Introduction

This issue of CISS Newsletter provides a snapshot of the host of activities undertaken by the Center for International Strategic Studies, Islamabad. It includes roundtable discussions, research publications and outreach activities, during the past three months. Most of these related to the major developments that took place during this period.

In the first week of January 2020, the US Army killed Iran's top military commander Qassem Soleimani. In retaliation, Tehran launched ballistic missile attacks on Iraqi military bases hosting American troops. The killing of Soleimani led both states to the brink of a major conflict. The security crisis, in the aftermath of General Soleimani's assassination, could have had adverse implications for the region and beyond if both sides had not taken steps to de-escalate.

The anniversary of the Pulwama-Balakot crisis and operation Swift Retort took place on February 27, 2020. On February 26, 2019, the Indian Airforce (IAF) carried out a failed surgical strike across the international border with stand-off weapons and Pakistan retaliated with a 'tit for tat response' on the next day. Despite the fact that the conflict had a relatively short lifecycle, there was a danger of miscalculation that could have led to escalation. Such a situation could trigger a major war between the two nuclear-armed adversaries.

For the Middle East, a peace plan was proposed by Jared Kushner, a member of President Trump's team, who is also his son-in-law. Under this plan, Jerusalem was declared to be the exclusive capital of Israel, Jewish settlements in the West Bank would be governed by Israeli law there, and Palestinian refugees will have no right of return, all of which were in contradiction to standing UN resolution on these subjects. Therefore, this 'peace' vision further complicates the Israel-Palestine issue and the shrinking land for Palestinians.

In another development, the United States and the Taliban signed an agreement paving the way for end to America's longest war. Beyond withdrawal of US troops and control of terrorism within Afghanistan, the peace deal also binds the Taliban to begin the Intra-Afghan Dialogue. The participants would include Afghan political and civil society leaders as well as the Afghan government. The Intra-Afghan negotiations are central to the US-Taliban Peace Agreement and to the whole peace process in Afghanistan because security guarantees will be of no value unless the Afghan political, differences underlying the conflict, are efficiently tackled.

The CISS team conducted its activities around these major international developments.

Editor
Maryyum Masood
The Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) held a roundtable with Laurel Miller, Director of International Crisis Group's Asia Program, on Washington's Perspective on South Asian Security on 14 February, 2020. Laurel Miller's talk focused on ongoing peace talks for a political settlement of Afghan conflict and Pakistan-India tensions, which have exacerbated since the post-Pulwama situation and the revocation of article 370 by the incumbent government in New Delhi.


The CISS Round Table on 'Pulwama-Balakot Crisis & Operation Swift Retort', was held on Thursday, 27th February, 2020 at the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) Office. A CISS special issue on 'Pulwama-Balakot Crisis & Operation Swift Retort' was launched at the ceremony.

For complete details please visit the link https://ciss.org.pk/round-table-on-pulwama-balakot-crisis-operation-swift-retort/
ED CISS Speaks on US-Iran Tension and Implications for Pakistan at Council on Foreign Relations, Karachi (January 7, 2020)

Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi, Executive Director of Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Speaks at Council on Foreign Relations, Karachi on US-Iran tension and implications for Pakistan at a round table on January 07, 2020.

For further details please visit https://ciss.org.pk/ed-ciss-speaks-on-on-us-iran-tension-and-implications-for-pakistan-at-council-on-foreign-relations-karachi/

Dr. Syed Javaid Khurshid spoke about “Global Structure of Nuclear Energy and Renaissance of Nuclear Power” at Pakistan Academy of Sciences (January 29, 2020)

Dr. Syed Javaid Khurshid, Senior Research Fellow CISS, spoke about “Global Structure of Nuclear Energy and Renaissance of Nuclear Power” at Pakistan Academy of Sciences on 29th Jan, 2020 in a seminar Energy Storage and Nuclear Energy” arranged by Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, Pakistan Nuclear Society and Pakistan Academy of Sciences.

Seventh CISS-IISS Workshop on South Asian Strategic Stability: Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control  
(February 6, 2020)

The seventh CISS-IISS Workshop on South Asian Strategic Stability: Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control was held in London on February 6, 2020. A 11 member delegation led by Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi and including prominent scholars and experts retired military officers and senior CISS researchers participated in the event.


Ms Saima Sial Participated in a Round Table Discussion on 'Preserving Freedom of Seas: Post-Pulwama Challenges and Responses' hosted by Maritime Study Forum  
(March 9, 2020)

Ms Saima Aman Sial, Senior Research Officer CISS, participated in a roundtable discussion on 'Preserving Freedom of Seas: Post-Pulwama Challenges and Responses' hosted by Maritime Study Forum.

Cooperation between the United States and Pakistan: What is the Future?
Riaz Khokhar (January 17, 2020)

Within the Indo-Pacific region, the United States and Pakistan have sharply divergent strategic objectives. While American objectives have changed over time, focusing in recent years on rivalry with China, Pakistan's strategic objective has remained constant—to maintain a balance of power with India. Yet Pakistan retains close strategic and economic ties with China, and the United States considers India an important strategic partner. Nevertheless, the two countries have worked together for nearly two decades toward two tactical goals—achieving a political settlement in Afghanistan and eliminating terrorism in South Asia. There is potential for them to cooperate more broadly, for example, increasing direct foreign investment to Pakistan and helping Islamabad balance its relations with the United States and China. Washington's willingness to expand such cooperation will depend on Pakistan's cooperation in fighting terrorism in the region.


U.S-Iran Conflict and Pakistan's Role
Riaz Khokhar (January 31, 2020)

The U.S.-Iran conflict reached a tipping point the first week of January 2020, when the U.S. Army killed Iran's top military commander Qassem Soleimani, followed by Tehran's salvo of ballistic missile attacks on Iraqi military bases hosting American troops. While the U.S. appears determined to pursue a regime change in Tehran or at least change the latter's behavior in the Middle East, Iran also seems adamant that it won't budge under the Trump administration's maximum pressure strategy.

For complete article please visit the link https://strafasia.com/u-s-iran-conflict-and-pakistans-role/

Davos 2020: New Prospects for Pakistan under PM Imran Khan
Amna Saqib (February 11, 2020)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) had its annual meeting at the beginning of the new year i.e. 2020, as it has done every year. The Forum makes it possible for business, technology and national
leaders to meet once a year in order to engage with each other and share their vision on major world problems and possible solutions. With its successful celebration of its 50th Anniversary, the Forum has launched a new Davos Manifesto, a set of ethical principles to guide companies in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This year it came up with its four major themes, i.e. global economy, climate change, geopolitics and health.

Complete article can be accessed at https://strafasia.com/davos-2020-new-prospects-for-pakistan-under-pm-imran-khan/

Dr. Mansoor Ahmed quoted in Defense News on Test of Ra'ad-II Air-launched Cruise Missile (ALCM)

Dr. Mansoor Ahmed (February 18, 2020)

He believes Ra'ad-II “will significantly enhance the operational and targeting flexibility of the air leg of Pakistan's strategic forces.”

“It gives enhanced capability for precision strikes against critical military targets on land and at sea from safer standoff ranges. With its extended range, hitherto invulnerable sites, forces and assets can now be taken out with greater precision that were previously only covered by Pakistan's ballistic missiles,”

For further details please visit the link https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2020/02/18/pakistan-tested-a-new-cruise-missile-can-it-hit-inside-india/

CISS Special Issue on Pulwama-Balakot Crisis & Operation Swift Retort

(February 27, 2020)

The India- Pakistan rivalry goes as far back as the creation of both the states in 1947. Its history has been well documented and equally researched by scholars of international history, international relations and strategic studies. The acrimonious relationship has led both states to fight three wars and face several crises. The nuclearization of both states led to a transformation in the conflict by helping curb the potential for a full-blown war, at the same time increasing the recurrence of crises under the nuclear overhang. The Pulwama-Balakot and Rajouri-Nowshera skirmish in early 2019 was a continuing manifestation of the same phenomenon, where the Indian politico-military elite tested Pakistan's resolve by hitting targets in mainland Pakistan, under the flawed assessment of a likely weak Pakistani response and overconfidence that they would be able to control escalation.

Complete CISS special issue can be accessed at https://ciss.org.pk/PDFs/Special-Issue-f.pdf


**Reading the Peace Vision**
Sajid Aziz (March 5, 2020)

Third-party initiatives to broker peace between Jews and Palestinians have had within them an embedded element of partiality toward one side. The Balfour Declaration, a letter written in 1917 by Arthur Balfour, the-then Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, to Lord Walter Rothschild, a major figure in the British Jewish community, promised Jews a land where the native Arab Palestinians made up 90 percent of the population.

Complete article can be accessed at [https://strafasia.com/reading-the-peace-vision/](https://strafasia.com/reading-the-peace-vision/)

**Lessons Learnt from the Balakot-Rajouri Strikes: A View from Islamabad**
Saima Aman Sial (March 7, 2020)

It has been a year since Pakistan and India's most recent and most serious crisis after their overt nuclearization in 1998. However, tensions have far from subsided. In the past year, there have been increasing ceasefire violations on the Line of Control (LoC), and India's leadership has appeared increasingly risk acceptant as seen through statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India could end a war with Pakistan in seven to ten days, and claims to Pakistan-administered by India's foreign minister and the army chief. On Pakistan's part, Prime Minister Imran Khan has warned of the potential for rapid escalation due to India's actions to change the status of the Kashmir dispute.


**Intra-Afghan Dialogue: The Real Path to Peace**
Maryyum Masood and Sabeen Malik (March 10, 2020)

For the Afghans, the “endless war” has lasted for more than 40 years, beginning with the communist coup of 1978, the Soviet invasion of 1979, and the ensuing 1990s civil war that culminated in the Taliban government and then US led war to topple the Taliban from power.

After more than a year and half of negotiations, the United States and the Taliban on February 29, 2020, signed an agreement paving the way for an end to America's longest war.