. On 4 November 1979, Iranian students attacked the US embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two 'diplomats' hostage, holding them captive for 444 days. President Jimmy Carter, the American president called the hostage taking an 'act of blackmail' and the hostages 'victims of terrorism and anarchy'.

The ruling clerics in Iran wanted Washington to return the Shah of Iran, who was suffering from cancer and had taken refuge in the US. Tehran wanted him to be tried for the crimes he had committed against his people, with the assistance of his secret police. Iran saw Washington's decision to grant him asylum as American complicity in those atrocities. The US saw the hostage-taking as an egregious violation of the principles of international law, such as the Vienna Convention, which grants diplomats immunity from arrest and made diplomatic compounds inviolable.

Negotiations made no progress. President Carter ordered a rescue attempt, called Operation Eagle Claw, that used helicopters flown in from the warships patrolling the waters near Iran. The attempt occurred on 24 April 1980, but failed, resulting in the deaths of eight Americans and one Iranian. The mishandling of the crisis resulted in the landslide victory of the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, for the US presidency. Reagan, in his campaign for the presidency, promised to work for regime change in Iran. Tehran got the message and the hostages were released on 20 January 1981, once Reagan took office. This was a day after the two governments signed the Algiers Accords, according to which, there was an agreement that the US would not intervene politically, or militarily, in Iranian internal affairs and remove the freeze on Iranian assets and trade sanctions. On the Iranian side, Tehran agreed to pay back debts to the institutions in the US. During this entire period, Pakistan was a strong US ally, and this reflected in its relations with Iran. They became distant.

In September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran. It was widely believed that they were encouraged by the US. They were certainly given arms by America. What followed was a bitterly fought war that lasted for eight years. Some half a million soldiers were killed on both sides. The toll for Iran was particularly heavy; tens of thousands of young men were thrown into battle without proper training or equipment. The loss of so many young

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males had demographic consequences for the country. To make up for the loss, the regime in Tehran encouraged families to have more children. The rate of fertility increased—this was one of the few cases in the world of demographic engineering by the state. Ayatollah Khomeini died in June 1989. Only a day later, he was succeeded by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The Ayatollah is regarded as the spiritual head of the country and has overriding powers. The system is a unicameral presidential system, closely controlled by the spiritual head through an 'assembly of experts', or 'guardian assembly'. There is a directly elected president and Majlis, termed the 'Islamic consultative assembly', with directly elected members, but the assembly of experts selects and approves all candidates and jurists, which includes those for the presidency. This body consists of twelve members. There are six experts on the Shia Fiqh in Islam and six are jurists selected by the head of the judicial council. This assembly also selects the supreme leader, who then selects the six religious experts and the head of the judicial council. All laws passed by the legislative assembly are vetted by the assembly of experts. It is believed that Khomeini's governance was made possible by the support of the deeply conservative and religious military. Iran today is an alliance between the clerics and the military that now has 100,000 soldiers in uniform and oversees the Baseej—a militia of perhaps one million volunteer vigilantes.

The Nuclear Deal with Iran

Ronald Reagan was in office from 1981 to 1989, during which he paid little attention to Iran. In 1989, he was succeeded by George H.W. Bush, his vice president, who acted swiftly and firmly when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Bush sent in American troops to Kuwait and the Iraqis pulled out. Bush lost his bid to win a second term in office to Bill Clinton, who governed for two terms, from 1993 to 2001. Ten months after he was succeeded by George W. Bush, the eldest son of George H.W. Bush, the 9/11 tragedy occurred, perpetrated by Al-Qaeda, and the targets that shocked the world most were the twin skyscrapers of the World Trade Centre towers, in lower Manhattan. Almost 3,000 people died. Vowing revenge, President Bush declared War on Terror and recruited Pakistan, under threat, to partner with the US.

Those to be targeted, were Sunni extremists operating from Afghanistan, where the Taliban ruled and were giving shelter to Al-Qaeda. The Taliban were quickly removed from Kabul in December 2001; many of them found their way to Pakistan. In 2003, President

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Bush decided to invade Iraq, accusing it of having weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), although afterwards none were found, nor was Saddam Hussein proven to be involved in any form of terrorist activities. The Iraq war was to become central to the conflict between Sunni and Shiite extremists.

Bush was succeeded by Barack Obama in January 2009 and the latter quickly came to the conclusion that a new relationship needed to be forged with the Islamic world. This would include settling some sort of deal with Iran. In July 2015, Iran signed an agreement with the US, France, Germany, China, and Russia, to suspend its efforts to develop nuclear weapons for ten years and ship to Russia the enriched uranium it had accumulated. The deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was the result of months of negotiations. According to Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, '[the JCPOA] had been achieved after 12 years of tough, intensive negotiations.'[3] But Israel opposed the agreement and was probably behind Trump revoking it. During his election campaign, he had called the treaty the worst ever the US had entered into with a foreign nation.

Withdrawal from the deal also meant that Iran would be put under sanctions once again. This time the US worked alone, after all Trump was revoking a signed agreement. But the US's financial reach was extensive and it planned to punish the institutions that continued to do business with Iran. On Twitter, Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, posted letters he indicated were from four European pharmaceutical companies, announcing the end of their business activities in Iran. Iran has a large pharmaceutical industry of its own but imports some of the raw materials needed to produce drugs. The US Treasury maintains that trade of humanitarian goods is allowed under the department's guidelines, but foreign banks are cautious about doing any business in Iran.

President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, who made the nuclear deal his signature achievement, said he had directed his diplomats to negotiate with the deal's remaining signatories—including European countries, Russia, and China—to keep the deal in place. Removing sanctions on the Iranian oil and banking sectors had been key to persuading Iran to accept limits on its nuclear program.

The re-imposition of US sanctions began to hurt the Iranian people. According to one account, 'New US sanctions on Iranian financial firms, including a bank that until recently handled most payments for Iran's imports of humanitarian goods are having a chilling effect on foreign companies that help supply medicine and other medical products.'[4]

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Indeed, the sanctions were so extensive that when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Iran, it hampered the countries attempts to purchase medical supplies and are considered one of the reasons that the outbreak in Iran was so devastating.[5] Trump administration held that it was not targeting, or prohibiting, humanitarian trade with Iran and that by imposing sanctions the aim was to persuade the Iranian government to 'change its behaviour'. Despite this claim, even during the height of the pandemic the Trump White House piled on additional sanctions on top of those already existing.

Washington's ambitions were now more extensive than was the case when President Obama worked on the deal. Then the focus was on Iran's nuclear program. Trump wanted Iran to give up its ballistic program and curtail its support for militant groups such as Hamas in Gaza and Lebanon's Hezbollah. These were the policy aims of the state of Israel. Trump did not stop with the cancellation of his country's participation in the arrangement. As mentioned earlier, on 21 July, in an all-caps message on Twitter, he addressed President Hassan Rouhani, who was elected in 2013, warning him of dire consequences if he continued to speak ill of the US. 'Never ever threaten the US again or you will suffer consequences the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before. We are no longer a country that will stand for your demented words of violence and death. Be cautious!'

The tweet was sent out at midnight, composed without any consultation with those responsible for watching over US foreign relations. It was said to have been a response to a statement by President Hassan Rouhani, in which he had spoken about a direct confrontation between the Trump administration and its chief adversary in the Middle East. Rouhani had said that a confrontation with his country would lead to 'the mother of all wars' and insinuated that Tehran might flex its military might in the Middle Eastern waterways that are crucial for global commerce, in particular the flow of oil to the West.

Tehran was quick to respond to the Trump tweet. Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, who negotiated the nuclear deal, posted a tweet of his own, also in capital letters and sending a similar warning as the one delivered by Trump. 'colour us unimpressed,' he wrote, 'The world has heard even harsher bluster a few months ago.... We've been around for millennia and seen the fall of empires, incl[uding] our own, which lasted more than the life of some countries. Be cautious.' This tweet brought the possibility of a major conflict right to the Pakistani border. President Rouhani explained his country's position with respect to that of the

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US: 'Silence in the face of open U.S. bullying of other countries to cut economic and trade relations with Iran, in blatant contravention of the established rules of international law, is simply not acceptable, and not an option for us.'[6] The Iranian president provided a cogent overview of Washington's approach towards Tehran.

Rouhani's article appeared two days before Trump addressed the UN General Assembly in September 2018, in which he claimed that he was about to complete the two most successful years in the history of the American presidency and this drew a laugh all around the hall, in which sat the representatives of most of the world's nations. Primarily, the speech was just a tirade against Iran. He vowed to increase sanctions, warning, 'Any individual or entity who fails to comply with these sanctions will face serious consequences.'

National security adviser, John Bolton, who had a well-known history of anti-Iran views, raised the ante, using harsh language to threaten America's allies on the issue of Iran. 'We do not intend to allow our sanctions to be evaded by Europe or anybody else.' Then, he directed his wrath at Tehran: 'If you cross us, our allies or our partners; if you harm our citizens; if you continue to lie, cheat and deceive, yes, there will indeed be hell to pay. We are watching and we will come after you.'[7] The Iranian president also had a view about the direction of the US approach to the world:

> Current U.S. foreign policy toward Iran is out of step with the realities on the ground—in Iran, in the region and around the world. I would argue that it is not even in line with U.S. national interests. Fed by disinformation and fake analysis from terrorist groups and Israel, the U.S. administration is under the illusion that resorting to sanctions will lead to concessions from Iran. Iranians, though, are known to close ranks and put up stiff resistance in the face of external pressure.[8]

The 40th Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution

John Bolton, Trump's hawkish US national security adviser, had predicted in 2018 that the Islamic Republic of Iran 'would not see its 40th birthday'. He was clearly wrong, although the Trump administration, for which he worked, had tried every trick in the book to hasten the demise of the Tehran regime, Iran did celebrate its 40th birthday on 1 February 2019. What happened in the days, months, and years after the revolution was quite radical. According to one account:

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> An Islamic republic, a theocracy built on ideological choices, inspired to a great extent by Ayatollah Khomeini. New rules were put into effect to forbid anything that might lead people astray and prevent them from ascending to heavenly afterlife: strict controls on the media, which isolated the Iranians from Western influences; an absolute segregation of the sexes in public places; compulsory head scarves for women. It went on and on, zealously and sometimes brutally enforced by the morality police and paramilitary Baseej forces.[9]

But as the revolution matured, so did accommodation to it by ordinary people. 'Passing through a front door often meant stepping into a different reality, one where all the rules that applied on the streets would magically disappear....But as the years progressed these changes began to creep outdoors and become more noticeable.'[10] While Iranian society has moved forward, propelled by social media, the political system has remained basically unchanged. The question now is whether that too will be liberalised.

The Iranian leadership statements on the 40th anniversary of the Revolution, focused on what it believed were the regime's main accomplishments. The president's office released a transcript of the statement made in front of a large crowd in Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square:

> We have not—and will not—ask for permission from anybody for improving our defensive power. We will continue on this path, and I say this clearly to the people of Iran, that Iran's military power in the past 40 years...has amazed the entire world.... In the recent five years, the moment Iran wanted to help the people of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, the world saw that the enemies did not achieve any victory against the power of the peoples of the region and Iran's support.[11]

The Azadi Square meeting was also addressed by Brigadier General Hossein Salami, deputy head of the Revolutionary Guard that wielded a great deal of power in the country's political structure. He dealt with the question of Iran's policy in the region and was mindful of the fact that the US was working hard to reduce Tehran's reach in the area.

The Western coverage of the event such as in *The Economist*, saw both the positives and the negatives in Iran's performance in the forty years since the 1979 Revolution: 'University enrolment has increased, services for the poor have improved and the economy is more diversified. But in most other ways, Iran is worse off... [It is] less prosperous than

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it should be and less engaged with the world than most countries.'[12] It mentioned that a large number of educated Iranians have little confidence in the country's future. More than 150,000 Iranians are thought to leave the country each year, among the world's highest rates of brain drain. *The Washington Post* used a poll conducted in December 2018, by the independent organisation, 'Iran Poll', to point out that a large majority (71 per cent) of the nation thought that Iran's economy was bad and getting worse, with shrinking confidence that European nations would continue to abide by the terms of the nuclear agreement.[13] Where will Iran be on 1 February 2029 when it celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution? This question matters for Pakistan as Iran is one of its four neighbours. Iran's future will also depend on how Washington treats it and whether the brewing conflict with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gets settled without an open conflict. President Joe Biden is, arguably, less obsessed with Iran than his predecessor was.

Iran aggressively promoted its place in the Middle East, while Trump's America was struggling to define its own role. It was of some significance that while the debate was on in Washington, about the size of the American contingent that would stay behind in Syria, Bashar al-Assad paid a surprise visit to Tehran in February 2019. He met with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior officials. The visit was the Syrian president's first publicly disclosed trip to the Iranian capital since 2010. Iran's supreme leader complemented Assad for strengthening the ties between Iran, Syria, and the Lebanese group, the largest forces in regional alliance that oppose the US and Israel and refers to itself as the 'axis of resistance'. However, the coming years might well see a change in Iran's supreme leader by a new cleric who would have greater support of the clergy and would also reflect the aspirations of the youth, which is now well educated and wants greater social and political liberties—but the latter part of this transpiration/development/transition is obviously an optimistic expectation.

According to a report in *The Washington Post*, quiet work has begun on finding a successor to 79-year-old Ali Khamenei. According to Iran's constitution, if Khamenei dies, or is otherwise incapacitated, a leadership council would be formed to govern for the interim period before a new supreme leader is decided. In the background, the assembly of experts is collecting names and dossiers of people. A source, Sheikh Aladdin al-Jazari based in Najaf, Iraq, is quoted in this regard. According to *The Washington Post* report: 'He says that Iran's next supreme leader may not come from a list of more obvious candidates now circulating

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among analysts and insiders. The basis of his assessment is on both his experience and...his proximity to Khamenei's inner circle and a degree of insight into the future.'[14]

The US Confrontation with Iran

When Donald Trump took office, he had promised his supporters that he would take strong action against Iran. That included walking out of the nuclear deal and other pressures on the regime in Tehran as well. In this, Trump was urged on by Israel, whose anti-Iran policy had the full support of Jared Kushner, the president's conservative Jewish son-in-law. While Iran was celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the US hosted a Middle East Summit in Warsaw, Poland, in February 2019, to discuss the region's problems and prospects.

The official line was that it was not an anti-Iran gathering, but a general discussion of the region's future, as the war against ISIS was winding down. But that was not the line taken by Rudolph Giuliani, the former mayor of New York and President Trump's personal lawyer. Hours before the Warsaw meeting began, Giuliani told an anti-Iran rally outside the main stadium, that Iranian leaders were 'assassins and murderers, and they should be out of power.'[15] He said that he was not speaking for the US government, but was representing an Iranian opposition group, the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK). But according to one assessment, the US's real intentions 'belied what American officials had told nervous European counterparts: that the two-day meeting would focus on a range of Middle East security issues.'[16] Trump tweeted on the eve of the Warsaw meeting: '40 years of corruption. 40 years of repression. 40 years of terror. The regime in Iran has produced only 40 years of failure. The long-suffering Iranian people deserve a much better future.'

> "In a room of some 60 foreign ministers representative of dozens of governments, an Israeli prime minister and the foreign ministers of the leading Arab countries stood together and spoke with unusual force, clarity and unity against the common threat of the Iranian regime," Netanyahu told reporters in Warsaw.[17]

The US approach of splitting the Muslim world seemed to be working. The Warsaw meeting was also attended by Jared Kushner, who was the architect of the pro-Israel stance of the Trump presidency. As a senior adviser to his father-in-law, Kushner had been put in charge of developing

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a peace plan involving the Middle East. Trump, given to the use of hyperbole, had described the Kushner plan as the 'deal of the century'. Kushner briefed the attendees at the Warsaw meeting on some aspects of the plan but did not provide any details. He said that the plan would be made public after the Israeli elections, scheduled for 9 April 2019.

The then vice president, Michael Pence, visited the infamous Auschwitz camp during his visit to Poland. The camp is maintained as a memorial of World War II. Speaking at this site, which symbolises what the Jews suffered at that time, he told reporters and likened the Nazi genocide to the vow of modern-day Iran to 'wipe Israel off the map of the Middle East' and said that, 'Tehran voices the same vile, anti-Semitic hatred that animated the Nazis in Europe.'[18]

Jackson Diehl, *The Washington Post* columnist, comments that Benjamin Netanyahu was one of 'the biggest international beneficiaries of the Trump administration'. The former Israeli prime minister was fighting hard at home to escape being formally charged for corruption. But in the November of 2021, he faced a trial and was accused of fraud, breach of trust and corruption. Previously, he was also looking for foreign adventures to divert domestic attention. He is already involved in two adventures, both audacious and risky. One is to annex 30 per cent of the West Bank, which it occupied in 1967, but which, against the laws of war, it did not vacate once the conflict was over. The other move involves Iran, a favourite Trump target and also that of his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo. In the past few months, according to Diehl:

> Israel has apparently been conducting what amounts to a slow-motion, semi-covert military campaign against Iran's nuclear and missile programs, and perhaps other industrial and infrastructure targets as well. Mysterious explosions and fires have struck a key centrifuge production facility, a military base where missiles are produced, as well as power plants, aluminium and chemical factories, and a medical clinic. Last week, a fire erupted at the port of Bushehr on the Persian Gulf, destroying seven ships.[19]

Nor were the Israelis particularly shy about distancing themselves from these activities. 'I'm surprised the Israelis have not been more circumspect about this,' said Dennis Ross, a former senior Middle East adviser in several past Washington administrations. He and several other analysts say Netanyahu almost certainly obtained the Trump administration's consent, if not collaboration for the Israeli offensive. The question is: How would Tehran react to these provocations? The answer is important

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for Islamabad, since it would bring conflict right to the Pakistani border. Returning to the Diehl assessment of the situation:

> Yet despite the risks, Trump appears to be all in on the Iran campaign. No doubt that's partly because the president and his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, are nearly as zealous as Netanyahu about destroying the Iranian regime. But it's also because Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran has ended up heightening rather than decreasing the threat it poses, while all but excluding remedies other than military action.[20]

Iran's cleric rulers have shown that they can use options other than the use of their military to respond to the combined military action by US and Israel. They could disrupt the world's oil supply. That won't hurt the US as much as it would have in the past. America has increased the domestic supply of oil, to make it self-sufficient by investing massively in fracking and other new technologies, to reach reserves in the ground that were not readily available in the past. That notwithstanding, any major disturbance in the Gulf would deliver a shock to the global economy at a time when it is dealing with the severe consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Trump was conscious of the cost to his country, of the crisis with Iran. It was revealed that he had sent two private letters to the Middle Eastern allies in October 2018, complaining that the US had spent too much money in the region to contain the spreading influence of Iran. He used a figure of $7 trillion, which was probably a misrepresentation taken from the work done at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, that estimated future debt from war spending by 2053, at $7.9 trillion. However, according to the institute, the amount spent on 'war-related activities' in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, since 2001, was $1.88 trillion. The existence of the two sets of letters was revealed by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It is likely that Trump's refrain about the need for Middle East allies to do more, was aimed partly at a domestic audience of Americans tired of involvement in the region.[21]

Trump was persuaded to backtrack on his decision to pull out the American troops in Syria, when some of his advisers persuaded him that doing so would create on opportunity for Iran to fill the vacuum. According to a *Washington Post* article, 'Bolton told senior officials working on Syria policy that Trump during a no-notes meeting alone with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki in July, had insisted that the U.S. troops stay until Moscow forced out its Iranian allies—an

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ambitious declaration that could keep the Americans there for years.'[22] This account led the State Department and the Pentagon to change their strategy and made Iran's departure a primary objective of the 2,000-strong US presence. Another decision was to list Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard as a foreign terrorist organisation. This was the first time Washington had branded a foreign government entity as a terrorist body. This decision 'came despite warnings from US military and intelligence officials, that other nations could use the designation as a precedent against US action abroad.'[23] The Israeli leadership was pleased with the action. 'Thank you, my dear friend, President Donald Trump, for having decided to announce Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation', tweeted Benjamin Netanyahu. He made it clear that this action was in response to a request from him. In the tweet, he also wrote, 'Thank you for the answer to another important request, that serves the interests of our country and the region. We will continue to act together in any way against the Iranian regime that threatens the state of Israel, the United States and the peace of the world.' There was also a quick response from Iran. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, also sent out a tweet: 'Another misguided election eve gift to Netanyahu. Another dangerous misadventure in the region.'

On 22 April 2019, the then US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, announced that starting 2 May, his country would no longer permit the five countries that had been exempted from the application of sanctions on export of oil from Iran. The order was aimed at China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Turkey. These waivers were granted in the fall of 2018. All of the five are engaged with Washington, on major security issues that do not involve Iran. In announcing the move, Pompeo said that Iran had earned about $50 billion annually from oil sales, accounting for as much as 40 per cent of government revenues. The US was working on not having this decision weaken the global economy. It was working with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to pump more oil in order not to create any global shortage that would lower the price. This brought the US closer to the Arab monarchies. Up until this move, the Russians had been working with the Saudis to manage global oil supplies. Riyadh welcomed the Washington move. However, without Russian cooperation, the Middle East can't control oil supplies. International prices that had soared $20 a barrel, increased by 3 per cent, after the move against Iran. The Chinese government immediately pushed back against the decision on the waivers. According to one assessment:

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> Any move by Beijing to keep buying Iranian oil—which analysts predicted China almost certainly would find some way to do—would force the US to decide whether to impose sanctions on Chinese financial institutions, which are increasingly important in the worldwide economy. China could also set up new vehicles as an alternative to using the current banking mechanisms, as the European nations have done to keep doing business with Iran.[24]

Other countries would also be affected. India, which imports four-fifths of its oil needs, depends on Iran as one of its main suppliers. Iran also reacted angrily and threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz. 'In the event of any threats, we will not have the slightest hesitation to defend Iran's waterways,' said Alireza Tangsiri, the head of the Revolutionary Guards naval force. *The Washington Post* wrote in an editorial:

> Would these pressures work and deliver the ends the United States is aiming to achieve? But if Iran responds aggressively, Mr Trump would be forced to choose between tolerating offenses that the Obama administration's 2015 nuclear deal stopped or sliding toward a war that few Americans wish for....One reason confrontation is possible is that the administration has left Tehran with scant options. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday [22 April 2019] reiterated the administration's nominal openness to negotiations, but he has set out a list of dozen conditions the regime would have to meet, presenting a complete account of its current foreign policy. Those steps ranging from a stop to nuclear-capable missiles to an end to hostility toward Israel are unrealistic in the absence of a broader settlement with Iran's regional rivals, including Saudi Arabia.' But 'history doesn't offer much encouragement however, which raises the question whether Mr. Trump has carefully considered the difficult corners into which his policy may lead. We're guessing he has not.[25]

For Pakistan, the arrival of the US in its neighbourhood, cannot be seen as a happy development.

Iran in the Middle East

According to analysts who study Iran's effort to influence the Middle East, the financial squeeze resulting from the America's re-imposed sanctions on Iran, were hurting these efforts. Ben Hubbard, who watches Tehran's developments in the region for *The New York Times*, reports:

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> Across the Middle East, Iran's allies are showing signs of financial strain. Some of that strain may simply reflect the impact of the prolonged armed conflict in Syria and Iraq. Hezbollah, which had focused resources on confronting Israel along Lebanon' southern border, has been diverting fighters and weapons to Syria for years. Shiite fighters directed by Iran helped battle the Islamic State after the militant group overran parts of Iraq five [in 2014] years ago.[26]

The case of Hezbollah helps to understand the success, or difficulties, Iran faces in the region.

Iran's focus has been on local politics, while aiding militarily, the people who are sympathetic to Tehran's overall strategy. Hezbollah now has a strong foothold in Lebanon that is only partly explained by the help provided by Iran to the militant group. It has worked hard to gain local political support. It is now the strongest military force in Lebanon and is a skilful political actor. Hezbollah and its allies won a majority in the Lebanese Parliament, 70 out of a total of 128, in the elections in 2018, taking seats away from the parties that had the support of the US. It controls three of the country's thirty ministries, including the health ministry, which takes care of its wounded fighters.

The Lebanese leadership, which relies on Hezbollah's political support, is well aware of the influence the Iran-backed force has in the country's politics. During a visit to Beirut, the then US secretary of state Mike Pompeo's anti-Hezbollah stance, was strongly pushed back. 'From our side, for sure, we reiterate that Hezbollah is a Lebanese party, not terrorist,' said Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, while standing next to Pompeo in a press conference. 'Its deputies are elected by the Lebanese people with great popular support.'

Iran has also been effective in increasing its presence in Iraq, a country in which the US got deeply involved as a result of the two wars it has fought there in 1991 and 2003. The second war destroyed the Sunni regime of the military dictator, Saddam Hussein, without preparing the country to be governed differently. Two-thirds of the Iraqi population subscribes to the Shiite sect. Najaf's shrine attracts thousands of Iranians every year. For the moment, Najaf is under the influence of the 88-year old Grand Ayatollah Sistani, who was born in Iran, but moved to Iraq. He opposes the Shiite doctrine known as Wilayat-al-faqih (or government, by Islamic jurists), which underpins Iran's governance system. But that might change under the new cleric who will succeed Sistani. The Iranians are placing their bet on a person who is in line with the Iranian system.

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According to Erin Cunningham and Mustafa Salim, 'Iraq's religious leaders have been moving to expand their influence over the Shiite Muslim establishment in neighbouring Iraq, in a gamble aimed at gaining sway over Iraq's largest religious group.'[27]

For about five years, the ISIS established itself in Iraq, but was annihilated by Iran and America fighting on the same side. What transpired well illustrates the complications of politics of the region. Financial pressure at home has pushed Tehran to pursue stronger economic ties. Militias that Iran helped create began to be paid by the Iraqi government, at little cost to itself. Iran also developed strong links across Iraq's political spectrum that promote Iranian interests.

China's Approach to the US's Sanctions on Iran

Since the sanctions imposed by the US following its unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal were directed at Iran, it was highly unlikely that Tehran would abide by them. In this effort, it had China's support. 'I want to stress that the Chinese government is opposed to the imposition of unilateral sanctions and the so-called long-arm jurisdictions by any country in accordance with its domestic laws,' said the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson. Some analysts have predicted that Chinese entities could act as intermediaries for European companies that want to continue trading with Iran, but fear violating US sanctions.[28] Iran has moved to increase its options by approaching China and concluding a deal with that country as already mentioned. When implemented, the plan would provide billions of dollars of Chinese investment in energy and other sectors, undermining the Trump administration's efforts to isolate Iran. In return, China would receive a regular supply of Iranian oil over the next twenty-five years.

China pressed ahead with its plans to bring Iran into its orbit. Beijing launched a rail connection between Bayannur, in western Inner Mongolia, and Iran. Travel times will be at least twenty days shorter than the journey by sea. The first train carried sunflower seeds. Ultimately, the train will connect London to China.

Internal Resistance in Iran

Tehran voiced its suspicion that the 22 September 2018, attack on a military parade in the city of Ahvaz, was engineered by Saudi Arabia and

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the US. The city is situated on the country's southwest border and is a hub for a minority Arab community. More than two-dozen people lost their lives and at least sixty others were wounded. Four attackers, all of whom were killed, or captured, targeted the people who had come to watch a parade to mark the start of Iran's war with Iraq in the 1980s. While the ISIS issued a statement claiming responsibility, most analysts, including the government in Tehran, believed that it was carried out by the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz, a separatist faction that seeks an Arab-led state in south western Iran. In a message on Twitter, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, blamed the attack on the regional allies of the US, calling it 'a continuation of conspiracies by US-backed regimes in the region, which have aimed at creating insecurity in our dear country.'[29]

Iran at the Centre of the Shiite Crescent

'Iran is a small body with a big brain, and the US is a big body with a small brain,' said Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, a Sunni Muslim who was the speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, while explaining how Iran gained the upper hand in Iraq.[30] There is no American presence in Iraq, only a military presence, while Iran has expanded its influence in most areas of life in the country.

Iran's President, Hassan Rouhani, paid a visit to Baghdad, on 11 March 2019, with the aim of breaking out of the isolation that the US was attempting to enforce on Iran. In Iraq, the state sponsored the paramilitary Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which is about forty militias under the prime minister, as a second line of defence against terrorism. They are primarily Shia, but soldiers of other sects are enrolled in it as well. These militias have close links with Iran. In the 2018 parliament elections, the PMF emerged as the kingmaker and parties linked to these militias won most of the seats.

The PMF was important in helping Iraq deal with the ISIS. Iran is encouraging the creation of a Sunni version of the PMF, in the Sunni majority areas. Tehran is also engaged in encouraging the Shiite leaders to follow its political model, where the religious leaders are active in politics. This is counter to the thinking of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who, as a firm believer in the segregation of religion from statecraft, has kept Iraq's religious leaders out of politics.

While Iran has extensive economic ties with Iraq, it is aiming to strengthen the links further. It provides natural gas, processed petroleum

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products and about 20 per cent of Iraq's electricity consumption. President Rouhani said, before his visit to Baghdad, that his goal was to see trade with Iraq increase to $20 billion annually, from the current $12 billion. The Iranian team praised Iraq's decision that it would not be a part of the US sanctions against them.

The Rouhani visit was a success in the sense that it put Iran at the centre of the Shiite crescent in the Muslim world. Rouhani capped his three-day visit by meeting Ayatollah Sistani; a meeting that eluded previous Iranian presidents and American leaders alike. 'The 88-year-old cleric, who is rarely seen in public and whose views are almost always delivered through intermediaries, said in a statement that he welcomes "any steps to strengthen Iraq's relations with its neighbours...based on respect for the sovereignty of the countries and no interference in domestic affairs".'[31] This was widely interpreted by experts as a message to Iraq's Shiite militias that are ideologically linked with Iran, which supports them with money and weapons. Washington views the militias as Iranian proxies with Sistani, that are the force that helped strengthen Rouhani's position in Iran. 'Sistani, a revered figure with a large following in Iran, has refused to meet with the powerful commander of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani [d. 2020]. Similarly, Sistani rejected a meeting with former president and hard-line politician Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.'[32]

Pakistan–Iran Relations in a Changing World

One of the themes running through this book is that policymakers in Islamabad have to be mindful of the fact that they have to fashion their relations with the world in a rapidly changing global environment. This is true, in particular, in the case of relations with Iran, which have come under enormous pressure from the US and Saudi Arabia. While Pakistan's relations with Washington have deteriorated in significant ways, that is not the case with Saudi Arabia. The 20-hour long visit by the Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman in February 2019, brought the two countries closer than ever before, while there were growing tensions between Islamabad and Tehran.

On 19 February, Iran claimed that the suicide attack, six days earlier, was carried out by citizens of the Pakistani province of Balochistan that borders Iran. The attack, one of the deadliest in years to strike Iran, killed twenty-seven members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and injured thirteen others. Within hours of the attack, a militant Sunni extremist

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group, Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice), which has operated in southeast Iran for years and has links with Al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility. Iranian officials immediately accused the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia of involvement in the attack. 'They suggested that it was more than coincidental that it had been carried out as representatives of all three nations were meeting in Warsaw, at a conference aimed in part at isolating Iran.'[33] That said, Tasnim, a news agency close to the government, pointed a finger at Pakistan as well. This was unusual, as Iran seldom accuses Pakistan. The agency said that Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, had raised this issue with his 'Pakistani counterpart, Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The latter said, "Pakistan was ready for any kind of cooperation with Iran to probe into the terrorist attack".'

Nonetheless, a lot has transpired since the US troops, rather hastily, left Afghanistan in the middle of 2021. This exodus caused amongst other things, a surge of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries primarily due to insecurity and fear of violence. *Al Jazeera* reported on 11 November 2021 that Iran is, 'deporting thousands of Afghan refugees.' The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has stated that over 1 million refugees have been sent back, 'despite the dire conditions awaiting them.' There have been complaints of mistreatment that include, 'housing them in over-crowded filthy detention camps' while a few have complained that they were physically beaten because they didn't have enough money to pay for deportation. However, Iran's ambassador to the UN, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, denied these allegations and said that despite 'international sanctions' and 'limited capabilities' the Iranian government was providing the refugees with 'food, shelter and medicine.' He went on to say that his government was providing Covid-19 vaccines, 'while [being] under severe and illegal US sanctions.'

Pakistan is Iran's eighth largest trading partner. But as Nadeem Ahmed Moonakal states,

> The bilateral trade between Iran and Pakistan fell from 1.32 billion USD in 2008–2009 to 432 million USD in 2010–2011 because of the sanctions posed by the United Nations, US, and the European Union on Iran amid the suspected nuclear program of Iran. One of the major progress in the Pakistan–Iran relationship perhaps would be the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline project. The Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline was seen as a crystallizing point which again halted as the deal faced multiple hindrances in the form of US displeasure and an economic crisis in Pakistan.[34]

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Iran has also been sceptical of Pakistan's ties with Saudi Arabia, and that limits its choices. But Iran's government has shown interest in CPEC and wants to accentuate trade by improving road and rail links.

Iran's agreement with China will be beneficial for the region, as when CPEC is complete, not only will Gwadar port facilitate the flow of Iranian oil to China, but it will also provide an interconnection between these nations, as well as a land connection further west.

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10

Working with Saudi Arabia and the UAE

This chapter deals with Pakistan's relations with two Arab nations, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). There are similarities in Islamabad's dealings with the two countries: both have large communities of Pakistani workers who remit substantial amounts of their savings to their families in Pakistan. This flow of finance into Pakistan has helped the country cover the large gap in its balance of payments. Worker-remittances have also helped millions of poor households to leave poverty behind and enter the lower middle-class status. However, the spread of Covid-19 has resulted in job losses by tens of thousands of these workers. They are now waiting to be repatriated back to Pakistan. The discussion about the UAE, is limited to a short section, since much of what is discussed in the longer section on Saudi Arabia also applies to the UAE.

It was inevitable that Pakistan, a country founded to establish a homeland for the Muslim population of British India, would develop close relations with Saudi Arabia, the home of some of Islam's holiest sites. But religion was not the only factor that brought Pakistan close to the Saudis. Economics and finance have also played an important role. As mentioned earlier, the kingdom and the UAE became a major source of remittances to Pakistan. One unexpected result of this large movement of people from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, was the deep radicalisation of the poorly educated youth who took up temporary residence in the Kingdom, towards the Wahhabi or Salafist versions of Islam. With the remittances, radical Islam also came into Pakistan. During the extended reign of General Ziaul Haq, who governed Pakistan for eleven years (1977–1988), relations between the two countries grew warmer. The Saudis became an important ally of Pakistan and the US in the war against the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. On occasion, the Saudis have also helped Pakistan in periods of financial stress. During Nawaz Sharif's three tenures as prime minister, Pakistan became a close ally of Saudi Arabia and the Saudis provided oil at less than the market value. Saudi Arabia was the first country visited by Prime Minister Imran Khan after being sworn in. Once again, the reason was to secure financial help from the Kingdom. After Donald Trump became the US president, Washington aligned itself closely with Riyadh. But Pakistan

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was pushed out of this alliance by Trump's seeming dislike for Islamabad. To understand where Saudi Arabia is today and how its policies could affect Pakistan, I will discuss the Kingdom's relations with the US in the aftermath of the gruesome murder of Jamal Khashoggi.[1] I will also discuss these relations in the context of the ongoing war in Yemen and how this conflict is likely to impact the Middle East. I will conclude the chapter with some thoughts on the future of Pakistan–Saudi relations.

The Making of the Saudi–American Alliance

Close ties between the US and Saudi Arabia date back to the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The American president, returning from the post-World War II conference in Yalta, stopped the USS Quincy, aboard which he was transiting in the Suez Canal, and met King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud. This was the first time the king had ever left his desert land. The meeting took place on 14 February 1945, aboard the US warship. The Kingdom had acquired considerable importance for the US after the discovery of large reserves of oil that had entered the global market as the US became a net importer of energy.

The Kingdom could become a major source of supply of oil to America. At the meeting, President Roosevelt also discussed the prospect of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East and tried to persuade the Saudi monarch to accept 10,000 European Jews in Palestine. According to the historian Scott Montgomery, Abdul Aziz was internationally considered a key Arab leader and heroic warrior. The meeting was held in secrecy, since the war was still going on and Roosevelt had promised Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, that the US would not intervene in territories under the influence of the British. That encounter laid the foundation for US–Saudi relations that have lasted to this day.

Coming back to present times, there was a leadership change not only in Washington, but also in Riyadh, when King Salman bin Aziz, the aging monarch, appointed his young son, Mohammed bin Salman, as the heir to the throne who actively pursues the policies of the monarchy. During Trump's tenure, the Saudis began to systematically examine how they could penetrate the new White House. A detailed account published by *The New York Times* on 9 December 2018, provided some insights into how the Saudi's developed close relations with Jared Kushner, a devout conservative Jew, and the president's son-in-law, who became the principal architect of the US–Saudi Arabia alliance. The paper wrote:

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> But the ties between Kushner and Prince Mohammed did not happen on their own,' wrote the newspaper. 'The Prince and his advisers, eager to enlist American support for his hawkish policies in the region and for his own consolidation of power, cultivated the relationship with Mr. Kushner for more than two years...Mr. Kushner's support for Prince Mohammed in the moment of crisis is a striking demonstration of a singular bond that has helped draw President Trump into an embrace of Saudi Arabia as one of his most important international allies.[2]

The crisis referred to in the story was the aftermath of the gruesome murder in the Kingdom's consulate in Istanbul, of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a columnist for *The Washington Post*. The Saudis began to work on the new relationship within days of Trump's electoral triumph. They sent a team to the US to develop a strategy for the Kingdom. The members of the team concluded that the new president's inner circle was made up of, predominantly, deal makers who lacked familiarity with political customs and institutions of American governance. Jared Kushner was the lead member of this group. A PowerPoint presentation was prepared by this group and which was obtained by the Lebanese newspaper, *Al Akhbar*. A few months after Trump assumed the presidency, Kushner began to inquire about the Saudi royal succession process and whether the US could influence it. He seemed to be interested in promoting Mohammed bin Salman ahead of his cousin, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the crown prince. According to one slide in the PowerPoint for Jared Kushner, the Palestinian issue was the top priority. His 'central interest was a historic solution to support the stability of Israel and solve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.' The Saudi team was not concerned about candidate Trump's pledge to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the entry of Muslims into the US. The Saudi team proposed the establishment of an intelligence data cell, to help the American administration carry out its strategy of investigating those requesting residency in the country. Trump, while campaigning, had called for 'extreme vetting' of Muslims who were on their way to the US. The delegation also pledged high-level coordination with the new American administration to help with 'defeating extremist thought'. The team proposed a 'joint centre to fight the ideology of extremism and terrorism'. Another proposal was to organise an 'Arab NATO'—an Islamic military coalition of tens of thousands of troops 'ready to fight when the president-elect wishes to deploy them'.

Fully conscious of the Trump family's interest in money matters, the Saudis proposed to spend $50 billion in over four years, on American

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defence contracts, to increase Saudi investment in the US to $200 billion again, over four years, and to invest with other Gulf States an amount of up to $100 billion in American infrastructure. In order to make these proposals operational, the Saudis proposed that Trump's first visit outside the US should be to their country. They persuaded Kushner to get his father-in-law to accept the idea of the visit. Trump was initially not attracted to the proposal, but came around to it and the visit took place in May 2017, about four months after the president was sworn in.

The 33-year-old prince implemented a program of social and economic reform that included giving more rights—including the right to drive—to the Kingdom's female population. He also began the process of reducing the importance of oil in the economy. But Mohammed bin Salman had low tolerance for criticism. According to one American commentator, 'Mohammed has been the go-to Saudi since the administration took office, key to President Trump's goal of partnering with Riyadh to bring Iran to heel, achieve an Israeli-friendly peace settlement with the Palestinians and sell billions worth of US weapons along the way.'[3] This policy cluster also meant US support for Mohammed bin Salman's brutal war in Yemen.

On 12 June 2019, a senior in Trump's administration was questioned by a Congress committee on the reason behind the declaration of an emergency to sidestep the legislators to secure twenty-two deals of the sale of arms benefitting Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The official refused to detail any of the individual deals, leaving Democrats to question whether the administration was expediting the sale of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia to arm it for a regional war, or due to an escalation of its military campaign in Yemen. A report by the Democratic staff of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, then headed by the late Elijah Cummings, a Democrat, revealed how former national security adviser, Michael Flynn and other National Security Council officials attempted to rush through a plan for American companies to sell nuclear plants to Saudi Arabia in the early days of the Trump administration. The plan was squelched by H.R. McMaster, who succeeded Flynn after the latter's brief stint in the job. However, negotiations continued with the support of energy secretary Rick Perry. There was a fear that the Saudis would use the plants to develop nuclear weapons if strict controls over the plutonium fuel became slack. However, *The Washington Post* wrote in an editorial:

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> Unsurprisingly, the arrogant crown prince is refusing to accept those terms—probably because he wishes to preserve a nuclear-arms option. Though federal law requires the US to negotiate a protocol on the conditions for supplying nuclear technology and submit that to Congress, it does not mandate those conditions.

It troubled the newspaper that Westinghouse, the company Flynn was supporting as a supplier of the nuclear plants, had also bought a stake in the Manhattan skyscraper owned by Jared Kushner's family company.[4]

The Khashoggi Affair

According to Kirkpatrick and Hubbard:

> An unexpected development caused a possible rift between Washington and Riyadh when Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi journalist, went missing at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. He had gone to the office to pick up a marriage license he needed to wed his Turkish finance after divorcing his first wife, a Saudi. She had not come out with him when he went on self-imposed exile to the US. According to the American newspapers: Turkish investigators say that a team of fifteen Saudi agents killed him inside the consulate. The team had arrived in Istanbul carrying diplomatic passports and dismembered the journalist's body, while his wife-to-be was waiting outside. Khashoggi, 59, was educated in the US and had served as advisor in the Saudi embassies in London and Washington but fled the kingdom for the US capital where he styled himself 'as the loyal opposition, supportive of the monarchy but critical of policies like its war in Yemen or campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood.[5]

Khashoggi had become a regular columnist for *The Washington Post*. 'I have left my home, my family and my job, and I am raising my voice,' he wrote in an op-ed in *The Post*. 'To do otherwise would betray those who languish in prison. We Saudis deserve better.'[6] His criticism of his native country did not sit well with Mohammed bin Salman who had aligned himself with the West, particularly the US, where he had befriended Jared Kushner, the adviser to the president on Middle East affairs. Khashoggi had gained prominence in the Western news circles after interviewing Osama bin Laden. After Khashoggi's disappearance in the consulate, the information that dribbled out of Turkey indicated that the journalist was the victim of a planned operation—a finding that was initially not accepted by the Saudi authorities. This raised the question of

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an appropriate US response. A lively debate swirled around this question in Washington's policy circles. John Brennan, former head of the CIA during the presidency of Barack Obama and an open critic of President Trump, pleaded for stern action by Washington. In an op-ed column in *The Washington Post*, he recalled how decades ago, Saudi intelligence and security services had garnered a reputation for committing heinous extrajudicial acts against Saudis and non-Saudis. But that sordid history was left behind after Prince Mohammed bin Nayef became deputy minister and then interior minister, between 2004 and 2017. He was appointed crown prince after King Salman bin Aziz ascended the Saudi throne. When the king appointed his own son, Mohammad bin Salman, as crown prince and Mohammed bin Nayef was relieved of all positions.

If it was established that the crown prince was behind the Khashoggi killing, Brennan argued that the US would have to act:

> That would include sanctions on all Saudis involved; a freeze on US military sales to Saudi Arabia; suspension of all routine intelligence cooperation with Saudi security services and a US-sponsored resolution condemning the murder: The US will never turn a blind eye to such inhuman behaviour, even when carried out by friends, because this is a nation that remains faithful to its values.[7]

In an interview with CBS's news program '60 minutes', President Trump promised to punish the Kingdom if investigations revealed an official Saudi hand in the killing. But he made it clear that he would not cancel the defence contracts reported to be worth $110 billion for the US defence industry. The US had much to gain from these deals. However, Riyadh had come to be punished by the private sector, as a number of prominent business people and news organisations chose to boycott the second meeting of Saudi-sponsored Future Investment Initiative, modelled after Davos. 'The FII offers a significant opportunity to engage with what will be the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, and a monumental force in the world of global investment,' read the invitation sent to the participants for the inaugural session in 2017. Among those who decided to sit out the 2018 meeting, was Dara Khosrowshahi, the Iranian–American CEO of Uber, a venture in which a Saudi fund had made an investment of $3.5 billion.[8] Several other business leaders declined to attend the second FII and none of the Western leaders turned up at the meeting. Analysts said, 'Repeat attendees noted fewer Americans and Europeans were present this year but more Russians leads to permanent damage to its relationship with the West.'[9] As the details about the Khashoggi murder

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continued to trickle out from Turkey, pressure built up on the Trump administration to take some form of action against Riyadh. But in the end, the strong relationship Mohammed bin Salman had built with the administration, worked to his benefit. Washington put twenty-one Saudis on a visa blacklist, or cancelled the visas already issued. These included fifteen Saudi citizens whom Turkey had named as being involved in the murder, as well as Saudi officials dismissed from their posts in October. Later, sanctions were imposed on seventeen Saudi citizens who were said to be involved in the journalist's killing. The Saudis finally came up with their interpretation of what happened to Khashoggi when he went to the Saudi consulate on that fateful day. The initial official explanation was that Khashoggi died when he got into an argument with a group of officials who had come to persuade him to return to Saudi Arabia. Very few outside the Kingdom accepted the story; there were just too many holes in it; one of them: 'What happened to the journalists' body?' Riyadh finally admitted that the murder was planned in advance of the killing. But the Saudi story kept on changing. According to the new story, the Saudis said that Khashoggi was killed with a lethal dose of tranquilisers and dismembered. The Kingdom's aim was to deflect attention from Mohammed bin Salman as the person who had ordered the killing. On 16 November 2019, the CIA concluded that Mohammed bin Salman had ordered the killing. The agency based its conclusion on three sets of crucial communications: intercepts of the crown prince's phone calls in the days before the killing; calls made by Khalid bin Salman, Mohammed bin Salman's brother, and the Kingdom's ambassador to the US, encouraging Khashoggi to visit the consulate in Istanbul and pick up the papers he needed; and calls by the team (that killed Khashoggi) to a senior aide of the crown prince, after Khashoggi was murdered and his body dismembered. According to Julian Barnes:

> The CIA has believed for weeks that Prince Mohammed [Bin Salman] was culpable in Mr. Khashoggi's killing but had been hesitant to definitively conclude that he had ordered it. The agency has passed that assessment on to law-makers and Trump administration.... The increasingly definitive assessment from the spy agency creates a problem for President Trump, who has tied his administration to Prince Mohammed and proclaimed him the future king Saudi Arabia, a long-time American ally.[10]

But Trump was not prepared to put the blame on Mohammed bin Salman. He was briefed about the CIA findings by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Gina Haspel, the CIA director, while flying to California,

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but refused to accept the conclusion that Mohammed bin Salman had given orders to kill Khashoggi. According to Mark Landler:

> Mr. Trump's stand is creating an American foreign policy that is becoming increasingly isolated in its position .... The European Union has demanded 'full clarity' from the Saudis about the killing of Mr. Khashoggi, who lived in Virginia and was a columnist for The Washington Post. Even other countries like Israel, with strategic ties to Saudi Arabia are not vocally defending Prince Mohammed. Republicans and Democrats in Congress flatly accuse the prince of being responsible and say they will push for much stronger action against Saudi Arabia.[11]

Nobody in Washington believed that the episode would result in the fall of Mohammed bin Salman. Many lawmakers wanted the Kingdom to change some of its policies, such as its deep involvement in the war in Yemen, or the incarceration of a number of critics of the regime.

On 20 November, more than a month after Khashoggi's death, Trump made it clear that he was not going to go after Mohammed bin Salman, even if he had ordered the journalist's death. In an eight-paragraph exclamation-mark-packed statement that aides said the president dictated himself, the focus was more on Iran than on the crime. The statement, titled 'America First!', began with the assertion that 'The world is a very dangerous place!' It then went on to describe the danger posed by Iran. In addition to fighting proxy wars and supporting terrorists, it said, 'The Iranians have killed many Americans and other innocent people throughout the Middle East' and, 'Tehran states openly and with great force, "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"'

About the possible Mohammed bin Salman involvement in the killing, the statement said, 'The United States may never know all the facts surrounding the murder.' The president followed the statement by talking to the press as he boarded his helicopter on the way to Mar-a-Lago, his sea resort, to spend the Thanksgiving holiday. 'Maybe he did or maybe he didn't! I am not going to destroy our economy by being foolish with Saudi Arabia.' After changing their story a number of times, Riyadh finally accepted that a team had been sent to Istanbul to apprehend the journalist and return him to Saudi Arabia. The US intelligence community maintained that Khashoggi's killing was premeditated.

In an article written for *The Washington Post*, published on 31 March 2019, the columnist David Ignatius provided some details about the way the Saudi Arabian security apparatus was working, helping Mohammed bin Salman to consolidate his hold over the Kingdom. He provided details

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in the context of the murder of Khashoggi. 'I've interviewed more than a dozen knowledgeable American and Saudi sources, who revealed some previously secret details.' According to Ignatius's information, Saud Al-Qahtani was the central player in the Saudi system, who had a number of American-trained people working for him. Some members of the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group that was sent to Istanbul to capture and bring back Khashoggi to Riyadh, received training in the US by the Tier-1 Group, an Arkansas-based company that works under a State Department license. The training project also involved Culpeper National Security Solutions, a unit of DynCorp. Both firms were owned by Cerberus Capital Management. Also involved was the NSO Group, an Israeli-founded company that provided sophisticated tools for hacking mobile phones. When the Saudis, under pressure from the US and other Western nations, took action against the Mohammed bin Salman-supported security group and arrested eleven individuals, charging five with offenses that carried the death penalty, Qahtani was spared. 'Despite reports that Qahtani is under house arrest, two Saudis told me that he is probably still communicating with his former aides.'[12]

Prime Minister Imran Khan, along with Jordan's King Abdullah II; Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa; and Saad Hariri, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, were the only senior political figures to attend the second Saudi conference modelled on the Davos format. Before boarding for Riyadh, Imran Khan told journalists that he had to go because, 'Right now we have the worst crisis in our history. We're desperate.' He flew home with an aid package of $6 billion, $3 billion as deposit for a year in the State Bank of Pakistan, the country's central bank, a $3 billion oil purchase facility that Pakistan could use to import oil from Saudi Arabia and a memorandum of understanding indicating the Kingdom's interest in building an oil-refinery at the port of Gwadar. Upon returning to Pakistan, Khan addressed his nation on television, detailing the reason for his country's close relations with the Kingdom.

Human Rights and Stifling of Dissent

The Kingdom's human rights record came under the spotlight for a number of reasons—the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi being one. The treatment of women was another. On 7 March 2019, the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council where Saudi Arabia was one of the forty-seven members, rebuked the Kingdom over its human rights record. The rebuke came in the form of a statement initiated by Iceland and

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signed by thirty-six nations. Iceland had replaced the US on the UN body. The statement pointed in particular to the treatment of women, who have been challenging the Kingdom's strict rules. It named ten women, all of whom were arrested in May 2018, in a crackdown shortly before Saudi Arabia introduced reforms allowing women to drive. Saudi interrogators had reportedly tortured at least four women on the list, with electric shocks and by whipping their thighs as well as sexually harassing and assaulting them. The rebuke also signalled the enduring international outrage over the murder of Khashoggi. The statement urged Saudi Arabia to cooperate with an inquiry into the Khashoggi murder, led by UN's special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard. She was set to submit her findings to the Human Rights Council in June. It was perhaps in response to this pressure that the Kingdom decided to have the detained women appear before a court on 13 March and have the charges for their detention read out to them. The arrested women had, in various ways, campaigned for women's rights. For instance, the ban on women driving would not have been lifted but for the work of 'Loujian al-Hathloul, who drove from the United Arab Emirates to the Saudi border, demanding to use her Gulf Cooperation Council-valid driving license on Saudi lands, just like her male fellow citizens.'[13] *The Washington Post* had maintained a steady flow of reports and editorials on the Khashoggi murder case as he had worked briefly for the newspaper, writing in its Global Opinions section. Khashoggi wrote only twenty columns before his murder. In an editorial published a day after the detained women were charged, the newspaper deplored that, 'The Saudis rejected the women's allegations of torture without a serious investigation. Now it is subjecting the victims to a trial on trumped up charges. If Mohammed bin Salman intended to modernise Saudi Arabia, he would be embracing women as allies. That he continues to persecute them tells a different story.'[14]

The newspaper continued with its editorial series and published another on 6 April, in which it argued that Mohammed bin Salman had sent an unmistakable signal to all who would be moved by the international backlash against his brutal treatment of human rights activists, particularly women, by having his security forces round up twelve additional persons who had openly supported those being tried. The new arrests included two US citizens. This action could be taken because the earlier American response 'lacked both a practical punch and the support of President Trump'. Why were the Saudis doubling down on their campaign, asked the newspaper? The answer: 'The only

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conceivable purpose of their detention is to deter Saudi and international support for the female activists—who have sought such modest reforms as allowing women to travel without the permission of a male relative.' The paper was troubled by what it saw as the US contribution to the creation of an environment in which the Saudi crown prince could continue to operate. It wrote:

> Mohammed bin Salman has yet to suffer any tangible sanction for his human rights abuses, even though they exceed anything seen in Saudi Arabia for decades. Senate Republicans have held up legislation that would mandate punishment for the murder of Khashoggi. That along with kid-glove treatment from Mr. Trump, has emboldened the regime.[15]

The annual report on human rights abuses in more than 200 countries and territories, mandated by the US Congress in 1977, gave a fair amount of space to the conditions in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the Khashoggi affair and the treatment of women. The report was the first since Mike Pompeo took the office of secretary of state. In the preface to the report, he wrote:

> By issuing today's report, we deploy the truth — the truth about abuses occurring around the globe — as one of the most powerful weapons in America's diplomatic arsenal.... The policy of this Administration is to engage with other governments, regardless of their record, if doing so will further U.S. interests. At the same time, we recognize that U.S. interests in the enduring stability, prosperity, and security of a world filled with strong, sovereign states will only be served if governments respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.[16]

Some in the human rights community were disturbed by Pompeo's statement.

> 'This statement signals to world leaders including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Egypt's president [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi] that the U.S. doesn't care about human rights and will forgive or forget even the most atrocious human rights abuses,' said Philippe Nassif, advocacy director for the Middle East Amnesty International US.[17]

The Saudi War in Yemen

While the Yemen conflict did not have any direct consequences for Pakistan—other than the tension it had created in the region—

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developments related to it needed to be watched carefully by Islamabad. The war has sharpened the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It was also drawing the Americans in; this became a real possibility after the 14 September 2019, attack on a Saudi oil processing field.

The conflict in Yemen involved four countries: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, and the US—all of whom were important for Pakistan's relations with the outside world. The Saudis once tried to enlist Pakistan on its side in the conflict. The Kingdom had relied on the Pakistan Army to help it in some earlier crises. It had requested Pakistan to send its foot-soldiers to do the ground fighting in Yemen. The request was placed before the national assembly by Nawaz Sharif, the then prime minister and was turned down. The assembly passed a resolution instructing the government and the military to stay out of the conflict in Yemen.

The Khashoggi incident had one important consequence. It focused the world's attention on the war in Yemen. The origin of the crisis in Yemen lay in the Arab Spring of 2011, when the youth rebelled against the authoritarian president who had governed the country for decades. Those who lost their positions were the long-serving president and his many associates. But as was the case with the other changes inspired by the Arab Spring, the one in Yemen did not bring peace to the country. Taking advantage of the turmoil, a long-neglected ethnic group moved in and began to gain territory in the country. They are called the Houthis; the group's members were Shiite and received support from Iran, which provided assistance to the rebels who came down from the hills to conquer the plains and the coastal areas. After capturing the capital, Sanaa, in 2014, they soon controlled Yemen's three largest cities.

Saudi Arabia, under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, saw this as a challenge that had to be met. Not having much of a ground force, it relied on its airpower. It enlisted the UAE as a partner and was aided by the US that sold the country airplanes, missiles, and bombs. In 2018, the port city of Hudaydah became a major battleground. 'But Hudaydha is also the gateway to a starving nation: Three-quarters of Yemen's 28 million people rely on some form of relief aid, and the vast majority of it passes through the port,' wrote Declan Walsh of *The New York Times*, one of the few foreign journalists allowed by the Saudis to visit the war-torn country. 'The war has ground on for more than three years, killing thousands of people and creating what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.'[18] The protracted war has left an estimated 20 million people at risk of starvation and hundreds of thousands exposed to a cholera epidemic.

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The furore over the Khashoggi affair resulted in a decision by the US to end the practice of inflight refuelling of Saudi aircraft engaged in bombing sites in Yemen. The Saudi bombing had inflicted heavy civilian damage and resulted in political pressure on the Trump administration, to exert oversight on the Saudi air operations and called for the suspension of the US refuelling planes in a war that had killed at least 10,000 people. According to one account, 'US military officials have said their refuelling program enables defensive missions, conducted by coalition planes—targeting Houthi sites, for example, from which missiles are thought to have been launched into Saudi Arabia—but acknowledged that they do not track what occurs once those planes have been refuelled.'[19] Under a Congressional Act passed in August 2018, the US administration was required to provide certification every 180 days, stating that Saudi Arabia and the coalition it was leading, was taking significant actions to limit the harm being done to civilians. This was needed to continue the assistance the US was providing the Saudis. In September, the secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, provided formal certification. In November, he joined the then defence secretary, Jim Mattis and called all sides in the war to end hostilities and take part in the UN-led negotiations. But Riyadh did not respond. 'The Saudis have escalated; they have intensified the war,' Bruce Riedel was quoted as saying. He had once worked for the CIA and was now at the Brookings Institution in Washington, specialising on the Middle East. 'It is a very public rebuke of both secretary of state and the secretary of defence by the Saudis. The administration has not said anything about that.'[20]

The US pressure, combined with that of some countries in Europe, brought the contesting parties to the negotiating table starting 6 December 2018. Chaired by the UN, the Saudi coalition and the rebels met in Stockholm, but did not sit at one table. They took positions in different rooms, with Martin Griffiths, the UN Yemen envoy and colleagues, shuttling between the two sides hoping to find some common ground. The future of the ownership of the key Red Sea port of Hudaydah, with the Saudis demanding that the rebels vacate the city, was critical for supplying the country with its basic needs. 'This is not on the table,' Abdul Malik al-Ajri, a member of the rebel delegation, told news agencies. Ajri also rebuffed a government suggestion that the defunct Sanaa international airport be reopened as a hub for domestic flights. The airport had been closed since 2014, when the Houthis overran the capital Sanaa and the start of the Saudi bombing. The US became a party with one objective: to counter the growing influence of Iran in the Middle

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East. Yet on 13 December 2018, the US Senate made an unprecedented move by voting 56 to 41 to limit presidential powers and sent a strong message of disapproval for the way the Yemen war was being conducted. Several Republicans voted for the motion as well. Nearly four years after Saudi Arabia intervened in the Yemeni civil war, Saudi and Yemeni commanders say that thousands of unmarked land mines planted by the Houthi rebels had emerged as perhaps their most formidable defence. According to one newspaper account:

> The hidden explosives, the commanders say, have helped keep the conflict close to a standstill despite the superior air power and other resources of the Saudi-led coalition. A Western mine-removal company hired by the Saudis estimates that the Houthis have laid more than a million mines, more than one for every 30 Yemenis and a concentration as high as that in any other country since World War II.[21]

According to David Kirkpatrick, 'The kingdom may be calling attention to the Houthi mines, to counterbalance allegations that the kingdom and its principle ally, the United Arab Emirates, have committed war crimes by conducting air strikes and imposing a partial blockade that have threatened Yemen with famine.'[22] The Senate again took note of the situation in Yemen and on 13 March 2019, in a landmark session, voted 51 to 46, to stop aid to the war in Yemen. The house also followed on 4 April 2019, with a vote of 247 to 175, which fell largely along party lines. It was the first time that US Congress successfully invoked the War Powers Act of 1973, by which it had sought at the end of the unpopular Vietnam War, to reassert its constitutional role in deciding when the US would go to war. This was an instance of Congress challenging the president's decisions as commander-in-chief.

On 16 April 2019, President Trump issued his second ever veto, this time on the war in Yemen. The resolution concerning Yemen was, 'An unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future,' Trump said in a statement issued after the veto. He participated in drafting the statement. 'It is our duty to protect the safety of more than 80,000 Americans who reside in certain coalition countries that have been subject to Houthi attacks from Yemen.' The veto decision went against the anti-war pledge Trump had made during his campaign for the presidency and again in his 'State of the Union' address, in February 2019. 'Great nations do not fight endless wars,' he

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had then said. According to one interpretation, the veto reflected his desire 'To keep strong relations with Saudi Arabia and does not share the view of Congress that the kingdom needs to be punished for the killing of Khashoggi.'[23]

The Attack on Saudi Oil Infrastructure

If the war in Yemen causes a major disruption in the supply of oil, the price of this vital commodity would increase. Pakistan, dependent on imported oil and struggling to close the large balance payments deficit, would be badly hurt.

The early morning attack on the districts of Khurais and Abqaiq, caused major damage. Khurais is one of Saudi Arabia's largest oil fields and is estimated to produce 1.5 million barrels per day. Abqaiq is the site of the Kingdom's largest oil-processing facility, operated by the oil giant, the state-owned Aramco. This was the most devastating strike into Saudi territory by Iranian-aided Houthis in more than four years of war in Yemen. They sent a fleet of ten drones that fired the rockets.

Experts have called Abqaiq a crown jewel of the oil economy of Saudi Arabia. It not only controls 5 per cent of global oil supply, but also handles nearly all of spare production capacity. An Aramco statement said production of 5.7 million barrels of crude oil was suspended as a result of the attacks. That represents 6 per cent of global supply—a shortfall that could send oil prices sharply higher. The Kingdom has about 188 million barrels, available in storage, enough, to cover any disruption of Abqaiq's estimated supply of 5 million barrels a day.

Washington was also assessing the extent to which Iran was involved in the attack. Trump called the Saudi crown prince on the phone. 'He expressed his country's readiness to cooperate with the kingdom in supporting its security and stability, stressing the negative impact of the recent terrorist attacks against Aramco facilities on the American economy as well as the global economy,' according to a Saudi readout/transcript of the telephone call.[24] However, in early January 2022, UN experts said that the weapons seized in the Arabian Sea, "confirm Tehran exports arms to Yemen." This was broadcasted by *Al Jazeera* that quoted a *Wall Street Journal* report.

The Houthi attacks notwithstanding, global businesses began to return to the Kingdom, sensing the basic strength of the economy. Hundreds of investors participated in the $100 billion international bond offering of the Saudi government, backed by Aramco. The bond sale was

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a great success following the company's disclosure that it generated $111.1 billion in net income—more than the combined income of Apple, Royal Dutch, and Exxon Mobil.

The Kingdom wants foreign businesses to support its fast-growing population of 33 million, most of whom are below the age of thirty and to deal with a nearly 13 per cent unemployment rate. Google was working on setting up a data centre there. Jamie Dimon, the chief executive of JPMorgan Chase who pulled out of the October 2018 conference, invested in the Aramco bond deal.

The investment company, Blackstone, was planning a joint enterprise worth $40 billion with Saudi Arabia. The country's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund, has assembled a portfolio of nearly $300 billion, which includes stakes in companies like Uber and the electric carmaker, Lucid. The Western business sentiment was well expressed by SoftBank's CEO, Masayoshi Son: 'As horrible as the Khashoggi event was, we cannot turn our back on the Saudi people. We will work to help them in their continued effort to reform and modernise their society.'[25]

Relations with Israel and Realignment in the Middle East

The Arab monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, have never recognised the Jewish state of Israel, but found common cause with it. Like Israel, they are nervous about the outcome of youth-led movements such as the Arab Spring of 2011 that toppled some authoritarian rulers in the Arab world. According to a detailed account in *The New York Times*, it appears that the NSO Group Technologies, an Israeli technology firm,[26] may have worked with the Saudi government to install software in the telephones of people who were in contact with the slain journalist, Jamal Khashoggi.

Amnesty International accused the Israeli firm of helping Saudi Arabia spy on a member of its staff. 'By continuing to approve of NSO Group, the Israeli Ministry of Defence is practically admitting to knowingly cooperate with NSO Group, whose software is used to commit human rights abuses,' said Molly Malekar, the program director of Amnesty International's Israeli office.[27] 'Because of the sweepingly invasive capabilities, the Israeli government classifies the software as a weapon. The company must obtain approval of the Defence Ministry, for its sale to foreign governments. Saudi Arabia paid $55 million last year for the software's use, according to Israeli newspaper reports.'[28]

Changing power structures in some parts of the world brought about a significant realignment in the Middle East. In Washington, Trump

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unexpectedly won the November 2016 presidential contest. One of the promises he had made in his campaign, was to bring peace to the Middle East by developing a plan that would be acceptable to all the parties in the area. His rise to power coincided with the consolidation of authority by Mohammed bin Salman. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, entered the White House as senior adviser to the president. He was given a large portfolio to handle, including the task of bringing peace to the Middle East. He devoted himself earnestly to creating a new set of circumstances in the Middle East, by getting the area's Sunni states to accept the existence in their midst of the Jewish state of Israel and to work with it to contain the rise of populist Islam in the region. Kushner did not favour political Islam as represented by organisations such as the Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood). He was troubled by the prospect of such organisations coming to power in the Arab world. This was also the goal of the Arab monarchies that had witness the strength of the youth during the Arab Spring and saw it as a threat to their rule. Israel also felt threatened by the rise of political Islam that supported the Palestinians who had lost their homes as a result of the creation of the Jewish state.

The stage was thus set for a major realignment in the Middle East. This brought together Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt. All were concerned about the impact of political Islam on their governing systems. Trump's America opted to support this coalition of interests. The coalition also came out strongly against the Shiite Houthi assault on Yemen. It was interesting that Saudi Arabia was the first country Trump decided to visit after assuming office.

It is in this context that we need to view the way the Trump administration saw the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. 'Mr. Trump and other senior officials keep emphasising their wish to preserve the United States' strategic relationship with Saudi Arabia, which dates to the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. There is merit to those arguments,' wrote *The Washington Post* in an editorial. But the paper added an important caveat:

> Maintaining a relationship with Saudi Arabia, however, should not require ignoring or suppressing the facts of what happened to Mr. Khashoggi; on the contrary they must be brought to light if the United States is to accurately assess its own interests. Nor can the bilateral relationship depend on one 33-year old prince—especially if it is confirmed that he has capped a record of reckless behaviour by overseeing the brutal murder of a distinguished journalist.[29]

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While the US reserved its judgment in the Khashoggi affair, Israel was openly supporting the Saudi rulers. 'What happened in the Istanbul consulate was horrendous and should be duly dealt with,' said Benjamin Netanyahu, the country's prime minister. 'It's very important for the stability of the world that Saudi Arabia remain stable.' Ron Dermer, the Israeli ambassador in Washington, clarified what his prime minister meant by 'duly dealt with'—the US should not 'throw out the prince with the bathwater'. It was obvious why the Israeli leadership was adopting this soft approach. They were afraid that the Khashoggi crisis was threatening to undo a carefully crafted regional strategy that had the crown prince as the key player. The idea was to forge a working alliance between Israel and the new generation of Sunni leaders united against Iran and willing to put pressure on the Palestinians.

According to Jackson Diehl, Israel was tossing the Saudis a lifeline, since 'Mohammed [bin Salman] would support a Trump Middle East peace plan that, while yet to be unveiled, seems to amount to coercing Palestinians into accepting Israel's terms.'[30] The peace plan was made public in April 2020. It was tilted in favour of Israel, which would be allowed to annex one-third of the territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River—territory that it had occupied in the 1967 war and never returned to the Palestinians. Most of this area had been settled by the Jewish people who had migrated to Israel from Russia and the US. Would these moves create stability in the Middle East, or add to the area's tendency towards volatility? One answer came from another editorial in *The Washington Post*:

> [The despotic regimes], which include Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, as well as Saudi Arabia, don't hesitate to employ the most extreme methods to accomplish their aims, including mass arrests, torture, forced disappearance and extra judicial killings....In doing so, they are repeating the mistakes of previous Arab dictators and storing up trouble for the future, in the form of alienated citizens and stagnant economies. In offering the regimes unqualified support, the Trump administration is putting vital US interests at stake.[31]

The approach the Trump administration adopted towards the Middle East was the product of two personal preferences. Trump was inclined to favour authoritarianism, while Kushner was strongly motivated by his religiosity to work in favour of Israel, the Jewish state.

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Mohammed bin Salman's 20 Hours in Islamabad

Pamela Constable summed up the significance of the 20-hour visit to Islamabad of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and how it was managed in Pakistan in her report for *The Washington Post*.[32] The royal visitor arrived a day late, but the delay was not explained. Mohammed bin Salman was the first Saudi leader to visit Pakistan in fifteen years. He was received by Prime Minister Imran Khan who lined up his entire cabinet to greet the prince. Khan then drove the prince himself to the prime minister's residence through the roads that had been emptied of all but security personnel. Mohammed bin Salman was accompanied by a large delegation. Islamabad's hotels were emptied out to accommodate the visitors. Two cargo planes delivered the prince's personal gym equipment as well as seven BMWs to ferry him and his close aides.

Constable's account of the reception reminded me of a story of an earlier royal visit, during the presidential tenure of Farooq Leghari. In 1997, the then crown prince, Abdullah, paid a visit to Islamabad and was received at the airport by the president and the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif and when the king arrived in a Boeing 747, the nose of the plane opened, and two large bullet-proof Mercedes 600 cars rolled out. He presented them to the president and prime minister.

Similarly, Mohammed bin Salman, on his short visit, was hosted by Imran Khan to a dinner, where he spoke briefly. He said that his visit to Pakistan was only the 'first phase' of a deepening collaboration between the two countries. He predicted, 'We believe Pakistan is going to be a very, very important country in the coming future, and we want to be sure that we are part of that.' Although there was no official mention of the war in Yemen and Saudi Arabia's rapidly deteriorating relations with Iran, one of Pakistan's four neighbours, the subject must have come up for discussion, especially when the prince met the Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. According to *The New York Times*, which covered the prince's Pakistan visit in long and daily reports:

> Saudi Arabia appeared bent on driving a wedge between Iran and Pakistan. In a televised news conference on Monday [18 February 2019], Adel el Jubeir, the Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs who is traveling with Prince Mohammed [Bin Salman], lashed out at Iran calling the country the world's 'chief sponsor of terrorism'.[33]

The news most Pakistanis wanted to hear was about money. The prince had already helped bail out the crisis Pakistan was facing at that time

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vis-à-vis foreign exchange reserves, by depositing $3 billion in the State Bank of Pakistan and gave another $3 billion as a soft loan to buy oil from the Saudis. In addition, on this particular trip, MOUs were signed for Saudi investment in Pakistan that included an oil refinery in Gwadar.

UAE: Building a Nation with Non-Nationals

International migration is one of the main reasons for Pakistan's close relations with the UAE. The emirates have become one of the major sources of remittances to Pakistan. There are an estimated 2.5 million low-skilled workers from Pakistan doing labour in the UAE's construction and service sectors. As with Saudi Arabia, the UAE also allows only temporary residence in the sheikhdoms that make up the country. In their book, *Building a Nation with Non-Nationals*, three sociologists have analysed the UAE model of nation-building. Their main conclusion is that with the UAE citizens accounting for a decreasing share of the total population; this model is not viable over the long run.[34]

While the first phase of migration from Pakistan was made up almost entirely of workers doing manual labour, professionals began to move in once the country needed trained workers for the growing service industry. Migrants from Pakistan also set up businesses in the country, mostly in the financial sector. Prime Minister Imran Khan's attempts at eradicating corruption revealed, via investigations ordered by the Supreme Court, that Pakistanis owned real estate valued at billions of dollars. A lot of these purchases were made by the laundering of money from Pakistan to the Emirates.

There were a number of reasons for Imran Khan's interest in the UAE. He wanted the states to be associated with Pakistan's efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan. Pakistan's deep involvement in finding a solution to the Afghan problem led to a series of meetings between the US and the Taliban, with a number of neighbouring countries watching the proceedings from the side-lines. The prime minister also sought funds from the UAE to strengthen Pakistan's financial situation. And he expressed a strong interest in the Arab state and its firms, to invest in Pakistan.

Khan made two trips to the UAE—the second to Abu Dhabi, on 18 November 2018, the 90th day of his premiership, seeking financial help. He went at a time when the team from the IMF was working in Islamabad, deciding on what Pakistan had to do to win the agency's support. A day before he left, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the foreign minister, announced

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that $1 billion was to arrive from UAE into the State Bank of Pakistan in a day or so, as a short-term deposit, to ease the financial strain on the country.

On 22 December 2018, newspapers carried the report that the UAE had formally announced its 'intention to deposit $3 billion in the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP), to support the financial and monetary policy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.' This action boosted Pakistan's reserves. 'Experts believe that Pakistan is no more in need of IMF's stringent bailout package estimated at $8 billion. Pakistan can raise another billion dollars by floating dollar-denominated international bonds to strengthen its ability to make international payments.'[35]

On 6 January, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE armed forces, paid a day-long visit to Islamabad. According to one account, 'in a rare gesture, Prime Minister Imran Khan received the crown prince at Noor Khan Airbase [Pakistan Air Force Base Nur Khan founded as RAF Station Chaklala and previously known as PAF Base Chaklala] and personally drove him to the PM House where the official welcoming ceremony was held.'[36]

During his more than three years in office, Khan has continued with the long-standing tradition of working closely with the oil-rich countries in the Arab world. That makes economic sense for Pakistan, which has to work hard to close the two gaps economists have long-recognised that bedevil most of the developing world. These are the gaps between foreign expenditure and earnings and domestic savings and investment. That said, the Khan government must watch the disturbances that are the result of the awkward positions taken by the Trump administration in the Middle East. Khan has worked closely with Turkey and its President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to deal with this challenge.

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Turkey: Halting Political Progress in a Non-Arab Muslim Nation

In the early days, after the 1947 Partition, Turkey was a much-venerated country—a sentiment reflected in Allama Iqbal's poetry—as the memory of the Caliphate,[1] that ended after World War I, still lingered in the minds of the Muslims of South Asia. That sentiment has not been forgotten.

Pakistan and Turkey are similar in a number of ways. Both are large, Muslim countries with a Sunni majority. Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country in the world, after Indonesia. Turkey, meanwhile, ranks sixth. Pakistan has 210 million people, with 96.5 per cent subscribing to the Islamic faith. Turkey has 80.8 million, of which 99.8 per cent are Muslim. Since their populations are predominantly Muslim, it has meant that these countries have searched for political Islamic identities. In Turkey, this matter was resolved in the 20th century, by Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938), the founder of the Republic of Turkey. After he led the fight for the survival of the Turkish state, subsequent to World War I, a grateful people gave him the title of 'Ataturk,' the father of the Turkish nation. He rebuilt what was left of the Ottoman Empire by pulling back from Islam as the defining feature of the new nation, and its predominant culture. He went as far as to give up the Turkish script based on Arabic and adopted the Latin-script alphabet for writing the Turkish language. Some of the letters were modified from the 'Latin-originals', to meet the phonetic requirements of the Turkish mother tongue. He also ordered all Turks to have surnames. His aim was to turn it into a secular, modern, and industrial nation, i.e. he wanted to Europeanise Turkey.

Ataturk's legacy was protected for decades by the country's military and by his Republican Party. Not only did the armed forces prescribe the limits beyond which politicians could not go, they also directly intervened in running the country, whenever they felt that the political leadership was departing from the principles of governance on which Ataturk had founded the modern Turkish state. Similar to Pakistan, military coups became a repeated feature of Turkey's political landscape, in order to keep the country on 'Ataturk-ian' path. What could be described as the 'Istanbul culture and way of life', became dominant. This was later challenged by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who based his political rise starting from Istanbul. He introduced a new political system, in which all power was concentrated in his hands.

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The Evolving Political System

Ever since the founding of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the country has ridden a political roller coaster. Its problems are not very different from those faced by Pakistan, another Muslim majority country that was also looking for a way to move towards political modernity. Like Pakistan, the role of the military in politics remained undefined, although President Recep Tayyip Erdogan seemed to have succeeded, at least for the moment, in pushing the armed forces to the background.

There was also the issue of the role of Islam in politics and in governance. The founders of both countries—Ataturk in Turkey and Mohammad Ali Jinnah in Pakistan—wanted their nations to be modern political entities, in which the will of the people would prevail. For Ataturk, that meant getting religion out of the way. The military helped in that endeavour. In Pakistan it was the opposite. It was the military, led by General Ziaul Haq, that pushed Pakistan towards Islamisation. That happened even though most men in uniform were not religious.

While the military in Turkey assigned itself the role of the protector of the national ideology, that was not the case in Pakistan, for the simple reason that it had not found an ideology to defend. The main reason for the military's claim to a significant share in the government's budget, was the country's enmity with India. The military also got involved in keeping peace in the country. According to General Jehangir Karamat (retd.), although the armed forces recruit from diverse cultures and backgrounds, once the recruits are in the military, a powerful system of training and education moulds them into following the common ethos.[2] The Pakistani military had to fight extremist militias, such as the Taliban, similar to the way in which the Turkish military has had to fight the Kurdish militias in the eastern part of the country and across the border in Syria.

Ataturk and his successor's policy involved expelling Islam from Turkish society and ultimately resulted in a reaction inspired by Erdogan and his political party, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; AKP). Most of the time, the Turkish military intervened in politics to protect Ataturk's secular approach to governance. As I will note below, it tried again in 2016 and attempted to remove Erdogan from office by a coup.

There is also the unresolved question of the proper distribution of political power. In Pakistan, federalism as a principle of governance is more firmly established than in Turkey. Especially after the adoption of

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the 18th Amendment in the Constitution, the country's four provinces wield more power than ever before. In Turkey, large municipalities, such as Ankara and Istanbul, wielded political influence, if not political power. Their importance in the evolving political system was the source of a prolonged political crisis in Turkey. The Kemalists—those who were wedded to Ataturk's political philosophy—had strong support in the large urban areas, until the political rise of Erdogan in Istanbul.

The defeat of the AKP in the local elections of 31 March 2019, was seen as the limit to which an important segment of the population was prepared to go, to accept the still-evolving political system envisioned by Erdogan. Those who opposed him first tried the traditional Turkish way, i.e. a military coup, but failed. They then turned to the ballot box. In the election for the mayor of Istanbul, a city of 15 million people, Ekrem Imamoglu, the Republican Party's candidate, led Binali Yildirim, the candidate of Erdogan's AKP, by only 13,000. Imamoglu entered the mayoral office on 6 April, but AKP did not accept the result. Declaring that the election had been stolen, they applied to the High Election Council for a recount. Eleven judges were on the board of the High Election Council, elected by the members of the Supreme Court and the State Council.

In a news briefing, Yildirim compared the vote to 'rotten meat'. A month later, on 6 May, the High Election Council, by a vote of seven to four, ordered a new election in the city. The new contest was scheduled for 23 June. The opposition was left with the difficult decision of whether to take part in a new election, or to adopt a policy of non-involvement. It chose to fight, encouraged by the decision made by several small parties to withdraw from the race.

That could tip the balance, in a race that was decided the first time around by razor-thin margin of less than 0.2 per cent of the total vote. The parties that pulled out took a combined 2.6 per cent of the vote and their decision not to contest could make a difference. 'The stakes are high. The odds are against Erdogan. This is a question about whether Erdogan is willing to pay a long-term political price to take Istanbul,' said Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the director of the German Marshall Fund in Ankara, a policy institution.[3] The elections were held on 23 June and the opposition candidate, Imamoglu, improved his margin to 54 per cent against AKP's Yildirim, who garnered 45 per cent.

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The Failed Coup of 2016

The fault lines in the developing political system of Turkey became apparent when the military, aided by some other parts of the government, attempted to overthrow the government headed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in July 2016. The attempt failed, but left 251 people, mostly civilians, dead and wounded more than 2,000. Twelve of those killed were in the military's general staff headquarters when the coup leaders struck and held the Chief of Staff, General Hulusi Akar, and others at gunpoint. The president, not losing his nerve and using his mobile phone, was able to organise his supporters. They mobbed and overcame the forces that were involved in the attempt. The attempt to overthrow the Erdogan government was not well planned; it did not have the support of the entire military. The coup-makers held eighteen generals as hostages; among them was General Salih Zeki Colak, the commander of land forces. Erdogan used the opportunity presented by the failed coup to move against those who opposed his rule and did not like the direction in which he was taking the country. His focus was on Fethullah Gulen, who was once the president's close associate. After the two fell out, Gulen went to the US, where he lives in exile.

President Erdogan pressed the authorities in Washington to extradite Gulen, but the US government maintained that the evidence presented to them was not strong enough to send him back to Turkey. The post-coup crackdown progressively widened to include an entire class of political opponents, as the government purged tens of thousands from the judiciary and academia, as well as the police and the military. President Erdogan believed that these institutions were systemically penetrated by Gulen and his associates. Carlotta Gall of *The New York Times*, who followed the way the government proceeded against the opposition forces, wrote a long story about the way in which the post-coup events unfolded:

> Mass trials have a history and have frequently been used in the aftermath of coups, including by some of those on trial today. Yet the sheer scale of the process this time around is unmatched almost anywhere else in the West. Critics say the mass trials represent collective punishment that has reached far beyond leaders of the coup effort, as Mr Erdogan's crackdown swept up every man on active duty that night in the bases and units around the country.[4]

Metin Topuz, an employee who had worked for decades in the US Consulate in Istanbul, was arrested in 2017 and sentenced for terror

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offences a few years later. Gall reported, 'Mr. Topuz is widely viewed as a pawn in a larger diplomatic game' that included the use of the Kurdish forces by the US, to beat back the ISIS and a large arms purchase from Russia.[5] It was in this period of political instability that the Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, was murdered in Istanbul.

There was some speculation in the West about the motives behind the long address to the Turkish Parliament by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, following the brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The journalist was killed on 2 October 2018. On 22 October, the Turkish leader outlined the timeline of the incident that led to the killing of Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. However, Erdogan stopped short of naming Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as the leader of the conspiracy.

He almost certainly views the Khashoggi episode as a chance to kneecap a regional rival and advance his goal of making Turkey the dominant Sunni Muslim power. He harbours dreams of presiding over a renewed Ottoman Empire. While that might be feasible in terms of political influence, it's doubtful he could extend Turkey's territory to any significant degree, though he has moved troops into northern Syria to fight what he views as Kurdish separatists who endanger Turkey's borders.[6] This was the context in which Erdogan reached out to the Pakistani prime minister. The two countries have come under stress for much the same reasons. They are going through serious political transitions, although the one in Pakistan is generally viewed favourably in the West, while that in Turkey was seen as something of a relapse. The latter appeared to have abandoned the democratic path. In Ankara, a populist leader had strengthened his control over Turkey's political system, moving it towards an authoritarian rule. In Pakistan, a democratically elected leader came to the helm with a mandate to reform the system. The third reason common to both countries, was the handling of public finance by Ankara and Islamabad. Both had done it irresponsibly. Pakistan had not borrowed as heavily as Ankara had done from the world's banking system to finance its foreign deficit. In Turkey, there was much borrowing to build fancy apartment buildings, shopping malls, mosques, and a presidential palace that cost $615 million. For expenditures such as these, it relied heavily on loans from foreign banks. The Western banks were happy to lend to Turkey and similarly situated countries, since the US Federal Reserve system kept interest rates very low.

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It is interesting to note that there was much more money to be made in places such as Turkey and Pakistan, where the returns on portfolio investments were noticeably high. For a time, Pakistan had one of the world's best performing stock markets. However, this earnings gap began to narrow, with the rise in US interest rates. Private funds began to pull out of emerging stock markets.

Where the two countries have differed, was over their policy with respect to the value of the domestic currencies. The Turks allowed the lira to float, controlling its value by changing the domestic rate of interest. A higher rate brought in more dollars and increased the value of the domestic currency. In the case of Pakistan, the central bank in the previous government had used its one-time comfortable foreign reserves to buy the local currency, thus pushing up the rate of exchange, causing massive devaluation in 2018.

Would these two financial crises affect the global system? One answer came from Matt Phillips, who wrote, 'In past decades, plunges in emerging-market currencies have ignited broader crises. Turkey's lira is crashing and that has financial markets on edge.'[7] Phillips was not alone in worrying. Many analysts were concerned whether the lira—and by extension, the Pakistani rupee—crisis might create a ripple effect that may have fatal consequences across the globe.

One example of what could happen was the 2 July 1997 devaluation of Thailand's baht, that made investors lose confidence not only in the country's currency, but also in its economy. 'Throughout the first half of July, nobody anticipated that the Thai crisis would spread, as soon as it did, to South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore and even Latin America'[8] wrote Vikram Khanna in *The Straits Times*. Is history repeating itself? Turkey's current account deficit had ballooned to 7.9 per cent of GDP in the first quarter of 2018, from being 3.8 percent as recently as 2016.

There was no doubt that fragile economic and financial systems around the globe could come under pressure because of the building Turkish crisis. There are some worrying signs in the June 2018 Annual Economic Report of the Bank of International Commerce, according to which, the outstanding stock of dollar credit to the non-bank, bank borrowers in emerging markets, has almost doubled since 2008 and currently stands at a staggering $3.6 trillion.

Towards the end of 2021, the monetary crisis in Turkey worsened reported *Al Jazeera*, as the lira, 'lost nearly 30 percent of its value against the dollar in November.'[9] One of the reasons was the lowering of the

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interest rates by almost 18% by the Turkish Central Bank. CNBC stated on 16 December that the lira had lost, '50% of its value against the dollar to date.' While the Turkish economy grew at a rate of 7.4 per cent in 2021, reported Patricia Sabga, it started shrinking in the fourth quarter because of lira troubles. President Erdogan has addressed the resulting soaring inflation in a speech and blamed the foreigners of sabotaging the country's economy and declared an '*economic war of independence*' that he is confident his country will win.

Many Pakistani analysts were concerned that Pakistan may also be borrowing excessively.

The US Factor

What was common to the two stressed nations was also the extreme hostility towards both shown by Washington during the term of Donald Trump. While the US president was never enthusiastic about Pakistan, for a while seemed he seemed to admire Erdogan. The Turkish leader had a lot in common with strong leaders and Trump appeared to show that he admired rulers who had autocratic tendencies. On the other hand, vis-à-vis Pakistan, he used harsh language and was angry because it did not give full support to America's effort in Afghanistan. However, shortly afterwards, Trump turned on Turkey and asked his commerce department to double the tariff on the Turkish import of steel and aluminium. This meant excluding those Turkish commodities from the American market.

The anger against both countries might have been for the same reason: the roles they were playing made it difficult for Washington to triumph in the two wars in which victory was eluding it—in Afghanistan and Syria. Washington wanted to see both countries fall in line with the US, in the conduct of these two unending conflicts. But Washington's wishes did not translate into action by Turkey, or Pakistan. The two had good reasons for not getting enmeshed in what they saw as unwinnable wars. The US under Trump had not thought through how it wished to protect its strategic interests in the Middle East. Washington was the source of a series of crises that have hit the region in the past several years. Since Trump took office, in January 2017, policy reflected the whims of the president, who operated on the basis of what he called his 'gut feeling'. He valued his instinct over the suggestions of his advisers. One manifestation of this approach to policymaking, is the up and down approach followed by the US in Syria. How Washington managed its presence in Syria is a

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good case study of the confusing approach to world affairs during the Trump era.

There is a fair amount of geographical distance between Pakistan and Syria, Turkey, and the Kurds. What happens in Syria once US troops abandon the conflict they started in that country, will have direct consequences for Pakistan. It may lead to thousands of ISIS soldiers heading towards other unsettled parts of the world, such as the foothold they already established in Afghanistan and the Philippines, in particular. Trump had promised his followers that if elected as president, he would bring back all the troops that were engaged in the wars in the Middle East—conflicts that his country should not have started in the first place. But he had not bothered to think of what would happen to the places that were thoroughly destabilised by the actions taken by his predecessors.

Several foreign powers were involved in the conflict in Syria. The US and many European countries made no secret of their aim to remove Bashar Hafez al-Assad from the presidency and bring democracy to the Arab nation. That was the objective of the Arab youth that brought the world the Arab Spring of 2011. But unlike the strongmen in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, who were removed by the movement, Assad and his regime were able to stay in power even if it meant the deaths of tens of thousands of citizens and displacement from their homes of half of the country's population. Iran and the Shiite militias in Iraq provided Assad support. Turkey, one of Syria's many neighbours, also got involved, aiming to achieve a number of objectives. For Ankara, the most important issue was to prevent the Kurds from carving out a geographic space for themselves on the Turkish border. That would have happened if the US had pulled out its entire force of 2,000 from Syria.

A telephone conversation between President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with President Donald Trump, resulted in him changing his mind. The White House, on 20 February, said that it planned to leave 200 American troops in Syria, signalling a partial retreat from the previous position of complete withdrawal that had led to the resignation of defence secretary Jim Mattis. In the telephone conversation, the two leaders agreed to work together to create a 'safe zone'.

It was not clear whether the presence of a small, residual contingent of 200 troops would save the war-torn country from falling into the hands of the Shiite forces that were aligned with Iran. Could it link up with the area in Iraq in which the Kurds had created an autonomous region? Due to obvious reasons, this possibility was a cause of concern to the government in Ankara. In an interview with CNN, the Turkish

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president made it clear, 'If there is to be a free zone, then it must be under our control. Because that is my border.'

Ankara regarded the Kurdish YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel—People's Protection Units) militia, which controls that region and has been a key American ally against the fight against ISIS, as a terrorist group. Turkey had repeatedly threatened to intervene militarily against the YPG east of the Euphrates River, where the safe zone was planned. Military action by Ankara could draw in both Iran and the US, this time on the same side of the conflict.

On 6 October 2019, Trump changed his mind again. Another telephone call from President Erdogan led to an announcement by the American leader that his country was pulling out all its troops from Syria's north. This gave Ankara the opportunity to establish its domain over the area. The Kurds were the main fighting force that had worked with the small American force, to defeat the ISIS in that area. They provided the boots on the ground, while the Americans came in with intelligence and air support. That combination proved to be too much for ISIS forces and it lost thousands of its soldiers, while thousands more surrendered and were placed in prison camps guarded by the Kurds.

The Turks carried out their announced intentions; when the Americans pulled out, they pulled in. An analysis by *The New York Times*, was right in detailing the consequences of the American move. There were a number of winners from the game Trump had played, said the newspaper. The more important among them was Turkey, which quickly routed the Kurdish groups whom Ankara considered terrorists and were living in an American protectorate. But there were other winners.

> Chief among them is President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who gains vast influence in a strategic corner of the Middle East where, until 2015, he had almost none. Now, he is a player, and already is filling the territorial and political vacuum that Mr. Trump left after he agreed to get out of the way of the Turkish invasion of Syria, which a small contingent of American Special Operations forces were there to prevent by their very presence. Iran was also a winner. It has long used Syria as a route to send missiles to Hezbollah and flex its muscles across the region.[10]

Developments involving Turkey in Syria should be of deep concern for Pakistan. This subject must have come up for discussion when the prime minister visited Ankara.

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Turkey's Role in the Muslim World and Imran Khan's First Visit to Ankara

In all likelihood, Recep Tayyip Erdogan will leave as impressive a mark on Turkey's history as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The two leaders have little in common. Ataturk wanted to pull his country out of the social, political, and economic backwardness that had marked the decline of the Ottoman Empire. He forged a modernised, secular nation. Erdogan, on the other hand, believed in what came to be called 'political Islam'. Istanbul's Taksim Square became the symbol of the struggle between the modernists and the traditionalists.

The square, which was named after a Byzantine cistern wall, has embodied many different lives. It was once at the edge of the city. Its surroundings were populated by non-Muslim communities, to a large extent of Greek, Armenian, and Jewish descent. An Orthodox church stood on the southern corner, where there once had been an Armenian cemetery. During the Ataturk era, the square became the centre of modern Istanbul, with the modernist Ataturk Cultural Centre becoming the focus of social life in the city. In 2012, the square's appeal was expanded when it was turned into a pedestrian promenade. 'The defining moment in Taksim Square's history came in 2013, when it was the site of large and violent protests against Mr. Erdogan, who was then prime minister,' wrote Carlotta Gall from Istanbul, for *The New York Times*.[11]

Under Erdogan, Turkey made a number of moves departing from the basic principles of governance established by Ataturk. He brought political Islam to the country. Some of the moves by Erdogan were in reaction to those of Trump. Successfully wooed by Trump and his family—in particular, his son in-law, Jared Kushner—for personal, economic reasons, many Arab monarchs abandoned the Palestinian cause in the land occupied by the Israelis.

President Erdogan took the opportunity to insert himself and his country into Middle Eastern politics and became a champion of the Palestinian issue. This was particularly after Trump sent out a tweet on 27 March 2019, that his country would recognise the Golan Heights as Israeli territory. In an interview with the international TV channel of Turkey, TGRT Haber, Erdogan said that Turkey planned to take the issue to the UN. The Turkish president was also pulling parts of the Muslim world away from the US—a move that was widening the chasm between his country and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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Turkey's rapid move towards an Islamic, semi-authoritarian state, had created serious social and economic dislocations in the country. For almost two decades, Erdogan had been a popular leader, offering the people a vision of restoring the glories of the Ottoman Empire. There was robust economic growth and sharp increase in international trade. Industrial output increased significantly. The European nations, impressed by this performance, revived the idea of bringing the country into the European Union.

The political system that had brought Erdogan to power, seemed to be working. But this euphoria was disturbed by the failed 2016 coup, when the military attempted to dislodge the president. Erdogan saw this as a challenge to his rule by a powerful religious leader, Fethullah Gulen, who was operating out of a sanctuary in Pennsylvania, in the US. His vision of the role of Islam in the Turkish state was different from the one Erdogan wanted to adopt in Turkey. The two had once been close political allies but had fallen out after Erdogan gained power.

A significant segment of the Turkish population had given up on their country; they did not like the direction in which their president was taking their homeland. Hundreds of well-established people moved out of the country, taking a fair amount of capital with them. According to the Turkish Institute of Statistics, more than a quarter million Turks emigrated in 2017—an increase of 42 per cent from 2016, when nearly 178,000 had left the country. The exodus continued in 2019–20. According to Ibrahim Sirkeci, the director of Transnational Studies who has studied the Turkish situation, waves of students and teachers had left Turkey before, but the latest exodus looked more like a permanent reordering of society and threatened to set Turkey back by decades.[12]

A number of countries in the Muslim world had difficult relations with the West, in particular the US and some countries in Europe. Turkey was one of these. Among the Europeans, France had interests in Africa that were driven by its colonial presence in the continent. Turkey was prepared to use its military to underscore its interests in the Mediterranean. There were hostile encounters in the sea, in July 2020, between Turkey on the one side and the US and France on the other. One analyst wrote:

> A NATO member since 1952, Turkey is too big and powerful and strategically important—it is in the crossroads of Europe and Asia—to allow an open confrontation....Turkey has pursued its own interests in northern Syria, where it now has more than 10,000 troops, and in Libya, where its military support for a failing government helped turn the tide in return for a share in Libya's rich energy resources.[13]

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France, with its policy of secularism, was afraid that Erdogan's Turkey would reinsert Islam into politics in North Africa, encourage Islamist militias and damage Frances's sphere of influence. According to Soner Cagapaty, the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for North East Policy, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, was worried about the way the Turkish government was conducting foreign affairs.[14] France is also wary of Turkey aiding Libyan rebels. Additionally, Turkey has an ongoing maritime dispute with Greece.

It was in this environment of growing tension between Turkey and the US, that Imran Khan went on a visit to the former. He spent two days (3–4 January 2019) in Turkey. There were a number of reasons behind the visit; it was prompted by the rapid unravelling of the situation in Afghanistan, caused in part by Trump's decision to begin pulling out American troops from that country. The visit to Turkey resulted in the agreement to hold a tri-lateral summit in Ankara, in the Spring of 2019, to be attended by the leaders of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Imran Khan and Erdogan also discussed relations with the Middle East in the meetings. Erdogan advised the Pakistani leader to widen his network of relationships and bring other resource-rich countries into the group that his country was reaching out to for financial help. He volunteered to establish Imran Khan's contacts with the Emir of Qatar. The offer was accepted and soon after returning from Turkey, Khan visited Doha. Erdogan also wished to build a non-Arab alliance in the Muslim Middle East, that would not operate under the influence of Saudi Arabia. The way Riyadh handled the Khashoggi killing further deepened the Turkish–Saudi divide. The Turkish leader wanted Pakistan on his side. Several steps have been taken in this regard. Istanbul–Tehran–Islamabad Railway is an international freight train service and the first train of the decade on this route left Islamabad's Margalla Railway Station on 21 December 2021 and reached Ankara in about thirteen days. Furthermore, Turkish officials have praised the, 'Pakistan armed forces professionalism' while the present PTI government seeks Turkish investment and wants the business community to take advantage of 'Pakistan's business-friendly environment.'

Are Pakistan and Turkey heading in the same direction? This is an important question, since the political paths the two countries are taking could profoundly influence the politically underdeveloped Muslim world.

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Looking Towards the Middle East

In this chapter, I deal not only with the Middle East that encompasses the 'Arab world', but also a number of non-Arab Muslim countries such as Israel, Turkey, and Iran.

The term the 'Arab world' refers to twenty-two nations, with a combined population of 422 million. They include the nations of North Africa and the Middle East, comprising Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, the UAE, and Yemen. Most of these countries use Modern Standard Arabic as their language. The countries included in this geographic definition are the members of the Arab League, an organisation founded in 1945, with the purpose of developing a common worldview.

There are other organisations to which the countries of the Arab world belong. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is another institution of which all Arab states are members. Founded in 1969, it has fifty-seven members with a combined population of 1.8 billion in 2015. Of the total membership, fifty-three countries have a Muslim majority. The OIC 'is the collective voice of the Muslim world' and works to 'safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.' It is headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. As mentioned earlier in this book, OIC remained largely ineffective in achieving its objectives and failed to put in place a platform that could represent the, 'united voice of the Muslim world.' However, the situation that arose in Afghanistan after the swift exodus of the US Army, alarmed its neighbours. This is why the OIC Extraordinary Session of Foreign Ministers was held in Islamabad on 17 December 2021. This conference was convened to address the, *humanitarian catastrophe* unfolding in Afghanistan. According to *Dawn*, 'Envoys from 57 Islamic nations as well as observer delegations participated in the session during which it was decided to set up a Humanitarian Trust Fund and Food Security Programme to deal with the rapidly aggravating crisis.'[1] Addressing the summit Prime Minister Imran Khan warned of the possibility that Afghanistan could become a major, 'man-made crisis in the world.'

The Middle East has also become a region that has attracted the attention of the world's major powers. The US, China, Russia, India, and several European nations have all got interests in the area. The Arab

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Spring continues to evince residual effect. And then there is the age-old conflict between the Muslim world's main sects, the Sunnis and the Shiites. Saudi Arabia and its allies favour the former, Iran the latter. Currently, there are fast paced changes in the region.

In this chapter, I will use Sudan as a case study to examine how an underdeveloped political system can cause chaos in the Muslim world. Pakistan, as I have suggested in several parts of this work, has moved towards greater political stability by opting for a Western-style liberal political order. Its experience should be studied as an example of political success in the otherwise politically stunted Islamic world.

The Arab Spring Returns to the Middle East: The Case of Sudan

The Arab Spring of 2011 brought about significant changes in several Arab countries, particularly Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria. The youth are active again; first in Algeria, then in Sudan and on to Libya. In fact, the change that occurred in Sudan and the forces that brought it about, were different from those that had scored a success in Algeria. Sudan evinces a good case to study the various forces that have kept much of the Muslim world in political turmoil. For several reasons, a handful of leaders were able to stay in power for long periods of time in the Middle East. Some, such as the deposed President of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, had popular support until the oil-rich nation went into a serious economic downturn. He had come to power in 1989, when, as the commander of the army's paratrooper battalion, he headed an Islamist junta that ousted Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, in a bloodless coup. That was Sudan's fourth military intervention since the country's independence in 1956.

The second coup brought Gaafar Mohamed el-Nimeiri, an army colonel, to power in 1969; he ruled until 1985. 'Both of these episodes were terminated by popular uprisings. Nothing, however, prepared us for the al-Bashir regime,' wrote Jamal Mahjoub in an article that appeared in *The New York Times*, a day after the fall of the dictator.[2]

The al-Bashir government initially flirted with what came to be called 'political Islam'.

> For the first decade of his rule, he was viewed as a frontman for a powerful Islamist cleric, Hassan al-Turabi, a Sorbonne educated ideologue with ideas about having a government based on sharia. International jihadists

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> including Osama bin Laden flocked to Khartoum to take advantage of developments in Sudan. A new conservative interpretation of Islam was being imported to Sudan from across the Red Sea by Hassan al-Turabi, a man with a charismatic smile and a doctorate from Sorbonne, who was the ideologue behind Mr. Al-Bashir's coup. In Mr. al-Turabi's twisted vision we were to be the vanguard of an Islamic renaissance. Religion would sweep away differences of class, ethnicity and wealth.[3]

In 1993, the US reacted and blacklisted Sudan as an international sponsor of terrorism. Six years later, in 1999, al-Bashir discarded al-Turabi. According to Alex de Wall, a professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and an expert on Sudan, al-Bashir is, 'like the spider at the centre of the web—he could pick up on the smallest tremor, then deftly use his personalised political skills to manage the politics of the army.'[4] In 1978, Sudan found large deposits of oil, but these were mostly in the south of the country, which had practically no say in governance. By 1999, Sudan was exporting oil. Living standards gradually rose in what was one of the poorest countries in the African continent. New roads were built and remote villages were provided with clean drinking water and electricity. But the boom lasted for only a half a dozen years. The south, as well as the Darfur region in the west, rebelled and President al-Bashir responded ruthlessly, with the help of militias drawn from the north. He was accused by the International Criminal Court with charges of genocide. He was the first sitting head of state to be targeted by the Hague-based court.

Pressured to hold a referendum to determine the will of the people, the southerners voted to secede and create a state of their own—South Sudan. Three-fourth of the oil reserves were in the south and with the control on those gone and revenues drying up, Sudan's economy weakened badly and by the end of 2018, it was in free fall. The rate of inflation went up to 72 per cent. The urban middle class was dismayed to see their living standards collapse and revolted. The ever-loyal military withdrew its support. The spider in the web was thus overwhelmed.

There were differences in the way the situation developed in Algeria and Sudan. In the former, the agitation that brought the president down was in the style of the 2011 Arab Spring. Activism by the youth was the main cause. In Sudan, it was the middle class that had once supported the governing establishment and then withdrew its support. In doing so, it came equipped with an institution that would continue to function, even after its immediate aim of removing the president was realised.

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Representing the principal protest group, was the Sudanese Professionals Association that brought together lawyers, doctors, economists, and managers and owners of small businesses, even some in the civil service. When the president called in the military to suppress the movement, it acted with restraint. It was an indication that the rebels also had the support of some in the armed forces.

Finally, the military ousted President al-Bashir, ending his thirty-year rule, and placed him in custody, the government was dissolved, and the constitution was suspended. The Professional Association was not impressed with the moves. Sara Abdelgalil, the spokesperson for the Professionals stated, 'What has been just started is for us a coup and it is not acceptable. Our request for a civilian transitional government has been ignored.' The ruling generals formed what they called the Transitional Military Council.

Those who had forced the ouster of Al-Bashir were not quite done. Despite the curfew ordered by the military, the protesters refused to leave the place they had occupied—the space outside the army quarters. The military acted again, and the interim leader Lt. Gen. Ahmed Awad ibn Auf was replaced by Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. At the same time, military leaders announced that they would not extradite al-Bashir from Sudan and he would stand trial for the crimes he had committed; a decision that drew widespread condemnation from international human rights advocates. The generals said that they intended to transfer power to civilians, but that it may take two years to do so.

The council announced that it would take steps to recover assets the members of the old regime may have stolen in the final days of their rule. According to one report, 'Many protesters say they are committed to putting pressure on the military council...and would call for renewed demonstrations...until the military transfer at least some power to civilians, which has yet to happen. The protesters have voiced concerns that unless they are vigilant, the generals will try to out manoeuvre them and thwart a transition to democracy.'[5] Foreign pressures are also being applied. The African Union's Peace and Security Council told the military that it has two weeks to transfer to a 'transitional civilian-led political authority, or face suspension from the African Union.'

The moves by the military did not ease the crisis; a long-feared confrontation between security forces and protesters occupying parts of Khartoum, erupted on 3 June and left more than a hundred people dead, several of them children, and hundreds injured. The attack on the protesters was carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). It grew out

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of the Janjaweed militias used by the al-Bashir government to suppress Darfur insurgency in the 2000s. Pockets of defiant protesters gathered at mosques on 4 June, turning their Eid-ul-Fitr prayers into calls for sustained civil disobedience.

A prolonged role by the transitional military council headed by Lt. Gen. Al-Burhan, was not acceptable to the protesters. Gen. Burhan spent weeks visiting the leaders of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, who had made major financial contributions to shore up Sudan's economy during the transition. The involvement of the conservative Arab states in Sudanese affairs was a kind of a payback to the country's military. Gen. Al-Burhan and his deputy, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, were instrumental during the time of the al-Bashir government, in recruiting young Sudanese fighters to reinforce the Saudi and UAE military offensive in Yemen. There was international action that went beyond condemnation, against the operation by the RSF. The 55-member African Union suspended Sudan from the body's membership.

The situation in Sudan was complicated by the involvement of outsiders, each with a deep interest in Sudan's future. The monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE did not want the military leaders who took power after the fall of old regime, to lose control. Thus, they have pledged to provide the military transition team with $3 billion in immediate aid. The announcement of this support was made in Washington, by their respective diplomatic missions. This support was split in two parts. $500 million would be provided to Sudan's central bank to help ease pressure on the Sudanese currency and improve the country's financial situation. The balance interestingly would be, 'dedicated to support the people of Sudan through food, medicines, and fuel derivatives.' The larger part, in fact, was to bribe the people to get them to vacate the streets. But the public was not impressed. The protesters who continued with their agitation, told Saudi Arabia and the UAE to stay out of their country. 'A soft landing for the old regime is being orchestrated by some Middle Eastern powers so that they can keep their allies in power,' said Mohamed Youssef Ahmed al-Mustafa, the head of the Sudanese Professional Association.

The two monarchies, working together, shared a vision for the Middle East, aimed at countering Iranian influence, crushing political Islam movements inspired by groups such as the Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) and stop a democratic contagion that could stir aspirations of their now restive youth. According to Khalid Mustafa Medani, Chair of the Africa studies program at McGill University, who had closely watched the developing situation in Sudan and had studied the

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outcome of the Arab Spring, 'The Sudanese were well aware of that legacy. For many months, they had discussed ways to avoid Egypt's trajectory, in which a popular revolt in 2011 followed by elections ultimately resulted in a military coup and an authoritarian government backed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. They were ready for the Saudis to intervene in opposition to democracy. The consciousness was already there.'[6]

Sudan's old regime had helped the Saudi Kingdom in its war in Yemen. It had contributed foot soldiers to aid the Saudi–UAE coalition fighting in the Yemeni civil war. Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who headed the transition team in Khartoum, had headed the office that recruited thousands of troops who fought in Yemen.

But Saudi Arabia and the UAE were not the only Arab nations interested in Sudan's future. Egypt, the country's neighbour on the north, had a deep interest in how the situation in Sudan evolved. If the street succeeded in pushing the military out of the government, it would set a precedence that would encourage Egypt's restive population to go to the street once again to start a political process. In fact, Cairo's interest went beyond the political; it was concerned by what the Sudanese being the upper riparian could do to the flow of water in the Nile River.

Qatar was another Arab nation that had interest in Sudan. It was boycotted by the Saudis and the UAE for supporting Iran as well as the Muslim Brotherhood. Mohammad al-Yahya, a Saudi analyst who is editor of the *Al Arabiya* English website, believes that Saudi Arabia and the UAE have a vital interest in ensuring that instability caused by political transitions across the Arab world, are not 'exploited by non-Arab actors', referring specifically to Iran and Turkey and the possibility that they would support political Islamist groups.

The US also watched with some nervousness, the political developments in Sudan. US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Makila James, travelled to Khartoum to meet Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and told him, '[T]he timeline should be as quick as possible because the streets are demanding that, and we stand in support of the people asking for that quick transition.'[7] The protesters were not pleased with that suggestion. 'The EU and US want an electorate mandate, so they are pushing for quick elections,' said Omer Eldigair, chair of the opposition Sudanese Congress Party. 'But if you have elections right now, you give the power right back to Bashir's people—they are the only ones with an organised party structure. We have been suppressed for decades. That is why we are asking for four years of civilian-led transition.' Islamabad should also keep a close watch on developments in Sudan. The country's positive

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political development has kept the potential of the youth at bay, but they remain alert.

Makila James was not a very senior official; his involvement in Sudan was indicative of the low priority assigned to the country by the Trump administration. This troubled old Arab-Africa hands in the US. One of them, Payton Knopf, who had served in Sudan during the presidency of George W. Bush, spoke with Declan Walsh of *The New York Times*. Knopf was worried about the way America was dealing with sensitive places in Africa and the Middle East. Walsh quoted him as saying: 'These are the most significant geopolitical shifts in the Horn of Africa since the immediate post-Cold War period. Back then, the US shaped what that environment looked like, for better or worse. Now, there's no evidence that the US is engaging with changes of historical magnitude with remotely the same level of focus.'[8] The nature of US involvement in the Middle East was dictated by Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who won the fifth term in an election in April 2019, had successfully tamed the Arabs and treated Iran as the real enemy.

Moving on to Libya. As is the case with Syria and Yemen, the Arab Spring of 2011 did not bring peace to Libya. The country had plunged into chaos after the ouster and gruesome murder of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi with rival cities and militias competing for power. As David Kirkpatrick noted in *The New York Times* in his report on the situation in the long-troubled country, 'The bedlam has slashed the country's oil production, drained much of its sovereign wealth, offered havens to its Islamist militants and turned its long Mediterranean coast into a major point of departure for African and Middle Eastern migrants fleeing to Europe.'[9] This complex situation produced competing foreign interests in the country. These surfaced again when General Khalifa Hafter ordered his militia to advance towards Tripoli, in March 2019. His move was made while the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, who was in Tripoli trying to bring about a reconciliation among the groups fighting one another. The general had the support of Egypt, the UAE, and apparently also that of the CIA. 'The transitional political process begun after Colonel Qaddafi's ouster broke down in 2014, around the time General Hafter declared his intent to take over.'[10]

The Arab world had not been without internal tensions. The period since the Arab Spring of 2011, has been particularly turbulent. In Syria, there is a civil war that has gone on for seven years, with no end in sight. The youth movement has led to the articulation of three different political aims: the young would like to see the Western-style liberal institutions

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in the Muslim world; the surviving monarchies want to stay in power and those more devoted to their faith would like to see Islamic political system to be adopted as the system of governance. The US, under the Trump administration, jumped into the fray, by and large favouring the persistence of authoritarianism in the area.

This tussle over the adoption of the political system, split the Arab world in several different ways. One of the more important splits occurred in the oil-rich Arab states. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia joined the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt to blockade the tiny energy rich state of Qatar. These countries were disturbed by the support that Qatar was allegedly providing to the organisations such as the Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood), who were promoting political Islam in the Arab world. The Saudis were also disturbed by Qatar's fairly strong working relations with Iran.

In late 2018, the Qataris announced their intention to leave the Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which they had been a member since 1961. It said it would leave the organisation in January. The sheikhdom did not attend the annual summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Three GCC members, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, are involved in the Qatar blockade. The decision to quit the OPEC was preceded by two Qatarian moves. In April 2017, it decided to significantly increase its production of natural gas by 43 per cent, to 110 million tons annually. It also entered into a slew of longer-term natural gas agreements with some major gas-consuming nations, including Britain, China, and Japan. According to Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a fellow at the Baker Institute of Public Policy, Rice University:

In the 1970s, Qatar discovered vast quantities of natural gas in the offshore North Field, which straddles the maritime border between Qatar and Iran, with the largest part of the field in Qatari waters. The North Field remains the largest non-associated gas field ever found, with more than 130 years of reserves at current production rates of 77 million tons a year.[11]

Qatar planned to reach 110 million tons a day, by increasing investments in developing the gas fields. By 2007, the country was the largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world, with production reaching 77 million tons. In 2020, Qatar's share in the global LNG markets was estimated at 30 per cent. Previously, it was a small player in oil. Its average production of 607,000 barrels a day in 2017, was less than 2 per cent of the OPEC's total output.

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The move to gas as its most important source of revenue, has made Qatar a major player in the region. With neither Saudi Arabia, nor the Emirates, willing to back down, or make allowances for Qatar, the Gulf rift has reshaped regional and institutional partnerships and increased separation among the parties to the dispute.

Several countries in the Muslim world, particularly the Arab states in the Middle East, are facing crises. These crises were complicated by foreign involvement. Further, the region's monarchies were nervous about youth movements. The US, during the Trump era, also got very active with the administration's moves, orchestrated by Jared Kushner. He had developed strong links with the ruling families in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Riyadh benefitted enormously from these links. Washington did not pursue the crisis related to the brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The Trump administration also acted to enhance the Kingdom's defence industry. In July 2019, it declared an emergency and fast-tracked the sale of more American arms to Saudi Arabia. The deal raised concerns that it could give Saudi Arabia access to technology that would let them make their own versions/variants of American precision-guided bombs. The manufacturer, Raytheon Company, would construct a facility to make components of the Paveway smart bombs in locations in the Kingdom and assemble the final product.

A Geopolitical Earthquake

On 13 August 2020, President Trump, flanked by his top advisers, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, announced an agreement with the UAE. Thomas Friedman wrote about it in an editorial in *The New York Times*. The newspaper had begun occasionally publishing signed editorials that represented the views of its editorial board and this was one of them. He wrote:

> For once I am going to agree with President Trump in his use of his favourite adjective: 'huge'. The agreement brokered by the Trump administration for the United Arab Emirates to establish full normalization of relations with Israel, in return for the Jewish state forgoing, for now, any annexation of the West Bank, was exactly what Trump said in his tweet: a HUGE breakthrough. Just go down the scorecard, and you see how this deal affects every major party in the region—with those in the pro-American, pro-moderate Islam, pro-

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> ending-the-conflict-with-Israel-once-for all-camp benefitting the most and those in the radical pro-Iran, anti-American, pro-Islamist permanent-struggle-with-Israel-camp all becoming more isolated and left behind. It's a geopolitical earthquake.[12]

Earthquakes shake the world; if the shock is big, they can bring about a lot of destruction. How would this development pan out for the Middle East? A brief discussion of Arab militias will help clarify the situation in this region of the world. How they respond to this evolution, will have a great deal to do with the impact of the UAE–Israel deal.

The Arab world has been relatively unsuccessful in developing militaries that are able to maintain domestic peace. The situation in Iraq offers a good example of the failure of this aspect of nation-building. There are, in 2019, thirty or so militias, collectively known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces, with at least 125,000 active-duty fighters in Iraq. Although attempts have been made to absorb them into the country's security forces, they are not under the command of either the defence or interior ministries.

Instead, they have a special status, reporting directly to the prime minister. The militias are not dependent on the state's resources. Most have gone into businesses, similar to Iran's Revolutionary Guard. They have also made inroads into the formal political system. According to Alissa J. Rubin, an analyst on the Middle East at *The New York Times*, 'Many militias have large numbers of representatives in the Iraq Parliament where the power to designate ministers is divided among political blocs. If a bloc or a party controls who becomes a minister, they have a chance to influence who gets valuable contracts or jobs.'[13]

The US is keeping a close watch on the militias, especially because of the fight against ISIS. In March 2019, Washington listed Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, as a foreign terrorist organisation. The Iraqi government did not agree with the designation. Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi stated, 'The Americans can make any decisions they want, but from the way we do, and our attitude towards the Popular Mobilisation is clear: we respect all the groups of the Popular Mobil that made sacrifices.'

The reference to the sacrifices was in regard to the period 2014–16, when ISIS swept across northern Iraq, with little resistance and was moving fast toward Baghdad. Urged by a call in June 2014, from the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's influential Shiite cleric, for volunteers to defend their nation, men responded and formed a backup army that was

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able to halt ISIS's advance. Iran helped the Popular Mobilisation acquire weapons and supplies, but eventually that role was taken over by the government. Most inimical to American interests are the armed groups linked to Muqtada al-Sadr, a cleric who has the largest number of seats in the Iraq Parliament. He is often equated with Iran by Americans in matters of the Middle East. He would like to see American forces depart from Iraq.

The political landscape changed in the Middle East during 2020–2021.[14] The major events in the Middle East and North Africa include escalating civil wars and a volatile energy market. Furthermore, Iran's hardliners consolidated their hold on power, the fallout of the May War in Gaza which killed 256 Palestinians and 13 Israelis turned out to be the deadliest eruption of violence in the last seven years. It was followed by a new government in Israel. Climate change was especially acute in the region as it was a year of extremes. Techno-politics became a key factor in the new geopolitics of Middle East as the Abraham Accords is still unclear on, 'The lack of agreement on export controls for powerful cyber tools has led to numerous issues, most recently involving Israeli companies backlisted by the U.S. and seven major surveillance groups banned by Facebook…' as stated by Chris Kubecka while discussing the impact of digital conflicts and cyber warfare. And, lastly the end of the two-decade war in Afghanistan.

Steven A. Cook, a columnist at *Foreign Policy* and the Eni Enrico Mattei senior fellow for Middle East and Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, had criticised Trump's Middle East policy and had declared that his 'Middle East Legacy' was a 'failure'.[15] Biden had lambasted Trump for not understanding the geopolitical conditions of the region. Nevertheless, the Biden administration largely ignored Middle East and concentrated on domestic issues such as economic crisis and the raging pandemic. But Steven A. Cook states in his article of 7 January 2022, 'President Joe Biden needs a Middle East strategy…Biden assailed President Donald Trump for not understanding the geopolitical environment…of course, it is rarely the case that campaign rhetoric aligns with policy once a president takes the oath of office.'[16] But this, 'Ruthless Pragmatism' needs to end, especially in the context of Syrian and Yemeni policies. In Yemen, Houthis are responsible for Yemeni misery. The conflict is far from over and endangers the stability of the entire region. For Pakistan, it becomes a crucial test of keeping a balanced approach between the various warring factions. Dr Karim Haider and Dr Imran Khan jointly penned an article in which they conclude that

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keeping a balance in this part of the world is not entirely 'feasible.' The article concludes by asserting, 'Saudi Arabia and Iran and policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia on Kashmir create [a] situation in which huge mix-up can be expected."[17]

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13

Russia Returns to the Global Game

Under Vladimir Putin, Russia's long-serving president, the country is working hard to regain some of the position it had carved out for itself after the end of World War II. After the war, Stalin consolidated Russia's hold over Eastern Europe and the landlocked countries of Central Asia and formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Those that did not get incorporated in the Soviet Union became Moscow's client states. The Soviet Union emerged as a superpower that challenged the US. One of the primary reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, was the losses suffered in the decade-long war in Afghanistan. Mikhail Gorbachev, who then governed the Soviet Union, was willing to redefine Moscow's place in the world. The far-reaching changes he set into motion, included disbanding the communist approach to governance and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, by letting go of the territories it had incorporated as its components.

The Central Asian republics became independent states, while most of the East Europeans joined the European Union. Some of them, to Moscow's great dismay, joined the NATO military alliance. There was also the expectation that the Russian Federation—the name it gave itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union—will eventually join the West by adopting liberal capitalism in all spheres of life. In 1998, the Western nations admitted Russia into the Group of Seven (G7)—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US—converting the G7 into G8. But Russia was expelled after its aggressive behaviour in South East Europe.

Russia Annexes Ukraine and Emerging Conflicts in Central Asia

However, the Russians, under President Vladimir Putin, did not play by the rules of the West. It used military force to redefine its boundaries. In 2021, Russia was suspended from the Group and G8 returned to being G7. This was done to punish Moscow for having invaded the Crimean Peninsula that was part of Ukraine and merging it into the Russian state. It has been referred to as the biggest land grab since World War II, by

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the Brookings Institute. The territory annexed by Russia had once been part of pre-revolutionary Russia, conquered in the time of Catherine the Great.

Following the establishment of the Soviet Union, Crimea was a part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic until 1954, when it was transferred administratively to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Hence when Ukraine seceded from the Soviet Union this territory remained part of it. Russia did not annexe the Crimean Peninsula openly. In February 2014, the pro-Russian President, Viktor Yanukovych, fled Kyiv/Kiev, after a civilian movement against him and the Ukrainian parliament appointed an acting president and prime minister. In March 2014, soldiers wearing no specific insignia of any country, took over the key positions in this area and set up garrisons. Later, Putin admitted they were Russian soldiers from the Crimea. Then, in March 2014, the Crimean Supreme Council—the Crimean autonomous body—voted to accede to Russia. A referendum was held on 6 March, which has been much criticised by the West. According to the results of this referendum, the Tartars, the native inhabitants of the peninsula, voted for accession to Russia.

The move to punish Russia for the Crimean operation, was led by the US, which, along with most European states, put Moscow under economic sanctions. The sanctions were strengthened by President Barack Obama in his final days.

The protests that began in Kazakhstan on 2 January 2022, following a sharp rise in liquified gas prices prompted country-wide protests and violent clashes between the police and the rioters. As the confrontation and clashes spread mobile and internet services were suspended, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev requested help to 'stabilise' the country. Responding to this call Russia deployed almost 3,000 soldiers under the authority of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), which was established after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is a peacekeeping force comprising of a group of countries such as Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. After restoring control and '...crushing the biggest protests in the Central Asian nation in decades,' Putin's troops returned from Kazakhstan.[1]

The rising tension between the US and Russia seems to be escalating as Russia's military build-up on Ukraine's border continues to irk Washington. At this time, there seems to be no sign that the impasse might be easing. According to a BBC report, 'Western intelligence suggests a Russian incursion or invasion could happen sometime in early

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2022.'[2] Secretary of State Antony Blinken's efforts to, 'defuse tensions with Moscow over Ukraine' did not bear fruit. His talks with Lavrov on 19 January did not help in deescalating the situation.

Vladimir Putin's Staying Power

Vladimir Putin has been in power as Russia's president for two decades. In 2020, he changed the country's constitution to allow him to stay in power for as long as he pleased. *The Economist* was of the view that 'Kremlin seems to have succeeded in applying enough repression, and thus generating enough fear of worse to come, to accomplish its needs,'[3] i.e. political longevity. *The Economist* saw one way of looking at the political change under Putin by comparing the three waves of protest in 2011–12, 2017, and 2019. The first protest was the largest of the three and was in response to the return of Putin who had previously switched from president to prime minister, to his previous job. 'They were political protests spurred by political events.'[4] The second protest was about the quality of governance and mind-boggling corruption Dmitry Medvedev, who had served as prime minister during Putin's first term as president and then switched jobs and stepped down as prime minister while Putin, his friend, returned as president. The next protest of comparable size was triggered by a video produced by Alexei Navalny, poisoned in August 2020 and jailed in 2021. From his prison Navalny wrote, 'An official taking a bribe and policeman pulling a bag over the head of a prisoner tied to a chair, are one and the same person. His law is the superiority of the strong over the weak. The superiority of the interests of a corporation over the rights of an individual. The willingness to commit crimes as an act of loyalty.'[5] Repelled by the stories told in the video about corruption in Putin's Russia, people took to the streets. The 2019 protests were the turning point. When Navalny was barred from standing for local elections, instead, he nominated his allies. People protested, violence ensued, when the government blocked them. It must worry Putin to see that it is the young who have turned against him, disgusted by corruption which deprives them of the opportunities they look forward to. They have a more positive view of Europe and the United States. The youth are also upset that political power has shifted from civilian technocrats to militarized and often uniformed 'securocrats.'[6]

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Russian Help in Trump's 2016 Election Campaign

There was a US intelligence services report that the Russians had interfered in the 2016 elections. There was suspicion that Moscow helped Donald Trump win the presidential contest by making available for public consumption, tens of thousands of emails written by candidate Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, her campaign manager. There was expectation on Moscow's part that by helping Trump, his government would remove the sanctions that had begun to hurt Russia. Naturally, Moscow's involvement in the elections was not accepted by Trump. He deeply resented the inquiry that was begun by the FBI. The newly installed president created a crisis for himself and his country, by firing James Comey, the head of the FBI. The question was asked whether there was collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign. To investigate the matter, the justice department appointed Robert S. Mueller as the special counsel. He had served as the FBI director in the past. On 22 March 2019, Mueller concluded his investigations and submitted the report to the department of justice.[7] The report held Russia responsible for interfering in the elections but didn't find that there was collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian secret services.

Rewriting the Afghan Story

President Vladimir Putin made no secret of his grief over the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it, the loss of power by Moscow. He was of the view that the Afghan story had to be rewritten in order to bring Russia back to the global stage as a great power. The arrival of the 30th anniversary of the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan, offered an opportunity to retell that story. The Kremlin, in 1989, had called the Afghan war 'a political mistake'.

The official effort began with a rock concert that glorified the decade-long Soviet Union involvement in the affairs of Afghanistan. On 16 February, the Russian parliament passed a resolution declaring that the war was justified. It denounced the 1989 condemnation of the Afghan war saying it was, 'At odds with the principle of historical justice.' The resolution said that the arrival of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan was not an invasion, but a response to an invitation from the government in Kabul. But history told a different story. The Soviet troops overthrew the government in Kabul, killed the president and installed a faction of the Afghan Communist Party completely beholden to Moscow. The Soviets

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and the Afghans both suffered. About 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed along with at least one million Afghans. There were other aspects of the conflict in the 1980s that tell a different story compared to what Kremlin began to sell under Putin. Initially, the war was kept hidden from public view. Its consequence only came to be known when the bodies of soldiers began arriving back in the country.

The Russian veterans of the Afghan war have banded together to form a group that goes by the name of Afgantsy. There are mixed feelings among them about the war. They have set up a small museum located in the outskirts of Moscow that show items associated with the war. Igor Yerin, the director of the museum, has spent decades collecting war memorabilia. He is reported to have commented, 'The re-evaluation by the government is not about rehabilitation, but about remembering. We Russians switch on the soul first, then the brain.' The effort underway in Moscow was aimed at moulding a historical narrative that conforms to the ideology of the current Russian president. He wanted to project the image of a strong Russia, with an unblemished past.

This rewriting of history coincided with the humbling of another great power that occupied Afghanistan. This time it was the US that was at the receiving end, working hard to plan an orderly exit from the country it invaded almost two decades earlier. It was perhaps not a coincidence that the then president, Trump, also indulged in revising the history of the Soviet Union by praising what Moscow had done in 1979. This was another area in which the American leader was following the line drawn by his Russian counterpart.

After the fall of Kabul and the capitulation of the American backed regime in 2021, unlike almost all Western countries, Russia did not close its Embassy in the Afghan capital.[8] In fact, Russia was invited to attend the inauguration of the new Afghan government by the Taliban.[9] It is clear that the next act of Russia in Afghanistan is yet to be written.

Russia and the US

The annexation of Crimea hardened anti-Putin sentiment in the Republican Party, but it did not result in changing the US stance towards Moscow once Trump became president. Even before entering the White House, Trump had begun to question whether a tough US stance towards Moscow made any sense for his country. He was pressed to comment on his view on the issue of annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. On 25 March 2016, he agreed to give a lengthy interview to *The New York Times*,

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on his foreign policy. He quickly veered to show that he was not anti-Ukraine: 'Now I'm all for Ukraine, I have friends that live in Ukraine,' he began and went on to say that the US was more concerned about President Putin's efforts to dismember the country, than the Europeans were. However, he also said that he was in favour of removing the sanctions imposed on Moscow, after the annexation of Crimea and allaying the suspicion that Moscow had interfered in the referendum.

Trump's associates also softened the attitude towards Russia of the Republican Party campaign program, for the November 2016 elections. Eventually, all talk of supplying deadly weapons to Ukraine to strengthen its defence against the encroachment of Russia, was avoided in the campaign. It was an unusual argument for a Republican candidate for the presidency; the party had always shown itself as anti-Soviet during the Cold War and were deeply suspicious of Putin thereafter.

According to David Sanger of *The New York Times*, 'Mr. Trump's position that sanctions were counterproductive and harmed American interests stood out from the start of the campaign, prompting many to question whether his interest in selling properties to rich Russians seeking to park their assets in the United States, or his effort to build a residential tower in Moscow, explained his position.'[10] Trump's stance took on a new meaning on 28 November 2019, when Michael D. Cohen, Trump's long-serving personal lawyer, pleaded guilty to lying to Congress about the negotiations concerning the real estate project. There were different interpretations for Trump's soft-pedalling vis-à-vis Putin. Faced with criticism, the American president cancelled his planned two-hour meeting with the Russian president, on the sidelines of the Buenos Aires meeting of the G20, in November 2018. According to one account, 'Trump was one of the last leaders to enter the summit site for a group photo and walked past Putin and Mohammed [bin Salman] without chatting or shaking hands. Trump who has a long affinity for autocrats, had drawn criticism for agreeing to meet Putin and for standing by Mohammed [bin Salman]'s denial on involvement in Jamal Khashoggi's killing.'[11] Trump's explanation that Russia's aggression was the fundamental reason for cancelling the meeting, was not bought by the Kremlin. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, 'This is the explanation we hear in public, which we have taken note of. But I think one must look for answers in the domestic political situation in the United States.'

In his memoirs titled *The Threat*, Andrew McCabe described the chain of events that led to the appointment of Robert Mueller III as the special counsel, to investigate possible collusion between President Trump's

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campaign and Russia. He mentions that McCabe took over as the acting director of the FBI, following the dismissal of James Comey by President Trump. Upset that it was done by the justice department, Trump spared no effort to malign the inquiry and the special counsel. According to McCabe's book, it was he who put a lot of pressure on Rod Rosenstein, the then deputy attorney general, to appoint a council. He wrote, 'For an FBI agent, watching the president seek to interfere with the ordinary process of justice is especially galling—an affront to our constitutional system. The work of every agent at every waking moment is governed by the intricate procedures whose aim is to ensure that every step taken is by the book. The process has to be fair and rigorous start to finish—for the sake of subjects and for the sake of justice.'[12]

As already indicated, the special counsel submitted his report to the justice department on Friday, 22 March 2019, and its finding were summarised in a four-page letter sent to US Congress two days later, by William Barr, the attorney general. The official said that Mueller did not find any conspiracy between the Trump camp and the Russians but did not reach a definite conclusion about his investigation on possible obstruction of justice by the president. A debate followed the Barr letter. One interesting point of view was presented by Michael Gerson, a Republican, who was once a speech-writer in George W. Bush's White House: 'Trump supporters are doing a victory dance over the fact that he isn't a Russian agent, just a Russian stooge.'[13]

US's military missions grew in scope in recent years because of tensions with Moscow. These took the form of exercises, observation fights, and maritime operations undertaken to prevent the Russian military from any further involvement in Europe. They were also meant to reassure allies in Europe that Washington takes seriously its commitment to their defence. Biden's White House requested the Defence department to provide detailed information about what the US had done in the past. Even though former President Trump was close to Putin, his administration involved itself in what experts covering the area said were 'envelope pushing missions.' For instance, in 2020, US destroyers entered the Baltic Sea, where Russia's Northern Fleet is located, for the first time since the Cold War. US supersonic B1-B Lancers trained with Ukrainian jets for the first time also in 2020, and, in another first, US nuclear capable B-52s flew through Ukrainian air space. A study cataloguing nearly 3,000 incidents between NATO and Russian forces from 2013 to 2020, written by military analysts Ralph Chem and Raymond Finch found significantly increased activity after 2016. There is some worry

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that these operations could escalate and bring the US and Russia closer to open conflict.[14]

Russia–China Relations: The World Being Reordered

Donald J. Trump, America's 45th president, had a simple world view: He believed that his country, in dealing with the world, must focus only on its own interests. He summed up this approach in the slogan, 'America First'. The second slogan, 'Make America Great Again', was to be the way the US was to conduct its business in the world. It was in this context that Trump saw his relations with China and Russia, the other two large geographic powers, although his dealings with Moscow were complicated by the fact detailed by the report issued on 10 May, by Special Counsel Robert Mueller III. That notwithstanding, Trump had shown a lot of respect for the Russian president, refusing to challenge him on his policies directed at expanding Moscow's influence in the world. In a joint press conference with Putin in Helsinki after a meeting with world leaders, Trump shocked most Americans by saying that he believed Putin, when the latter told him that he and his government had not interfered with the elections. In other words, this meant that Trump did not agree with the various US intelligence agencies that the Russians had used to access social media, to create doubts in the minds of voters about Hillary Clinton. It may be mentioned that Hillary Clinton, as the secretary of state in the administration of President Barack Obama, had taken several positions that irked Putin's Moscow.

While Trump went easy on Russia, it was China on which the former president focused a great deal of negative attention. He was of the view that Beijing had taken advantage of the way the US had conducted itself in the post-World War II era and had advanced as far as it had. It was now the world's second largest economy after the US and was headed towards overtaking America and becoming the largest in a decade or two. It had used its increasing economic power to gain military strength and was on its way to becoming the world's most advanced in terms of the use of technology. Trump felt that Beijing had to be checked. He used tariffs on Chinese goods entering the US as one of the ways to achieve that objective. The other was to obstruct the rise of large Chinese companies, particular, Huawei, China's largest technology company that had become a global leader in bringing the 5G system of communications to various parts of the world. It appears as if the US and China are headed towards a full-scale trade war.

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Russia, however, defied US pressure to keep Huawei out of the West and allow two Nordic companies, Ericsson and Nokia, to provide the hardware and software needed by the 5G systems. During Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow, an agreement was signed between Huawei and MTS, one of the three largest cell-phone operators in Russia.

Xi Jinping made an effort to reach out to Russia in order to forge a new relationship with its large neighbour. On 7 June 2019, he took a team of a thousand Chinese to participate in International Economic Forum held in St. Petersburg. This annual marquee event is Russia's answer to the annual business conference in Davos, Switzerland. Moscow's earlier attempts to draw closer to Beijing were not fully reciprocated by Beijing, although trade between the two countries increased, reaching $108 billion in 2018. The Chinese and Russian militaries participated in a major exercise in 2018.

In their speeches at the St. Petersburg Conference, the two leaders made it clear that their worldview was very different from that of the American president. 'Countries that used to preach the principles of free trade and free and open competition, have started speaking the language of trade wars and sanctions,' Putin said. 'A system will never be stable, or balanced, if the unfairness at its foundation is clearer than ever.' Xi Jinping and other Chinese officials took a more measured tone toward the US at the conference, saying they were firmly committed to multilateralism. This put China on the other side of the Trump 'go alone: America first' approach.

An editorial in the Peoples' Daily, the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper, published on 7 June, the first day of the three-day conference, was more explicit about the role China and Russia could play in the evolving global system. 'In a world which is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, China and Russia bear the great expectations of the people of the two countries and the international community. Strengthening Sino-Russian relations is the call of history and unwavering strategic choice of both sides.'[15] While Trump was pulling his country out of the global system his country had helped to create, China and Russia were stepping into the void the American president had created. With Afghanistan having come into play with the Taliban taking power in the country, both China and Russia moved to cultivate relations with the new power in Kabul. This development has obvious consequences for Pakistan.

The Wall Street Journal's article titled 'China and Russia Military Cooperation Raises Prospects of New Challenge to American Power'

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cautions against being sceptical about, 'a unified threat from the two countries ... (because) ... Beijing and Moscow are now more aligned than any point in the past 60 years.' The US efforts to 'contain' both countries contemporaneously have, 'driven them into a marriage of convenience.' The article goes on to highlight the fact that while Washington was dealing with the collapse of the Afghan government, 'Chinese and Russian troops in August executed military drills in north western China.' Later that year, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov declared that *Kremlin considered Taiwan a part of China.*[16]

According to data released by the Russians, the bilateral trade between both the countries reached $123 billion in November 2021. The construction of a rail bridge spanning Siberia's Amur River was jointly completed by the two countries and a $55 billion worth of natural gas pipe line will be finished by the middle of this decade. It is a 1,865 mile channel, 'that began its operations in 2019.... It is expected to deliver 1.3 trillion cubic feet of Russian natural gas' to China. This economic and military cooperation is a sign of further strengthening of Sino-Russian ties. The significance of this emerging bilateral relation needs to be factored in by policymakers in Pakistan.

Carving Out a Role in the Middle East

As an ardent dealmaker, President Trump believed that one party's gain is the other party's loss. Extending this philosophy to foreign affairs, he should have recognised that the space vacated by one powerful state will be taken by another. This was precisely what happened in the Middle East. While the US was focused on Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia, other parts of the perpetually troubled Middle East, were left to Russia. As Liz Sly wrote in *The Washington Post*:

> Among the presidents, prime ministers, kings and princes who have visited Moscow over the past year to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin are some of the United States closest allies, who once might have been expected to devote their travel time to Washington. At the centre of it all is Putin, whose strongman image resonates with the region's authoritarian rulers at a time when doubts are growing about Washington's commitment to the Middle East.[17]

Russia benefited the most by its military intervention in Syria, in 2015, burnishing Putin's reputation as a leader who has the confidence and the

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military ability to achieve his objectives. He had set out to keep Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in power. The action in Syria put Putin in the middle of the shifting alliances in the region. He became an intermediary for old foes such as Iran and Israel, Syria and Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, thus playing the role that would have been expected in the past from the US.

Liz Sly, quoted Malik R. Dahlan, a Saudi professor of international law and public policy at Queen Mary, the University of London, as saying, 'Putin is effectively working as the psychoanalyst of the region. The Russians are happy to hear all sides, and anyone who wants to speak they're happy to listen.' It should have registered with the Trump administration that despite the time they had spent courting Riyadh, King Salman went to Moscow for his first and so far, the only official overseas visit as the Saudi king. The crown prince of Abu Dhabi, a close friend of the US, declined an invitation to Washington, but travelled to Moscow, his seventh visit to the Russian capital in five years. The Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, made his fourth visit to Moscow and signed a strategic partnership agreement with Putin. The Russian president warmly greeted Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at Buenos Aires, when the two attended the G20 meetings.

All this shuttling did not suggest any carefully thought out strategy on the part of Putin. He appears to be attempting to fill the gap created by the US's near absence. 'The Russians understand their limits very well. I don't think they want to replace America everywhere, and it would be very costly,' said Yury Barmin of the Russian International Affairs Council. According to him, it appears that the Russians have a military strategy focused on the Mediterranean. 'Very generally, the Mediterranean has been of strategic importance for Russia for a very long time. Russia sees that region as a hard power for countering NATO.'

But all this activity did not mean that Russia was returning to the intense rivalry that marked the Cold War. Back then, Moscow was looking for fellow nations to join its ideological war with the West. Now, economics is the main area of focus. Russia was creating a presence in the areas in which it had strength: energy and arms. Its state-owned nuclear energy company, Rosatom, had contracts to build nuclear reactors in five Middle Eastern countries. Russia had nearly doubled its weapons exports to the region over the last half-decade, with $24 billion worth of orders to be carried out over the next five years. But the US has a clear advantage in this field. Its firms booked $81 billion worth of arms deals, to be fulfilled in the five-year period between 2019 and 2024. In a speech

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delivered at the 14th IISS Manama Dialogue 2018, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain (26–28 October), Jim Mattis, the US defence secretary at the time, sought to dispel the notion that the Russian advance matched the US retreat. 'Russia's presence in the region cannot replace the long-standing enduring and transparent US commitment to the Middle East. We are going to stay committed here and in no way are we walking away from here.'[18]

But some experts believe that for the moment, time is on the Russian side. According to Riad Kahwaji, head of the Dubai-based Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, 'Russia has managed to create the perception in the Middle East that it is more powerful, more capable and more relevant than the US. It's not how much power you have. It's how you use it. The United States has all these troops and bases, and Russia has a fraction of that. But Russia uses its power effectively.'[19] The US had deployed 45,000 troops in the Middle East, while roughly 60,000 Russian troops moved in and out of Syria.

But the Middle East was not the only region in which Russia sought to increase its presence and influence. In a detailed story in *The New York Times*, the newspaper looked at the work Moscow was doing in Madagascar. Its interest was clearly in getting the country's president, Hery Rajaonarimampianina on its side:

> It was one of Russia's most overt attempts at election interference to date. Working from their headquarters in a resort hotel, the Russians published their own newspaper in the local language and hired students to write fawning articles about the president to help him win another term. Skirting electoral laws, they bought airtime on television stations and blanketed the country with billboards.[20]

The operation was approved and coordinated by some of the same figures who oversaw the disinformation in the 2016 American presidential election.

A senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Anatol Lieven points out that Moscow has been, 'supporting, not undermining, US interests in the region.'[21] Yet the US perspective is that Putin's intervention was a source of instability in the region. It is true that Syria is the 'epicentre of Kremlin activity' and thus remains a cause of volatility in the region. It is also clear that as per the agreement between Moscow and Damascus, militarily, 'Russia is in Syria to stay for at least the next forty-nine years.'[22]

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Russia's involvement and interest in Middle East is geopolitical but there is a commercial dimension to it as well—one that concerns energy and arms. Borshchevskaya, Wajeeh, Rakov, and Sim concur, 'Moscow sees the Middle East as a prime arena for this joust. If this trend continues ... [it] could lead to a more explicit rise of Russia-Iran-Assad nexus and transform the Middle East in a way that could create more vulnerabilities for the West and its allies...[s]uch a scenario could only hurt...American competition with China and Russia.'[23]

Relations with Pakistan

In the years 2018–19, for the second time in the seventy-two years of Pakistan's existence, the country attempted to get close to Russia. The first attempt was made during the period of Ayub Khan. The then commerce minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, approached Moscow for help in constructing a steel mill in the country. Russia agreed to do that, but the mill did not stay open for a long time. The second time was when the antipathy displayed by the then Trump administration increased and Washington suspended one of the oldest military assistance programs that it had operated in Pakistan. The US suspended the International Military Education and Study program that brought young military officers to America for education and training. The military in Pakistan, looking for another training ground to which it could send its senior personnel, turned towards Moscow as a possible substitute. But Islamabad's interest in working with Russia was actually in the context of the Afghan problem.

Three decades after their defeat in Afghanistan, Russia began cultivating relations with the Taliban. 'Russian engagement with the militants drew attention, and some flak when Kremlin invited Taliban representatives to Moscow for a meeting in September 2018. That invitation was rescinded—at least temporarily—after the Afghan government objected, saying it must take the lead in any talks.'

Russia's move was seen as a part of a larger play in the southern regions adjoining it. Moscow was attempting to 'reclaim its role as regional power-broker, convening secret discussions with the US, Iran, Pakistan, India, and China seeking to ensure that any finale to the conflict suits Russian interests.'[24] Senior officials in the US believe that Russia had provided small arms to the Taliban, or at least tolerated a supply of Russian weapons to the militants from Central Asia, to fight against their troops there. In July 2010, *The New York Times* carried a report that

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the Russians had offered bounties to the Taliban, encouraging them to kill American security forces in Afghanistan.

Moscow's motive for this renewed interest in their previous Waterloo, was that they were concerned about the rise of the ISIS in Afghanistan and other Central Asia states. Unlike the Taliban, which was focused exclusively on Afghanistan, the ISIS had international ambitions. The group had recruited thousands of fighters from Central Asian countries. Moscow's worries about the Afghan situation increased when the Taliban briefly occupied Kunduz, a major city close to the Afghan border with Tajikistan. The Russians responded by providing Tajikistan more than $1 billion worth of second-hand hardware. Washington wearily watched these moves by the Kremlin. They were also consequential for Pakistan. In August 2021, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Russia is obviously interested in this development and has begun to access the Taliban policymakers in Kabul.

It is true that Russia and Pakistan were unable to forge a close relationship in the past for various reasons, one of which was the Afghan conflict during the Cold War era. Even though Pakistan sided with the US, it paid a heavy price in terms of loss of lives and resources. The subsequent results were unprecedented rise in extremism and terrorism and a restive tribal border with Afghanistan. Since then, the geopolitical environment has changed and Russia and Pakistan have in the words of Brigadier Feroz Hassan Khan (retd.), 'warming up to each other.' He goes on to state, 'Starting in 2010, relations...improved markedly as illustrated by high-level visits, arms sales and increased cooperation.'[25] Currently Brig. Khan (retd.) is serving as a research professor in the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California. He believes that in the face of rapidly changing geopolitical environment, Pakistan's location has, 'found new geo-economic significance.' Russia has also shown interest in China's BRI project and Pakistan provides the vital access through its 'flagship CPEC project.'

In the beginning of 2022, a three-day Pakistan and Russia talks on 1,122 km high pressure RLNG pipeline from Karachi (Port Qasim) to Kasur (Punjab) ended favourably. 'Russia has not adopted to keep 49 percent shares in equity offered by Pakistan, but decided to have its equity at 26 percent. It means Pakistan will be having 74 percent equity in the project. The pipeline project will be backed by agreement based on take and pay mode with no sovereign guarantee.'[26] The Pakistan gas

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companies like Sui Northern and Sui Southern will lay down the pipeline, which according to the agreement will be manufactured in Russia.

As Pakistan grapples with militancy and extremism, the ongoing Islamophobia in the West continues to fan the flames of this menace. Despite many attempts by Prime Minister Imran Khan to address the anti-Muslim sentiment, not much progress was made to allay these concerns. But on 24 December 2021, during his annual press conference President Putin said that insulting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) does not count as religious freedom. The Russian state news agency TASS reported that the Russian president also criticised the publication of blasphemous sketch of Holy Prophet (PBUH) in the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called to thank him for his support and also discussed ways to move forward on trade and mutually beneficial cooperation. He said, 'We invited each other to visit our countries.'

Unending Conflicts

On 23 February 2022, Prime Minister Imran Khan made an official two-day visit to Russia—the first by a Pakistani premier in over two decades. The visit coincided with the Russian invasion of Ukraine due to which the tensions between Moscow and Washington have escalated. On 21 February 2022, President Putin recognised Ukraine's two breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent entities. As a consequence, the USA, EU, and Japan retaliated by slapping sanctions on 'Russian banks, oligarchs, and other wealthy individuals,'[27] and Germany halted the certification of Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline—a multi-billion project owned by Russian state-owned gas giant, Gazprom.

Islamabad has been watching the Ukraine crisis with concern because after the breakup of USSR, Islamabad found in Kyiv (or Kiev) a highly reliable partner, especially in the military sphere. Ukraine provided some assistance in accessing high level military technology, the types of which Islamabad had been unable to obtain from the West or develop independently. It was perhaps for this reason that Pakistan's ambassador in Kyiv, Maj. Gen. Noel Israel Khokhar (retd.), met with Ukraine's first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emine Dzheppar, a day before Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Moscow.

This is indeed a test for Pakistan as it tries to balance post-Cold War relations between Russia, USA, and China. Pakistan's geo-political importance increased, especially after China started its Flagship Project

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of CPEC. It is time for prudent, perceptive, and sagacious diplomacy. It is indeed a delicate balancing of relations between Pakistan and the three superpowers—USA, Russia, and China.

As I approach the end of this book, I turn my attention to the many conflicts that have reshaped the world in which we now live. These are not necessarily fought on the battlefield. Even if they engage armed men and women, it was difficult to define the geography of the battlefield. This was certainly the case with the war in Afghanistan, which went on for nearly two decades.

In a stocktaking done by *The New York Times*, in a long, two-part editorial, it was clearly shown what a costly war this has been for the US. Its origin was in the 14 September 2001 Congressional passage of an Act titled, Authorisation for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists, which gave the President George W. Bush, limitless power to wage what he called the 'war on terror'. Only one person voted against the resolution and her statement explaining her vote turned out to be most prescient: 'We must be careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target,' said Barbara Lee, a Democratic Congresswoman from California.

The new wars do not involve militaries. Some are being fought in the sectors of trade and technology, while others involve the use of information gathered by large corporations and well-equipped states. Some of these have already affected the way people choose who governs them. The gathering of information and storing of data, has resulted in the exponential development of artificial intelligence and machine learning, which will have profound consequences on the way people work. The fight against the spread of Covid-19 is also affecting international relations. With rapid changes taking place in international relations, one has yet to see how the arrival of President Joe Biden in the United States would affect nations and global dynamics.

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Moving Forward in the Reshaped World

Pakistan has been an independent state for almost seven-and-a-half decades. In that period, the world around it has undergone a radical change twice and altered in profound ways. The third change is happening now and is the main subject of this book. Whereas the tensions between nations were dealt with collectively, in the third phase, most countries that matter in the world have been left to their own devices. This is the main reason why I have devoted most of the space in this book to discussing the situations in eleven countries and the one region that matters most for Pakistan. However, there are four global developments that will concern the conglomeration of nations. Two of these I have discussed earlier: I devoted full chapters to international migrations and global warming in the opening part of the book. In the closing part, I will devote some space to more recent developments. According to some analysts, we may have entered a new 30-year-long cycle in world affairs. Gideon Rachman of the *Financial Times*, in an article titled, 'The Trump era could last 30 years', identifies two roughly thirty-year-long periods after World War II and now the third period, ushered in by Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the erstwhile election of Trump to the US presidency. This theory is narrated in further detail towards the end of the section that follows.

Three Phases in the Evolution of the International System of Governance

From the time of Pakistan's birth in 1947 to 1991, a period of almost half a century, the country lived in a world dominated by two competing superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. Both had contributed massively to the victory in World War II. While the allies had driven back the Germans from France and Belgium, Russia had done the same in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. The fall of Germany was imminent, and the US wanted Russia's help in its war with Japan. Thus, in short, they agreed to divide Germany, and Russia was allowed to have influence in East Europe and the rest would remain allied to the West. Japan capitulated on the day Russia declared it would join the war against it,

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so it did not fight any battle on this front. However, Korea was divided into a Soviet-administered northern half and American-administered southern half. Later, these would become two independent countries—one communist and the other, a republic. Immediately after the war, Moscow moved into all the countries in Eastern Europe and several in Central Asia.

While Soviet control was exercised in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, it also influenced China, which adopted the ideology of Lenin and became a communist nation, four years after the end of the war. Both large communist powers were expansionist, and that reality brought them into conflict with the US that did not wish to lose its geographic dominance. Communist China, initially aided by the Soviet Union, attempted to influence South East Asia. The US also spread its sphere of influence and a long-term, strategic rivalry, the Cold War, developed between the two acknowledged superpowers of that era—the USSR and the US. This lasted until the Soviets advanced into Afghanistan and were ousted. The defeat in Afghanistan at the hands of basically primitive people but armed with sophisticated weapons was a humbling experience for Moscow and ultimately resulted in the breakup of the Soviet Union.

From the early days of the American ascendency in world affairs and the Cold War, the Pakistani leadership joined the US camp not for ideological reasons, but mainly to strengthen their position in the face of the rivalry with India. In the first of the two sub-periods of this long era, the country took formal membership in the defence alliances created by the Americans—the CENTO and the SEATO.

The US aided Pakistan's economy and provided hardware to the military. In the second sub-period, starting in 1979, Islamabad became a US partner to oppose the Russian occupation of Afghanistan and thereby received economic and military assistance. From 1979 to 1989, Pakistan worked with the US and Saudi Arabia to expel the Soviet Union from Afghanistan.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 1991, ushered in a new period that lasted for another quarter century. This period was famously described as the 'end of history' by the American sociologist, Francis Fukuyama, who used that phrase as the title of his book.[1] History, he thought, had ended since the world had chosen Western liberalism rather than state-socialism as the preferred system of governance. This turned out to be an optimistic conclusion, which he revised in a later book.[2]

That was not the only major change in the global order brought about by the end of World War II. The other was the structuring of a rule-based

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multilateral system that would work in the areas in which states had often been in conflict. The UN system was meant to resolve political and social problems among states. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was to keep the global financial system working smoothly. The World Bank Group and associated regional development banks were to provide development finance and advice to the countries that were backward and required finance of technical assistance. This system worked not only in keeping peace in the world, but also bringing about unprecedented economic development and social progress.

The forces that produced these changes came to be described as 'globalisation'. The rapid development of information technologies made it possible to locate production where labour was cheap, disciplined, and reasonably well-trained. China had such labour available and a number of American and European enterprises relocated themselves to that country. Apple is a good example of how some parts of the production sector got restructured as a result of globalisation. Product design was done in Cupertino, a city on the west coast of the US, while assembly of the products was done in a Taiwanese-owned factory in China's south, from the components imported from a dozen countries, mostly in South East Asia and most of the final consumption was in the rich nations of North America and Europe. The result of this restructuring of the industrial sector was the development of supply chains around the globe. Large industrial enterprises depended on parts and components produced wherever there was comparative advantage for manufacturing. These were transported mostly by ships. It was only when the Covid-19 pandemic struck the world that there was a serious disruption in shipping. The result is a shortage of goods as the United States embarks on the 2021 holiday season.

There were some job losses in the developed countries, which resulted in a political backlash that contributed to the rise of Donald Trump. This resentment on the part of what became the Trump electoral base, turned globalisation into a dirty word and those who were in favour of that development, were called with some unhidden contempt globalists. This style of politics of resentment, particularly in the rich nations, was symptomatic of the launch of the third phase that I have mentioned earlier.

While the beginning of the first phase of the world order was in 1945, that of the second was in 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the third, in 2016, with the unexpected triumph of Trump in the American presidential elections. The policies followed by America's 45th

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president and his view of the world unleashed chaos in global affairs. This has manifested itself in several ways.

Gideon Rachman divides recent world history into three distinct eras. The first period of rebuilding economies and extending welfare states that followed World War II, *Les trente glorieuses* (1945–1975), as they were referred to in France, saw strong economic growth across the West, alongside the use of Keynesian demand management as a way of bringing the state into economic affairs. British economist John Maynard Keynes was the father of the multilateral global system devised at Bretton Woods, in New Hampshire, in the US. A set of new institutions was created, in which the US was the dominant voice, but where other countries also had some say. It was generally assumed that the members of the institutions created to manage global finance (the IMF) and provide development assistance to war-ravaged Europe and Asia as well as the new countries that were emerging from decades and centuries of colonial rule (the World Bank Group), would adopt liberal democracy as the form of governance. Since the Soviet Union and China had their own systems of governance, they initially stayed out of the Bretton Woods system. Of course, Rachman's hypothesis concentrates mainly on major implications in the international mainstream. Rachman asks, 'why should cycles in modern history last for roughly thirty years? One possible explanation is that the successful ideologies and the political movements they spawn go through a cycle of emulation followed by overshoot.' So far, modern history seems to show that these stages last about thirty years, with occasional gestation periods.

By the mid-1970s, this phase of *les trente glorieuses* had run its course. Jimmy Carter, the US president, diagnosed a national 'malaise', while Britain elected Margaret Thatcher as the prime minister in 1979 and wanted a total restructuring of the state. The US followed with the election of Ronald Reagan as the president. China abandoned the Maoist system of governance with a heavy role of the state in political and economic governance and emphasis on income and social equality. Under Deng Xiaoping, the new supreme leader, a new era began in China. In his words, 'It was glorious to be rich.' China opted for the Western system of economic governance. It joined the IMF, the World Bank and later, the World Trade Organisation. It did not abandon its political system of one-party rule. This was the neo-liberal era that also lasted for thirty years, until the world was thrown into the Great Recession that began in 2007 and lasted until 2009. In the West, this period, is sometimes called the Thatcher–Reagan era, reduced the role of the state by easing

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regulatory systems and reducing taxes. The most egregious consequence of this easing was the excessive lending for housing by commercial banks and the development of new instruments of finance, generally known as asset-backed securities that led to the recession. Neo-liberalism lasted for thirty years. To quote again from Rachman's article:

> As with the end of trente glorieuses, it took a few years of uncertainty before a new ideological movement emerged. But that happened in 2016 with Trump's election and Brexit. The fact that populist and nationalist parties around the world were already taking their cue from Trump, it suggests that the cycle of emulation is already underway. It was standard practice for politicians such as Victor Orban in Hungary as well as Matteo Salvini in Italy and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, to imitate the Trump playbook—condemning 'globalism', accusing the media of spreading fake news, mocking the 'politically correct', and scorning international organizations that attempt to deal with problems such as climate change or the resettlement of refugees.[3]

If this interpretation of recent world history is correct, then when does the next phase start? Americans have always believed that they would lead the world in every field. That confidence has been challenged by the rise of China as a competitor. China set itself to be the leader in several new technologies. Could Trump-ism and all that it had spawned around the world, last for thirty years and take us into the middle of the 21st century? Trump's impact on the global system may not endure for thirty years.

The reaction, possibly, began in November 2018, when the American voter sent a large batch of Democrats to the House of Representative and the Democratic Party took control of the lower chamber of the American national legislature. The voter also put more women in the house than ever before. More importantly, he lost the elections, but little can be said of the implications of that right now. Liberal thinkers believe that among the world's great powers, only America has the attributes to lead the globe and get it to move in the right direction. Jake Sullivan, who is the national security adviser to President Joe Biden, wrote in *The Atlantic*:

> The idea is not that the United States is intrinsically better than other countries, but rather this: Despite its flaws, America possesses distinctive attributes that can be put to work to advance both the national interest and the larger common interest....The United States cannot keep leading if it starts being seen by others as a 'normal' power, interested exclusively in its narrow self-interest.[4]

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Sullivan, who was also the national security adviser to Biden when he was vice president and held other senior posts, has the credentials to reflect on the role the US can play to recover from the deep trough into which it was pushed by President Trump. It was precisely in terms of self-interest that Trump defined his mission in America.

What are the attributes that make the US stand apart from other large nations? The first is a recognition by most who reflect on these matters that the best and most durable solutions to economic and national problems in world affairs, are ones in which the gains made by the US also contribute to the gains made by other countries. The Trump belief that all deal-making is a zero-sum game, in which one party's gain is equal to the other's loss, should not become the guiding principle of America's foreign affairs. In fact, it negates the very concept of a deal, which implies an agreement for mutual benefit.

The second attribute is America's can-do spirit. This was behind President John Kennedy's promise to land an American on the moon. This was why, until recently, the world's most technologically advanced firms were American. China is catching up with the US. It has overtaken Japan and become the world's second-largest economy.

To quote once gain from Sullivan, 'A third attribute of America's exceptional role, is that the country is more willing than other advanced democracies to wield power in all forms. This is in no small part because Americans see themselves (rightly or wrongly) not as choosing to act but rather as called to act, by circumstances, or by other nations.' This is how and why the US entered the two World Wars.

The fourth and final attribute is that the US, as a country, was not carved out of a territory, or a tributary, but out of a set of ideas. The founders knew that they were not creating a political entity that would be in its final shape from the time it came into being. They anticipated progress over time toward 'a more perfect union'. This was and still is, an ongoing process.

Deflection from Representative Liberalism towards Authoritarianism

As already discussed above, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of European Communism, Francis Fukuyama, the American political scientist, had reached the conclusion that history had ended. He was of the view that all nations around the world would move towards Western-style liberalism. It would provide individuals

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central roles within mutually agreed legal frameworks. The state would work according to people's expressed wishes. People would do that by periodically holding elections to give reins of power to the selected policymakers. Would this finding apply to Pakistan and the countries in its immediate neighbourhood?

For Fukuyama, the world history was a conflict among different ideologies. For more than a century, there were running battles between the European powers that had colonized large chunks of land in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the native elites of the colonized areas. Colonists believed that they were bringing civilization and modernity to backward lands they had under their control while the elites were convinced that the colonized land was their land and they had the full right to manage it. In managing it, they will keep in sight the aspirations of the people they would govern. The colonial powers mostly ignored the locals.

While this conflict was still on, parts of Europe was captured by ultra-nationalists. The Italians under Mussolini brought nationalism into governance while across the border Adolf Hitler introduced Nazism not only to his native Germany and but also to the rest of the world. It took World War II to defeat the Germans and the Italians and move the world towards systems of governance that was law-based and participatory at the national and international levels. This move was what Fukuyama saw as the 'end of history.' The national systems would place individuals at the centre of the system who would be governed by laws he and she and fully participated in putting on the books. This system lasted for more than half a century but came under stress for a variety of reasons many of which were articulated in world's different regions. The globe had been fractured in many parts. This brings me to a discussion of Pakistan and of how the country is being affected by its neighbourhood.

Pakistan shares its international borders with four countries. All of them are governed by authoritarian rulers. That has been the case for decades. Two of those, Iran and Afghanistan, follow the Islamic faith in the way they govern their people. However, their different interpretations of the religion translate in different ways to define governance. Iran is a Shiite nation in which clerics well-versed in the Islamic Sharia govern the country. The Taliban have re-established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan after having lived and fought the established order for two decades. They are engaged in the process of defining how such as a political entity would be managed.

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For Pakistan, China is the third border state. President Xi Jinping who was elected president in 2013 on the assumption that he would serve for two terms as was done by his two predecessors, Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, is set to get a third term when the Chinese Communist Party meets in the spring of 2022 for its five-yearly conclave. Earlier in 2021, the Party rewrote the document that details its history in which Xi was given the status equal to that of Deng Xiaoping and Mao Zedong.

The fourth neighbour, India, has gone, and is going, towards what it calls Hindutva, or authoritarianism based on the Hindu religion. Not having given up the old caste system, it has introduced religion into it. Hinduism occupies the top of the hierarchy while Islam with 200 million adherents is now placed on a much lower rung. Twice elected prime minister at the head of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party—first time in 2014 and the second time five years later in 2019—Narendra Modi now controls all levers of power in both the state as well as in the party apparatuses. Pakistan, in other words, is geographically placed in the centre of an authoritarian governing system the components of which have very different characteristics.

The four countries that are Pakistan's neighbours are likely to evolve their authoritarian systems in different ways. As they go forward, they will face challenges from within as well as from the outside. Iran now has a well-educated middle class in which women with high levels of literacy have an increasingly important roles to play. I developed this point in a 20-page chapter on Iran in my book titled, *Rising Powers and Global Governance*.[5] Former Foreign Minister of Iran, Ali Akbar Velayati, was impressed by the thesis I had developed about his country's future. We met in Singapore and he invited me to launch the book in Tehran to which I would be invited by the government. I had to decline the invitation as it would have put me in an awkward position in the United States which was now my home. The Iranian women don't want their lives to be governed by what they regard as archaic rules. The external challenges for Iran come from the Jewish state of Israel, from the Sunni government of Saudi Arabia and from the United States. All three would like to see the system (dominated by the Shiite clerics) to be dismantled and replaced by something they have made no attempt to define. There was a reaction to these external challenges and resulted in the election of Ebrahim Raisi, a hardliner, as president, a hardliner to replace the more moderate Hassan Rouhani who governed for eight years, from 2013 to 2021. The direction in which the country is likely to go will be defined to some extent by nuclear politics. Will Tehran be persuaded to join the

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nuclear talks that were begun in December 2021 to revive in some form the nuclear accord negotiated by then President Barack Obama in 2015 but from which his maverick successor Donald Trump pulled out in 2017?

Pakistan will be most affected by the political and social shape systems still-being-formed in Afghanistan will take. The only comfort that Pakistan can draw is that some of those who are occupying senior positions in the government in Kabul have had close working relations with Pakistan's military intelligence service. Prime Minister Imran Khan has a soft spot for the Taliban was revealed to me five years ago, when I conveyed to him the invitation of then President Ashraf Ghani to visit him in Kabul.

There is not much to speculate about the future direction of China. As already indicated, the course for it has been clearly set for several years to come.

However, Pakistan should be very worried by the authoritarian direction in which India is moving and how that would affect the country's 200 million Muslim population. For decades, India had earned the reputation of a highly fractured society that had found a way to create a nation out of diversity. It had created political and economic systems that provided space to all classes of people. Historian Sunil Khilnani had called it 'The Idea of India'—his book with the same title. That idea is now dead. Hindutva is now being aggressively promoted even at the cost of worsening relations with Bangladesh, a Muslim majority country, the Indians had sent in their troops to create by pushing Pakistan out of what was the latter's eastern province. Fifty years later while Bangladesh is under the rule of government that is very close to India, there are now Hindu–Muslim riots on both sides of the India–Bangladesh border. The pressure on the Indian Muslim population and the increasing restiveness of the Muslims in Kashmir could create another wave of migrants for Pakistan. The country can ill afford this at this particular time.

Pakistan's Position in a Fast-Changing World

This book focuses on the challenges Pakistan faces as it enters the eighth decade of its existence as an independent state. Keeping in view what we can gauge from the literature on this subject, in the latest phase in the development of international order since the end of World War II, how should Pakistan and those responsible for making the country's policies, react? How should they guide the country through the difficult times

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the world faces? I will attempt to provide some tentative answers to that question in this section.

Before discussing how Pakistan is likely to be affected by the changes in its external environment, it would be appropriate to examine some of the internal developments. Two of these are important: demographic and political change in the country.

Pakistan, in 2021, was a country of some 210 million people, almost seven times its size at the time of its birth, in 1947.[6] Some of the results of the 2017 population census surprised even seasoned demographers. They had decided, amongst themselves, that the population growth had declined to 1.8 per cent a year, from a bit more than 3 per cent, in Pakistan's early years. That was the basis on which public policy was being made. The census, however, revealed a growth rate of 2.4 per cent a year, 33 per cent higher than was generally assumed. At the current rate, Pakistan, in a few decades, would become the world's third-largest country after India—soon to be the largest—and China.

Pakistan has a lot of diversity. It has a large landmass, like Brazil, Canada, China, India, and the US. It has sizeable, almost uninhabitable deserts in the west and high mountains in the east. Like most deserts across the globe, those in Pakistan also have large mineral deposits, waiting to be exploited. Some of the world's highest peaks are in the range of mountains that define Pakistan's border with China.

The glaciers are the source of water for the many rivers that flow through the country. Collectively, the rivers go under the name of the Indus Basin. As a result of a treaty signed with India in 1960, the use of the western rivers was given to Pakistan, while those in the east were awarded to India. Pakistan was compensated for the loss of the eastern rivers, by the building of 'link canals' that took water from the west, to the east. The enormous investment in this complicated work of water engineering, was financed by a consortium of countries and institutions, led by the World Bank.

The story of the division of the Indus Basin is well told in *Indus Divided* (2017) book by Daniel Haines, a British scholar.[7] The result was a system of surface canals, whose water was augmented by tens of thousands of tube-wells. This well-developed system of irrigated agriculture has the potential to provide a variety of food products, including those that come from livestock. That would satisfy not only the needs of a large and increasing population, but also those in Pakistan's immediate and near-immediate neighbours, in particular China and the oil-rich countries of the Middle East.

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Geographic and economic diversity are not the only distinguishing features of the Pakistani landscape. There are a number of ethnic, religious, and language groups that populate the land. The various differences in the population, is the result of the way the land that is now Pakistan, was settled over a period of thousands of years. Some of the world's oldest civilisations once flourished in the Indus Basin. There have also been large-scale migrations since partition and even afterwards. On the other hand, millions have migrated out of the country to get better jobs. Both of these factors have been mentioned in earlier chapters.

Turning now to domestic political developments, I believe the election of July 2018 saw the country develop politically in profound ways. It brought into play a new political dynamic that moved power away from the dominating feudal class and to the urban areas. It handed the reins of political power to a leader, Imran Khan, and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, that is significantly different from those that came before.

The present government is not tethered to the established forces that stood in the way of making structural changes that kept the country confronting serious financial and political problems. Time and again, Pakistan needed outside assistance in part due to the country's inability to raise domestic resources to finance development.

Previously, the taxation system was hide-bound and only 5.7 per cent of the people in the country paid taxes. All of them were in well-structured parts of the economy. They worked in the government or in large and regulated private corporations. The present government is taking measures to broaden the tax net and make collection more efficient. The previous political establishment was not prepared to tax the socio-economic classes to which it belonged. This failure took the country repeatedly to the IMF and also made it beholden to the US.

This cycle of dependence can now be broken because the government headed by Imran Khan, has greater freedom to follow a different development paradigm. The prime minister visited many foreign countries and these contacts bore fruit as foreign investment has started to pour in. Further, the balance of trade has already improved. Pakistan's seven-decade history is divided into periods of rules by the military and by civilian leaders. The civilian leadership drew its power more from a system of patron-client relations, than from the ballot box. Those who ruled were supported by the *biradari* system in Punjab and similar arrangements in other parts of the country kept the ruling classes in power as they were able to deliver some basic needs of the citizens by using the resources they commanded in the government.

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Resilient or not, these were short-term palliatives and not long-term solutions to the people's social and economic backwardness. As I discussed in *Pakistan Under Bhutto*, Ayub Khan was able to break into this pattern of governance, by launching his system of 'basic democracies'. That system institutionalised relations among different classes of the citizenry and provided a link between the people and the government. This procedure was adapted and safeguarded in the 1973 Constitution as the three-tier local government system. Often, however, the elections for the local government bodies were delayed. There are good political reasons as well as economic and social ones that should move Imran Khan and his party to place greater emphasis on the proper functioning of the local government.

Conclusion

How would I conclude a discussion that has taken me across such a wide spectrum? I am writing this at a time when the world has been hit by a pandemic of exceptional virulence/magnitude. On 30 January 2020, the WHO called Covid-19 a pandemic and declared a public health emergency. The disease was caused by a new version of coronavirus. The previous versions had caused the SARS and the MERS. Those outbreaks were nowhere as severe as this pandemic.

Covid-19 was first identified in the industrial city of Wuhan, on the left bank of the Yangtze River, in Central China. The city has attracted a lot of foreign investment, which has gone mostly into large-scale manufacturing. The city also has a modern, state-of-the-art laboratory that carries out research on viruses. Initially, there was suspicion that coronavirus had been developed at the institute for research purposes and had escaped and entered the city's food chain. Later, the virus's origin was traced to bats, an animal known to carry coronavirus in its body. The disease has resulted in what some economists called the pandemic depression. The qualifier pandemic is meant to distinguish it from the Great Depression of the 1930s. The causes and cures for the two severe downturns are different. Economists agree that the trigger of the 1930s depression was the sharp decline in stock prices in 1929. However, economists are still debating about what contributed to the deterioration in economic health in the extended period, that came after the stock market meltdown following the arrival of the pandemic in early 2020. Keynesians believe that the economic disaster was caused by a sharp reduction in demand. However, some thought that expensive money had

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reduced the amount of investment people and firms were making. For Keynesians, the cure was to have the state increase investment and create jobs. For the rival group, the monetarists, the cure was to have the central banks lower interest rates. The question is, which of these approaches should be adopted by policymakers in South Asia, including Pakistan? The region is expected to see a significant decline in its GDP, though this will most likely be sharper in India than in Pakistan.

People with medical backgrounds (mostly epidemiologists and virologists) did most of the policy work relating to Covid-19 in the US and Europe. Economists and financial experts stayed in the background for obvious reasons. Non-medical professionals had correctly determined that the spread of the disease had to be brought under control before economic and financial measures could be applied to address the slowdown in the economy. Medical experts came to the conclusion that a three-pronged policy response was needed. Masks had to be used outside homes, social distancing had to be observed, which meant staying at least 6 feet apart in all places, and testing and tracing people who were found to be infected.

While not participating in policymaking, economists have begun to focus on some unusual aspects of the disease and how these will need to be incorporated. According to Osterholm and Kashkari:

> This pandemic is deeply unfair. Millions of low-wage, front-line service workers have lost their jobs or been put in harm's way, while most higher-wage, white-collar workers have been spared. But it is even more unfair than that; those of us who've kept our jobs are actually saving more money because we aren't going out to restaurants or movies, or on vacations. Unlike in prior recessions, remarkably, the personal savings rate has soared to 20% from around 8% in January.... That's why traditional concerns about racking up too much government debt do not apply in this situation.[8]

Of course, this article refers to the US, but this increase in savings will be witnessed to varying degrees globally and may be used for creating jobs that low-income learners have lost.

Policymakers in Pakistan should look at the conditionality associated with the IMF program they are implementing, which are recommending compressing the rate of GDP growth for a short-term. Instead, this may be the time to undertake public investment aimed at creating jobs.

The tree-plantation program inaugurated by the prime minister of Pakistan, is one example of the type of activity the government needs to

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undertake, as well as the building projects that have been initiated. At the same time, an ambitious effort should be made to improve healthcare, especially for the poorer segments of the population.

While I have focused on the present and opined about the future, I have said little about the past. And yet the past has a way of influencing the present as well as the future. Economists have a term for this: they call it path dependence Pakistan has had a turbulent past. It was born almost seventy-five years ago, with few assets but many problems. India had hoped that a country born to protect the religious beliefs and cultural practices of its people would not survive and would appeal for re-admission. That way, it would re-confirm what the early Indian leadership was hoping to achieve—a country where people of different faiths, belonging to different castes and speaking different languages, could coexist happily.[9] Neither happened. Pakistan survived. India, seven decades after floating Khilnani's 'idea of India', has abandoned it altogether in favour of Hindutva.

Born in a deep crisis, Pakistan lived through many more. Each time it found the resources and the will to beat back the troubles and to continue to move forward. The path it followed was not linear; it zigzagged its way into the future. The main point of this work is that Pakistan now stands at a juncture in its history, from where it can achieve the ambition of forging a better future for its citizenry.

Why be Optimistic?

I have provided the answers to this question in this work. I have, in the foregoing chapters, regrouped them into three clusters: the political progress the country has made in the last few years; the many positives in its situation and on which it should focus, in making public policy; and its extraordinary location, which could turn it into a hub of international commerce.

In politics, Pakistan could become a model that other countries in the politically stunted Islamic World can follow. Of the fifty or so Muslim majority nations that stretch from Morocco in the west, to Indonesia in the east and which comprise a total population of some 1.6 billion people, Pakistan is one of the two or three that have made political progress. It is managing the various fault-lines that continue to shake the Muslim world. Even Turkey, which had appeared to have found a way of dealing with these difficulties and was hoping to join the European Union, stumbled. Pakistan moved forward by strengthening its political

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institutions and bringing change through the ballot box, rather than relying on civil disturbances, or coups. Change has been coming to Pakistan by strengthening the political institutions. These are now led by a charismatic politician, who heads a political party that has broken with the past. Imran Khan's PTI is working on building a base of support that does not rely on family connections and patron-client relations, as did the parties that governed the country when the military was not in charge.

The PTI has a base among the country's youth, who account for two-thirds of the population. Many had migrated from the rural areas to the country's large cities, where the population is even younger. Their aspirations include a good education, which would inevitably prepare them for well-paying jobs in the modern sectors of the economy, healthcare, and transport, which is an important facility for this base, because the majority live on the peripheries of the cities. Being politically active, they would like to influence the way they are governed. This is what the youth of the Arab Spring wanted and turned to the streets to attain it. The Pakistani youth have used the ballot box to achieve the same result. Such an achievement is likely to be more durable.

The second conclusion is to suggest that policymakers should focus on the several positives that Pakistan currently enjoys. There was a tendency in the country to dwell on the negatives and their impact on the country's future. The positives were generally overlooked. They include a well-equipped sector of agriculture that should be achieving higher yields and producing high value-added crops, rather than merely food grain.

The country has engineering skills that have been used for decades in small and medium-scale enterprises. They could be linked with large industries in China, through a system of supply chains. The CPEC can be instrumental in achieving this objective. While a growing population is a burden, it can be turned into an asset. Pakistan has one of the world's youngest populations. While the country needed to invest more in public education and healthcare, the private sector had established institutions that were turning out highly skilled people and injecting them into the economy. In this context, we need to note, in particular, that one million well-educated women who join the workforce every year. They are being accommodated in the modern sectors of the economy.

Finally, there is the advantage of Pakistan's location, which the country could, and perhaps will, use to improve its economic growth. CPEC could be instrumental in realising this objective. It would require a new development paradigm that utilises the sectors of agriculture, small-scale engineering, and modern services, as the drivers of growth. With the

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right policies, Pakistan could double its GDP growth rate, to between 6.5 to 7 per cent a year, in a decade or so and sustain it over time. This was done in the 1960s and 1980s but that was made possible by large inflows of foreign capital. This time around it will need to be done by raising domestic resources.

Pakistan stands at the cusp of bringing about a change for the better in its political system, the structure of its economy, and its relations with the world outside its borders. In order to acquire a better understanding of how to achieve this, policymakers at the centre and in the provinces must develop institutions that can study the changes that are needed and also involve the citizens of Pakistan in the consultation and decision-making process.

NOTES

Preface

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Introduction

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PAKISTAN: STATECRAFT AND GEOPOLITICS IN TODAY'S WORLD

SHAHID JAVED BURKI

There are several studies on Pakistan's external relations but none of them paint the picture on as wide a canvas as the one chosen for this work. Most studies deal with bilateral relations, however, the scope of this work is much wider. This book examines Pakistan's relations with India, China, the United States, and Afghanistan and several other countries in a dynamic framework. The author looks at Pakistan's external relations from several disciplinary angles and explains that it is difficult to fully comprehend economic changes—in particular, the influences on the making of public policy—without understanding the political, social, and cultural environment in which Pakistan's economy functions. Some of the topics discussed in the book are demography; geography; migrations; religion; climate change and global warning; American–China trade war; America's conflict with Iran; India's decision to absorb Kashmir as a 'territory' of the Indian Union; and the impact of international migration on the political systems in several Western nations.

Shahid Javed Burki is a prominent professional economist. In 1974, he joined the World Bank as Senior Economist and served as Vice-President of the organization until he took early retirement in 1999. He held several senior executive positions at the World Bank and was a de facto Finance Minister of Pakistan on a caretaker basis (1996–7). He writes a weekly column for *The Express Tribune,* and contributed to the op-ed pages of the *Financial Times,* London, and *The Indian Express,* Delhi. He is the author/editor of several books on Pakistan, including: *Pakistan Under Bhutto* (1980); *Pakistan under the Military: Eleven Years of Zia Ul-Haq* (with Craig Baxter, 1991); *Pakistan: Fifty Years of Nationhood* (1999); *A Historical Dictionary of Pakistan* (1999); and *Changing Perceptions, Altered Reality: Pakistan's Economy under Musharraf, 1999–2006* (2007). Presently, Burki is Chairman, Advisory Board of the Burki Institute of Public Policy, Lahore, Pakistan.

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