

TANZEEM E ISLAMI



Striving for the Law of Allah, on the Land of Allah

PERSPECTIVE

The official online newsletter of Tanzeem e Islami
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'PERSPECTIVE' is a trend-setting newsletter issued by Tanzeem e Islami that focuses on a candid commentary on the current national and international issues, in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. A blend that gives Muslims an insight into the events of the past, those happenings at present and the Signs of things to come...

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From the Qur'an:

“And there is prohibition upon (the people of) a city, which We have destroyed that they will return (to it in power).”

“Until when (the dam of) Gog and Magog has been opened and they, from every elevation, descend.”

(*Al-Anbiya;*
Verses: 95 & 96)

Selected Hadith:

Narrated Zainab bint Jahsh (RAA):

That the Prophet (SAAW) once came to her in a state of fear and said, "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah. Woe unto the Arabs from a danger that has come near. An opening has been made in the wall of Gog and Magog like this," making a circle with his thumb and index finger. Zainab bint Jahsh (RAA) asked, "O Allah's Messenger! Shall we be destroyed even though there are pious persons among us?" He said, "Yes, when the evil (*as in person/s or as in wickedness, immorality and decadence*) will increase."

(*Sahih Bukhari:*
Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 565)

EDITORIAL

All praise is due to Allah (SWT), and peace & blessing on his noble Messengers (AS), in particular, on the last of them all the blessed Prophet Muhammad (SAAW).

The current rift between Qatar and Saudi Arabia is the beginning of the turmoil that Trump has left behind in the Middle East and West Asia during his recent visit. Trump's tour of the Middle East and West Asia tour has made the prospect of engagement and dialogue very remote. The region needs a strong dose of statesmanship and good sense for peace prospects to be revived.

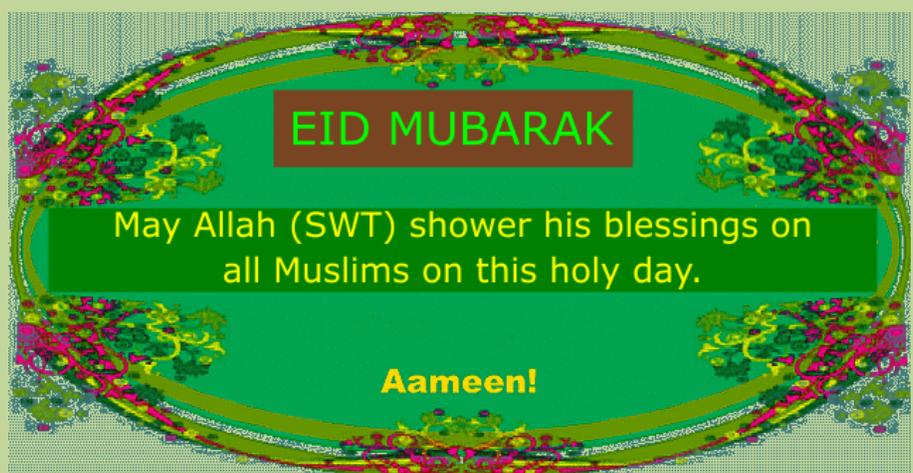
US President Donald Trump made two West Asian countries his first foreign destinations as president. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, he participated in three summit meetings – a bilateral with the Saudi ruler, King Salman bin Abdulaziz; a meeting with the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); and a third meeting with the leaders of the Islamic world, described as the “Arab-Islamic-US Summit”. From Riyadh, he went to Israel where he visited Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Ten days later, the region presents a picture of disarray, the most visible aspect of it being the rising tension between Qatar on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and other sheikhdoms on the other.

The tour produced several speeches, statements, agreements and press conferences, which, taken together are being described as a “Trump Doctrine” for the Middle East and West Asia. This nascent doctrine asserts that the US will be actively involved in the war against extremist ideology and organizations in the region and those who back them, that in this war it will work with its Saudi-backed allies in the “Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism” (or IMAFT, also described as a “Sunni Arab NATO”), and that it will robustly confront Iran's ideological, political and hegemonic ambitions across West Asia. The subtext in this approach is the possibility of the anti-Iran Sunni alliance being bolstered by the participation of Israel.

The Saudi-US joint statement clearly set out this position. The two countries announced a “joint strategic vision” and pledged to pursue a new strategic partnership for the 21st century. They then acknowledged the need for “a robust, integrated regional security architecture” and agreed “to expand engagement with other countries in the region over the coming years and to identify new areas of cooperation”.

They had full understanding on Iran; they agreed on “the (Cont. on P3)



Press Release issued by Tanzeem e Islami

Date: June 09, 2017

Lahore (PR): Lahore (PR): “It would be an absolute tragedy if the present Gulf-Crisis was not resolved peacefully through negotiations.”

This was said by the Ameer of Tanzeem e Islami, **Hafiz Aakif Saeed**, in a statement. The Ameer noted that President Trump’s visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had already started to bear ‘fruit’. He stated that first the sectarian divide among the Muslim Ummah had been made more conspicuous with the isolation of Iran and now ‘rifts and differences’ between Qatar and other Arab states had emerged. The Ameer remarked that the gravity of the latest intra-Arab conflict could be judged by the fact that seven Muslim countries had cut off all diplomatic ties with Qatar and Qatar airlines had been told not to enter the airspace of these countries. Qatar was currently facing an acute shortage of food, especially milk, he added. The Ameer said that Turkey, on the other hand, had announced to send troops for the security of Qatar, thus Muslim nations had been pitted against each other as enemies – a classic treachery plotted by the enemies of Islam. The Ameer demanded that the government of Pakistan ought to do whatever is necessary to bring the present Gulf-Crisis to a peaceful end.

While commenting on the attacks on the Iranian parliament and the shrine of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Ameer said that the intentions of the enemies of Islam and the unity among Muslims had become extremely evident. The Ameer concluded by pressing on the leaderships of all Muslim nations to see through the layers of deceptions and understand the real intentions of the enemies of Islam so that they could thwart their evil designs by demonstrating mutual affection, assistance, unity and Islamic brotherhood.

Date: June 02, 2017

Lahore (PR): “Our government is persistently employing a policy of designed conflict with other institutions of the State of Pakistan.”

This was said by the Ameer of Tanzeem e Islami, **Hafiz Aakif Saeed**, in a statement. The Ameer noted that the dust of the negative effects of our government’s conflict with the military establishment of Pakistan on the issue of DAWN Leaks had hardly settled yet, when our government had embarked on its latest misadventure of a premeditated clash with the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC). He added that from the day that the SC had started its probe of the possible involvement of the ruling family in the Panama Leaks Scandal and the subsequent formation by the apex court of a Joint Investigative Team (JIT) to probe the matter further, various ministers of the ruling party had been maligning the Judges of the SC and slandering members of the JIT as part of a deliberate effort to undermine the hearings and findings of the judicial apparatus on the issue. The Ameer remarked that Nehal Hashmi, a senator and member of PML-N till after the fact, had crossed all limits of civilization and morality by making candid criminal threats to the honorable Judges of the SC and the members of the JIT in a public speech, in which he had tried to intimidate the aforementioned bluntly and said that they and their families, including children, would suffer the consequences of probing members of the ruling family after they retire from service – a rabid and deranged threat made against serving officials of the state, unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. The Ameer agreed completely with the remarks made by an honorable judge of the SC that the ruling party and its political cronies were behaving like a ‘Sicilian Mafia’ (Cosa Nostra) and that treats to the children of serving judges of the apex court and members of the investigative teams appointed by them had not been made even during the regimes of the worst dictators. The Ameer expressed his concern that it appeared that the present attitude of our government would lead to a clash between state institutions, which in turn would push our country to the edge of a deadly abyss.

While commenting on the recently announced federal budget for the fiscal year 2017-18, the Ameer called it a ‘purely anti-masses and evidently business-friendly’ one, in which the minimum income of the poor had been increased by a meagre Rs.1000 at the expense of the billions allocated for the ‘welfare’ and ‘benefit’ of the rich and powerful. The Ameer lamented that the most significant chunk of the expenditure in the budget – to the tune of Rs.1363bn – had been allocated for the payment of interest on foreign loans. The Ameer added that, as usual, it was a deficit budget, with the proposed expenditures outweighing the proposed revenues by Rs.1480bn (the amount of deficit). The Ameer concluded by remarking that these figures meant nothing other than further debt burden on the nation and further collapse of the economy of our country.

Editorial*(Cont. from P1)*

need to contain Iran's malign interference in the internal affairs of other states, instigation of sectarian strife, support of terrorism and armed proxies, and efforts to destabilize the countries in the region." They "stressed that Iran's interference poses a threat to the security of the region and the world, and that the nuclear agreement with Iran needs to be re-examined in some of its clauses". They also accepted that Iran's ballistic missile program poses a threat, not only to neighboring countries, but also is a direct threat to the security of all countries in the region as well as global security."

This consensus defines the strategic framework that has now been put in place in the Middle East and West Asia by the US and its regional partner, Saudi Arabia. The other participants at the other two summits were then only required to endorse this framework and pledge their participation in it!

Trump reflected this Saudi-US consensus in his address to the assembled Muslim leaders. He urged them to confront extremism, describing it as a "battle between good and evil"; he went on to clarify: "That means honestly confronting the crisis of Islamist extremism and the Islamist terror groups it inspires. And it means standing together against the murder of innocent Muslims, the oppression of women, the persecution of Jews, and the slaughter of Christians." He called for a "coalition of nations" to combat the scourge of extremist violence.

He also blamed Iran for the carnage in Syria and as a sponsor of terror. He called on his audience to isolate Iran, and, just days after the Rouhani victory in the Iranian presidential elections, he sought regime change in Iran as he "pray(ed) for the day when the Iranian people have the just and righteous government they deserve".

The problem is that everyone knows that this bilateral consensus was founded on a bargain, commercial on one side and political on the other. Saudi Arabia signed contracts for US defence supplies valued at \$110 billion, with the indication that this could reach \$350 billion in ten years. The Kingdom also gave American companies energy and industry development contracts of about \$40 billion, and agreed to invest another \$20 billion in the upgradation of infrastructure in the US, all of which would create a million US jobs directly and "millions" indirectly.

In return, Trump asserted his commitment to "principled realism," which meant: "we are not here to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be, or how to worship. Instead, we are here to offer partnership – based on shared interests and values – to pursue a better future for us all." Trump thus pledged that he would not embarrass the Kingdom and his other Arab partners with references to human rights, democracy, transparent and accountable governance, and status of women and minorities.

In Israel, Trump affirmed the unshakeable bonds between the US and Israel, and assured both Israeli and Palestinian leaders that he would promote the peace process. He also attacked Iran and assured Israel that Iran would not acquire the nuclear weapon while he was president. However, he did not provide any details of the content, direction and time-line of his peace effort nor did he criticize the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank or refer to Palestinian rights and their state.

After his visit, the US has said that its embassy in Israel will not shift to Jerusalem for the time being. This is of little comfort to the Palestinians or other Arabs since they expect that Trump will now demand a high price for this "restraint", including first steps to normalize ties with Israel.

Trump has entirely re-shaped the regional strategic scenario by firmly placing the US on the side of the Saudi-led "Sunni" alliance, represented by the 41-nation Islamic Military Alliance, which, while ostensibly directed against terrorism, is clearly meant to confront Iran. Its core members are: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, while retired Pakistani army chief General Raheel Sharif is the commander of the military grouping.

This alliance is ranged against Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Hezbollah, effectively a "Shia" alliance, which enjoys Russian support. An Arab commentator has described this alliance as "the embryo of a third coalition of dissenters" that includes Turkey, Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood, together with several small, armed Turkish-affiliated militia in Syria. He points out that this

coalition relies on Qatar's financial and media power, Turkey's military power, and the Muslim Brotherhood's members in most Arab and Islamic states, as well as outside them.

Soon after the Trump visit, commentators began to doubt the efficacy of the strategic scenario he had structured in the region. Reva Goujon, writing in STRATFOR, felt that in West Asia, the president's "reach might exceed his grasp" and that the Arab NATO was "nothing more than a desert mirage". The first challenge came very quickly from a GCC member, Qatar.

Two days after the Riyadh summit, on May 23, the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, speaking at a military ceremony, was said to have expressed unhappiness with various aspects of the encounter with Trump in Riyadh. He is believed to have told his audience that Saudi Arabia was placing too much trust in a president who was in deep political trouble at home.

He criticized the virulent rhetoric against Iran at the summit, saying: "Iran represents a regional and Islamic power that cannot be ignored and it is unwise to harbor hostility against it." He also asserted that that Hezbollah was a legitimate resistance group, a social welfare organization and a political party, while " Hamas is the representative of the Palestinian people;" he added that there was "tension" between Trump and Qatar. He also telephonically congratulated Rouhani on his re-election. Shortly thereafter, the Twitter handle of Qatar's foreign minister included statements that Doha had ordered the ambassadors from Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to leave the country.

Qatar protested that its official sites had been hacked. However, several Arab news agencies pointed out that some of the emir's remarks had already appeared on Qatar state broadcasting sites before they were disowned. In response, the Saudis and Emiratis blocked Qatar's Al-Jazeera network.

This was followed by a well-coordinated campaign of vilification against Qatar in several GCC newspapers. The campaign also included a letter signed by 200 members of the Saudi Al-Sheikh family, descendants of the revered 18th century cleric, Sheikh Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhab whose doctrines constitute the basis of the Saudi belief-system, in which they rejected the claim of an unnamed Gulf ruler to be a descendant of ibn Abdul Wahhab.

The letter said that the claim was "fabricated" and was being used by that ruler to misrepresent Islam. US commentator Bruce Riedel points out that this "amounts to an indictment of the legitimacy of the Qatari ruling family", reflecting both a quarrel between GCC royal families and within the Wahhabi doctrine itself.

Qatar also formally adheres to Wahhabi doctrines, but has carved a space of its own by projecting a moderate and accommodative belief-system and has backed the Brotherhood against Saudi Arabia's rigid ideological precepts and practices. It had welcomed the Arab Spring and had supported the Morsi regime in Cairo, which, besides the Kingdom, has earned it the animus of Egypt's president Abdul Fattah al-Sisi and the UAE crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, both of whom are deeply hostile to the Brotherhood, as also rightwing groups in the US.

Thus, the Saudi-led campaign against Qatar has a US partner, the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a group that is deeply hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. At a conference, besides condemning the Brotherhood and Qatar, the FDD also said that the US's decision to shift from the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia to Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar could be reversed, particularly since US ties with Saudi Arabia had improved since the 9/11 attacks.

Qatari media have given strong replies to the criticisms directed at the island nation: the Al Raya said: "Bark as you wish, Qatar won't change its principles." Qatar won't accept "guardianship from anyone" it said, and questioned why "fostering relations and exchanging congratulations with a neighbor is now considered a crime?"

Riedel sees the Saudi-led alliance "splintering" within two weeks of Trump's departure amidst "growing unease with the summit's intense animosity toward Iran and increasing concerns that the Saudis are inflaming the sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shiites".

Qatar's dissenting position and the sharp attacks being directed at it could seriously damage the

GCC, particularly since both Oman and Kuwait are uncomfortable with Saudi Arabia's sectarian agenda and the virulence of its rhetoric against Iran.

Another weak link in the Saudi-led Sunni alliance is Turkey. Not only has it developed close economic and military ties with Qatar, it has also, in response to territorial gains of the Kurds in Syria, has abandoned the anti-Assad coalition in Syria, led by Saudi Arabia, and has joined the Russia- and Iran-sponsored peace process in Syria that calls for a national unity government in Damascus, without insisting on Bashar Assad's removal.

As of now, Qatar's investments in Turkey are a modest \$1.5 billion. But, this is made up for by the lucrative contracts that Turkish companies have obtained in Qatar worth \$13.7 billion, in many instances awarded on the basis of "positive discrimination". Qatar and Turkey have also concluded military cooperation agreements that have opened avenues for Turkey's defence industry, while also providing for the deployment of Turkish troops in Qatar.

The Riyadh summit has also had reverberations in Pakistan, both regarding its participation in the military alliance and role of Raheel Sharif in it. In fact, the appointment of the Pakistani general as leader of the alliance in April this year had stirred considerable controversy in Pakistan, with critics seeing it as a "Sunni" force which would have adverse implications for Pakistan's own fragile national unity and its ties with Iran.

The government had then buckled under Saudi pressure and had reluctantly agreed to Sharif's appointment, mainly because of the criticisms heaped upon it in the GCC two years earlier for failing to participate in the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen. In April, the Nawaz Sharif government placated domestic opinion by insisting that the force headed by Raheel Sharif would only fight terrorism and would in an extreme eventuality be called upon to defend the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah from external attack.

Now that Saudi officials' remarks after the Riyadh conclave have strongly suggested that the alliance is directed at Iran, the Pakistani media is awash with news quoting official sources that Pakistan is "reconsidering" its association with the alliance; a final decision will be taken once the terms of reference of the alliance are finalized, which will happen during a meeting of the defence ministers of the participating countries in Saudi Arabia shortly. Official sources have said that Pakistani officials at the forthcoming meeting would insist that the military alliance have the clear objective of fighting terrorism. "We are very clear that we will join this alliance only to fight terrorism," officials have been quoted as saying.

Pakistani members of parliament have said that they do not want their country to be part of any sectarian alliance as it goes against the country's constitution. Defence minister Khawaja Asif, on the floor of the National Assembly, has said that Pakistan would withdraw from the alliance if it turns out to be sectarian in nature. Pakistan's foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz has also attempted to placate MPs by clarifying that, during the process of framing the terms of reference of the alliance, every member would be free to decide its participation in any activity: members could opt for different roles such as training, consultation or military action as per their desire, hinting at a reduced Pakistani role in situations where Iran is targeted. Observers believe that anti-Iran initiatives could include encouraging unrest among its minority ethnic groups and promoting regime change, both of which would exacerbate anxieties in Pakistan and other alliance partners.

Dubai-based commentator Theodore Karasik has said, quoting a Gulf interlocutor that Saudi Arabia has already begun to counter Iranian interventions in the region: "Saudi Arabia is encircling Iran in a much larger scope than Tehran's so-called Shiite Crescent in a trans-regional arc in order to choke Iran into behavioral changes to force retreat or a 'withdrawal of the tentacles.'" Karasik then goes on to say that Riyadh is encircling Iran through a variety of soft and hard power networks that are "in Baluchistan (of Pakistan), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. This is a space to watch as Riyadh puts pressure points on the Islamic Republic from outside especially to Iran's north and east." Observers have noted that the Trump administration has initiated action to back the GCC plan to destabilize Iran and ultimately effect regime change and force Qatar to give up its maverick approaches to regional matters with the appointment of an experienced covert operations officer as head of the Central Intelligence Agency's Iran operations. While music to pro-Saudi hardliners in Pakistan, this should cause considerable anxiety among Pakistani leaders and policy-makers.



The Saudi-Iranian doctrinal and strategic competitions are at the heart of the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen, the resurgence of misplaced transnational 'jihad', the eruption of sectarian identity in defining regional confrontations, and the widespread breakdown of state order across large parts of the Middle East and West Asia.

Patrick Cockburn, writing on the eve of Trump's visit to Riyadh, had referred to the Saudi deputy crown prince and the US president as "the two most dangerous men in the world", both sources of instability and conflict. He had also noted: "Trump and Prince Mohammed bin Salman may be very different in some respects, but both know that fighting foreign foes and waving the flag shores up crumbling support at home."

Trump, in serious trouble at home, has waded into the region with much bravado and simplistic Manichean perceptions of good and evil and friend and foe, but with little knowledge and understanding of the historical sources of regional contentions. By aligning the US politically and militarily with the Saudi-led "Sunni" alliance that is in confrontation with the Iran-led group, Trump has bolstered the hawks in the kingdom and reduced any possibility of engagement and confidence-building with Iran by giving the Saudi rulers the sense that the US is their partner in their "existential" contention with Iran.

Their alliance, firmed up in Riyadh last month, has made West Asia more dangerous than it has ever been in recent times. Confident in the support from the US, the Kingdom's deputy crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in an hour-long interview last May, framed the rivalry with Iran in starkly theological terms, and said that Tehran's aim is to wrest control of Islam's holiest sites in Makkah and Madinah.

He made repeated references in the interview to the Shia ideology of the Iranian state, and said it was impossible for there to be dialogue with an entity that believes its policies are divinely-guided to prepare conditions for the return of the Imam Mahdi – who Twelver Shiites believe will return from hiding before the end of times and establish just rule across the world. "How do you have a dialogue with a regime built on an extremist ideology ... which [says] they must control the land of Muslims and spread their Twelver Jaafari sect in the Muslim world?," Prince Mohammed stated rhetorically. He then threatened war by saying: "We won't wait for the battle to be in Saudi Arabia... Instead, we will work so that the battle is for them in Iran, not in Saudi Arabia."

Cockburn had noted in his article Prince Mohammed bin Salman's reputation for "impulsiveness, aggression and poor judgement in the two-and-half years he has held power", which was confirmed by the prince's xenophobic anti-Shia diatribe. Cockburn noted the absurdity of the prince suggesting that the four or five Shia countries had the ambition or the ability to take over the 50 or more countries that are Sunni. In his view, Prince Mohammed seems to be simply reviving the discredited canard of a grand anti-Sunni conspiracy that, since the Iranian revolution in 1979, Iran has been trying to "control Muslims and spread the Twelver Jaafari [Shia] sect in the Islamic world."

In light of our analysis, the present situation in the Middle East and West Asia is extraordinarily bleak. Trump's fulsome support for one side of the equation has complicated future peace prospects. The Trump tour in West Asia has made the prospect of engagement and dialogue very remote and has brought forward the demons of animosity and war. The region needs a strong dose of statesmanship and good sense for peace prospects to be revived. In this perilous environment, there is need for a diplomatic initiative by nations that have an abiding interest in regional stability to promote interaction between the estranged Islamic leaders that are poised for war across the waters of the Gulf. The first choice of the U.S., Europe and Israel would be to introduce India as an interlocutor. However, the chances of that being successful or even happening in the first place are bleak, largely, due to religious and political factors. The Muslim nations of the Middle East and West Asia need to find a solution to end the present turmoil on their own, lest 'Woe unto the Arabs...!'

Signing Off...

Dr. Absar Ahmad (Chief Editor)