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EDITORIAL

War Clouds over South Asia

With his reckless “pre-emptive” airstrike on Balakot in Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inadvertently undone what previous Indian governments almost miraculously succeeded in doing for decades. Since 1947 the Indian Government has bristled at any suggestion that the conflict in Kashmir could be resolved by international arbitration, insisting that it is an “internal matter.” *By goading Pakistan into a counter-strike, and so making India and Pakistan the only two nuclear powers in history to have bombed each other, Modi has internationalised the Kashmir dispute.* He has demonstrated to the world that Kashmir is potentially the most dangerous place on earth, the flash-point for nuclear war. Every person, country, and organisation that worries about the prospect of nuclear war has the right to intervene and do everything in its power to prevent it. These were the considered words of Arundhati Roy.

Andrew Korybko was equally apt when he wrote: “The latest Kashmir Crisis resulted in a stunning reversal of international perceptions about India and Pakistan whereby the self-professed “world’s largest democracy” has now been recast as a rogue state wanting to wage a war of aggression on unproven pretexts while the previously presumed “rogue state” of Pakistan has been revealed to be a responsible international actor fighting to uphold the UN-enshrined rules-based international order that the US and “Israel’s” South Asian ally is dangerously trying to undermine.

The Kashmir Crisis of 2019 will go down in history as the moment when international perceptions about India and Pakistan were stunningly reversed. The fast-moving multi-dimensional developments that took place between the last week of February and the first week of March did more than anything else to ruin India’s global reputation (mostly through its own reckless actions) while greatly improving Pakistan’s, something that few observers could have expected because they’d been so heavily indoctrinated with decades-old outdated dogmas that they never paid attention to how much both countries had changed by the beginning of the New Cold War.”

Kashmir: Peace vs. War

The contrast between the Pakistani and Indian Prime Ministers couldn’t be sharper, both in the context of the latest Kashmir Crisis and in the months-long

run-up to it, because PM Khan's consistent peacemaking statements were total reverse of PM Modi's relentless warmongering ones and proved that the Pakistani leader was behaving much more responsibly than the Indian one. Whatever anybody's opinion of him, and whatever Pakistan's role has been in the Kashmir conflict, Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan has acted with dignity and rectitude throughout this crisis.

The crisis in South Asia is not between the two arch rivals India and Pakistan, it is a war that is being fought in Kashmir which expanded into the beginnings of yet another potential war between India and Pakistan. Kashmir is the real theatre of horrific violence and moral corrosion that can rapidly turn into violence and uncontrollable nuclear war. Kashmir issue has become highly volatile to be resolved by India and Pakistan alone; it is not to be wished away as a bilateral issue as it has horrendous international ramification that warrant involvement of International powers. Kashmiris have sacrificed their lives fearlessly to be free of Indian military occupation by nearly 700,000 soldiers

Regional peace and stability must not be put at stakes on suspicions and presumptions. There are voices in Indian media, politicians and security analysts insinuating that the Indian government itself staged the Pulwama drama for electoral advantages. Lack of evidence on non-involvement of elements from Pakistan further increases the credence of such assertions.

Media in India and Pakistan needs to play a more mature role when the things heat up across the borders. Whereas Pakistan media acted relatively more responsibly and was visibly restrained but the Indian media was in a frenzy beating the drums of war. In a future conflict or crisis if media repeats what it did post Pulwama scenario that could exacerbate the situation that could lead to dreadful consequences not only for the antagonist but the whole of South Asian and beyond.

Arundhati Roy has summed it up very eloquently: "Kashmir is the real theatre of unspeakable violence and moral corrosion that can spin us into violence and nuclear war at any moment. To prevent that from happening, the conflict in Kashmir has to be addressed and resolved".

Islamophobia Led to Christchurch Massacre

Islamophobia is an attitude attitudes expressed towards Muslims as a whole, not towards fundamentalist groupings, or to Muslims committed to anti- Muslim or anti-Western violence

According to a Pew Global survey in 2014, a quarter (26%) of Britons had an 'unfavourable' view of Muslims. Attitudes were slightly harder in France (27% unfavourable), and much harder in Germany (33% unfavourable), Spain (46% unfavourable) and Italy (63% unfavourable). The survey results and analysis raise important questions as to the causes of this steady shift, the forces behind it and how best to reverse it in the future.

London Institute of South Asia held a seminar in 2014 in London and suggested that unless Western governments take measures to control this phenomenon we shall see more violence and terrorism against the Muslim communities that could lead to a clash of civilisations.

Christchurch massacre of 50 Muslims inside a mosque is a living example of dangers of rising Islamophobia. Undoubtedly The New Zealand prime minister Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern emerged as a heart warming surprise in this world. She handled the aftermaths most humanely and admirably. While she impeccably devised early warning and risk analysis and took decisions to improvise gun laws for better conflict prevention, she went a step ahead in comforting the aggrieved families of the incident through personal visits. Ardern clearly termed the incident an act of terrorism; she declared Tarrant as nameless, she banned semi and automatic weapons; she promised the nation that this kind of tragedy will never happen again. She was in more profound sorrow; her demeanour, her eyes, her every part of body and mind was reflective of the grief she was going through as head of the state. After more than two weeks, Ardern is unfolded as a lady of compassion and kindness. Unfortunately this cannot be said of the rest of the leaders of the 'civilized world' where Islamophobia is ripe but then there is a ray of hope when some sane voices emerge from Europe:

European Union Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini on Monday described rising Islamophobia as a threat not only for Muslims but for all of European society as it "threatens diversity".

"The strength of our societies lies in our diversity, and whoever attacks the diversity of our societies attacks the entire society not just one segment of it," she said. "This is why for the European Union, institutions, for me personally, for all our member states, it is a priority to make sure that Islamophobia doesn't find any place in the European Union," she asserted.

Islamophobia in India

While we are concerned more about Islamophobia in the West the world at large has failed to notice the more potent and immediate danger that emanates from India. The phenomenal rise of hatred against the Muslims (nearly 200 Million) in India in the past five years

Whereas it is commonly believed that in the West the governments would like to contain Islamophobia and take appropriate remedial measures, in India there exist claims that it is state sponsored. Under Narendra Modi Islamophobia has hit India like a tsunami. The anti-Muslim tirade has permeated the body politic of India. RSS — a right-wing paramilitary party politically allied to Narendra Modi's BJP is carrying out "Saffron Terror" and forcibly converting Muslims, Christians and Dalits to Hinduism in what is termed as "Ghar Wapsi. India's right wingers demonize Muslims. Remember what Ambedkar (The guru of Dalits) said, "Dalits were never Hindus and will never be Hindus"

Hindutva is on the rise and the principal targets are Muslims and Dalits. It is amazing that not many in the world realise this tragedy. There are nearly 300,000,000 (Three hundred million Dalits) and nearly 200,000,000 (two hundred million) Muslims in India. Combined they represent over 42 percent of India's population.

The Indian Hindutva network's inner core is currently comprised of at least 17 groups whose primary purpose is to promote prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims. An additional 32 groups are actively engaged in forcefully converting Muslims, Christians and Dalits in the folds of Hinduism The inner core Indian Islamophobia/Hindutva network enjoyed access to billions of rupees in pursuit of their radical mission

For some, rising anti-Muslim sentiments are immediately explained away as a "natural" outcome of the many violent events in the Muslim world and "terrorism" in general. However, *LISA upholds that the rising negative sentiments may have to do with the presence of a well-organized and well-funded Islamophobic industry that has managed to invade and capture civil society and public discourses without serious contestation.*

Pakistan Announces Sharda Temple Corridor

Softening borders between Eastern and Western Punjab region of Indian and Pakistan can boost people to people contact, mutual trade, cultural exchange

and economic development on both sides as Confidence Building Measures (CBM) to mitigate effects of mutually shared animosity grounded in the historical process of their inter-state rivalry.

The opening of Kartarpur corridor for visa free access to Sikh pilgrims was more than an event as both sides need to consistently work for peace building through such soft political initiatives and CBM's to carve mechanism for a comprehensive dialogue to resolve hard political issues including disputed perspectives on Kashmir and other disputes.

Following the Kartarpur Corridor, Pakistan on Monday took an extraordinary step by announcing that it would open 'Sharda Temple Corridor' in Azad Jammu and Kashmir for Hindu pilgrims, particularly in the neighbouring country. Sharda temple is one of the most ancient temples of Hindus. This temple is about 5,000 years old which was established in 237 BC during the reign of Maharaja Ashoka. Close to the temple, there is a pond called 'Madomati' – its water is as sacred to the community members as the water of Katasraj temple.

This initiative would please Sikh and Hindu communities in Pakistan, India and across the globe and earn a good name for the new leadership of Pakistan.

BLA and the UK

The Pakistani authorities have officially charged "Balochistan Liberation Army" (BLA) leader Hyrbyair Marri and 12 others for last week's terrorist attack against the Chinese consulate in Karachi, which the group's fugitive UK-based leader is suspected of masterminding.

The UK's granting of political asylum to "Balochistan Liberation Army" (BLA) leader Hyrbyair Marri and hosting of this fugitive reflects adversely on Britain's credentials as a state having zero tolerance for terrorists. Hyrbyair Marri has blood on its hands for as asserted and alleged by Pakistan he masterminded the attack on Chinese consulate in Karachi. Islamabad might seek his extradition but realistically there's little that it can do to ensure London's compliance unless it convinces Beijing to support it.

Marri received political asylum from the island nation in 2011 and has been living there since then, meaning that Britain has blood on its hands for the crime that he's accused of cooking up while under their protection. This doesn't necessarily mean that the British government had a role in carrying it out, but

just that they're nevertheless culpable for at the very least indirectly facilitating it by granting him a safe haven from where he can systemize terrorism.

The Latest Kashmir Crisis: Momentous Shift in Pakistan-India Relations

Andrew Korybko

The latest Kashmir Crisis resulted in a stunning reversal of international perceptions about India and Pakistan whereby the self-professed “world’s largest democracy” has now been recast as a rogue state wanting to wage a war of aggression on unproven pretexts while the previously presumed “rogue state” of Pakistan has been revealed to be a responsible international actor fighting to uphold the UN-enshrined rules-based international order that the US and “Israel’s” South Asian ally is dangerously trying to undermine.

The Kashmir Crisis of 2019 will go down in history as the moment when international perceptions about India and Pakistan were stunningly reversed. The fast-moving multi-dimensional developments that took place between the last week of February and the first week of March did more than anything else to ruin India’s global reputation (mostly through its own reckless actions) while greatly improving Pakistan’s, something that few observers could have expected because they’d been so heavily indoctrinated with decades-old outdated dogmas that they never paid attention to how much both countries had changed by the beginning of the New Cold War. What follows is a concise breakdown of the 10 main military, diplomatic, and soft power points that caused the world to never see India and Pakistan the same way again:

Military

Pakistan Responded Proportionately To India:

Many commentators previously presumed that Pakistan lacked the conventional capabilities to respond tit-for-tat to India because of the numerical mismatch between their two militaries and the defense budgets funding them, but Pakistan proved just how wrong such superficial comparisons are when it responded proportionately and even managed to down at last one of India’s planes.

Pakistan Preemptively Prevented An MH-17-Like False Flag Attack:

By preemptively closing down its airspace to civilian airliners during the climax of the Kashmir Crisis, Pakistan prevented India from staging an MH-17-like false flag attack and blaming it on Islamabad in order to ratchet up the

international pressure against its adversary, which prudently contributed to the forthcoming de-escalation that later unfolded.

The Pakistan Navy Detected And Deterred An Indian Submarine's Infiltration Attempt:

Once again contradicting the international “experts” who never expected that the Pakistani military could ever pose a challenge to its Indian counterpart, the Pakistan Navy detected and deterred an Indian submarine’s infiltration attempt and therefore proved its worth as a valuable branch of the Armed Forces that’s more than capable of punching well above its weight.

Diplomatic

Russia Expressed Its Willingness To Mediate Between India And Pakistan:

Bruising India’s wannabe-“superpower” ego and its supremacist self-perception relative to Pakistan, Russia showed that it regards India and Pakistan as equals in accordance with international law by expressing its willingness to mediate between them and even host peace talks if both parties were interested, which undercut India’s international prestige while raising Pakistan’s.

India Outright Rejected Russia's Or Anyone Else's Mediation Efforts While Pakistan Welcomed Them:

The Indian Ambassador to Russia told Sputnik that his country wouldn’t accept any mediation offer from anyone if it was formally made in the future while the Pakistani Foreign Minister enthusiastically welcomed the possibility of international – and especially Russian – assistance in this respect, which went a long way towards reshaping how Russia regards these two South Asian nations.

The OIC Slammed India For Its Atrocities In Kashmir:

The 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) slammed India for its atrocities in Kashmir despite hosting its Foreign Minister as the bloc’s official guest of honor during its latest summit, powerfully sending the message that it considers the Kashmir issue to be of premier importance for the international Muslim community (“Ummah”) and the rest of humanity in general.

India's "Economic Diplomacy" Miserably Failed to Achieve Anything of Political Significance:

India had hitherto assumed that the billions of dollars' worth of deals that it signed with Russia and the Gulf States would eventually lead to them politically supporting it when the need arose, yet New Delhi's "economic diplomacy" failed to get Moscow to "compromise" on its joint anti-terrorist and Afghan-related interests with Islamabad just as it failed to get the OIC to sell out its co-confessionals in Kashmir.

Soft Power

PM Khan's Consistent Peacemaking vs. PM Modi's Incessant Warmongering:

The contrast between the Pakistani and Indian Prime Ministers couldn't be clearer, both in the context of the latest Kashmir Crisis and in the months-long run-up to it, because PM Khan's consistent peacemaking statements were the complete opposite of PM Modi's incessant warmongering ones and proved that the Pakistani leader was behaving much more responsibly than the Indian one.

Indian Media Exposed For Being Military Proxies

Most of the world naively thought that the self-professed "world's largest democracy" had a "free and fair" media environment, but this was exposed as a total misconception after Indian media marched in lockstep with the military by braying for Pakistani blood, even going as far as spreading regular fake news reports in order to rile up the population into "seeking (nuclear) revenge" against Pakistan.

"Democracy" Debunked:

India staked the bulk of its international reputation on being regarded as the "world's largest democracy", but this untrue notion was decisively debunked by none other than its own government after the ruling party's Finance Minister scandalously implied that the opposition's dissent is treasonous all because they questioned the authorities' claims after no proof was ever presented to support them.

Concluding Thoughts

The dramatic events of the past two weeks proved to the world that Pakistan is a responsible power that will fight to protect the UN-enshrined rules-based international order in the face of India's irresponsible attempts to undermine it at the behest of its American and "Israeli" allies on unproven pretexts, leading to Pakistan becoming the champion of regional – and consequently, global – stability while India was recast as the rogue state committed to destroying it. India's international reputation is irreparably ruined while Pakistan's has immensely improved, both in the realms of international norms and geostrategy. India will always be important because of its location and attractive consumer and labor market potentials, but there's no more denying that it's now a US pawn for destabilizing the global pivot state.

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research. This article was originally published on Eurasia Future.

Our Captured, Wounded Hearts:

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy On Balakot, Kashmir And India.

By deploying the IAF, Narendra Modi has ensured that Kashmir is conclusively internationalised.

With his reckless “pre-emptive” airstrike on Balakot in Pakistan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inadvertently undone what previous Indian governments almost miraculously, succeeded in doing for decades. Since 1947 the Indian Government has bristled at any suggestion that the conflict in Kashmir could be resolved by international arbitration, insisting that it is an “internal matter.” By goading Pakistan into a counter-strike, and so making India and Pakistan the only two nuclear powers in history to have bombed each other, Modi has internationalised the Kashmir dispute. He has demonstrated to the world that Kashmir is potentially the most dangerous place on earth, the flash-point for nuclear war. Every person, country, and organisation that worries about the prospect of nuclear war has the right to intervene and do everything in its power to prevent it.

On February 14 2019, a convoy of 2,500 paramilitary soldiers was attacked in Pulwama (Kashmir) by Adil Ahmad Dar, a 20-year-old Kashmiri suicide-bomber who, it has been declared, belonged to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad. The attack that killed at least 40 men was yet another hideous chapter in the unfolding tragedy of Kashmir. Since 1990, more than seventy thousand people have been killed in the conflict, thousands have “disappeared”, tens of thousands have been tortured and hundreds of young people maimed and blinded by pellet guns. The death toll over the last twelve months has been the highest since 2009. *Associated Press* reports that almost 570 people have lost their lives, 260 of them militants, 160 civilians and 150 Indian armed personnel who died in the line of duty.

Depending on the lens through which this conflict is viewed, the rebel combatants are called “terrorists”, “militants”, “freedom fighters” or “mujahids”. Most Kashmiris call them ‘mujahids’ and when they are killed, hundreds of thousands of people—whether they agree with their methods or not

—turn out for their funerals, to mourn for them and bid them farewell. Indeed, most of the civilians who were killed this past year, are those who put their bodies in the way of harm to allow militants cornered by soldiers to escape.

In this long-drawn-out, blood-drenched saga, the Pulwama bombing is the deadliest, most gruesome attack of all. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of young men in the Kashmir Valley like Adil Ahmed Dar who have been born into war, who have seen such horror that they have become inured to fear and are willing to sacrifice their lives for freedom. Any day there could be another attack, worse, or less-worse than the Pulwama attack. Is the Government of India willing to allow the actions of these young men to control the fate of this country and the whole subcontinent? By reacting in the empty, theatrical way that he did, this is exactly what Narendra Modi has done. He has actually bestowed upon them the power to direct our future. The young Pulwama bomber could not have asked for more.

Indians who valorise their own struggle for Independence from British Rule and virtually worship those who led it are for the most part strangely opaque to Kashmiris who are fighting for the same thing. The armed struggle in Kashmir against what people think of as “Indian Rule” is almost thirty years old. That Pakistan has (at one time officially and now mostly through non-government actors) supported the struggle with arms, men and logistics is hardly a secret. Nor is it a secret that no militant can operate in the war-zone that is Kashmir if they did not have the overt support of local people. Who in their right mind could imagine that this hellishly complicated, hellishly cruel war would be solved or even mitigated in any way by a one-off, hastily executed, theatrical “surgical-strike,” which turns out to have been not-so-surgical after all? A similar “strike” that took place after the 2016 attack on an Indian Army camp in Uri achieved little more than inspiring a Bollywood action film. The Balakot strikes in turn seem to have been inspired by the film. And now the media reports that Bollywood producers are already lining up to copyright “Balakot” as the name of their next film project. On the whole, it has to be said, this absurd waltz looks and smells more “pre-election” than “pre-emptive.”

For the Prime Minister of this country to press its formidable Air force into performing dangerous theatrics is deeply disrespectful. And what an irony it is, that while this irresponsible nuclear brinkmanship is being played out in our subcontinent, the mighty United States of America is in talks with the Taliban forces whom it has not managed to defeat or dislodge even after 17 years of straight-out war.

The spiralling conflict in the subcontinent is certainly as deadly as it appears to be. But is it as straightforward?

Kashmir is the most densely militarized zone in the world, with an estimated half a million Indian soldiers posted there. In addition to the Intelligence Bureau, the Research and Analysis Wing and the National Intelligence Agency, the uniformed forces – the Army, the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force (and of course the Jammu and Kashmir Police) each does its own intelligence gathering. People live in terror of informers, double agents and triple agents who could be anybody from old school friends to family members. Under these circumstances, an attack on the scale of what happened in Pulwama is more than just shocking. As one pithy Twitter commentator put it, (she was referring to the increasingly popular Hindu vigilante practice in North India, of tracking down and lynching Muslims accused of killing cows), how is it that the BJP “can trace 3 kg of beef but cannot trace 350 kg of RDX”?

Who knows?

After the attack, the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir called it the result of “an intelligence failure”. A few intrepid media portals reported the fact that the Jammu and Kashmir Police *had* indeed raised an urgent alert about a possible attack. Nobody in the media seems overly worried about why the warning was ignored, and where, in the chain of command, the breach took place.

Tragic as it was, the Pulwama attack came as a perfect political opportunity for Narendra Modi to do what he does best—grandstand. Many of us who had predicted months ago that a BJP that was losing its political footing would call down a fireball from the skies just before elections, watched with horror as our prediction came true. And we watched the Ruling Party adroitly parley the Pulwama tragedy into petty, political advantage.

In the immediate aftermath of the Pulwama Attack, as enraged mobs attacked Kashmiris who worked and studied in mainland India, Modi kept dead quiet and reacted only after the Supreme Court said it was the Government’s duty to protect them. But after the air strikes he was quick to appear on TV to take credit, sounding for all the world as though he had personally flown the planes and dropped the bombs. Immediately India’s roughly four hundred 24/7 news channels, most of them unapologetically partisan, set about amplifying this performance with their own personal “inputs”. Using old videos and fake facts, their screaming anchors masquerading as frontline commandos, orchestrated an orgy of crazed, triumphalist nationalism, in which they claimed the air strikes

had destroyed a Jaish-e-Mohammad “terror factory” and killed more than three hundred “terrorists”. The next morning, even the most sober national newspapers followed suit with ridiculous, embarrassing headlines. *The Indian Express* said: ‘India Strikes Terror, Deep in Pakistan’. Meanwhile *Reuters*, which sent a journalist to the site in Pakistan where the bombs had actually fallen, reported only damage to trees and rocks and injuries sustained by one villager. *Associated Press* reported something similar. *The New York Times* said “Analysts and diplomats in New Delhi said the targets of the Indian airstrikes were unclear, as any terrorist groups operating along the border would have cleared out in recent days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India vowed retaliation over the Kashmir attack.”

The mainstream Indian media did not carry the *Reuters* report. So, for the bulk of India’s voting people who don’t read the *New York Times*, their Prime Minister—with his famous 56” chest—had dismantled terrorism forever.

For the moment at least, it looked as though Modi had completely outmanoeuvred his political opponents, who were reduced to tweeting in praise of India’s brave pilots. Meanwhile he and his men were out electioneering. Doubters and dissenters were terrorized by Hindutva trolls, charged with being anti-national, or just debilitated by the fear of the on-call lynch mob that seems to lurk at every street corner in North India.

But things can change in a day. The sheen of false victory faded quickly after Pakistan struck back, shot down a fighter plane and captured a pilot of the Indian Air Force—Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman. Once again, the BJP’s see-sawing electoral prospects have begun to look distinctly less rosy.

Leaving aside the business of electoral politics and the question of who will win the next elections, Modi’s actions are unforgiveable. He has jeopardized the lives of more than a billion people and brought the war in Kashmir to the doorsteps of ordinary Indians. The madness on television, fed to people like an IV drip morning, noon and night, asks people to lay aside their woes, their joblessness, their hunger, the closing down of their small businesses, the looming threat of eviction from their homes, their demands that there be an enquiry into the mysterious deaths of judges, as well as into what looks like the biggest, most corrupt Defense deal in the history of India, their worries that if they are Muslim, Dalit or Christian they could be attacked or killed—and instead vote, in the name of national pride, for the very people that have brought about this devastation.

Leaving aside the business of electoral politics and the question of who will win the next elections, Modi's actions are unforgivable. He has jeopardized the lives of more than a billion people and brought the war in Kashmir to the doorsteps of ordinary Indians.

This government has wounded India's soul so very deeply. It will take years for us to heal. For that process to even begin, we must vote to remove these dangerous, spectacle-hungry charlatans from office.

We cannot afford to have a Prime Minister who, on a whim has broken the back of the economy of a country of a billion people by declaring overnight, without consulting anybody that 80 percent of a country's currency is no longer legal tender. Who in history has ever, done this? We cannot have a Prime Minister of a nuclear power who continues to shoot for a movie about himself in a National Park while a huge crisis befalls the country and then airily declares that he has left the decision of what to do next to the "*Sena*"— the Army. Which democratically elected leader in history, has ever done this?

Modi has to go. The quarrelsome, divided, unstable Coalition government that might come in his place is not a problem. It is the very essence of democracy. It will be far more intelligent and far less foolhardy.

There remains the matter of the captured Wing Commander. Whatever anybody's opinion of him, and whatever Pakistan's role has been in the Kashmir conflict, Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan has acted with dignity and rectitude throughout this crisis. The Indian Government was right to demand that Varthaman be accorded all the rights that the Geneva Convention accords a Prisoner of War. It was right to demand that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) be given access to him while he was in Pakistan's custody. Today Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced that, as a gesture of good will, the Wing Commander will be released.

Perhaps India can offer the same courtesy to its political prisoners in Kashmir and the rest of the country: protection of their rights under the Geneva Convention, and access to the ICRC?

Kashmir is the real theatre of unspeakable violence and moral corrosion that can spin us into violence and nuclear war at any moment. To prevent that from happening, the conflict in Kashmir has to be addressed and resolved.

The war that we are in the middle of, is not a war between India and Pakistan. It is a war that is being fought in Kashmir which expanded into the beginnings of yet another war between India and Pakistan. Kashmir is the real theatre of unspeakable violence and moral corrosion that can spin us into violence and nuclear war at any moment. To prevent that from happening, the conflict in Kashmir has to be addressed and resolved. That can only be done if Kashmiris are given a chance to freely and fearlessly tell the world what they are fighting for and what they really want.

Dear World, find a way.

Arundhati Roy is author, of 'The God of Small Things', 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness', and the forthcoming collection of essays, 'My Seditious Heart'. She is a political analyst, an activist who promotes human rights.

Robert Fisk Exposes Israel's Hidden Role in the Brewing India-Pakistan Conflict

Whitney Webb

Well-known British journalist Robert Fisk recently wrote a very telling and troubling article in *The Independent* regarding the outsized role of the state of Israel in the burgeoning tensions between India and Pakistan, two nuclear powers. The story — despite its importance, given the looming threat of nuclear war between the two countries — was largely overlooked by the international media.

The tit-for-tat attacks exchanged between India and Pakistan last week have seen long-standing tensions between the two countries escalate to dangerous proportions, though Pakistan helped to deescalate the situation somewhat by returning and “saving” an Indian pilot whose plane had been shot down in retaliation for India’s bombing of targets in a disputed area administered by Pakistan.

That bombing was retaliation for a car bomb attack launched by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants, a group that both India and Pakistan recognize as a terrorist organization, against Indian forces. Some analysts have speculated that India’s decision to bomb this area was made by Indian President Narendra Modi, a Hindu ethno-nationalist, in order to rally his base ahead of upcoming Indian elections in May.

Yet, whatever the reason, the bombing has revealed the close ties that have formed between Modi’s India and Israel, particularly between their militaries. As Fisk notes, following the bombing, Indian media heavily promoted the fact that Israeli-made bombs — specifically, Rafael Spice-2000 “smart bombs” — had been used in the attack. Fisk writes:

Like many Israeli boasts of hitting similar targets, the Indian adventure into Pakistan might owe more to the imagination than military success. The ‘300-400 terrorists’ supposedly eliminated by the Israeli-manufactured and Israeli-

supplied GPS-guided bombs may turn out to be little more than rocks and trees.”

Recently released satellite images seem to corroborate what Fisk predicted, as the bombing failed to hit its intended target and instead damaged a nearby forest.

Arguably the most important aspect of Fisk’s report is his detailing of the very close ties that have been forged between the Israeli and Indian militaries in recent years. For instance, according to Fisk, India was Israel’s arms industry’s largest client in 2017, spending nearly \$700 million on Israeli air-defence systems, radars, ammunition and missiles. Many of those weapons had been promoted as “combat tested” after being used against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the world’s largest open-air prison. That same year, India represented 49 percent of Israel’s arms export market.

In addition to arms purchases, many Indian soldiers have travelled to the Negev desert to be trained by Israeli “special commando” units, and at least 16 elite Indian “Garud” commandos were recently based at two separate Israeli air bases.

Exporting oppression

Just as troubling as this military cooperation is that ethno-nationalism and anti-Islam rhetoric are increasingly becoming the basis for the relationship between the two countries.

For instance, a recent *Haaretz* article, written by Shairee Malhotra and cited by Fisk, noted that “the India-Israel relationship is also commonly being framed in terms of a natural convergence of ideas between their ruling BJP and Likud parties.” Other reports have noted that this has translated into more “aggressive” policies from Modi targeting Kashmir and Muslims elsewhere in India and that continued Israeli goading of Modi’s anti-Islam tendencies could make life much more difficult for the estimated 180 million Muslims living in India.

Indian police beat a Kashmiri Shiite Muslim for participating in a religious procession in Srinagar, Indian controlled Kashmir, Sept. 19, 2018. Dar Yasin

While some analysts and reports have warned about this danger, Fisk notes that it will be difficult to prevent the Zionist, fascist nationalism of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party from influencing India's ruling party, writing:

It is difficult to see how Zionist nationalism will not leach into Hindu nationalism when Israel is supplying so many weapons to India – the latest of which India, which has enjoyed diplomatic relations with Israel since 1992, has already used against Islamists inside Pakistan.”

Fisk goes on to note that “[s]igning up to the ‘war on terror’ – especially ‘Islamist terror’ – may seem natural for two states built on colonial partition.” Indeed, India's actions in the disputed Kashmir region share many similarities to Israel's neo-colonial occupation of Palestine. For instance, the Muslim majority of Kashmir are treated as second-class citizens on their own land and their push for self-determination has been brutally suppressed by Indian forces. As of 2016, 500,000 Indian military personnel were present in the region, roughly equating to one soldier for every 25 civilians. As *Al Jazeera* noted at the time, there have been more than 70,000 killings, about 10,000 enforced disappearances and 7,000 mass graves found since 1947 in Indian-administered Kashmir.

There are many other parallels between Kashmir and Palestine, including the fact that the British government shares a large share of the responsibility for both. Indeed, the British-brokered partition creating the current states of India and Pakistan in 1947 is the root of the current conflict in Kashmir much as the Britain-mandated creation of the Israeli state in 1948 is the root of the current conflict in Palestine. *As far as Kashmiris and Palestinians are concerned, the governments of India and Israel picked up where their colonial master of years past left off.*

If a deadly conflict ultimately breaks out between India and Pakistan, it will hardly be the first time Israel has armed controversial governments. Israel sold arms to the Rwandan government during the Rwandan genocide and, more recently, to the government of Myanmar during its “ethnic cleansing” of the Rohingya Muslims. Yet, as Fisk notes, Israel's export of Zionist nationalism and neo-colonialism — and the accompanying oppression that in practice actually helps to create many of the very terrorist groups they fight against — is just as dangerous as its export of arms.

Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News and has contributed to several other independent, alternative outlets. Her work has appeared on sites such as Global Research, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire among others. She also makes guest appearances to discuss politics on radio and television. She currently lives with her family in southern Chile.

(Indian) Armchair Generals are marching India into trouble

Pankaj Mishra,

Peace appears to have been given a chance in South Asia. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, striving to play the statesman, has not only released a captured Indian pilot but also detained several alleged Pakistani militants. Still, there's good reason to worry that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi might once again ratchet up tensions against a nuclear-armed neighbor as he approaches the most crucial election of his political life.

And Modi's militant nationalism, loudly amplified by Indian television anchors, isn't the only flammable element in a volatile situation. India's burgeoning military-intellectual complex also deserves the world's close and skeptical scrutiny.

One wing of his community consists of superannuated and clearly bored generals, titillating hyper-patriotic television anchors and themselves with vision of do-or-die wars and glorious victories. There jingoism far exceeds the capacity of the Indian military, which, an internal report recently revealed, is encumbered with "vintage" equipment

Perhaps more worrying, though, are the credentialed members of what a recent report by Brookings India identified as India's "strategic community." Though much more sober than the fire-breathing talking heads on cable TV, they seem equally attracted to the "temptation," as U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower put it in his classic warning against the military-industrial complex, of "some spectacular and costly" military action.

Perched in privately funded think tanks, many of these connoisseurs of "surgical strikes" did not seem in the least shocked or disturbed that an Indian leader who has, as the Economist put it last week, "made a career of playing with fire" was now playing with Armageddon by launching airstrikes into

Pakistan. Rather, they echoed the Hindu nationalist consensus that India was now finally dictating the terms of engagement with its rival — a triumphalism shattered the very next day when Pakistan raised its own threshold for conflict with India by striking within Indian Territory and bringing down an Indian warplane.

Eisenhower’s fear in 1961 of vested interests acquiring “unwarranted influence” is freshly pertinent in today’s New Delhi. With hopes rising that India would soon be a superpower closely allied to the U.S., as well as a strategic counterweight to China, much Indian and foreign money has gone into creating a luxurious ecosystem for strategic experts and foreign-policy analysts.

There’s ample reason to fear that such an often murkily funded and influential security establishment outside government won’t serve the cause of democracy and peace in the Indian subcontinent. In the U.S., a series of reports by the New York Times in 2016 alleged that on all kinds of issues, including military sales to foreign countries, think tanks were “pushing agendas important to corporate donors, at times blurring the line between researchers and lobbyists.” If intellectual dishonesty mars analysis in Washington, D.C., it can be expected to be more pervasive in New Delhi, where the line between paid service for corporate donors and research work is even fuzzier.

It may seem melodramatic to fear that a few well-connected intellectual racketeers might endanger democracy and social stability. But, America under President Donald Trump confirms that Eisenhower was right to worry that an axis of government, corporations and intellectuals- on- hire might skew national priorities, or that, pathologically obsessed with an enemy, his country might degenerate into “a community of dreadful fear and hate.”

Already by 1984, George F. Kennan, arguably America’s finest diplomat, was lamenting that the “habit” of constantly preparing for “an imagined war” with the Soviet Union had “risen to the status of a vast addiction of American society.” This habit, Kennan presciently warned, “would be difficult to eradicate in the future,” long after the U.S.S.R. had disappeared.

In India, Hindu nationalist politicians and their sympathizers in media have similarly turned an imagined punitive war on Pakistan into another vast addiction, and the military-intellectual complex increasingly aggravates this national habit. Focused on Islamabad’s backing of the militant insurgency in Kashmir, they’ve successfully externalized a problem that is primarily domestic: the Modi government’s resolve to suppress, rather than address, Kashmiri demands of democracy and civil liberties.

Ajai Shukla was one of the very few mainstream Indian writers on security issues to point out that “the wider story in a crisis with such potential devastation is that the Modi government has launched a nationwide anti-Muslim agenda that regards Muslims as unpatriotic, Pakistan as a cunning and implacable foe and Kashmiri separatists as its willing tools.”

Thus, Shukla argues, Kashmiris protesting against Indian brutality have come to be widely seen as “Muslim traitors, rather than the manifestation of a political problem that has to be discussed and resolved, not militarily crushed.”

Zealously pushing a military solution to a political problem, India’s political, media and security establishment suffered a debacle last month. They ought to “learn,” as Eisenhower exhorted,” how to compose differences not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose — above all in Kashmir, which is the key, now more than ever, to the health of civil society in both India and Pakistan.

Pankaj Mishra is an Indian essayist and novelist. He is a recipient of the 2014 Windham–Campbell Prize for non-fiction.

Ban all terrorism

Munir Akram

FOREIGN ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) met in Istanbul after the “savage terrorist attack which took the lives of 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch”. Notably, while the New Zealand prime minister unequivocally condemned this act as terrorism, many Western capitals refrained from branding it as such. India’s reaction did not mention either Muslims or mosques.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 against the US, the ‘war on terrorism’ has been largely a war against ‘Islamic terrorism’

The UN Security Council outlawed Al Qaeda and all organisations ‘associated’ with it. A Security Council committee formed to ‘monitor’ counter-terrorist actions, established a list of ‘terrorist’ groups and individuals who are exclusively ‘Islamic’. Apart from Al Qaeda and its associates, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement, the pro-Kashmiri Jaish-e-Mohammed was ‘listed’ after the 2007 assassination attempt against president Musharraf and the Lashkar-e-Taiba after the 2008 Mumbai attack.

Under the cover of countering terrorism, state suppression of the rights of Muslims has intensified.

Under Security Council resolutions, extensive obligations were imposed on states to prevent financing and support for the listed ‘terrorist’ organisations and to cooperate against them.

In the US and most Western countries, any act of violence perpetrated by a Muslim, whether or not associated with a terrorist organisation, is described as an act of terrorism. Moreover, not only violence, but even involvement in raising finance for a ‘terrorist’ organisation or a violent action, or an expression

of support for a terrorist organisation or a violent action, is diligently prosecuted, even if the act is the consequence of a 'sting' operation. Similar crimes committed by non-Muslims rarely evoke the terrorist label.

Pakistan and some OIC countries made early attempts to counter such discrimination. At the 2005 UN summit, they secured a declaration which condemned "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomsoever, wherever and for whatever purposes...". The summit furthermore called for the adoption of a 'Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism'.

Encouraging progress was made in the UN General Assembly's Legal Committee in 2006/07 on drafting the convention. Its approval was, however, prevented by the refusal of some major powers and India to address 'state terrorism' and the root causes of terrorism.

The Trump administration has given up all pretence of objectivity and declared 'war' on 'radical Islamic terrorism'. This anti-Muslim focus has been eagerly embraced by India and several other states which face internal Muslim insurgencies.

The global counterterrorism campaign has had mixed success. Al Qaeda is greatly diminished and the militant Islamic State group has been territorially defeated. But insurgent Muslim groups have sprouted and spread across the Middle East, North Africa and beyond.

Unfortunately, under the cover of countering terrorism, the state suppression of the legitimate rights and freedom struggles of Muslim peoples, as in occupied Kashmir and Palestine, has intensified. Some Muslim communities, like the Rohingya, have suffered genocide. Some, like the Kashmiris, face the prospect of a Pakistan-India war or genocide if the Hindu fundamentalists in India persist in their plans to colonise them. Meanwhile, the continued occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people, and even the Israeli usurpation of holy Jerusalem, no longer moves the world's conscience.

Crass discrimination against the Muslims has been made 'acceptable'. Muslim refugees and migrants are turned away from Western borders in violation of international law and humanitarian norms. The defamation of Islam and other manifestations of Islamophobia have become socially and politically acceptable in the West and elsewhere. This has generated widespread hate against Muslims that was so vividly and tragically manifested in the slaughter of the 51 Muslims in the Christchurch mosques.

This global denigration and demonization of the Muslim faith can be halted and reversed only if the OIC countries act with determination, unity and clarity.

Reviving the call for a ‘Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism’ may be a good place to start.

From the perspective of OIC countries, the convention should firstly agree on a legal definition of terrorism. One formulation could be ‘the use of force and violence against persons or property to coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, committed by whomsoever, wherever and for whatever social or political purposes, except in the exercise, in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter, of the legitimate right of self-defence and self-determination or resistance to foreign occupation’.

This definition should not exclude ‘state terrorism’. If some major powers seek to exclude ‘armed forces’ from the purview of the convention, ways would have to be found to limit this exclusion, for instance, by defining the conditions under which such an exclusion is possible and by affirming that this does not in any way compromise or constrain the legitimate right of peoples to struggle for their right to self-determination and against foreign occupation.

The convention, or at least its accompanying resolutions, should explicitly condemn as terrorism the violence perpetrated or propagated by white supremacist, neo-Nazi and fascist groups in Europe, the US and other countries. Their actions should be prohibited equally with those of the Islamist groups listed as ‘terrorists’ and equal constraints should be placed on the propagation of their Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, racist and violent ideologies.

Similarly, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and other violent extremist Hindu organisations in India deserve to be classified as terrorists. Their ideology is one of religious supremacy, hate and violence. Starting from the assassination of Gandhi, the list of their crimes is long and manifest: the Gujarat massacre of Muslims; the Samjhauta Express slaughter of Pakistanis; the ongoing violence against the Kashmiris; the cow-lynching of poor Indian Muslims; the suppression of Dalits, Adivasis, Naxalite, and other disadvantaged communities; the murder of journalists and political opponents.

A UN Security Council or General Assembly Committee should be established to list and monitor these additional ‘terrorist organisations’.

Pakistan is well placed to assume the lead in evolving a common and unified OIC strategy and collectively convincing the major powers that failure to adopt an equitable approach on terrorism will intensify crimes against Muslims, exacerbate the terrorist threats in and from the Islamic world and beyond and precipitate in dangerous regional and global conflicts.

The writer is a former Pakistan ambassador to the UN.

Pakistan, Afghan peace and India

Ikram Sehgal

After almost two decades the US-led NATO intervention in Afghanistan aimed at eradicating the Taliban had no end in sight. US President Donald Trump and the American people, if not the US military, decided that an honourable exit was necessary to end the longest war in US history. Despite the fact that one of Trump's election promise was to exit Afghanistan (Iraq and Syria) by reluctantly Troop had approved the military surge advised by the Pentagon, unfortunately this could not reverse the situation. The Taliban are today controlling more territory than they did before the collapse of their government in 2001. Pursuing his 'America first' agenda and tacitly recognizing the existing military situation, a frustrated Trump authorised negotiations with the Taliban. In protest US Defence Secretary Gen James Mattis resigned. Choosing Afghan-origin Zalmay Khalilzad to lead the US side was a brilliant choice, this is already paying dividends.

On New Year's Day 2018 Trump had in an early morning tweet accused Pakistan of perfidy, of doing nothing to help the Americans win the war in Afghanistan despite receiving billions of dollars in aid. Reversing his stance barely a year later, Trump reached out to Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, seeking cooperation in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. He now acknowledges that Pakistan is an irreplaceable partner in the Afghan peace process this underscored the painful truth to many observers led astray by constant Indian anti-Pakistan propaganda, that Pakistan is not part of the problem but central to any solution in Afghanistan. Determined to withdraw US forces the US is now ready to a compromise with the Taliban.

Taking cognisance of the dramatic change taking place in international relations in the region Pakistan's new government fully supports the need for peace in Afghanistan no prosperity in Pakistan is possible without that. The credibility of

the US as a strategic partner having suffered, Pakistan can never be sure of its position with the US. However other friendly countries closer to home also have a credible interest in a peaceful Afghanistan. Joining the Afghan peace efforts and recognizing the political role of the Taliban in a post-war Afghanistan are China, Russia and Iran, and even Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates. Last year's conference initiated by Moscow and participated in by the regional promoters of peace was a successful first meeting between regional promoters of peace and intra-Afghan political forces including the Taliban. Significantly after many decades personal acquaintances were made and initial positions were exchanged.

The only country in the region not interested in peace in Afghanistan is India. Keeping strife going in the unfortunate country is a tailor-made formula whereby India keeps Pakistan in turmoil. Moreover this proxy war costs India nothing in either money, manpower or material. The US is mostly footing the bill while the Afghans not only take maximum of the casualties but sustain continuing material damage to its infra-structure and urban areas. Virtually taking our Afghan intelligence agency KHAD Indian's RAW attacks the ideology and territory of Pakistan by clandestinely supporting the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) along with many other Jihadi factions. In the process the Kashmir freedom movement was successfully clubbed with the Afghan Taliban and labelled as "terrorist" by India for the world. More damaging for Pakistan is being portrayed as supporting and fomenting terrorism. All this time the US poured in money for the Afghan military, the govt and the economy while sustaining casualties billions of US dollars themselves. In effect the US was fighting India's proxy war against Pakistan while India in a strategically brilliant ploy has stood by and enjoyed the residual benefits while Afghans, Americans and Pakistanis died. Paraphrasing Patton's "no man ever won a war by dying for his country, he won a war by making the other (person) die for his country," India's second line reads, "we can win the war against Pakistan by letting the US and Afghans die for their country".

For the last 10 years I have faced US intelligentsia at Think Tanks frustrated by "Pakistan Fatigue," this exponentially increased as the US got more deeply embroiled without hope of success in the Afghan War. I was derided and attacked even by my close friends in Wash DC and New York for Pakistan's "falsehood". Unluckily for us Asif Zardari's point man Hussain Haqqani, appointed as the Pakistan Ambassador in the US, led this anti-Pakistan campaign even while he was Pakistan's Ambassador in the US. What were the US intelligentsia to believe when the glib-talking Pakistan's prime official representing Pakistan in Wash DC gave credence to the Indian-manufactured "facts"! Haqqani violated the oath he gave to the Supreme Court (SC) for

exiting the country and never coming back. He only came out in the open after he was removed from his post and now regularly sponsors the Indian propaganda verbatim. It is strange that Asif Zardari or the PPP never mentions this, what to talk about condemning his calumny? Once virulently anti-Pakistan Zalmay Khalilzad and became “Born Again” as the reality dawned on him, why is the Indian-supported Ashraf Ghani govt now having a go at Khalilzad?

Afghanistan has been a central point of relevance for Indian regional policy. During the last twenty years India had supported the Northern Alliance in its fight against the Taliban only because the Northern Alliance Opposed Pakistan. The only country in the world that wants the Afghan war to go on is India. Many Indians occupied many Consulates in Afghanistan, UN Disarmament, Demilitarization and Reintegration Corps (DDR) and construction efforts. India built a sizable developmental and considerable intelligence footprint in Afghanistan since 2001, spending more than \$2 billion in aid and infrastructural development. Building on Indian influence with the UN and the Afghan governments India gained almost a free hand for using the permeable border with Pakistan to encourage militancy and terrorism across the border and then blaming Pakistan for it. India’s development contributions in Afghanistan are the “soft” part of New Delhi’s strategic encirclement policy to make Islamabad vulnerable in any potential conflict. That is the reason why Pakistan made it a condition that India be kept out of the negotiations for bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table the relative success so far has caused major frustration in India.

US support for successive Afghan governments under Karzai and now Ghani was vital for maintaining security and stability. Without America’s protective umbrella these characters will vanish sooner rather than later. That is why the present Afghan regime is desperate for the talks not to succeed. With a post-war Afghanistan that includes the Taliban as a major political force in the making India’s Afghan policy is facing bankruptcy. During their many years of presence in Afghanistan, Indians have never missed an opportunity to damage Pakistani interests there. It is probable that India may remain a peripheral player in post-war Afghanistan but New Delhi will find itself unable to influence the situation the crossway it had did for the last two decades. India’s recent critical stance at the United Nations for the failure to sanction Taliban leaders seems out of sync with emerging ground realities in Afghanistan.

India’s entire Afghan policy has been Pakistan-specific. Does it worry them at all if Afghans die by the thousands and the country’s infra-structure is laid to waste? Bad relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Durand Line have been used by India to keep a viable threat of a possible second front against Pakistan as a counter to the indigenous uprising in Kashmir. Thus the

Indo-Pak relationship and the Kashmir conflict is casting their shadows on the Afghan question as well. Real peace will be only possible when these outstanding conflicts are finally resolved.

The writer is a distinguished senior defence and security analyst.

India and Pakistan on the brink: A nuclear Nightmare in South Asia

Geoff Wilson and Will Saetren

With last week's U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi, Congressional Democrats' revolt against President Donald Trump's state of emergency and Michael Cohen's testimony before the House Oversight Committee; you may have missed the news that the Indian Air Force launched airstrikes against targets in Pakistan.

This was quietly one of the dangerous crises of the post-Cold War era.

On February 26, Indian fighter jets attacked a terrorist training camp operated by the Pakistani-based group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The attack was a reprisal for an earlier suicide bombing in Kashmir on February 14 that killed over forty Indian paramilitary police.

The raid was the first instance since the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 that either of the two powers have used airpower against the other. It also marked the first time in history that a nuclear weapons state has conducted airstrikes against another nuclear weapons power.

There is a very good reason for that. Deploying air assets against another state signals a level of hostility that far exceeds cross border skirmishes. *The ability of a state to field high-tech aircraft is often seen as a metric of sophistication, making air power a powerful symbol of national pride.* It also worth noting that the Mirage 2000 jets used by the Indian Air Force in the raid are the same type of aircraft that delivers some of India's airborne nuclear weapons. When a country is willing to go on the attack with tens of millions of dollars worth of airplanes and bombs, including aircraft that may or may not be carrying its nuclear weapons, *it can trigger a spiral of escalation that can quickly get out of control.*

That spiral was quickly triggered. Pakistan responded to India's air-assault with artillery strikes and conducted airstrikes of its own. Both sides lost aircraft, with Pakistan claiming to have shot down two Indian jets and captured one of the pilots, while India claims to have downed a Pakistani jet.

Fortunately, the capture of the Indian pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, was a positive turn in crisis, providing a human face to the standoff and ultimately leading to his release by Pakistan as a "peace gesture" that helped defuse tensions.

It could have been much worse.

India and Pakistan possess two of the fastest growing nuclear arsenals in the world. Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists, estimates that India possesses some 140 nuclear weapons, while Pakistan has around 150. Of particular concern is Pakistan's growing inventory of smaller, tactical nuclear weapons. According to Kristensen, these weapons are part of an effort "to create a full-spectrum deterrent that is designed not only to respond to nuclear attacks, but also to counter an Indian conventional incursion onto Pakistani territory."

This is extremely concerning. Just possessing nuclear weapons meant to be used against conventional forces, could lower the threshold for their use during a conflict.

The Trump administration agrees, with officials having gone on the record saying, "we are particularly concerned by the development of tactical nuclear weapons that are designed for use [on the] battlefield. We believe that these systems... increase the likelihood of nuclear exchange in the region."

These fears are more than just hyperbole. Earlier this week a *retired* Pakistani general told his colleagues that in order to deter India, "our response should be to escalate and push the envelope of hostilities so that nuclear war is a likely outcome."

We know that this sort of thinking is misguided. Why? Because the United States once had a similar strategy.

During the Cold War the United States stockpiled thousands of tactical nuclear weapons, including nuclear bazookas, landmines and artillery shells as a counter to Soviet conventional superiority in Europe. The plan was simple. If an

army of Soviet tanks rolled through the Fulda Gap, we would counter with small scale nuclear weapons. The theory went that by showing you were willing to use a small nuke; the enemy would consider that you might just be crazy enough to use your big ones too, causing them to back down.

This strategy was ironically referred to as the Madman Theory. Unfortunately, under scrutiny, it turned out to be just that, mad.

In 1955, the Department of Defense conducted a war-game called 'Carte Blanche' in which more than three hundred simulated tactical nuclear weapons were used against Soviet targets on German soil with the aim of halting an advancing Soviet army. When the simulated dust settled, an estimated 1.7 million Germans had been killed, with 3.5 million wounded and incalculable number of additional casualties resulting from radiological fallout. When the results of the exercise were leaked to the press, they "produced widespread unrest and agitation" in West Germany over the proposed U.S. nuclear strategy.

The Reagan administration tested the premise again in 1983 with the war-game Proud Prophet. This scenario saw NATO launch limited nuclear strikes against Soviet targets in response to a conventional provocation. But instead of backing down, the Soviet team doubled down.

"The Soviet Union team interpreted the nuclear strikes as an attack on their nation, their way of life and their honour. So they responded with an enormous nuclear salvo at the United States," writes Department of Defense advisor and nuclear historian Paul Bracken. "The United States retaliated in kind. The result was a catastrophe that made all the wars of the past five hundred years pale in comparison... a half-billion human beings were killed in the initial exchanges and at least that many more would have died from radiation and starvation. NATO was gone. So was a good part of Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union. Major parts of the Northern Hemisphere would be uninhabitable for decades."

The results reportedly shocked President Ronald Reagan so badly that his schedule had to be cleared for the rest of the day. A few months later, he famously told the American people that, "*A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.*"

The lessons of these war games apply to the Indian subcontinent as well. Recent studies have estimated that regional nuclear war, such as one between India and Pakistan, could lead to the deaths of some 2 billion people worldwide.

To prevent this nightmare from becoming a reality, the international community must condemn further acts of violence and build space for the conflict to be mediated, before the situation escalates further out of hand. It is not without irony that as President Trump negotiates a nuclear agreement with North Korea, another nuclear crisis is unfolding out on the same continent. Under normal circumstances the United States would have already dispatched mediators to the region to defuse the crisis. As it stands, Washington has been painfully slow to respond.

The current crisis is a symptom of a larger problem. The last five years have seen a dramatic increase in tensions between nuclear weapons states across the board. The U.S.-Russian relationship has soured to a point not seen since the Cold War, and a cornerstone of the international arms control regime, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, has been abandoned. Russia and NATO forces have engaged in direct hostilities in Syria, even leading to the downing of a Russian fighter-bomber. The number of confrontations between U.S. and Chinese assets in the South China Sea has reached an all-time high. Sooner or later our luck will run out and the unthinkable will happen.

When nuclear weapons states made the decision to develop nuclear weapons they also assumed the responsibility to take every precaution to ensure that they are never used. It is time they took that obligation seriously. The nuclear weapons states of the world must take concrete steps to work together and breath new life into the arms control regime that has prevented the use of nuclear weapons for more than seventy years. An international agreement to limit the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons would be an excellent place to start.

At the height of last week's standoff, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan asked India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, *"given the weapons capability on both sides, can we afford a miscalculation?"*

The world must respond with a resounding no. These types of crisis can never be allowed to escalate into a full-blown nuclear powers conflict.

Geoff Wilson is a Research Associate at Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation that has supported War Is Boring (where this first appeared) in the past.

Will Saetren is the author of Ghosts of the Cold War: Rethinking the Need for a New Cruise Missile, and an alumnus of the Roger L. Hale Fellowship at Ploughshares Fund.

Injustice with victims of Samjhauta Express

Rehman Malik

Initially Indian authorities blamed Pakistan for attack on Samjhauta Express and the Indian media flashed this as the act of Pakistan and full-scale propaganda was carried out against Pakistan whereas Pakistan repeatedly denied of its involvement in any such act.

This India-Pakistan Samjhauta Express attack was done on 18th Feb 2007 where 68 Pakistanis were killed. Haryana police registered a case against the attackers, but the probe was handed over to the National Investigation Agency in July 2010 after three years of the incident. Later during investigations by Anti Terrorism Squad team, a Hindu extremist leader Swami Aseemanand, a leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) who has strong ties with Modi's BJP, confessed of having been a part of the incident. He also confessed in the court that several RSS preachers and Sang activists were directly involved in planning, funding and executing Samjhauta Express, Ajmer, Malegaon and Mecca Masjid blasts. He even said that Gen J J Singh is "with us" (former Singh was Army Chief till Sept. 2007) and this fact stood proved when Lt Colonel Shrikant Prasad Purohit of Indian Army was also found evidently involved in 2008 blast in the Muslim-majority Malegaon town in Nasik district of Maharashtra besides his further link to the Samjhauta Express terrorist attackers.

After Malegaon and Samjhauta Express attack, the police in India arrested Muslims alone despite the fact that Muslims were victims. *Hemant Karkare, as the chief of the state Anti-Terror Squad, led the investigation into Samjhauta Express and Malegaon blasts.* He arrested eleven suspects, all Hindus, including a former ABVP student leader Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, Swami Amritananda alias Dayanand Pandey, Swami Aseemanad (RSS member), a

retired Major Ramesh Upadhyay and a serving Army officer Lt. Col. Prasad Shrikant Purohit. Most of the accused belonged to Sangh Parivar organisation. He identified them as being responsible for terrorism in India.

Mr. Karkare had documented the evidence very professionally and he was sure to get these accused convicted for their involvement in the terrorist attack on Samjhauta Express killing 68 Muslims. This investigation made Indian Army, RAW & RSS furious against DIG Karkare, as he had very honestly exposed these accused fully and their deep involvement in this blast.

He started to get the threats from RAW and RSS and he continued facing serious life threat from the highest ranking members of BJP and RSS, Even the then *Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, and BJP Prime Ministerial candidate, L.K. Advani* accused Karkare of being a traitor and proposed death penalty for him by calling him “*Daish Dhrohi*”. These statements were like orders for the elimination of DIG Karkare. Unfortunately this brave hunter of criminals by then had become a target of RSS/ RAW. This great hunter of terrorists was finally hunted by RAW and RSS when he was shot three times in his chest during Mumbai attacks on 27th November 2008 killed him at the spot. The murder investigation was not allowed further and the case was dropped on frivolous grounds though everybody was aware of his killers. *RSS & RAW won and honest and brave Karkare lost his life to the bosses of terrorism.*

The crucial evidence in Karkare’s death - the source of bullet fired into his body was absent. The bullets were removed from his body but declared that no bullets were shown to have found and hence no match found resulting in dropping of the investigation. The poor wife of this brave officer, Kavita Karakare kept voicing for justice for her husband and her children but to no avail. She lived in Hindu colony, Dadar, and was a professor at the NSS B.Ed College, but soon left work as she was suffering from hypertension which gave her a massive brain haemorrhage on 27 September 2014 and she soon got slipped into coma. Thereafter she died on 29 September 2014, at age of 57.

Lt Colonel Srikant Purohit, who was arrested by the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) for questioning in the case although confessed his role in the attack yet this terrorist is free but Karkare is dead.

According to reports, Purohit told the ATS officials that he prepared the blue print of the conspiracy and provided ammunitions for the September 29 ‘revenge’ attack in Malegaon and Samjhauta Express. The 37-year-old officer

had confessed to providing the logistics and explosives to a radical Hindu outfit 'Abhinav Bharat', who carried out the blast.

During investigation, Col Purohit had also confessed to training Hindu terrorists from RSS for attacking Muslims, besides training them for attacking Samjhauta Express besides providing them RDX. He further confessed that it was intended to cause armed conflict between Pakistan and India so that anti-Muslim passions could be nurtured in India leading to violence. It had close simile of facts with Pullwama and exactly the same situation was engineered after Pulwama.

The Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) claimed that Purohit supplied RDX to one of Abhinav Bharat member for Samjhauta Express blast. Public prosecutor Ajay Misar said Abhinav Bharat treasurer Ajay Rahirkar had handed Rs2.5 lakh to Lt Col P S Purohit.

After 12 years of the incident, victim Muslim families in Pakistan are still awaiting justice,

After the death of Karkare, the Indian Government through Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA)'s manipulated the investigation and the trial through faulty investigation and suppression of the evidence in the trial court. The Indian government, after 12 years long wait by the victim families in Pakistan for justice, managed a favourable decision by Judge Jagdeep Singh wherein he released all the criminals with an intention to save RSS and to benefit BJP in coming election. This decision infact has supported the Modi war doctrine, as one of the components of his doctrine is to suppress the other political parties.

It looks like the decision has been taken under the direction of PM Modi as these departments are under his control. In fact he also appointed his favourite judge to seek the judgment in favour of the accused persons.

It is no more a secret that Samjhauta Express attack was pre-planned and executed by Indian agencies as per the investigation and the judicial statements of the accused persons.

The decision will further strengthen Hindu fundamentalism in Indian society and the world will now witness Hindu Taliban in coming years. RSS is BJP's militant group, which exposes Indian dual face. Indian democracy and

secularism is badly exposed by International media. I out rightly reject this engineered judgment made by a judge who is friend of PM Modi.

In view of above facts, India owes to answer the following questions as one day India will have to respond to International Court of Justice as the people will not like the butchers of 68 Muslims to go unpunished

1. Why names of many accused were dropped from the investigation whereas solid evidences were available against them and judicial confessions were available on record.
2. Why the real role with evidence of Col. Purohit was not made part of the court proceedings and why the judge did not examine him resultantly he has not been convicted?
3. Why the decision of the Samjhauta Express is coming in such a time frame when next Lok Sabha general election are very near and BJP is not sure about its success in upcoming polls?
4. Why the case of the Samjhauta Express was shifted to the NIA whereas, the earlier investigating authorities observed sizeable advancement?
5. DIG Karkare got killed in Mumbai terror attack where he was badly criticized by the BJP leadership. Why was he criticised by the masters of RSS
6. Why killing of DIG Karakre was not investigated under the laid down legal procedure laid down under law?
7. Sadhu Swami Aseemanand made confession in judicial custody in the presence of a magistrate. Why his confession was not made part of the court proceedings and then why was he acquitted despite his judicial confessions?
8. Why the evidence offered by Rahila Wakeel as eye witness not given the weightage and was not given a chance of appearance before the court whereas the judgment was reserved in order to obtain the claimed evidences by the said Pakistani eyewitness Muslim lady?
9. Why/how could Sadhu Swami Aseemanand gets walk over in all the cases whereas his name appears in brutal acts against Muslims in Makkah Masjid blast, Ajmer Dargha blast and every time he is declared innocent? It needs to be

investigated as to why he is nominated in all such violence related cases. Can Indian government give some logic to justify it?

10. The involvement of RSS trained terrorists, backed by BJP leadership, in Samjhauta Express attack was proven with sufficient evidence and it indicated that Samjhauta Express attack was a state sponsored act of terrorism. Why those who blackened the name of India have not been treated as the criminals under the state law? Can India deny that it is not an act of state terrorism by India.

The victims expect response of India government and appeal to Chief Justice of India to take notice of this injustice committed by state sponsored terrorists.

Rehman Malik is a Pakistani politician and a retired Federal Investigation Agency officer. He also served as the Interior Minister from March 2008 to March 2013

India and Israel: Where War is a “Legitimate” Campaigning Strategy

Adam Garrie

In a fair world, the contemporary leadership of India and Israel would understand the mistakes of the past and try to rectify the occupation of Kashmir and the occupation of Palestine. But back in the real world, both India and Israel thrive on perpetuating a cycle of violence against the occupied while spinning a narrative to the outside world that the victims are the aggressors and that somehow those armed with sticks and stones are a “threat” to states with nuclear arms and a modern air force.

These unfortunate characteristics have come to the fore in ever more prominent ways in recent years. This is largely due to the fact that far from just carrying on old traditions of war and occupation, Indian Premier Narendra Modi and Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu have become grossly hyperbolic representatives of the most militant, extremist and sectarianism tendencies within their own political cultures. Whilst Modi and Netanyahu did not invent Hindutva extremism nor Zionist extremism, respectively, they have both come to be the most effective representatives of the most extreme tendencies of both ideologies.

This year was not the first time that Modi and Netanyahu have used military violence against occupied peoples in order to secure the ultra-jingoistic vote during an election season. That being said, this year has seen both Netanyahu and Modi become ever more brazen in their violent electoral tactics. India’s full scale mobilisation against occupied Kashmir in the aftermath of the Pulwama incident saw ever more soldiers and heavy artillery enter the most militarised zone in the world. It was this same aggressive attitude which saw Israel conduct large scale airstrikes against occupied Gaza over the last 12 hours.

Furthermore, whilst Netanyahu scapegoats all of Israel’s internal problems on the existence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Modi does the same in respect of

the existence of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Modi's "surgical tree strike 2.0" against Pakistan was little different than Netanyahu's frequent air raids against alleged Iranian personnel in neighbouring Syria.

But the similarities do not end there. For Netanyahu and his supporters, occupied Palestinians are not humans but terrorists. When one realises that women, children, the elderly and the limbless are also scoffed at as "terrorists" by Netanyahu's ultra-Zionist base, one can begin to understand how for Modi's ultra-Hindutva base, the same applies to the civilians of Indian occupied Kashmir.

When it comes to Indian Muslims and so-called "Arab Israelis", things are not much better. Modi's government has continued to either turn a blind eye or even encourage violent and sexual assaults against Indian Muslims whilst working to culturally cleanse India's rich Muslim heritage from the streets and monuments of the country. Recent legislation has even made it clear that while undocumented Hindu migrants can become Indian citizens, the same does not apply to Muslims in the same position. This is the case in spite of India's technically secular constitution.

As if taking cues from Modi, in 2018, Netanyahu passed the *Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People* law which defines Israel not just as a "Jewish State" but as a state *of* and for Jewish people. This has effectively ended the long held myth that the minority of Arab citizens of Israel have a truly equal footing in society.

But it is not just Arab Muslims and Indian Muslims who are discriminated against in their respective countries. The ever growing Hindutva movement is also suppressible of the right of Sikhs to hold a peaceful referendum for self-determination in Indian Punjab. Meanwhile, in Israel, the many black African Jewish migrants to Israel are in many ways treated even worse than indigenous Arabs.

Of course in both instances, due to the large global powers seeking strategic partnerships with both India and Israel, little is said and virtually nothing is done about these worrying trends.

But there is one important difference. Whilst recent years have seen western celebrities join the BDS movement to oppose Israeli occupation and discrimination against Palestinians, India's black propaganda continues to convince many self-described "peace activists" of the wider world and in

western states in particular, that occupied Kashmir and Pakistan are to blame for regional strife. While Netanyahu's mask has slipped among influential artist-activists like Roger Waters, Kashmir and Pakistan have yet to receive support from those who dare to speak out against India's culture of extremist Hindutva violence.

Thus, while Israel's Hasbara propaganda is beginning to show its limitations, India is far ahead of the game when it comes down to portraying itself as a victim abroad whilst the international community gives it a blank cheque in respect of aggression against occupied Kashmir and even against its own Muslim citizens.

Adam Garrie is Director at Eurasia future and co-host of The History Boys with George Galloway.

Mumbai Terrorism: Why, who benefited? Reflections 10 Years later...

Dr. Graeme MacQueen

“The War on Terror” which goes by different names in different countries but continues as a global framework for violent conflict, thrives on this fraud. But if the very agencies that should be investigating and preventing these attacks are involved in perpetrating them, what is civil society to do to protect itself? Who will step in to study the evidence and sort out what really happened?

Ten years after the Mumbai terrorism (26-29 Nov 2008), Pakistan is still battling its ghost and India has acquired a “multi-dimensional strategic tool” in the form of an unending self-replicating narrative that it uses to isolate Pakistan across the world. Even in November 2008, a natural question arose: How could Pakistan benefit from a blood-chilling act of mass killings in which terrorists – supposedly sent and directed from Pakistan – were found attacking innocent citizens of several nationalities including Americans and Israelis in the heart of Mumbai?

While no plausible answer could satisfy cannons of common sense, the explanation then offered by Indian and some US commentators was that Pakistan’s security establishment or the rogue elements, the uncontrolled non-state actors wanted to prevent a détente between the New Delhi and the new civilian government in Islamabad. Ten years down the line, this argument has lost most of its appeal – and for good reason. Today, to any discerning mind, looking back on the events of the past 10 years, it is obvious that political establishment in Delhi did not want to engage Pakistan in a meaningful, non-interruptible sustainable dialogue.

Reasons also made sense; Indian strategists calculated after 9/11 – till the emergence of CPEC and BRI initiatives – that Pakistani state is on the losing side of history and India can always negotiate a better deal with a failing or failed state a few years later. This thinking – through looking increasingly redundant to many Indians – still continues and the last minute rejection of meeting between the foreign ministers – Shah Mehmood and Sushma Swaraj –

at the sidelines of UN General Assembly session in September 2018 was a victory of the same old mindset in Delhi.

To many keen observers, in Pakistan, of global dynamics, the Indian strategic community is still trying to force a “political re-engineering” of Pakistani state as per its own needs. “Rao Doctrine” of 1992 had never become obsolete; it is on track and is assuming new forms and dimensions – under the diktats of what is called, “Fifth Generation Warfare”. *Today, it is not about Hafiz Saeed or LeT or JuD; its also not about Kashmir; this is not 1990’s, now it is about isolating and reengineering Pakistani politics, and its state institutions, through media, international pressures, through threats of surgical strikes but without the engine of traditional war.*

It is about failing CPEC, getting access to Central Asia without a parallel quid pro quo, it is about isolating Pakistan from the western world and disrupting its relations with China; it is about battle for global commons in and around South Asia. Elias Davidsson’s book, “The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence” was published in June of 2017; despite excellent book reviews by Prof. McQueen and others it was mostly ignored in Pakistan. Only with developments at FATF, in Feb/March 2018, it found interest on Pakistani websites.

Davidsson, in 920 pages, offered a threadbare examination of the case – evidence, testimonies – and conduct of prosecution and courts and argued that somehow Indian institutions were not interested in reaching out to the bottom of what may have really happened. We had discussed these aspects in detail in the March issue of ‘Global Village Space’ (Hafiz Saeed: Albatross around Pakistan’s Neck, Pages 54-60) but in the interests of posterity we again offer the book review written by Prof. McQueen – some issues can be understood much later, perhaps after 10 years.

The Betrayal of India: A close look at the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attacks

These days we rush from one media story to another, trying to keep up with the latest terrorist attack. Yesterday Paris; today London; tomorrow, who knows? These attacks are tragic enough when they are acts of violence by religious extremists who have outsmarted our police and intelligence agencies. But, of course, many of them are actually violent acts facilitated by our police and intelligence agencies, directly or indirectly. The tragedy in such cases lies not only in the immediate human suffering but in the way our civil society and

elected representatives are betrayed, intimidated, disciplined and stripped of their power by our own security agencies.

“The War on Terror” which goes by different names in different countries but continues as a global framework for violent conflict, thrives on this fraud. But if the very agencies that should be investigating and preventing these attacks are involved in perpetrating them, what is civil society to do to protect itself? Who will step in to study the evidence and sort out what really happened?

And who will investigate the official investigators? Over the years, civilians from different walks of life have stepped forward— forming groups, sharing information and methods, creating a tradition of civilian investigation. One such investigator is Elias Davidsson. Some readers will be familiar with his meticulous book, “Hijacking America’s Mind on 9/1” or his more recent work, “Psychologische Kriegsführung und gesellschaftliche Leugnung.” Davidsson has now produced a book on the 2008 attacks that occurred in Mumbai, India. The book is entitled, *The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2017).

To remind ourselves of these attacks—that is, of the official story of these attacks as narrated by the Indian government—we can do no better than to consult Wikipedia, which seldom strays from government intelligence narratives:

“The 2008 Mumbai attacks were a series of attacks that took place in November 2008, when 10 members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant organization based in Pakistan, carried out a series of 12 coordinated shooting and bombing attacks lasting four days across Mumbai. The attacks, which drew widespread global condemnation, began on Wednesday, 26 November and lasted until Saturday, 29 November 2008, killing 164 people and wounding at least 308.”

This description, however faulty, serves to make clear why the events were widely portrayed as a huge crime—India’s 9/11. When we bear in mind that both India and Pakistan are armed with nuclear weapons, and when we consider that these events were widely characterized in India as an act of war supported by Pakistan (Davidsson, 72-74; 511 ff .; 731 ff .), we will understand how dangerous the event was for over a billion and a half people in South Asia.

We will also understand how easy it was, on the basis of such a narrative, to get a bonanza of funds and equipment for the Mumbai police (735-736) and why it

was possible, given the framing of the event as an act of war, for India's armed forces to get an immediate 21% hike in military spending with promises of continuing increases in subsequent years (739 ff.).

Wikipedia's paragraph tells a straightforward story, but the straightforwardness is the result of much snipping and smoothing. Both Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Taiba denied responsibility for the attacks (65; 513) and, Davidsson argues, they did so for good reason.

In his conclusions at the end of the book, Davidsson encourages us to assess separately the actual attacks and the Indian state's investigation of the attacks (865 ff.). It is "highly plausible," he says, "that major institutional actors in India, the United States and possibly Israel, were complicit in conceiving, planning, directing and executing the attacks of 26/11" (873); but the evidence of a deceptive investigation is even stronger:

"The first definite conclusion of this book is that India's major institutions, including the Central government, parliament, bureaucracy, armed forces, Mumbai police, intelligence services, judiciary and media, have deliberately suppressed the truth regarding 26/11 and continue to do so. I could discover no hint of a desire among the aforementioned parties to establish the truth on these deadly events (865)."

This distinction is useful for civil society investigators. We will frequently find it easier to prove that an investigation is deceptive and that it is obscuring rather than illuminating the path to the perpetrators than to directly prove the event itself to have been fraudulent. And there are two good reasons to pay attention to evidence of a cover-up. First, to cover up a crime is itself a crime. Second, those covering up a crime implicate themselves in the original crime. If they were not directly involved in the commission of the crime, they are at least accessories after the fact.

To begin by exposing the fraudulent investigation, therefore, will often be wise. When this has been done we shall often find that we can begin to discern the path to the attack itself. Davidsson gives a wealth of evidence about both the attacks and the investigation, but for this brief review, I shall focus on the investigation. Here are three recurring themes in his study that may serve to illustrate the strength of the cover-up thesis.

(1) Immediate Fingering of the Perpetrator

When officials claim to know the identity of a perpetrator (individual or group) prior to any serious investigation, this suggests that a false narrative is being initiated and that strenuous effort will soon be made to implant it in the mind of a population. Thus, for example, Lee Harvey Oswald was identified by officials of the executive branch as the killer of President John F. Kennedy—and as a lone wolf with no associates—on the afternoon of the assassination day, long before an investigation and even before he had been charged with the crime.

And we had major news media pointing with confidence, by the end of the day of September 11, 2001, to Osama bin Laden and his group—in the absence of evidence. In the Mumbai case, the Prime Minister of India implied, while the attack was still in progress, that the perpetrators were from a terrorist group supported by, or at least tolerated by, Pakistan (65; 228; 478; 512; 731). Likewise, immediately after the attacks, Henry Kissinger attempted to implicate Pakistan. Three days prior to the attack on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, one of the main attack sites, Kissinger had been staying in the hotel.

He “sat with top executives from Goldman Sachs and India’s Tata group in the Taj to ‘chat about American politics’” (331). Kissinger’s presence on the scene with Indian elites (the Tata family is one of India’s wealthiest, and the Tata Group owns the Taj) would be peculiar enough to cause raising of the eyebrows, but when combined with his immediate fingering of Pakistan it becomes extremely suspect. As Davidsson shows, what investigation there was came much later, and even today the case against Pakistan remains full of contradictions, unsupported allegations, and absurdities.

(2) Grotesque Failure by Official Investigators to follow Proper Procedures

Incompetence is a fact of life, but there are times when the incompetence theory is strained to the breaking point and it is more rational to posit deliberate deception. In the case of the Mumbai investigation, Davidsson depicts its failures as going well beyond incompetence.

- Neither the police or the judge charged with trying the sole surviving suspect made public a timeline of events (188-189; 688-689). Even the most basic facts of when a given set of attacks began and when they ended were left vague.

- Key witnesses were not called to testify. Witnesses who said they saw the terrorists commit violence, or spoke to them, or were in the same room with them, were ignored by the court (e.g., 279 ff.)
- Contradictions and miracles were not sorted out. One victim was apparently resurrected from the dead when his testimony was essential to the blaming of Pakistan (229- 230). A second victim died in two different places (692), while a third died in three places (466). No one in authority cared enough to solve these difficulties.
- Eyewitnesses to the crime differed on the clothing and skin colour of the terrorists, and on how many of them there were (328-331). No resolution was sought.
- At least one eyewitness confessed she found it hard to distinguish “friends” from terrorists (316). No probe was stimulated by this odd confusion.
- The number of terrorists who committed the deeds changed repeatedly, as did the number of terrorists who survived (29 ff.; 689).
- Crime scenes were violated, with bodies hauled off before they could be examined (682-683).
- Identity parades (“line-ups”) were rendered invalid by weeks of prior exposure of the witnesses to pictures of the suspect in newspapers (101; 582).
- Claims that the terrorists were armed with AK-47s were common, yet the forensic study of the attack at the Cama Hospital failed to turn up a single AK-47 bullet (156).
- Of the “hundreds of witnesses processed by the court” in relation to the attacks at the Café Leopold, Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Oberoi-Trident Hotel or Nariman House, “not a single one testified to having observed any of the eight accused kill anyone” (40).
- Indian authorities declined to order autopsies on the dead at the targeted Jewish center in Nariman House. The dead, five out of six of whom were Israeli citizens (427), were instead whisked back to Israel by a Jewish organization based in Israel, allegedly for religious reasons (453). Religious sensitivity seems to have extended to a large safe at

(3) Extreme Secrecy and the withholding of Basic Information from the Population, with the Excuse of “National Security”

- The surviving alleged terrorist had no public trial (661).
- No transcript of his secret trial has been released (670).
- One lawyer who agreed to defend the accused was removed by the court and another was assassinated (670). [Shahid Azmi]
- The public was told there was extensive CCTV footage of the attacks, despite the mysterious malfunctioning of the majority of CCTV cameras on the days in question(97-98; 109 ff.; 683 ff.); but only a very small percentage of the claimed footage was ever released and it suffers from serious defects—two conflicting time-stamps and signs of editing (111).
- Members of an elite Indian commando unit that showed up with between 475 and 800 members to battle eight terrorists (534) were not allowed to testify in court (327; 428-429).
- The “confession” of the suspect, on which the judge leaned heavily, was given in secret. No transcript of this confession has been released to the public and the suspect later renounced the confession, saying he had been under threat from police when he gave it (599 ff.; 681).
- The suspect, after being convicted and sentenced to death, was presumably executed, but the hanging was done secretly in jail and his body, like the bodies of the other dead “terrorists,” was buried in a secret place (37; 623).
- It is difficult to see how the investigation described above differs from what we would expect to see in a police state. Evidently, the “world’s largest democracy” is in trouble.

Meanwhile, motives for the “highly plausible” false flag attack, Davidson notes, are not difficult to find. The attacks not only filled the coffers of national security agencies, creating as they did the impression of a permanent threat to India but also helped tilt India toward those countries claiming to take the lead in the War on Terror (809 ff.; 847). The FBI showed great interest in the attacks from the outset. It actually had a man on the scene during the attacks and sent an entire team directly after the event (812 ff.).

The Bureau was, remarkably, given direct access to the arrested suspect and to his recorded confession (before he even had a lawyer), as well as to eyewitnesses (651-652; 815). The New York Police Department also sent a team after the conclusion of the event (816-817), as did Scotland Yard and Israeli police (651; 851). There seems to have been something of a national security fest in relation to Mumbai as ideas of closer cooperation in matters of security were discussed (e.g., 822).

In case Israel seems too small to belong to the other players in this national security fest, Davidsson reminds us that India is Israel's largest customer in defense sales (853). So, what can we learn from Davidsson's book? For patient readers, a great deal: this 900-page study is as free of filler and rhetoric as it is rich in detail. (In correspondence the author told me that he was determined to produce a work dense with the primary source material so that it could be of maximum help to activists in India striving for an official inquiry.)

For readers with less patience, Davidsson has provided regular summaries. And both sets of readers will find that the book discusses not only details of the Mumbai attacks, but patterns of deception common in the War on Terror. For all these reasons, this book is a highly significant achievement and is of objective importance to anyone interested in the War and Terror—the structure and motifs of its ongoing fictions and the methods through which civil society researchers can lay bare these fictions.

Dr. Graeme MacQueen is the former Director of the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Canada. He was an organizer of the Toronto Hearings on 9/11, is a member of the Consensus 9/11 Panel, and is a former co-editor of the Journal of 9/11 Studies. This article was first published in the online journal Global Research: Centre for Research on Globalization (globalresearch.ca). The views expressed in this article are author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Global Village Space.

This is not the same old India-Pakistan conflict

Alison Redford

Regional issues between India and Pakistan can seem irreconcilable, being so far away from our daily lives in Canada. Yet, the consequences of the animosity of these two nuclear powers extend far beyond their own borders. We need to examine the events of the past week to support more constructive dialogue in the region and reduce the risk of growing military and nuclear conflict.

The various alliances that India and Pakistan have with China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, the United States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) mean that if hostilities increase, there is the risk of many countries becoming involved in the defence of their traditional allies. We have seen what this has meant in Afghanistan for the past 30 years and how that has affected the rest of the world.

The international community must look beyond the mounting narrative of historical misdeeds on both sides and stop allowing rhetoric to exacerbate this dangerous rivalry. Global powers have to stop relying on their historic biases in this conflict and must insist that unproven accusations are not sufficient to justify acts that can lead to war and escalation of the nuclear threat.

For too long, Pakistan's actions have been unreasonably characterized as aggressive.

The primary conflict between India and Pakistan has focused on Kashmir, which continues to exacerbate a dangerous cross-border relationship. Seventy years of animosity have been based on both countries' claims to the entire territory, a legacy from England's empire, that illustrates how partition is still the dominant driver of their foreign policy and regional security goals.

Since 1971, both countries have observed a line of control, which has served as a de facto border. Although there have been incursions across this line, both sides had observed a buffer zone for military aircraft operations – until now.

On Feb. 26, the Indian Air Force crossed the line of control and attacked civilian targets in Pakistan. In response, the next day, the Pakistan Air Force shot down at least one Indian Air Force plane in Pakistani air space and capturing a pilot who has now been repatriated to India.

India's justification for the original attack was that it was retaliating against Jaish-e-Mohammed, an insurgent group that claimed responsibility for an attack on Indian troops in Kashmir on Feb. 14.

There is no dispute as to the events that took place, but the characterization of them has made resolution more difficult. In various media outlets this week, Pakistan was characterized as the aggressor in this latest round of military activity.

The facts demonstrate a different reality. Indian military jets breached the line of control and launched an attack on civilian targets in Pakistan, (even boasting of civilian deaths), based on an unproven allegation that the insurgents responsible for the Kashmir attack against Indian soldiers were supported by Pakistan. In response, during the next Indian sorties, which appear to have been a second breach, Pakistan, acting in self-defence, shot down at least one Indian military jet in Pakistani airspace.

While some might argue that India was justified in its actions, which are questionable under international law, this also assumes that India's claims of Pakistan's support for Jaish-e-Mohammad are correct.

First, in media reports, India refers to 40 years of terrorist attacks against India by Pakistan without equal mention of terror attacks perpetrated by India on Pakistani soil, as recently as three months ago in Karachi, or India's support for independence insurgents operating in the Northwest of Pakistan over the past 10 years.

Second, although in the past there have been allegations that Jaish-e-Mohammed has been supported by Pakistan, the organization has been banned in Pakistan since 2002 and support for its operations and training activity was withdrawn. Yet, India continues to assert this position, without providing evidence to support it.

Third, it is against the fundamental principles of international law to launch a military attack on civilian targets, which can be considered an act of war. In

those circumstances, one can argue that Pakistan had the right to defend itself and that its response was both measured and reasonable.

On the Kashmiri question, Pakistan has called for United Nations mediation, but India has refused, saying that it is an internal issue, while violently suppressing a growing, and younger, local insurgent movement. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights criticized India for using excessive force in 2017. More than 500 people, including 100 civilians, have been killed in 2018.

In recent months, India's tactics have been increasingly violent, leading to more international criticism of its conduct and occupation of Kashmir, including most recently by British parliamentarians, and two resolutions at the OIC this past weekend condemning its violent actions in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also faces criticism domestically from Indian opposition leaders such as Rahul Gandhi, for manipulating these events to bolster Mr. Modi's political support in an election year.

There have been times when both countries have been accused of being involved in unwarranted actions against the other and the international community is quick to ignore the complicated dynamics in the region and rely on history. Instead, each incident should be assessed on its own merits to avoid dangerous rivalries from being perpetuated. With a real nuclear risk, we cannot afford to be complacent.

Alison Redford studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She is the former premier of Alberta and spent a year as a consultant to the World Bank on energy regulation in Pakistan

Kill Them Over There, Not Here, Please.

Jeremy Salt

All of us must stand against hatred in all of its forms. – *Barrack Obama*

Israel mourns the wanton murder of innocent worshippers – *Benjamin Netanyahu*

White supremacist terrorism must be condemned by leaders everywhere – *Hillary Clinton*

People of all faiths must condemn these attacks and call out those who encourage Islamophobia. – *Madeleine Albright*

These are excerpts from some of the messages of condolence sent to New Zealand by ‘world leaders’ after the Christchurch massacre. There is no point in giving more names because all politicians and public figures would say the same, as they should, given the monstrosity of the crime.

Obama, Netanyahu, Clinton, and Albright have been chosen because they have been responsible for acts of murder infinitely greater than the slaughter of 50 Muslims in New Zealand.

The victims of their crimes and the crimes of their political predecessors in the past three decades run into the millions. Brenton Tarrant terrorized Muslims in two mosques in one country. They have terrorized Muslim populations in a number of countries. He has violated New Zealand law. They have violated international law. He will be punished but they never are.

Obama, Netanyahu, Clinton, and Albright have never uttered a word of remorse for the crimes they have committed. Not once has the head of any western government expressed regret for the millions of people killed in Muslim countries over the past three decades, not with Brenton Tarrant’s semi-automatic firearms, but bombs, missiles, and tank fire or, in the case of Syria, with the armed gangs set loose like attack dogs.

When asked whether she thought the ‘price’ paid for the first Gulf War (1991) and the decade of sanctions that followed, which took the lives of 500,000 children, was worth it, Madeleine Albright replied: ‘We think the price is worth it.’

For these governments and politicians, the price is always worth it as long as someone else pays. Even now there is nothing but estimates of how many Iraqis were killed or died as a result of the two wars launched against their country but the figure hovers around three million since 1991.

On top of this are the millions of wounded, many disabled for life, and the children born with deformities because of the use of uranium-depleted weapons.

Senior UN officials described the war and decade of sanctions against Iraq as genocide. No horror was expressed in the media for the enormous crimes that had been committed almost wholly against Muslims, men, women, and children as innocent as Brenton Tarrant’s victims. Except on the margins, no demands were ever made for those responsible to face justice.

Every Tuesday Obama sat in his office and signed the death warrant for Yemenis or Somalis targeted in drone missile strikes that were totally illegal under international law. Thousands have been killed in these attacks, many if not most of them civilians, men, women and a lot of children. They are all Muslims. Did any of the politicians sending condolences to New Zealand and condemning terrorism ever bend their heads in shame at the killings in Yemen or Somalia and demand moral accountability and legal responsibility?

Has even one of them condemned Benjamin Netanyahu for the crimes committed against Muslims in Palestine, for the massacres of the innocent by sniper fire, missile strike, and artillery fire? Is the killing of Muslim children somehow different in New Zealand and Palestine?

After the destruction of Libya, Hillary Clinton laughed when told Muammar al Qadhafi had been killed, most brutally. This was her war, Obama’s war, a war of deceit that was carried on for seven months, destroying the most developed country in Africa and killing thousands. *They were all Muslims. What else did Libya represent but Clinton’s ‘white supremacist terror,’ the same terror that has been delivered across the Muslim world by western governments for the past 200 years?*

In Syria an estimated half a million people have been killed in a war orchestrated by western governments and their regional 'allies.' Their weapons of choice, the terrorist groups they have armed and financed, have assassinated, massacred and slaughtered in every way possible, thinkable and unthinkable.

Nearly all of their victims have been Muslims. In the face of this slaughter their paymasters, procurers, and enablers have remained morally mute, save for trying to blame the Syrian government for the war they initiated.

Over decades these enormous crimes have forced millions of people out of their wrecked countries. They have fled in all directions. Many have drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach the presumed safety of Europe. Boats headed in the direction of Australia, only to be turned back at sea or for the desperate people they were carrying to be locked up in 'detention centers' if they managed to slip through. Many sank and many men, women, and children drowned.

Australia was a willing participant in the wars that destroyed their homes yet refused them entry, abusing them as 'queue jumpers.' They were locked up behind razor wire in the middle of the desert so the Australian people could not see them and feel sorry for them. All were Muslims and many were children, treated as cruelly as the adults.

No matter how many millions of innocent people are killed in the Middle East, the designation of terrorist is reserved for Brenton Tarrant or the Islamic State, not for the western governments and the gangs they and their regional allies have employed in Syria to do their dirty work.

The same media that has covered up the monstrous crimes committed against Muslims in the Middle East can now talk of nothing else but the danger of white supremacists, not the far greater danger that Muslims around the world have always faced from western governments.

Brenton Tarrant, the Islamic state, Israel, the US and its 'allies' and the armed groups they are sponsoring in Syria are all joined at the hip. Terror is terror whether state or individual. Brenton Tarrant now has to face the consequences of what he has done. The politicians who have destroyed Middle Eastern countries don't.

There is a law for Brenton Tarrant. There is no law for the politicians. Tarrant will be jailed for life for the murder of 50 Muslims. Politicians responsible for

the deaths of millions of Muslims never seen the inside of a jail. We have a system of international law but only in theory. In practice, when the massive crimes of the powerful are involved, it does not work. It is broken.

Claud Cockburn (father of Patrick) called the 1930s the 'devil's decade.' The devils were human, of course: nationalist socialists and fascists destroying Spain, Italian fascists poison-gassing Ethiopians and Japanese fascists slaughtering Chinese. Now, since the 1990s, we have had nearly three devil's decades.

Today's western liberal democracies – as they are called – are doing exactly what the fascists did in the 1930s. Instead of Spain, we have Syria. Instead of Guernica, we have had Fallujah. Country after country has been destroyed by these liberal democrats in their grey suits and pastel ties. Do they really need to wear black or brown uniforms for people to recognize them for the killers that they are?

In their pursuit of power, they have no more respect for international law than the fascists and national socialists did in the 1930s. They have no respect for human life over there.

Yet when it comes to the killing of Muslims over here, they, and their outliers in the media are shocked, appalled and outraged at this senseless act of terror. Brenton Tarrant is a sick, depraved and twisted individual but so is Benjamin Netanyahu and so are the politicians responsible for the deaths of millions of Muslims in distant countries. Over there, not here, and that is what counts.

Jeremy Salt has taught at the University of Melbourne, Bosphorus University (Istanbul) and Bilkent University (Ankara), specialising in the modern history of the Middle East. His most recent book is "The Unmaking of the Middle East. A History of Western Disorder in Arab Lands" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.) Courtesy: American Herald Tribune

The Infowar on China's Xinjiang-Uyghur Crisis. Now They're Targeting Pakistan and PM Imran Khan

Andrew Korybko

The Western Mainstream Media's infowar about the true state of the anti-terrorist situation in Xinjiang failed after a group of diplomats and journalists were unprecedentedly allowed to visit some of the education and job-training facilities in the strategically located province, after which the weaponized narrative was tweaked to become one of "China buying off Pakistan's silence", which dishonestly portrays the Muslim Great Power's pious leader as a religious hypocrite and dangerously risks provoking terrorist attacks against him and his government.

2018 was predominantly characterized by four main stories for Pakistan – the rise of Imran Khan as Pakistan's latest Prime Minister; the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan's (TLP) anti-blasphemy protests and subsequently seditious calls for acts of terrorism against the state; the Hybrid War on CPEC that peaked near the end of the year with the Karachi & Chabahar attacks and the first-mentioned mastermind's assassination in Afghanistan; and the creeping awareness of the Western Mainstream Media's infowar narrative about China's alleged treatment of the Uighur in Xinjiang. It's therefore not surprising that all four of them are still relevant at the beginning of 2019, but there are worrying signs that hostile perception managers are attempting to weave them together as part of a renewed destabilization campaign against Pakistan.

The Hybrid War on CPEC received an unexpected setback after one of the so-called "Balochistan Liberation Army's" (BLA) top terrorists was assassinated in Afghanistan right before the New Year, which occurred just a few weeks before China's unprecedented diplomatic and journalistic opening in Xinjiang when it recently allowed members of both professional communities to visit some of its education and job-training facilities that it constructed there as part of its anti-terrorist operations in the strategically located province. Beijing even announced that UN officials are welcome to travel to the region as well, provided of course that they follow the proper procedures and don't interfere in the country's domestic affairs. These two developments are the reason why the weaponized narratives that were unleashed against both countries are now being tweaked.

Recognizing that the BLA terrorists were dealt a mighty blow by the recent assassination of one of their leaders and the growing popularity of Dr. Jumma Marri Khan's Overseas Pakistani Baloch Unity (OPBU) that peacefully reintegrates wayward overseas Baloch into Pakistani society, and realizing that the world is becoming aware of the fact that the scandalous stories about China's treatment of the Uighur in Xinjiang are fake news, the forces that are hostile to both multipolar Great Powers are scrambling to adapt their infowar techniques to these changed conditions. It's with this situational context in mind that one should approach the latest claims coming from the popular American-based financial and business news site Business Insider, which just published a very inaccurate portrayal of Pakistani-Chinese relations.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) Attack on China's Consulate in Karachi, Ahead of President Xi's Meeting with Donald Trump

In an article titled "Pakistan abruptly stopped calling out China's mass oppression of Muslims. Critics say Beijing bought its silence", one of the outlet's news reporters attempted to make the case that China paid Pakistan off so that it wouldn't use its influence in the larger international Muslim community ("Ummah") to rally its co-confessionals against Beijing's alleged mistreatment of the Uighur. The author drew attention to a widely publicized fake news report that the country's Federal Minister for Religious Affairs supposedly brought this topic up in a critical way when meeting with the Chinese Ambassador last September. Both officials later denied the media's reports about their talks, but the damage was already done because few people who heard the fake news were made aware of their response.

The writer then tried to make it seem like PM Khan was sidestepping the Uighur issue after reminding her audience about Chinese support for Pakistan's economy, with her innuendo being that "Beijing bought its silence". She then quotes two people to press home this point, the second of whom is Peter Irwin, who's described as a "project manager" at the so-called "World Uyghur Congress" (WUC). Unbeknownst to her audience and conspicuously left out of her report, that man functions as a spokesman for an organization that many in China and beyond believe to be the political wing of the so-called "Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement" (ETIM) which was designated as a terrorist group by the UN in 2002. This makes it very disturbing that his words were included by the author in the article's title.

After declaring that China was "buying the silence of Pakistan", Irwin goes on to say that "he knows he simply needs to keep his mouth shut", concluding that "someone like Khan has a very good idea of the balance of power in their

relationship with China.” This dangerously insinuates that PM Khan and his government are being paid to stay silent about the plight of Muslims, which would make them religious hypocrites if it was true and accordingly paint them as targets of Takfiri terrorists (i.e. those who target alleged “infidels”/“apostates”). Dolkun Isa, the WUC leader who China regards as a terrorist, recently slammed Muslim countries for not supporting him, so it might be that Irwin was tasked by his boss to weaponize this narrative against Pakistan and PM Khan personally.

This is exceptionally dangerous in the Pakistani context because leaders of the TLP opposition party were arrested late last year on charges of sedition and terrorism after they called on their supporters to commit acts of violence against state officials on the purported basis that they were violating fundamentalist Islamic tenets following the Supreme Court’s acquittal of a Christian woman who was previously convicted of blasphemy during a high-profile case. Some of the group’s most religiously extremist sympathizers inside of Pakistan and abroad might interpret Irwin’s hypocrite/infidel/apostate insinuation that he just spread on the globally famous Business Insider information outlet about the pious Prime Minister as a “call to action”, just like Isa might have planned to happen all along as punishment for Pakistan’s refusal to support his narrative.

The WUC-ETIM’s intention seems to be to rekindle the Hybrid War on CPEC by expanding it beyond its now-contained Baloch “nationalist”-driven acts of terrorism to become an “Ummah”-wide militant jihad against the Pakistani state for its position towards China’s alleged treatment of the Uighurs, which is increasingly being revealed to have been the proper one all along after Beijing’s recent diplomatic and journalistic opening in the province debunked the last year’s worth of fake news about this emotive issue. It’s precisely because it turned out that Pakistan was right all along, and its refusal to fall for this infowar narrative doomed the plans to organize an “Ummah”-wide militant jihad against China, that it’s now being targeted through this desperate Hybrid War scenario.

No one should automatically assume that Business Insider is knowingly acting as an instrument of Hybrid War against Pakistan, and it might just be a coincidence that its news reporter decided to obtain exclusive comments on this topic from an individual representing an organization that Beijing regards as a political front for a UN-designated terrorist group (which she didn’t inform her audience of), but the outlet’s irresponsibly inaccurate portrayal of the country’s relations with China nevertheless advances the aforementioned scenario regardless of its original intent. A globally renowned US-based information

platform is openly being used by what many consider to be a terrorist-connected organization to spread its dangerously false innuendo that PM Khan is a hypocrite/infidel/apostate who was paid off by China to remain silent about the supposed plight of fellow Muslims, and that's extremely alarming.

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research. This article was originally published on Eurasia Future.

India shouldn't undermine Afghan peace talks

M.K. Bhadrakumar

The Press Trust of India has reported on the discussions regarding Afghanistan in Washington last week between the visiting Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale and the US special representative Zalmay Khalilzad. The report carries a New Delhi dateline and is attributed to 'official sources'.

According to the report, FS made a demarche with Khalilzad that any US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan should take place only after a new elected government takes over in Kabul and not on the basis of any interim arrangement. Separately, *Hindustan Times* amplified on the PTI report, citing 'people familiar with developments' to the effect that India is opposed to any interim government that is not 'constitutionally mandated' and might have members of the Taliban.

Both reports say that Khalilzad held out an assurance to FS that the security guarantee that Washington seeks from the Taliban about Afghan soil not being used for international terrorism, will also include groups that target India.

Quite obviously, Delhi considers it advantageous to disseminate the above confidential exchange in Washington at the present juncture when US-Taliban talks regarding 'intra-Afghan dialogue' and ceasefire is about to commence in Doha later this month.

Curiously, the Indian security establishment leaked the above information just the day after Pakistan PM Imran Khan claimed last Friday that peace in Afghanistan is 'round the corner' and can be expected in 'coming days'. Imran Khan reportedly said, 'A good government will be established in Afghanistan, a government where all Afghans will be represented. The war will end and peace will be established there.'

Kabul has reacted strongly against Imran Khan's prognosis of a ceasefire and a new representative government forming in Kabul. Of course, the present ruling elite in Kabul fear that they may become expandable in an Afghan settlement. However, they are becoming a small minority. Whereas, a large section of Afghan opinion seems to favour the idea of 'intra-Afghan dialogue' and a broad-based government getting established in Kabul.

Why should India take a partisan stance in such circumstances? See an interview, here, by former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, who used to be a close friend and trusted interlocutor of India.

Delhi is demanding elections in Afghanistan ignoring that security conditions need to be created first on the ground for that purpose. Clearly, the reconciliation with the Taliban who control at least half of Afghan territory is an essential pre-requisite of the situation.

Suffice to say, without the participation of the Taliban, election makes no sense — that is, for electing a government that enjoys legitimacy. On the other hand, the withdrawal of the US troops is a pre-condition that the Taliban has unwaveringly laid down for participating in any intra-Afghan dialogue — and latest reports are that the US is agreeable to meeting that pre-condition.

Clearly, Delhi's stance that US withdrawal be postponed until a settlement is in place is neither realistic nor logical. It casts India in a spoiler's role.

The really surprising part is that Delhi waded into the Afghan peace talks just when Kabul and Washington publicly clashed over Khalilzad's role. The Afghan national security advisor Hamdullah Mohib has derisively called Khalilzad a 'viceroy' who manipulates the peace talks with a view to usurping power for himself in Kabul. Delhi should not take sides in the rift between Khalilzad and President Ashraf Ghani. It's a dangerous gambit.

If Delhi so desperately wants to give a lifeline to Ghani's circle who are its allies in Kabul, the thing to do is to depute army chief Gen. Vipin Rawat to make a quick trip to Afghanistan and evaluate how an Indian intervention, replacing the US and NATO forces, can be urgently worked out before a settlement with the Taliban takes shape so that the erstwhile puppet regime of the US in Afghanistan can be transformed into an Indian surrogate.

If that is too weird a thing to be tried out, then the reasonable thing to do is to give the US-Taliban peace talks a fair chance. This may not be the ideal way of conflict resolution, but this is the only show in town and may serve the purpose of ending the senseless 17-year old war.

Delhi should have understood a long time ago that the Taliban insurgency cannot be defeated militarily and the US has been pursuing the West's interests in Afghanistan. It should have worked with like-minded regional capitals to

stabilise the Afghan situation in the interest of regional security and stability. But instead, it opted to be the US' poodle.

Inevitably, Delhi feels let down. But that doesn't warrant the petulance that is appearing here. When India has neither the geo-strategic clout influence nor the capacity to be prescriptive, the rational thing is to exercise strategic patience and try to come to terms with the regime that emerges out of a settlement in Afghanistan.

It is still not too late to calibrate India's policy in a manner that stops viewing Afghanistan as the turf to wage proxy war against Pakistan. Pakistan has legitimate interests in Afghanistan — no less than what India would have in Nepal or Bhutan.

Arguably, a new thinking on our part reversing the policy trajectory adopted two decades ago in the late nineties will not only stop the enormous financial haemorrhage running into billions of dollars, but may even have the salutary effect of Pakistan reciprocating elsewhere on issues where India has core interests.

M. K. Bhadrakumar has been a highly distinguished career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service for over 29 years, with postings as India's ambassador to Uzbekistan (1995-1998) and to Turkey (1998-2001). He writes extensively in Indian newspapers, Asia Times and the "Indian Punchline".

Hindutva and Fascist White Nationalism: A match made in Hell

Adam Garrie

In 2011, the fascist Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik detonated a bomb in central Oslo before travelling to Utøya island where he opened fire on children on a camping holiday. Overall, Breivik murdered 77 people whilst he injured over 300. While Breivik has been behind bars since committing the atrocities of 2011, his name has been back in the news after the terrorist behind the barbaric attacks on two New Zealand mosques claims that Breivik (through his proxies) offered his support for the atrocities in Christchurch.

In many respects, the Australian terrorist of Christchurch infamy acted in a manner that sought to copy the methods and mentality of Breivik. This including the drafting of a political manifesto that was published online just before the beginning of the attack.

Going back to 2011, it is helpful to remember that in addition to citing figures from European history as inspirations for his attack, Breivik also extolled what he thought to be the virtues of the Hindutva ideology. But far from distancing himself from Breivik, former BJP Indian parliamentarian B.P. Singhal openly revelled in Breivik's anti-Islamic cause. In 2011, Singhal stated:

“I was with the shooter in his objective, but not in his method. If you want to attract the nation's attention, surely you need to do something drastic and dramatic, but not killing people”.

Whilst Singhal's qualified support for Breivik is both disturbing and distasteful, Singhal then went on to qualify his initial qualified remarks by apparently justifying violence against Muslims. According to Singhal, the Holy Quran is “violent” and as such, sometimes “violence must be fought with violence”.

But far from being an aberration, Singhal's support for a fascist European killer follows on from a long line of Hindutva politicians and theorists who openly praised Adolf Hitler and other extreme European leaders. Hindutva's founding

father Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was an unabashed admirer of both Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and fascist Italy's Benito Mussolini. Beyond this, Savarkar blamed European Jewry for the Holocaust and went on to compare his own views on south Asian Muslims with Hitler's views on European Jews.

At one point, Savarkar stated that Indian Muslims should be treated in the way that African Americans were treated in the United States during the Jim Crow Era, even though this racist remark was mild compared to his desire to create a Hindutva empire that would see Pakistan (West and East as it was at the time) wiped off the map.

With the revival of Hindutva extremism under the BJP government of Narendra Modi, a fascination with Hitler and European fascism in India has likewise been documented by foreign observers. As recently as 2017, even the BBC recognised that neo-fascists in Europe and North America were reviving the concept that Hindutva extremism and white supremacist extremism should cooperate in order to fulfil various socially exclusive goals. In particular, the BBC noted how 21st century western fascists have come to admire the European born Hindu convert and promoter of Hindutva ideology Savitri Devi as a figure of inspiration.

Just months ago, Qatari broadcaster and news outlet al-Jazeera observed that based on both pre-Hitler theories on how central Europeans were related to ancient Indo-Aryans and also due to a shared contemporary hatred of Muslim people and the religion of Islam, the world had witnessed a burgeoning growth in a political and ideological alliance between western fascists and Hindutva extremists in India and beyond.

But the story does not end there. Through the power of the internet, it is now possible for western fascists to watch English language Hindutva television programmes on a 24/7 basis. While there is plenty of western pro-fascist material to occupy the time of western extremists, because Indian media tends to give extremist views a veneer of respectability that is otherwise missing in much of Europe and North America, Hindutva propaganda is in many respects the perfect way for western fascists to both gain inspiration and to further internationalise their cause.

Thus far, Turkey's broadcaster TRT World has been helpful in offering the wider world a critical glimpse of the hateful rhetoric that spews continually from pro-BJP platforms as well as in film.

The growing ties between the western fascist revival and India's increasingly prominent Hindutva socio-political movement continue to receive only marginal attention. And yet, while the BJP's militant wing RSS continue to promote violence in India, Europe and the west as a whole are sleepwalking into an era in which a western version of RSS may well be right around the

corner. If people throughout the world are genuinely concerned with ebbing the flow of extremism, the Hindutva-Fascist axis must be both named and shamed.

Kartarpur – A Peace Icon

Muhammad Ayaz Nazar

Softening borders between Eastern and Western Punjab region of Indian and Pakistan can boost up people to people contact, mutual trade, cultural exchange and economic development on both sides as CBM to mitigate effects of mutually shared animosity grounded in the historical process of their inter-state relations.

The opening of Kartarpur corridor is more than an event as both sides need to consistently work for peacebuilding through such soft politics initiatives as CBM's to carve mechanism for a comprehensive dialogue to resolve hard politics issues including disputed perspectives on border disputes and cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan is scheduled to host 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak at Kartarpur by receiving an influx of Sikh pilgrims from across the globe in April 2019. Guru Nanak was the first Sikh guru and founder of Sikh faith. It is an opportunity for Pakistan to reflect its commitment to inter-faith harmony and dialogue among civilizations by giving a welcome gesture to the global Sikh community particularly Sikh's in India as an opportunity to visit this religious place. Pakistan has offered India border free corridor for a crossing of Sikh pilgrims from India into Pakistan to visit Kartarpur. India-Pakistan Kartarpur Corridor is a right gesture in the right direction. Kartarpur is a bordering area of Pakistan with India in central Punjab district of Narowal, Pakistan. Due to this close geographic proximity with India, the opening of visa-free Kartarpur corridor for border crossing of Sikh pilgrims between Pakistan and India is a significant development for Sikh community in India and Indian Sikh diaspora across the globe.

India constitutes 85% of the total Sikh community living worldwide. Therefore, this peace initiative can play a constructive role in creating a conducive environment between Pakistan and India for cooperation in the realm of soft politics and comprehensive dialogue. Consistency and political will to execute this initiative on both sides is mandatory prerequisite to materialize it into a living reality.

Prime minister Imran Khan has inaugurated construction on Kartarpur corridor on 28th November while India has also laid the foundation of the

corridor on its own side of the border for construction of the road to the Pakistan border. This news arrested media attention after the revelation of a landmark decision by Premier Modi's cabinet about accepting Pakistan's offer for a joint corridor on Kartarpur border.

In November, Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh apprised the nation in a tweet that "In a landmark decision, the Cabinet approves building and development of Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to International Border. Kartarpur corridor project with all modern amenities and facilities to be implemented with Central Government funding." This news was welcomed by Pakistan government and foreign minister of Pakistan shared details of Pakistan's reciprocity and groundbreaking ceremony on Pakistan's side in this regard.

Foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi confirmed in a tweet that "Pakistan has already conveyed to India its decision to open Kartarpura Corridor for Baba Guru Nanak's 550th birth anniversary. PM Imran Khan will do break ground at Kartarpura facilities on 28th November. We welcome the Sikh community to Pakistan for this auspicious occasion." This confirmation from Pakistan was a music to the ears of millions of Sikh believers living in India. This confidence building measure (CBM) can bring a thaw to freeze Pakistan India relations. This peace initiative was first taken by Pakistan on the demand of the Indian Sikh community.

Earlier, Pakistan's army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa hugged Navjot Singh Sidhu (an Indian Politician) as the guest during oath-taking ceremony of Premier Imran Khan in August 2018 and offered Pakistan's peace initiative of opening Kartarpur border with India. This initiative of Pakistan received criticism from Indian media hawks as Pakistan army's "emotional blackmailing tactic" for Sikh community in India. BJP's many leaders also opposed it but the Sikh community in India pressurized Indian government which has now decided to open this corridor with Pakistan.

However, Opening of Kartarpur corridor is more than an event. But both sides need to consistently work for peacebuilding through such soft politics initiatives as CBM's to carve mechanism for a comprehensive dialogue to resolve hard politics issues including disputed perspectives on border disputes and cross-border terrorism.

The opening of Kartarpur border will enhance People to people contact but issues between the two countries cannot be resolved overnight. Role of the policy-making elite on both sides is crucial in this regard especially their security establishments.

Pakistan's civil-military leadership is on the same page concerning opening Kartarpur corridor and having the dialogue with India which is a positive development for Pakistan. Premier Imran Khan has also expressed his determination for dialogue with India for the sake of regional peace in his maiden speech after becoming elected leader of Pakistan.

Indian political elite may have the will to continue this Sikh pilgrim border crossing corridor with Pakistan but the real challenge to this peace initiative comes from the potential role of Indian security policymaking elite especially armed forces of India. Their ambiguity casts doubt on the smooth execution of this project as bilateral peace diplomacy example especially in the presence of controversial statements from incumbent Indian army chief. Building comprehensive policy-making elite consensus in India on Kartarpur corridor is essential to materialize this initiative.

Though, many see the opening of Kartarpur corridor as a corridor of hope for peace between the two countries and infinite possibilities. Softening borders between Eastern and Western Punjab region of Indian and Pakistan can boost up people to people contact, mutual trade, cultural exchange and economic development on both sides as CBM to mitigate effects of mutually shared animosity grounded in the historical process of their inter-state relations.

Pakistan needs to establish a master plan for hosting the event by organizing venues for trade, religious tourism and regulation of Sikh pilgrims in Kartarpur region. Security sensitivities of this bordering region with India cannot be overlooked. Therefore, security compliance and effective border management mechanism must be devised with the consent of Indian authorities to meet these requirements. Pakistan-India Kartarpur corridor is a beginning into the realm of soft politics between two countries to warm the freeze ties.

Muhammad Ayaz Nazar is an independent researcher. His area of interest includes geopolitics, politics of South Asia, especially focusing on India-Pakistan relations.

Who is to Blame for the Plight of Indian Muslims?

Prof Ram Puniyani

VETERAN actor Naseeruddin Shah in an interview to Karawan-E-Mohabbat expressed his anguish and anger at the killing of Subodh Kumar Singh, the police inspector. Shah's interview brought forth the issue of insecurity particularly of the religious minorities in India. While this did remind the nation about the direction in which India has been heading in the last few years, there was an angry outburst to Shah's take from the intolerant sections of society who pounced on him calling him names and humiliating him on social media.

At the same time, the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* carried an interview with Shah's cousin, Syed Rizwan Ahmad. Ahmad is introduced as an Islamic scholar. In the interview, the newly discovered cousin says that Muslims are unsafe only in nations where the Muslims are in majority and that in India intolerance is the result of the Muslim incompatibility to exist peacefully with other faiths.

He goes on to blame the Indian Muslims themselves for their plight in this country as they failed to play a proactive role in cases like Shah Bano and the Kashmiri Pundits. It is because of this that the Hindus have started feeling that they are getting a raw deal in their own country. According to him, intolerance is the "pseudo-narrative of pseudo seculars and intolerant Muslims."

As far as the Muslims and other religious minorities are concerned it's good to introspect about their plight. It is not right to have a feeling of victimhood. But can we understand the broad political global phenomenon in such a superficial way, where Muslims are blamed for their own plight?

Can we present the Hindus as a uniform, monolithic community pitted against the Muslims? Globally it is true that the Muslim majority countries in West Asia are witnessing more civil wars and more insecurity. Let's also note here that while from Indian side we blame Pakistan for the acts of terror, the number of deaths of innocent civilians is many times higher in Pakistan than in India. And let's not forget Pakistan lost its former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in a terror attack.

Again we see that the civil wars, wars and terror attacks have been more in the oil-rich Muslim countries. The coming of Afghan Mujahideen, Al Qaeda and Taliban in that sequence in the region began the acts of terror and violence in these areas. Has this been due to Islam? Why this phenomenon was not there during the Cold war era or prior to that?

This violence in West Asia has been promoted primarily by the American policy of controlling oil wealth. In the wake of the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, America was not able to counter it by sending its own army as the American army was writhing under the breakdown of its morale due to the humiliating defeat in the Vietnam war. So the US by clever machinations started promoting fundamentalist groups in these regions, promoted brainwashing of Muslim youth in madrassas in Pakistan and funded and heavily armed these groups which came up through this process.

This sowed the seeds of violence, terrorism and led to insecurity in the region. Mahmood Madani's book 'Good Muslim-Bad Muslim' gives an accurate count of the process which was employed by the mighty superpower to prop up the terrorist groups. To add salt to the wounds, after the 9/11 attacks; the US media popularised the phrase 'Islamic terrorism' and laid the foundation of global Islamophobia. The wealth of Muslim majority countries, the Oil, became its biggest handicap!

Islam came to India with Arab traders and later many embraced it due to many reasons including the wish to escape the tyranny of Hindu caste system. One recalls that Muslim kings like Akbar promoted inter religion interaction and even the most demonized Aurangzeb's many top officers were Hindus.

In India while the impression is being created that Muslims are intolerant, the fact during medieval period Hindu-Muslim interactions created Ganga Jumna tehzeeb, well presented in Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Discovery of India' and beautifully captured in the Shyam Bengal's immortal serial '*Bharat Ek Khoj*', based on this book. During freedom movement majority of Muslims were with Indian National Congress and were equal partners in the freedom movement. This gets well reflected in the Muslim freedom fighters like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abul Gaffar Khan, and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai among others. Partition was the clever move of the British Empire to weaken India and to have a subservient state in South Asia in the form of Pakistan.

The communal poison was spread here by communal organizations, Muslim League; Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. Sardar Patel goes to the extent of saying

that it is due to the communal poison spread by RSS, that murder of father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi could take place. The rising communal violence, later arrest of innocent Muslim youth on the pretext of acts of terror, then lynching's in the name of cow-beef have created massive insecurity. We can see a correlation between rising insecurity and rise in ghettoization, rise in fundamentalism and rise in use of Burqa among other parameters of orthodoxy.

It is nobody's case that mistakes have not been done from the side of Muslim community. The section of Muslim community which stood to oppose the Supreme Court verdict on Shah Bano pushed the whole community back. The section of leadership highlighting Babri mosque demolition also has not been good for the large section of the community.

No doubt the Babri mosque issue has been doctored to show that it was a place of birth of Lord Ram still Muslim leadership should focus more on the issues related to livelihood than these identity issues. Muslim leadership does need to focus on issues of equity. Now dominant communal discourse as by this so-called Islamic scholar is trying to put all the blame of plight of the Muslim community on Muslims themselves! Nothing can be farther from truth, it's like blaming the victim for the crime!

Ram Puniyani is an eminent author, activist and former professor of IIT Mumbai. The views are personal and Caravan Daily does not necessarily share or subscribe to them

Old geopolitical rivalry in Nepal

Biswas Baral,

On January 25 Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’, the co-chairman of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), came out with a strong statement denouncing the recent US intervention in Venezuela as an ‘imperialist coup’. Most Nepalis were dumbfounded.

Nepal does not have diplomatic ties with Venezuela while the US has been one of its big donors. Moreover, the NCP hardly ever talks about other countries, even in South Asia. It kept mum over developments in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, two fellow Saarc countries. What then explains Prachanda’s sudden ire?

A day before his statement, the United Nations in Nepal and nine Kathmandu-based Western embassies had called on the Nepali government to honour the Supreme Court verdict on transitional justice. The court had, most notably, ruled out ‘blanket amnesty’ on human rights violations from the decade-long Maoist conflict (1996-2006) during which 17,000 people died and nearly 2,000 ‘disappeared’. Top Maoist leaders see all cases from the period as part of a legitimate war and no top Maoist leader or commander should hence be prosecuted after the fact.

The international community disagrees. They believe it is dangerous to leave the wounds from the conflict untreated. It is vital that the families of those who died or disappeared get justice. The judiciary backs this stand. On the other hand, India and China have chosen to (largely) stay silent on Nepal’s transitional justice, and they had not signed the January 25 statement issued under the UN aegis.

With the two big external powers of Nepal opting out of the transitional justice bandwagon, former Maoist leaders suspected the signature campaign must have been the handiwork of the US – hence Prachanda’s strong reaction in an unrelated case.

But in 2018 Prachanda’s Maoist party had formally merged with CPN-UML – led by the current Prime Minister KP Oli – to form the ruling NCP, which Prachanda and Oli now jointly lead. The Americans were furious that the co-

leader of the ruling party had the gall to say something so brazen. They asked the government for a clarification.

In reply, the foreign ministry produced a non-committal response, which did nothing to allay American concerns. (PM Oli later termed Prachanda's words as 'a slip', even as the former rebel leader vehemently defended his statement.)

Prachanda has thus sparked a serious diplomatic row between Nepal and the US. His remarks come at a time the Nepali government has been reaching out to the Americans. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo recently welcomed Nepali foreign minister Pradeep Gyawali in Washington DC, in the first powwow between foreign ministers of the two countries in 17 years.

The US state department later reported that among the issues discussed were Nepal's 'central role in a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific'. That Nepal had agreed to discuss the 'Indo-Pacific' rather than the more traditional 'Asia-Pacific' was widely criticised back home. The American 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' is seen as targeted against China.

The Oli government tried to portray Gyawali's visit as Nepal wanting to widen its relations beyond India and China. (Hadn't the alleged Indian blockade of 2015-16 and China's failure to come to Nepal's rescue amply highlighted the need for that?). But China has always been uneasy about the American presence in Nepal after CIA-trained rebels launched a raid into Tibet from Nepali soil in the 1960s. The Indians may also be reluctant to see Nepal as a playground of Western powers.

Nepali communists have traditionally railed against the 'imperialistic' US and 'expansionist' India. Given the country's geographical fate, while in power the NCP has no option but to appear friendly to India. It feels under no such obligation to humour the US. The old communist habit of concocting a real or perceived external enemy also comes into play.

Yet the recent rumpus over Venezuela suggests something more troublesome. Despite the appearance of stability in Nepal following the formation of the two-thirds communist government, the ruling party is far from a united force.

Biswas Baral is a Kathmandu-based journalist who writes on Nepal's foreign policy. Baral writes a weekly Beyond Borders column for Republica daily published from Kathmandu and tweets from @biswasktm.

