OPINIONS

Quarterly Round Up

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Donald J. Trump's Presidency

On January 20, 2017 Donald J. Trump took oath as 45th president of the United States of America. Due to his controversial statements, on January 21, millions of people joined the Women's March against Trump's presidency around the globe. Women condemned newly elected president's stance on issues like abortion, health care, climate change etc. The protests have given a message to Trump administration to be cautious in order to form public as well as international policies. A caution he is not likely to follow given his strong character and inclinations. Also because he has a solid base in the USA which led to his election.

On 27 January President Trump issued an executive order to temporarily ban people from seven Muslim-majority countries to travel to USA. The orders sparked reaction worldwide and confusions at airports. It also posed legal challenges on domestic level. A week later a federal judge in Seattle suspended the orders. On March 6, Trump ordered second travel ban blocking citizens of six Muslim majority countries from entering USA. Pakistan was not amongst them. On March 16, federal judge in Hawaii blocked the major provisions of President Trump's revised ban, hours before it was going to take effect. However President Trump vowed to pursue his case.

Palestine Issue

On February 1, 2017, Israeli officials announced the construction of new Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank area of Palestine. Many member states of the United Nations have criticized the settlements as violation of international law. The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed it as disappointment and alarmed. However despite criticism and violations of international law, Israel is continuing illegal settlements in the occupied area.

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North Korea

North Korea test fired an intermediate range ballistic missile into the sea of Japan. The move came despite pressure from U.S. and also was held after new president of USA took his office. The test followed condemnation from most of international community including Pakistan. South Korea and Japan declared it "an unprecedented, serious and important threat". It seems that the dialogues process could guarantee peace in the region but neither the present policies of the DPRK or of the new Administration are promising so far in that regard.

The U.S. Military also started to deploy Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system in South Korea. It has been controversial with some elements within South Korea itself. The deployment was justified as a response to the North Korea's missile program. The system is meant to intercept and destroy short and medium-range ballistic missiles. China has reacted and opposed this deployment as it sees it as a counter to its own missile deterrent capability. Therefore, on one hand the deployment is meant for North Korea but other a major power in the region opposes it, while Japan is in support as it also feels threatened by the missile threat from the DPRK.

UN Warning of Challenges to Humanity

The United Nations warned that the contemporary world is facing the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II and up to 20 million people are at great risk of starvation and famine in countries like Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria. There is immediate need of funds, access of humanitarian aid as well as solution to ongoing conflicts in these areas. One point that the international community should better understand that is because there are two different types of causes behind these issues. One problem area is due to deep-seated under-laying causes while the other problem areas are due to more current causes. The UN and the international community should in first phase work on immediate causes that trigger high intensity challenges to humanity. In the second place they should understand and address the political and social causes which have given rise to these issues in order to break this continuous chain of challenges. Civil war, terrorism, human trafficking are major

threats constitute the other challenges these starving people tragically face.

Syrian Situation

The Syrian Government and its military claim to have gradually taken control of most areas that were occupied by ISIS in Syria. This has been done with the help of Russian airpower support and that of Iran as well as by trained Hezbollah troops from Lebanon. Meanwhile, the United Nations reports stated that Syrian army has deliberately used the chemical weapons against the ISIS and other opposition groups leading to the death of more than 200 civilian. On the basis of this report, USA and its Allies come up with a resolution in United Nation Security Council to condemn the Syrian Government but that was vetoed by the Russian Government. Russia and Turkey are trying to come up with political solution to Syrian conflict. The peace in Syria still seems far away.

Yemen

In the shadow of civil war in Yemen, both Houthi and terrorist groups have gained ground. In response the Saudi led coalition launched many air strikes. According to United Nations millions of Yemenis are in dire need of emergency humanitarian aid. As is the case in Syria, a political solution in Yemen does not likely in the near future and therefore the humanitarian crisis will continue to unfold further at the cost of the Yemeni people.

Kulbhushan Case

India, on the denial of counselor access to its citizen Kulbhushan Jadhav, a on service Naval officer and a spy involved in subversive terrorist activities in Pakistan, went to International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the suspension of his execution order by a Pakistani Military court. Indian has claimed that under the Vienna convention on Diplomatic Relation 1963 it should be granted consular access to Jadhav. In first hearing, in spite of Pakistan's argument that the ICJ has no jurisdiction, the Court gave a preliminary verdict that as long as the case is before the ICJ Pakistan should suspend the execution process. There are many legal

complexities involved in this case. These include aspects of international law and also Pakistan's own laws that in order to tackle security threats access to foreigners can be curbed. Pakistan has a strong case, but nonetheless the government should put together a strong and well prepared team to deal with this case in the next hearing.

Pakistan –India relations

India continues with its unrealistic campaign to try to isolate Pakistan and is unwilling to respond to Pakistan's reiterated and constant offer to begin talks. An offer which finds favour with the international community which is worried about worsening relations between two nuclear armed neighbours. India managed to sabotage the SAARC Summit which was to be held in Pakistan on 9th and 10th November 2016 for the first time after the last summit in Islamabad in January 2004. BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee participated in that Summit which led to breaking of a similar deadlock in bilateral relations and the relaunching of the peace process through the mechanism of the 8 part dialogue. Modi and his government lack similar vision despite being from the same BJP party. However Pakistan rebounded by holding the successful ECO Summit in Islamabad on Ist March 2017.

The awarding of the death sentence to the Indian intelligence spy arrested in Pakistan while directing subversive and terrorist activities has increased hostile statements from India. However the Pakistan Government has given details of the terrorist attacks he planned and directed and also made plain that all legal processes were followed giving him qualified legal council and the right to question witnesses. He will be allowed to follow all the steps for appeal against his sentence and for clemency that still lie ahead. For many years Pakistan has been complaining about and highlighting Indian sponsored subversive and terrorist activities in Baluchistan and FATA, through direct channels and largely through Afghanistan and Iran. This concrete case provides the latest concrete evidence.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations

Relations with Afghanistan remain variable as the Afghan government tends to blame Pakistan for its own lack of control and

failures, as does the USA. For a number of years Pakistan has been strongly advising the USA and the Afghan government that the only lasting solution is a political dialogue involving the Taliban leading to a political solution, and that the American policy to both fight to kill the Taliban field cadres and to talk to them was inconsistent with such a sustainable approach. On March 29 Ambassador Richard Olsen the former American Ambassador in Pakistan and till the advent of the new Trump Administration the US Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan wrote a detailed article entitled, 'The Art of the Deal with the Taliban', in the influential New York Times stating that a negotiated settlement was the only way forward.