

## **Quarterly Round Up**

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### **Middle East: Gas Attack in Syria**

There were more reports of chemical weapon attacks from Syria during the period under review. 74 innocent people were killed and 500 were injured. No one took credit for the attack. In earlier gas attacks the Asad regime was blamed for killing its own people. One thing that is alarming is that despite having awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organization of Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for destroying all chemical weapons stacks in Syria, how these weapons continue to be used in this war wracked country.

### **Middle East: Trump's Visit to Saudi Arabia**

The situation in the Middle East is becoming murkier as battle lines are being drawn between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and USA being important allies are worried about growing influence of Iran and Russia in the region. The proliferation of terrorist organisations is adding to this explosive cocktail. In this situation, alliance politics is the best foreign policy tool to be used to deter the emerging challenges. A high level of meetings and dialogue between Saudi Arab and USA indicates the seriousness of this issue. Both the desert kingdom and the North American consider their bilateral relationship vital, neutral observers are worried that arms sales to the regional countries will only trigger an arms race that could further destabilise the Middle East.

### **Middle East: Saudi Arab - Qatar Diplomatic Crisis**

A new crisis brew up in the Middle East, this time between Arab countries straining once cordial relations between Saudi Arab and the Qatar. These two countries were allies within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Things started going bad, when Qatar and Iran started coming close to each other and former began pursuing an independent foreign policy. Saudi Arabia retaliated by accusing Qatar for supporting non-state actors and disturbing regional peace. The situation took a turn

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for the worst, when Saudi Arabia imposed sanctions on Qatar and cut off diplomatic ties. The Saudi-Qatari standoff is likely to create hurdles in solving the crises in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Libya.

### **Europe: French Presidential Election**

As a result of the national elections in France, Emmanuel Macron, as the young leader of this important European country, has been elected as president. The new president faces a number of national, regional and global threats. Domestically he has to solve problems such as unemployment, xenophobia and extremism. The unity of the European Union (EU) faces challenges because of Great Britain's plans to quit this regional forum. Only time will tell how Macron measures up to these grave issues.

### **Global Warming: Trump's Withdrawal from Paris Climate Accord**

President Trump struck a vital blow against climate change by withdrawing from the Paris Accord. His abrupt action was viewed with not only a great deal of cynicism in the international community but also domestically. His action it is felt would add to global warming and would put paid to international efforts to control climate change.

### **UK: Terror Attacks**

Couple of terrorist attacks rocked United Kingdom in May and June 2017. First attack took place in Manchester Arena concert area on May 22, 2017. A shrapnel-laden homemade bomb was detonated when people were leaving Manchester Arena after a concert by the American singer Ariana Grande. In this attack, twenty three people were killed including the attacker whereas 139 were severely injured. Several hundred people were captured in psychological trauma. The attacker was identified as 22 year old Libyan ancestry Salman Ramadan Abedi who had returned from his home country recently. Security agencies believed that although he acted alone for this attack but other had been aware of his plan.

June 3, 2017 witnessed an attack through vehicle-ramming and stabbing in London when a van was deliberately driven into pedestrians

on London Bridge before crashing on the south bank of the River Thames. The three occupants of the vehicle then ran in the nearby Borough Market area and stabbed people around in restaurants and pubs. The attackers inspired by Islamic State (ISIS) were shot dead by London Police. They were wearing fake explosive vests. The incident took lives of eight people whereas forty eight were injured including four police personals who attempted to stop the assailants.