

Quarterly Round Up

Ambassador (R) Tariq Osman Hyder*

Refugees crisis

World is witnessing great humanitarian crisis in the form of Syrian refugees which is second largest mass movement of populations after World War II. The deadly civil war in Syria has forced millions of people to flee to neighbouring countries and then to the Europe. Almost seven million people were internally displaced and four million people have migrated to the neighbouring countries. This crisis has created tension in the European nations as they have differing policies regarding asylum and potential resettlement. Both EU governments and their people are becoming increasingly critical of these refugees and aspiring immigrants. Germany has been an exception due to Chancellor Merkel but she is under pressure at home. Also due to this situation, the world wide refugees crisis debate has entered the mainstream of international discourse. Although UNHCR is taking steps to cater the needs of these refugees but due to meagre resources and lack of consensus on resettlement policies this issue still persist as a humanitarian crisis as millions children, men and women are still in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

Middle East and North Africa turmoil

The chaotic situation in the Middle East is worsening day by day. The Syrian conflict is in transition after nearly six years of what has become a decimating civil war, pitting the Islamic State, al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front, and other state and non-state actors against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. So far over 200,000 people have died on both sides, and millions of Syrians are internally displaced or have fled the country for a very uncertain future. Despite the UN talks in Vienna to seek a temporary cease-fire in Syria and the beginning of discussions on an eventual new Damascus government the situation has not improved

* Ambassador (R) Tariq Osman Hyder is Former Pakistan Ambassador to Ashgabat and to Seoul.

much. ISIS can increase instability and provoke further political backlash by boosting its attack capabilities, where the security forces are not present in large numbers. The abrupt break in diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has exacerbated existing conflicts in Middle East.

Afghanistan situation

Afghanistan is one of the major security threats encountered by the modern world. US led coalition invaded Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. Since then, country is in the constant state of war. America, despite its strong military machine, has not succeeded to bring peace in the country. The international community has tried off and on to solve the issue through dialogue but most of the efforts proved to be ineffectual. Hence innocent civilians in Afghanistan continue to suffer from the consequences of this internal conflict exacerbated by foreign forces. The bombing of the MSF hospital in Kunduz by US planes, no matter how accidental is yet another example of the horrors of this conflict. Repercussions of the Afghan issue can be felt in region as well. Pakistan has been bearing the brunt of Afghan war for last four decades. Militancy, drug trafficking and insurgency have spilt-over into Pakistan. In addition, Afghan refugees have also contributed to the gravity of international refugee crisis due to turmoil in Afghanistan. Recently, quadrilateral dialogue comprising of the USA, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan ended without any fruitful outcome. Killing of Taliban leader Mullah Akhta Mansoor in American drone strike in Pakistan is further pushing Taliban away from peace talks. Furthermore Pakistan has also criticized the drone strike as against its sovereignty.

Climate change

The global climate agreement finalized in December last year was a mile stone to limit the carbon emissions in the atmosphere. Devastating results of climate change pushed the world leaders to come up with the collective strategy on global warming. The deal unites all the world's nations in a single agreement on tackling climate change for the first time in history. Nearly 200 countries agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions is regarded by many observers as an achievement in itself and is being

hailed as "historic". Pledges thus far could see global temperatures rise by as much as 2.7 °C, but the agreement lays out a roadmap for speeding up progress. It was agreed to keep global temperatures rise "well below" 2.0 °C (3.6 °F) above pre-industrial times and "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5 °C. To limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally, beginning at some point between 2050 and 2100. The goals set in Paris accord are considered over ambitious and only time will tell how these will be achieved.

Zarb-e-Azb

To get rid of the scourge of terrorism Pakistan Army launched military operation on June 15, 2014. More than one and half year after start of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, phenomenal successes have been achieved. Last pockets close to Pak – Afghan Border are being cleared. Terrorist's backbone has broken. According to ISPR 3,400 terrorists killed, 837 hideouts from where they were carrying out their terrorists activities destroyed. During last 18 month over 13,200 Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) carried out across the country in which 183 hard core terrorists killed, 21,193 arrested, (IBOs) are continuing. However the civilian administration has yet to establish its presence effectively in FATA or to play its part in countering extremism and terrorism throughout the country.

Rohingya crisis

Tens of thousands of Muslim Rohingya have fled Myanmar in the past year, many of them kept sailing on boats in the sea in the spring of 2015 to reach Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The surge in refugees was prompted by a long-building crisis: the discriminatory policies of the Myanmar government in Rakhine State, which have caused hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee since the late 1970s. Their plight has been compounded by the responses of many of Myanmar's neighbours, which have been slow to take in the refugees for fear of a migrant influx they feel incapable of handling. No unified or coordinated ASEAN response has been proposed or developed to address the deepening crisis. States in Southeast Asia also lack established legal frameworks to provide for the

protection of rights for refugees. This humanitarian tragedy requires international community to organize realistic and workable solution. The OIC response has also been ineffective. It is feared that with the restoration of civilian rule despite expectations the plight of the Rohingyas will not improve.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

India has intensified its bid to join the NSG and the other three control regimes and has strong US backing. Pakistan has been only reactive and only the Chinese position of principle that the application of all the three non NPT nuclear powers should be considered together is likely to keep India out of the NSG. Unless Pakistan formally applies to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) which it has not done so far despite public pronouncements by the Prime Minister and the National Command Authority that it should be made part of all four of the Control regimes India will get a walkover and will veto any future Pakistani application.

Panama Papers

The Panama papers have exposed detail financial and attorney-client information for hundreds of thousand offshore entities. This has largely impacted the politics of many countries. Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson resigned after his family was found involved among those exposed by Panama papers and Spanish Acting Industry Minister Jose Manuel Sori resigned whose name was also linked to offshore companies. UK's Prime Minister David Cameron faced criticism as he appeared to get benefit from his late father's offshore trust. Similarly many Pakistani names appeared in the leaked documents including family of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and many other politicians, which has caused intense debate in the political circles in the country about investigation and accountability regarding the matter. It appeared at one time to some analysts that the Prime Minister would be destabilized and could lose his position but that appears unlikely now.

Important foreign visits

Two important visits took place in March. The first was by the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow who was reciprocating the two visits by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to Turkmenistan in the past 12 months. The strategic relationship between the two countries continues to grow and the visit augers well for progressing the TAPI pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan and beyond to India. The second was by President Ruhani in which he offered to meet all of Pakistan's energy needs. The visit was a positive reset of oft uneasy bilateral relations between the two countries and the emphasis should now be to complete the 780 km or so portion of the IPI gas pipeline from the border of Iran up to nearly which Iran has completed its part of the pipeline.

Arrest of high level Indian spy

The arrest in Baluchistan within Pakistan of an Iran based high level Indian spy, a former Indian Naval officer gave weight to Pakistan's frequent and long standing complaint that India involved in trying to destabilize Pakistan in the border regions with Afghanistan and Iran.