



Weekly Review of Select International Events

(3-10 October, 2016)

Central Asia

Nazarbayev, Putin Meet in Astana to Increase Economic Cooperation

President of Russia Vladimir Putin visited Kazakhstan and held discussions with President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana on October 4, 2016. The meeting covered the development of the transport and logistics infrastructure in the Eurasian space and border cooperation.¹

The two Presidents met for the eighth time in 2016. Following the meeting, the two leaders attended the Russia-Kazakhstan Business Forum organised as part of the 13th Russia-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum. The forum, which was attended by about 900 business leaders from Kazakhstan and Russia, focussed on increasing cooperation in the field of trade and economy. Later, both presidents also held the 13th Russia-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum.

Kazakhstan and Russia are strategic partners and members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). In 2015, their bilateral trade amounted to US\$15.5 billion.² Despite launching the economic integration programme in the form of EEU in 2015, trade between the two countries has declined last year primarily due to global economic slowdown, exchange rate fluctuations, low energy prices and sanctions on Russia by Europe. In 2013, their bilateral trade was US\$28.5 billion.³

¹ President of Russia website “Meeting with President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev,” 4 October 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53016>

² President of Russia website “Russia-Kazakhstan Business Forum,” 4 October 2016 <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53017>

³ Catherine Putz, “Putin and Nazarbayev Trade Compliments at Business Forum,” The Diplomat, 5 October 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/10/putin-and-nazarbayev-trade-compliments-at-business-forum/>

Russia and Kazakhstan are trying to overcome the decline in trade by increasing economic cooperation by way of investments, particularly in the border regions of the two countries, developing infrastructure and emerging as a transit transport link between China-West trades. Russia has invested US\$9 billion in Kazakhstan and received US\$3 billion of Kazakh capital as investment. The border and inter-regional trade, and inter-regional cooperation amount to 70 per cent of the total bilateral trade.⁴

Joint Action Plan of Kazakhstan and Russia for 2016-2018; Agreement between the Government of Kazakhstan and the Government of Russia on preserving the ecosystem of Zhaiyk trans-boundary river basin (Urals); Protocol amending the Agreement between the Government of Kazakhstan and the Government of Russia on the peculiarities of the legal regulation of enterprises, institutions and organizations of railway transport as of 18 October 1996; and Memorandum of Understanding and expansion of strategic cooperation in the field of nuclear fuel cycle between the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan, 'NAC 'Kazatomprom' JSC and 'Rosatom' State Corporation, were signed.⁵

In the meeting, President Nazarbayev congratulated President Putin on the 'good results' of the State Duma elections and regional elections.

China – Economic Affairs and OBOR

Consumption Contributes 73.4% of China's Growth in 2016

Consumption contributed 73.4 percent of China's economic expansion in the first half of 2016, official data showed on October 9, 2016.

The share was up 12.5 percentage points from the proportion seen at the end of 2015, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said at a press conference.

Compared with investment and exports, consumption has been a less conspicuous growth driver for China in the past few decades, but the latest data showed it is catching up fast as other drivers lose steam.

The momentum is partly attributable to government efforts to explore consumption potential in the country's underdeveloped rural areas with the help of improved logistics and the Internet.

⁴ President of Russia website "Meeting with President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev," 4 October 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53016>

⁵ President of Kazakhstan website, "Participation in the plenary session of XIII Forum of Interregional Cooperation of Russia and Kazakhstan," 4 October 2016, http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/akorda_news/akorda_other_events/participation-in-the-plenary-session-of-xiii-forum-of-interregional-cooperation-of-russia-and-kazakhstan

So far, China has built 100 e-commerce demonstration bases across the country to make online shopping more accessible, according to MOC spokesman Shen Danyang. China, Portugal Pledge to Upgrade Economic Cooperation.

China and Portugal on October 9 vowed to upgrade economic cooperation by enhancing investment and trade and exploring the third-party market. The pledge came as Chinese Premier Li Keqiang held talks with his Portuguese counterpart Antonio Costa in Beijing.

Hailing the two countries' economies as highly complementary, Li called on both sides to realize the potential of cooperation and link China's Belt and Road Initiative with Portuguese development.

Li encouraged the two countries to consolidate and explore the third-party market and multi-lateral cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries, and enhance cooperation in areas such as agriculture, infrastructure and auto-manufacturing. "We can combine China's market potential and advantages in equipment manufacturing with Portugal's advanced technology to create long-lasting and mutually beneficial cooperation," Li said at a press conference with A. Costa.⁶

New PLA Bomber may Feature 4 Turbofan Engines

Chinese air force expert Fu Qianshao has speculated that China's new type of long-range bomber, currently being developed, may be equipped with four turbofan engines. His remark came after Gen. Ma Xiaotian, commander of PLA Air Force, publicly confirmed the plane's existence for the first time.

Fu said his assessment was based on the comprehensive technological capacity of the PLA Air Force. He said the new bomber would most likely be equipped with the WS-10 (literally, turbofan-10), now being installed in fighter jets.

Since the WS-10 has two versions, one with an afterburner and the other without, Fu further speculated there would be three separate technological plans for the bomber's engine configuration.

The first plan emphasizes the bomber's stealth capability but not its supersonic penetration performance. It calls for a WS-10 version without an afterburner. The second plan requires the WS-10 to be fitted with afterburners to generate the extra thrust needed for rapid acceleration for a certain period. Under the third plan, both stealth ability and supersonic penetration are equally stressed, something the PLA is also capable of realizing with its present level of technical expertise. The United States and Russia also possess long-range bombers.

⁶ http://www.china.org.cn/world/2016-10/10/content_39452790.htm

Some military experts believe China's H-6K medium-long-range strategic bomber could have its engines and avionics upgraded to give it a range of 8,000-9,000 km. But Fu pointed out that medium-long-range bombers should have a range in excess of 6,000 km, while long-range bombers should be double that, carrying a payload of 20-30 tons.⁷

PLA Publishes First Encyclopedia of Military Training

The first Encyclopedia of Military Training of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), compiled by the PLA Shijiazhuang Army Command College (SACC), was published by Encyclopedia of China Publishing House a few days ago.

As one of China's military encyclopedia series, the Encyclopedia of Military Training is an important project that promotes advanced military culture. The book embodies the latest achievements of theories and practices in the field of military training at all times and in all countries, forming a scientific, standard, systematic and authoritative encyclopedia knowledge system for military training.

It provides a requisite professional reference book for the PLA's military operation, training, teaching and research, and also fills up the gap in enriching and developing the scientific research of military training.

The encyclopedia was orchestrated by more than 300 authors from 24 PLA units through 7 years of efforts. It consists of about 2 million characters and 1,100 pictures, covers each field of military training.⁸

Iran and China to Further Enhance Cooperation

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met with Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao in Bangkok on October 9, 2016, during which they both expressed the willingness to fully implement consensus reached by the two countries in January.

Iran wants to further enhance cooperation with China in connectivity, finance, energy, education and addressing regional problems by mapping out a 25-year cooperation agreement more quickly, said Rouhani.

Iran and China agreed to upgrade bilateral relations to "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" and also to "put consultations and discussions aimed at concluding a bilateral 25-year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement" during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Iran in January, according to the joint statement between China and Iran on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

⁷ http://www.china.org.cn/china/2016-10/10/content_39454191.htm

⁸ http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2016-10/08/content_4742853.htm

President Rouhani said Iran attached great importance to ties between China, and the Belt and Road Initiative has great regional importance.⁹

China – Domestic and PLA, Southeast Asia

Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen Continues Call For Beijing Talks But Refuses to Accept ‘One China’ Principle¹⁰

Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen is likely to have upset Beijing on Monday after she repeated her often-expressed hopes of holding talks with the mainland while refusing to accept the “one China” principle in her first National Day speech as the island’s president. Observers noted that Tsai respected the historical facts concerning the meeting between the two sides in 1992, which had led to more than 20 years of cross-strait interactions. However, she avoided referring by name to the “1992 consensus” – something that Beijing has repeatedly stated is the sole political foundation warranting continued talks and exchanges.

“We respect the historical fact that in 1992 the two institutions representing each side across the strait held a meeting,” Tsai said in her first address marking Taiwan’s national day. But she declined to refer to the “1992 consensus” – the key words that refer to the one-China principle, which are considered unacceptable by DPP members. “We advocate that both sides must collectively cherish and sustain the results of more than 20 years of cross-strait interactions and negotiations since 1992,” she said.

1. China Urges U.S., ROK to Halt THAAD Missile Deployment¹¹

China urged the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to halt the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), an advanced U.S. missile defense system, on the Korean Peninsula. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang called on the United States and the ROK to do more to benefit regional peace and stability, and face up to the reasonable concerns of regional countries, including China. The ROK reportedly selected a golf course in the south-eastern part of the country as the final site for the THAAD missile system. Defense ministers of the ROK and the United States approved the site in month-long evaluations jointly conducted by the allies, ending September 27.

⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/10/c_135741473.htm

¹⁰ Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen continues call for Beijing talks but refuses to accept ‘one china principle”, *South China Morning Post*, 10 October 2016, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2026698/taiwans-president-tsai-ing-wen-continues-call-beijing> (accessed 10 October 2016).

¹¹ Xinhua, “China urges US, ROK to halt THAAD missile deployment”, *PLA Daily*, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-09/30/content_7285510.htm, (accessed 10 October 2016).

We keep repeating our position that the deployment of the THAAD missile system by the United States and the ROK will not address the concerns of relevant parties, contribute to denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, or aid the peace and stability of the Peninsula, Geng said. The deployment will severely damage regional strategic security interests and harm the regional strategic balance, Geng said. Geng said China will take necessary measures to safeguard its national security.

2. Chinese President Appoints New Ambassador to India¹²

President Xi Jinping has appointed Luo Zhaohui as China's new ambassador to India, in accordance with a decision from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the top legislature. Luo, 54, was China's ambassador to Canada from 2014 to 2016. Before that, Luo served as director general of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2011 to 2014, according to the website of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi. Former Chinese ambassador to India Le Yucheng left New Delhi in April, according to the website.

3. 7th Xiangshan Forum to Kick Off in Beijing¹³

The 7th Xiangshan Forum, co-hosted by the Chinese Association for Military Science and the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, will be held in Xiangshan Yihe Hotel in Beijing from October 10 to 12, 2016, according to a press briefing of the Xiangshan Forum on October 8. As a high-level platform for dialogues on Asian security and defense issues with international influence, Xiangshan Forum attracts global attentions, He Lei, Secretary-General of the Secretariat of Xiangshan Forum and vice commandant of the Academy of Military Sciences of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), said in an interview.

More than 400 representatives, including 350 foreign representatives from 64 countries and international organizations, will participate in the forum to discuss security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, He Lei said. The theme of this year's forum is to "Build a New Type of International Relations through Security Dialogue and Cooperation". The four topics for discussion at the plenary sessions are "Role of Militaries in Global Governance", "Responding to New Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific through Cooperation", "Maritime Security Cooperation" and "International Terrorist Threats and Countermeasures". The subjects for discussion at the four concurrent panels include "Major Power Relations and Global Strategic Structure", "Globalization vs. Deglobalization: Implications for International Security", "Latest

¹² Xinhua, "Chinese President appoints new ambassador to India". *PLA Daily*, 8 October 2016, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-10/08/content_7290543.htm (accessed 10 October 2016).

¹³ *PLA Daily*, "7th Xiangshan Forum to kick off in Beijing", *PLA Daily*, 9 October 2016, at http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-10/09/content_7292107.htm (accessed 10 October 2016).

Developments in Terrorism and Creative Approaches to Cooperation", "Maritime Crisis Management and Regional Stability".

European Union

Russia Deployed Nuclear-Capable Iskander Missiles in Kaliningrad

Russia confirmed that it has deployed nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in its Kaliningrad region. NATO members, namely Lithuania and Poland, have voiced concerns over the deployment of these missiles. All Baltic nations and Poland will come into the range of these missiles. On the other hand, the Russian Defense Ministry stated that the deployment of these missiles is part of regular drills. Ministry spokesman General Igor Konashenkov added that Iskander missile system is a mobile one and it is relocated in the Kaliningrad as part of training of Russian armed forces.

Russia Vetoes Resolution on Syria

Russia has vetoed a French-drafted resolution on Syria, which called for halting the airstrikes on the city of Aleppo. The resolution moved by France called for an end to the bombing campaign on Aleppo and providing humanitarian aid to the city. However, Russia argued that the draft resolution was initiated by those obsessed with regime change in Syria. It was biased against the Syrian government and failed to acknowledge that terrorist groups are stopping humanitarian aid to Aleppo. Tension is growing between Russia and the West over Syria.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Africa Trip

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is on a three-day trip to Africa. She will be visiting Mali, Niger and Ethiopia. She first stopped in Mali and will also visit Niger and Ethiopia. Apart from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, people from African countries also moved to Europe. Chancellor Merkel's visit was intended to curb economic causes of migration from Africa to Europe. She would also be exploring possibilities for investment for businessmen. She emphasized on private investment in development of Africa and opined that state support is not enough for development of the continent. Thus, she stressed on creating conducive environment for private sector investment in the African continent.

North America

Canada

- 1) The Prime Minister of Canada Mr. Justine Trudeau announced that the Prime Minister of France Mr. Manuel Valls will be travelling to Canada next week. Canada is committed to deepening relations with France, building on

the significant commercial, historical, and cultural ties both countries enjoy. This includes an unfailing commitment to promote the French language both at home and around the world. The leaders will examine how Canada and France can work together to fight climate change and foster opportunities for youth. They will also discuss how to increase collaboration in science, innovation and technology, and promote protection for women and children.¹⁴

- 2) Environment Minister Catherine McKenna says the federal government will introduce new regulations to cut Canadian carbon emissions later this fall, in addition to a carbon tax it will impose on some provinces and territories. The new measures will include making new and old buildings and houses more energy efficient. The regulations will come on top of a national carbon tax unveiled by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during the past week. Starting in 2018, Ottawa will impose a \$10-a-tonne carbon price on provinces and territories that don't adopt their own carbon tax or cap-and-trade plan; that price will go up by \$10 a year for the following four years. Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia already have carbon-pricing plans. All revenue generated by the national carbon price will be returned to the provinces and territories.¹⁵

United States

- 1) A few members of the Republican Party, current members of the US Congress and past officials have called on Mr. Donald Trump to withdraw his name from the Presidential race. They have condemned his comments about women following the release of a 2005 tape that shows the real estate mogul speaking in derogatory terms about women and his relations with them. These include Tennessee Governor Mr. Bill Haslam, who urged Donald Trump to step aside and let his running mate Mike Pence take his place, saying he would write in another name if Trump remained. Senator Orrin Hatch and Representative Rob Bishop, (R.UT), have condemned Mr. Trump's remarks even as they stand by their candidate.¹⁶
- 2) Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work held a series of meetings on October 07 in Helsinki, Finland, as part of ongoing U.S. efforts to strengthen bilateral and multilateral security relationships with the nations of the Nordic-Baltic

¹⁴ Prime Minister of Canada Office, "Prime Minister of France to visit Canada," <http://pm.gc.ca/eng>, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

¹⁵ Michelle Zilio, The Globe and Mail "Ottawa to roll out new rules to cut Canadian carbon emissions," <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-to-roll-out-new-rules-to-cut-canadian-carbon-emissions/article32312495/>, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

¹⁶ The Atlantic, "Trump's Tape Scandal: The Latest Updates," <http://www.theatlantic.com/liveblogs/2016/10/trumps-tape-scandal-the-latest-updates/503480/>, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

region. Building on previous meetings held in Oslo, Norway and Stockholm, Sweden, delegations from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the United States discussed several issues of shared interest. The meeting included an update on NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence effort on its eastern flank, the U.S. European Reassurance Initiative, security challenges in the Baltic Sea region, the status of the campaign to defeat ISIL and opportunities to strengthen security and stability in the region.¹⁷

- 3) President Obama in his remarks on the Paris Agreement stated that, “encourage folks who have not yet submitted their documentation to enter into this agreement to do so as soon as possible. And in the coming days, let’s help finish additional agreements to limit aviation emissions, to phase down dangerous use of hydrofluorocarbons -- all of which will help build a world that is safer, and more prosperous, and more secure, and more free than the one that was left for us.”¹⁸
- 4) In the second Presidential Debate, Mr. Trump threatened to appoint a special prosecutor to go after Hillary Clinton for her use of a personal email account while she was secretary of state. Whereas she called on the voters to visit her website to check on facts. The debate has largely been seen as one of the most bitter debates in recent times.¹⁹

Mexico

- 1) Remains of more than 600 bodies were unearthed from what may become Mexico’s largest mass grave found to date, according to local media. It was discovered near Torreon, one of the most dangerous cities in the world. The gruesome find was made in a 16-hectare paddock in San Pedro, near the city of Torreon, according to Notimundo news outlet, citing Grupo VIDA, an NGO representing the relatives of missing persons. Ranches surrounding the San Pedro municipality have become notorious in recent years as mass killing sites used by criminal gangs active in the area.²⁰ Mexican drug gang bosses furious at suspected turncoats sent commandos aided by local police to seize dozens — perhaps hundreds — of people, murder them and dispose

¹⁷ Department of Defence, “Readout of Deputy Secretary of Defence Bob Work’s meetings in Helsinki, Finland,” <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/968234/readout-of-deputy-secretary-of-defense-bob-works-meetings-in-helsinki-finland>, Accessed on 10 October 2016

¹⁸ Office of Press Secretary, The White House, “Remarks by the President on the Paris Agreement,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/05/remarks-president-paris-agreement>, Accessed on 10 October 2016

¹⁹ Sam Levine, “Donald Trump Threatens Hillary Clinton With Special Prosecutor, Jail,” http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-special-prosecutor_us_57faefffe4bob6a43033439f, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

²⁰ RT, “Over 600 bodies recovered from Mexican mass grave,” <https://www.rt.com/news/362112-mexico-mass-grave-remains/>, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

of their bodies in a town near the Texas border, yet state and federal officials ignored the massacre for years, according to a government-backed report released recently. The long delay in the investigation makes it impossible to determine just how many people were killed in the town of Allende in 2011, according to the report sponsored by the federal Executive Commission for Attention to Victims. The Coahuila state file lists 42 missing people related to the case. But a Zeta drug gang member told a U.S. court in 2013 that 300 died, though it was not clear if all the deaths occurred in the same incident. A witness testified that many of the bodies of victims were incinerated to the point of making identification of remains almost impossible.²¹

- 2) In the midst of preparations for Mexico's Independence Day celebrations, hundreds of people gathered in response to a social media campaign demanding President Enrique Peña Nieto's resignation. Most of the marchers were young people, and turnout, in a city of 20 million, was relatively small. But its timing reinforced the country's dissatisfaction with Peña Nieto. The president suffers from abysmal approval ratings that risk plunging even more after last month's widely ridiculed meeting with U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. His party in June lost gubernatorial elections in four states it had never lost before.²²

Bangladesh

- India has “agreed” with Bangladesh on putting up a new fence to secure over 250 villages outside the existing barbed wire fence along the International Border to curb cross-border crimes and alleviate problems of the population there. The new fence would be closer to the 'zero' line. How close it would be to the 'zero' line would be determined later at the operation level, KK Sharma, counterpart in New Delhi.²³ Maj Gen Aziz Ahmed, director general of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), stressed the need for ensuring that the new fence doesn't affect the lives of villagers. "We will ensure that there are no objections from our side when the fence is erected. We need a humanitarian approach and it (new fence) could be done as the present positive relations between India and Bangladesh are an example that is nowhere to be seen in the world," he said. The chiefs of the two border forces were speaking to the media at the end of two-day

²¹ The Associated Press, “REPORT SAYS MEXICO STATE OFFICIALS IGNORED COAHUILA MASSACRE FOR YEARS,” <http://www.thenews.mx/mexico/report-says-mexico-state-officials-ignored-coahuila-massacre-for-years/>, Accessed on 10 October 2016.

²² Associated Press, “Mexico: March Seeks Pres. Enrique Peña Nieto's Resignation,” <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/mexico-march-seeks-pres-enrique-pe-nieto-s-resignation-n649441>, Accessed on 10 October 2016

²³ Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/borders-india-dhaka-agrees-new-fencing-1294297>. Cited verbatim

biannual BSF-BGB DG-level talks on 5 October 2016 at the BSF headquarters in New Delhi.²⁴ We have taken a major decision to erect a single row fence for villages that are ahead of the present fencing and behind the International Border. This will help curb cross-border crimes, smuggling and instil a sense of security among the border population. The Bangladesh government and the BGB have given us the permission to do so, "BSF Chief said after signing a joint record of discussions with his BGB counterpart."²⁵ He further said the decision would affect 148 villages completely outside the IB fence as well as 137 villages partially outside it. "A majority of these villages are in West Bengal state of India while a few are in other Indian states that share a border with Bangladesh. As the population lives and works here, the fence will have gates for people to cross over to the other side and come back," he said.²⁶ The BGB chief said the situation in these villages outside the fencing is very challenging at many places. Both the DGs said regular issues such as cattle smuggling and circulation of Fake Indian Currency Note (FICN) came up at the meeting. DG BSF said, "The FICN menace has seen some reduction but much more needs to be done to further bring this criminal activity down." Maj Gen Aziz said both sides are sharing a lot of information, and that the BGB personnel are cooperating with the BSF in curbing cattle smuggling from India to Bangladesh. "We also want it stopped... We do not want Indian cattle in Bangladesh. Our government has initiated a new project of domestic cattle farming to meet our needs," he said.²⁷ The BGB chief noted that most of the killings of Bangladeshis by the BSF on the border occur due to cattle smuggling, and both the BGB and the BSF would like to bring these numbers to zero. Both the DGs said the talks were "cordial" and a number of issues were sorted out during the conference that began on October 3. The BSF chief said they also took up the issue of security situation after the surgical strikes conducted by the Indian army across the de facto border with Pakistan recently, and that both the forces are on "high vigil." "There is no new input (about Bangladeshi territory being used by terrorists). However, vigil has been increased along the Indo-Bangla border too," he said.²⁸

- Chinese President Xi Jinping's forthcoming Dhaka visit will take Bangladesh-China relations to a new height, said Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ma Mingqiang on 3 October 2016. A number of bilateral documents will be signed during the crucial visit, Ma Mingqiang said maintaining that things are yet to be finalised.²⁹

The Chinese diplomat reiterated that China will be glad to be partner of any

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=36488>. Cited verbatim.

projects in Bangladesh, including deep seaport project, if those benefit Bangladesh and also China. A Chinese advance delegation has already visited Bangladesh and discussed various aspects of the forthcoming visit of Xi Jinping, including security aspects.³⁰ The Chinese President is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on the morning of October 14 on a two-day State visit.

During the visit, the Chinese President will have bilateral talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He will also meet President Abdul Hamid apart from other engagements.³¹ The Chinese President may announce a package involving several billion dollars for the next couple of years for Bangladesh development projects, diplomatic sources here said. After the Dhaka visit, the Chinese President will leave for India to attend the BRICS Summit which will be held in Goa, India on October 15-16. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will also attend the outreach meeting there at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.³²

- On October 5, 2016, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said Bangladesh and Sri Lanka would work together in further deepening the bilateral relations. Referring to his earlier visits to Bangladesh, he expressed the hope to visit again as the country's President in near future. The Sri Lankan President conveyed this when the newly appointed Bangladesh High Commissioner to Sri Lanka M Riaz Hamidullah presented his credentials to him in Colombo. Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Dr. Harsha De Silva, Secretary to the President P.B. Abeykoon and Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka Ambassador Esala Weerakoon were present.³³ During the ceremony, Sirisena mentioned about the long-standing relations between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh based on history and commonalities and their identical views on different international issues. Bangladesh's High Commissioner Riaz conveyed to the Sri Lankan President the personal regards of the president and the prime minister of Bangladesh, respectively.³⁴

He said the proposed bilateral FTA (free-trade agreement) and the coastal shipping agreement could be finalised during upcoming high-level interactions, which would make solid ground for taking preparations for the VVIP visit in the beginning of the next year. He expressed his eagerness

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Retrieved from <http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id36848=LY> . Cited verbatim

³⁴ Ibid., Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF), said after a meeting with his Bangladeshi

for broadening and strengthening the existing relations between the two countries.³⁵

- Pope Francis announced on October 2, 2016 that he would "almost certainly" visit India and Bangladesh in 2017, as he wrapped up a three-day tour in the Caucasus and headed home to Rome. Asked on board the papal plane what his plans for the coming year were, the Argentine pope confirmed he would join the big annual pilgrimage to Fatima in Portugal next year. According to Catholic tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared to three young shepherds six times over the course of the year 1917, the first time on May 13.³⁶ The sanctuary will mark the centenary of the apparitions next year. Francis's predecessor Benedict XVI was the third pope to make the pilgrimage to Fatima in 2010, after Paul VI in 1967 and John Paul II who visited Fatima three times in 1982, 1991 and 2000. Francis also said he would "almost certainly" visit India and Bangladesh, though he did not specify a date. He then said he intended to visit an African nation, though he did not specify which it would be, adding that the choice would depend on the political climate.³⁷
- The National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas, Natural Resources and Power-Port will send an open letter to India on October 18 urging the neighbouring nation to cancel coal-fired Rampal power plant, which is now being built near the Sundarbans. Announcing the programme at a press conference at Mukti Bhaban in the city, the committee leaders said they would hand over the letter to the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka for sending it to the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.³⁸ "We'll hold a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club and then move towards the Indian High Commission office in Dhaka in a procession to hand over our letter," said National Committee member secretary Prof Anu Mohammad while addressing the press conference. The press conference was convened also to announce the next course of action programme protesting 'the repression by the government on the activists of the committee and the 'suicidal activities' to lease out offshore gas blocks.'³⁹ Anu Mohammad said the committee has already written a similar open letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urging her to cancel the Rampal power plant project but is yet to get any response. "In the meantime, local and international experts, including from the UNESCO, have come up with their clear opinion that the Rampal project will be harmful to the Sundarbans."⁴⁰ Now, public opinion against Rampal is getting

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/pope-likely-visit-bangladesh-next-year-1293736>. Cited verbatim

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=37039>. Cited verbatim

³⁹ ibid

⁴⁰ ibid

stronger,” he said. The National Committee leader said now it is essential to launch programmes to press the Indian government to cancel the project because Indian state-owned organisations such as NTPC, BHEL, Exim Bank and Coal-India are involved in the project. “If the Rampal project is implemented, then all these Indian organisations will be benefited while the Sundarbans and greater part of Bangladesh will be severely affected,” he said.⁴¹

South Asia

I. Afghanistan: Internal

- **Taliban Focusing on Provincial Capitals: MoD⁴²**

Officials in the Ministry of Defense (MoD) on October 03 said that the Taliban has changed tactic and are focusing on vulnerable provincial capitals. This comes after the Taliban launched yet another attack against a provincial capital – Farah city, in the western Farah province – ten days ago. According to officials, clashes are ongoing. Members of the provincial council and civil society activists have, however, blamed local officials for the lack of a war management strategy and said that currently the clashes are ongoing only three kilometers from the provincial capital. Reports indicate that the air force has also targeted Taliban strongholds. Mahauddin Ghori, commander of 207 Zafar Military Corps, has arrived in the province and will lead the war against the Taliban, said officials. However, reports indicate that the Taliban is advancing on the city despite the heavy clashes.

In another incident, at least 35 people including civilians and security forces were wounded after Taliban insurgents stormed the capital of northern Kunduz province on last Monday, capturing several posts, but the Ministry of Defence said security forces were in control of the strategic urban centre.⁴³

II. Afghanistan: External

- **EU Stresses Continued Global Support for Afghanistan⁴⁴**

Participants of the Brussels Conference have promised continued international support for Afghanistan’s political and economic stability, the European Union said. A self-reliant, prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan is a

⁴¹ ibid

⁴² “Taliban Focusing on Provincial Capitals: MoD”, *Outlook Afghanistan*, 03 October 2016. URL: http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16339 accessed on 05 October 2016. And “Farah Province on Verge of Collapse: Officials”, *Outlook Afghanistan*, 10 October 2016. URL: http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16396 accessed on 10 October 2016.

⁴³ “35 Injured as Taliban Renew Attack on Kunduz City”, *Outlook Afghanistan*, 04 October 2016. URL: http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16343 accessed on 05 October 2016.

⁴⁴ “EU Stresses Continued Global Support for Afghanistan”, *Outlook Afghanistan*, 08 October 2016. URL: http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16379 accessed on 08 October 2016.

priority for the European Union, Afghanistan, its neighbours and the international community, a statement from EU said. The conference delivered a reform agenda from the Afghan government and regional support and engagement in the country's political and economic stability and development. It was co-chaired by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, on behalf of the European Union. On behalf of Afghanistan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani and Minister of Finance Eklil Ahmad Hakimi co-chaired the event, which was held under the patronage of the European Council President Donald Tusk and President Ashraf Ghani.

The conference adopted a Joint communiqué renewing the Partnership for Peace and Development, which reflects the breadth of the international community's engagement over the coming four years. This includes political and financial support, amounting to €13.6 billion for the period 2017-2020, and will be accompanied by continued and accountable reforms on the ground. The European Union and member states are together the largest donor, expecting to provide up to €5 billion, including all funding sources, of this overall figure.

Afghanistan

- **Vice President Dostum Takes Charge of Operations in Kunduz**

The First Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum has taken charge of the operations in the northern Kunduz province of Afghanistan hours after the Taliban militants launched a coordinated attack on the strategic Kunduz city. Gen. Dostum organized a meeting in the Command and Control Center of the Ministry of Defense on October 3, 2016, evening as Taliban intensified attacks on the city, the Office of the First Vice President said in a statement.

The meeting also focussed on other provinces under the Taliban threat including the southern Helmand province and Uruzgan province. Officials in ARG Palace have also confirmed that Gen. Dostum is the Command and Control Center of the Ministry of Defense to coordinate operations with deputy Chief of staff of Afghan Army General Murad Ali Murad who is leading the operations against the Taliban in Kunduz province. In the meantime, the officials in the Ministry of Interior have confirmed that several key districts in Kunduz city have been cleared of the militants' presence.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Khaama Press, October 4, 2016. <http://www.khaama.com/vice-president-dostum-takes-charge-of-operations-in-kunduz-02007>

- **Afghanistan Agrees To Take Back Refugees From Europe**

Afghanistan has signed a deal with the European Union to take back an unlimited number of its deported refugees, according to reports. The deal was signed on October 2, 2016, after months of negotiations, The Guardian reports. EU threatened to withdraw aid to Afghanistan if it didn't agree to cooperate with the process. Afghanistan is the second most common nationality among asylum seekers in Europe after Syria, with close to 200,000 arriving in 2015.

Deporting rejected asylum seekers back to their home countries has been a major headache for many European countries. Germany has 549,209 rejected asylum seekers in the country as of June. A total of 219,000 migrants are currently set to be deported, but authorities expect just 27,000 to be expelled by the end of the year.⁴⁶

- **Kunduz MPs Accuse Local Police Of Cooperating With Taliban**

A number of parliament members (MPs) from Kunduz on October 5, 2016 accused some local government officials and local police of siding with the Taliban. They claim that certain elements handed check posts over to the insurgent group. Government has however rejected these claims and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said that a number of police officers have been killed in the clashes. They also said there is no evidence pointing towards claims of conspiracy. But Kunduz MPs sharply criticized the Minister of Defense (MoD) and the MoI for not maintaining security.

They said police, especially local police, had helped the Taliban take over the city. "All the officials in Kunduz, including Afghan National Army (ANA), police and local government officials in cooperation with the people from central government handed the city to the Taliban," said Fatima Aziz, an MP from Kunduz. A number of political analysts, and Parliament's Internal Security Commission, said that political disagreements, poor leadership, distrust in government and the lack of qualified people in the local government are the reasons that the city has virtually fallen once again to the Taliban.⁴⁷

- **Taliban can't and won't Win Conflict on Battlefield: Kerry**

The US Secretary of State John Kerry has said the Taliban militants group in Afghanistan cannot and will not be able to win the conflict on the battlefield. Kerry delivered the message during his speech at an international conference on Afghanistan

⁴⁶ *Tolo News*, October 4, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27609-afghanistan-agrees-to-take-back-refugees-from-europe>

⁴⁷ *Tolo News*, October 5, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27646-kunduz-mps-accuse-local-police-of-cooperating-with-taliban>

and the following the conclusion of a peace deal between Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Afghan government.

He said the peace deal with Hekmatyar could be a model for reconciliation with the Taliban, insisting that the commanders of Hekmatyar must cease violence, cut ties with terrorist groups and accept the Afghan constitution's rights for women and minorities. "The message from every person here today to the Taliban would be: Take note," Kerry said, adding that the Taliban is still "trying to test the Afghan government's resolve."⁴⁸

- **\$15.2 Billion Pledged to Afghanistan During Brussels Conference**

A major conference on Afghanistan concluded in the Brussels city of Belgium on October 5, 2016, as the international community pledged \$15.2 billion to support Afghanistan. Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah said the financial assistance by the international community will be utilized in coming four years. He thanked the international community for their vote of confidence and support showcased at the conference, calling it a huge success for the country. Federica Mogherini, the high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy, said the outcome of the conference was positive after two days of intense work. "We've had two intense days of work here in Brussels at the International Conference on Afghanistan, after months of preparations. But all the effort we put into organising this event – together with the Afghan government, and with the participation of 75 countries and 26 international organisations – has led to a very positive outcome," she said in a statement.

Mogherini further added "The most visible success is our collective commitment to invest 13.6 billion euros over the coming four years, to support growth, jobs and security in Afghanistan. In the last few months, many told us that international support for Afghanistan would fall, and the conference would fail."⁴⁹

- **Pakistan Supporting Daesh, Taliban Fighters in Afghanistan: Ex-Fighters**

A number of former Daesh and Taliban fighters who have recently joined the peace process in Nangarhar said the groups are supported by Pakistan and the members receive military training in the neighbouring country. They claimed that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is involved with the Taliban and Daesh militants, that they equip them and then send them to fight against security forces in Afghanistan.

⁴⁸ Khaama Press, October 5, 2016. <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-can-not-and-will-not-win-the-conflict-on-the-battlefield-kerry-02014>

⁴⁹ Khaama Press, October 6, 2016. <http://www.khaama.com/15-2-billion-pledged-to-afghanistan-during-brussels-conference-02019>

Khalid, a former Daesh fighter, who joined the insurgent group in Haska Mina district in Nangarhar, said he received military training in Pakistan and was told to fight security forces in Afghanistan.⁵⁰

- **EU Wants Kabul to Focus on Reform, Peace Process**

The European Union on October 5, 2016 called on the Afghan government to accelerate reform, eliminate corruption and focus on political stability, peace and security. In his remarks at the Brussels Conference, European Council Donald Tusk said security and prosperity began to reinforce each other in a virtuous cycle, an experience that Europe saw in its post-war history.

“To get to that situation in Afghanistan, we need a viable peace process, reform of the judiciary and proper parliamentary elections. We need stronger state institutions,” he said in a doorstep statement, with these imperatives in mind, he added, the European Union and Afghanistan had signed a state-building contract worth 200 million euros to support stability and good governance in the conflict-devastated country.

Besides representatives of 75 countries and 25 international organisations, he greeted President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah and other Afghan government officials attending the event.⁵¹

- **EU Official Defends Afghan Peace Process**

George Cunningham, deputy ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Afghanistan has raised concerns over a recent peace deal between the government and Hizb-e-Islami, citing that there are serious discussions needed over Hekmatyar's war crimes. But he stressed that it is the Afghan government and the people who take the final decision about the peace process.

Amid the fragile political and security climate, the peace deal with Gulbuddin Hekamatyar-led Hizb-e-Islami is seen as an important gain for the National Unity Government (NUG) under President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah.

Although the peace accord with Hekmatyar sparked a positive response from the Afghan political elite, questions over Hekmatyar's war crimes remain in place. "Well you

⁵⁰ *Tolo news*, October 6, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27664-pakistan-supporting-daesh-taliban-fighters-in-afghanistan-ex-fighters>

⁵¹ *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, October 6, 2016.

http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=16356

know this is very controversial of course, but it is up to the Afghan government and people to decide how to go about the peace process," he said.⁵²

- **Pakistani Envoy's Statement Illogical: Analysts**

The remark triggered harsh criticism in Afghanistan as Afghan experts termed Pakistani envoy's remarks regarding peace links between Afghanistan and Kashmir as illogical. "Kashmir issue is between Pakistan and India and linking that to Afghanistan is illogical and meaningless, because Afghanistan is not India's advocate," said political expert Ahmad Saidi.

"Afghanistan's and Kashmir's interests do not relate Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan," another political analyst Jawid Kohistani said. Kabul has frequently blamed Islamabad for dishonesty to the peace process in the past decade. Afghan officials are pessimistic regarding Islamabad's honesty to bring Taliban to negotiations, and linking the Kashmir solution could be another pretext by Pakistan in order to sabotage peace process in Afghanistan. This comes, while recently President Ghani said that we are not expecting peace through Pakistan, but we want peace with Pakistan. Also efforts in the framework of Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) consisting Afghanistan, Pakistan, US and China failed after the Taliban group rejected to participate in peace talks and announced their spring offensive.⁵³

- **Ghani Thanks Troops and Gives Update On National Issues**

In an address to the nation on October 9, 2016, President Ashraf Ghani said that the enemy has tried to cast a shadow over Afghanistan's achievements during and after the successful Brussels Summit. But those who have tried to undermine the country's achievements "have failed", he said. This comes amid a surge in violence across the country in the past week – particularly in Kunduz and Baghlan.

However, Ghani kicked off his address by thanking the security forces in battle-weary Kunduz and other provinces for their hard work. He also passed on his condolences to bereaved families who have lost relatives in recent battles. Ghani raised the issue of foreign relations and said this had significantly improved in the past two years. According to him a balance has been brought in terms of keeping good relations with foreign countries.⁵⁴

⁵² *Tolo News*, October 7, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27677-eu-official-defends-afghan-peace-process>

⁵³ *The Pashtun Times*, October 8, 2016. <http://thepashtuntimes.com/pakistani-envoys-statement-illogical-analysts/>

⁵⁴ *Tolo News*, October 9, 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27721-ghani-thanks-troops-and-gives-update-on-national-issues>

Saudi Arabia and GCC

Saudi Arabia Adopts Austerity Measures to Balance its Book

Saudi Arabia has adopted a slew of measures to counter its financial problems. These measures include slashing of salaries of ministers, civil employees, suspending their bonuses, perks, allowances and annual increments, besides postponing of appointments on non-essential vacant posts. In addition to expenditure cuts, the Saudi government has also raised the charges and fees of the government services and tried to attain self-sustenance.

The fall in oil prices in less than two years to more than half, from \$103 a barrel to less than \$50 a barrel and the costly war in Yemen are the two factors, which affected the financial condition of the Kingdom. In 2016, Ministry of Finance reported a 16 per cent budget deficit, amounting to \$98 billion. According to IMF estimate, this is likely to persist in 2017 as well.⁵⁵ In order to balance its budget, Saudi Arabia needs an oil price of \$67 per barrel,⁵⁶ which again is fraught with more cascading effects, including the challenges coming from the shale producers. Saudi Arabia continued its production for the last eight years just to bankrupt and oust these shale producers from the energy market. However, this has almost failed, especially when the OPEC met in Algiers last month and decided to cut oil production between 250,000 b/d and 750,000 b/d, shoring up the prices around 6 per cent for the first time since mid-2014.⁵⁷

Austerity Measures in Details

The government has slashed 20 per cent salaries of the ministers and 15 per cent of the *Shura* members (consultative council). It has suspended civil employees' bonuses, perks and allowances and has halted appointments of vacant posts and programmes of the public sector; it has also stopped hiring and renewal of the contract of expatriate workers in non-essential sectors and has suggested various government departments to rotate employees wherever labour needs arises.⁵⁸ The government has also fixed the payment for the landline or mobile phones bills of the higher officials. The authorities would not pay if their phone or mobile bills exceed SAR 1,000. The provision of vehicles for senior officials till next year has been suspended; annual increments for the next

⁵⁵IMF Executive Board Concludes 2016 Article IV Consultation with Saudi Arabia, *IMF*, 28 July 2016, <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/07/28/15/54/PR16368-Saudi-Arabia-IMF-Executive-Board-Concludes-2016-Article-IV-Consultation>

⁵⁶ IMF report 2015.

⁵⁷ 'OPEC agrees on oil output cut at Algiers meeting, *FT*, 29 September 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/e78iddcc-8565-11e6-8897-2359a58ac7a5> (Accessed on 10 October 2016).

⁵⁸ Habib Toumi, 'Saudi Arabia cuts public sector bonuses, ministers' salaries, *Gulf News*, 10 September 2016, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-arabia-cuts-public-sector-bonuses-ministers-salaries-1.1902575>, (Accessed on 10 October 2016).

year have also been suspended, besides stopping monthly transportation allowance during holidays.

The government has fixed 80 hours of work per week. It has also reduced the annual holidays from 36 days to 30 days of the general civil employees. It has decided to remove subsidies on seven services, which are subsidized up to 50 per cent. These services include, passports, car driving license, car transfer, tariff violations, renewal of resident permits (iqama) for domestic and tariff (custom) protection for 193 commodities.⁵⁹

Wage bill in Saudi Arabia consumes about half of the total national budget, amounting to \$120 billion. In addition, the government is also planning to cancel more than \$20 billion worth of projects and slash ministries' budgets by a quarter to repair its finances.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is expected that the austerity measures would save significant amount of government revenue.

Domestic Resource Mobilization

In addition to expenditures cuts, the government has also raised fees and charges of its services. The first major step of the government has been to increase charges and fees of utility services such as water and electricity. Another focus area is visa department. It has revised visa fees. For single entry, either for religious or business purposes, it will cost approximately SAR 2000 (\$543). Earlier, visa for religious visits were provided free of cost. For six months multiple-entry visa, charge will be SAR 3,000, for twelve-month SAR 5,000 and 24-month SAR 8,000. While the cost of transit visa will be SAR 300 and for exit-re-entry for six months will be SAR 600. However, there will be no fee for those who are visiting for the first time to perform Umrah.⁶¹

Riyadh has also reduced annual holidays of the civil employees and ministers, from 42 to 30 days and increased the weekly working hours. The government has also adopted solar-based western Gregorian calendar for the payment of salaries to the civil employees, which is 11 days longer than the lunar-based Islamic Calendar, adopted by Saudi Arabia in 1932.⁶²

The Immigration department is also likely to raise iqama (work permit), contract renewal charges. There is also speculation that the Saudi government is also planning to

⁵⁹Subsidies on seven services set to go', *Arab News*, 18 September 2016,

⁶⁰Glen Carey, 'Saudi Arabia's Monarch scrapes bonuses, cuts ministers salaries', *Bloomberg*, 26 September 2016,

⁶¹King announces new austerity measures', *Saudi Gazette*, 27 September, 2016

⁶²Saudis adopt Gregorian calendar system as part of austerity cuts', *Press TV*, 2 October 2016, <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/10/02/487381/saudi-calendar-georgian-civil-servants>, (Accessed on 10 October 2016).

impose 5 per cent income tax on expatriates, and like other countries, it may limit transfer of remittances by the foreign workers up to only 50 per cent of their total income. Rest they have to spend in the Kingdom. Through this, the movement wants to limit the leakages of remittance-money, which siphons off around 6 per cent of the national GDP.

The government is also planning to impose 5 per cent Value-added tax (VAT) on rich section of Saudi population. For the first time, the kingdom has also planned to issue international bond of \$10 billion worth.

Saudi Arabia has already realized the future of energy market. As a result, in April 2016, it introduced a comprehensive medium-term economic plan, Vision 2030, which aims to introduce structural transformation in the oil-based economic system of the Kingdom. Major emphasis is on reducing the role of oil in the economy, encourage diversification and boost privatization in the country. To achieve its objectives, it has also introduced a five-year national Transformation Plan (NTP) (2016-2020). Through these measures, the government aims to increase employment opportunities, increase the share of private sector in GDP; raise women's participation in labour force, encourage import substitution in select sectors such as defence, renewable energy, etc., and establish the kingdom as a global 'manufacturing hub' by exploiting its strategic location, which connects three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa.

However, much of the success depends upon three broad factors: (i) readiness of the Saudi people, including the elite to bear the pain of the new austerity measures; (ii) commitment of the staff, including the prices to make the plan successful, and; (iii) response of the global economic community to the reform policies of the Kingdom. Chief architect of the Vision 2030, Deputy Crown Prince, Muhammad Bin Salman, has already started lobbying for the plan and has been visiting to potential countries, which could investment in Saudi Arabia, including the US, China, Japan, etc.

Nevertheless, much is to be seen how the world takes Saudi Arabia, which needs to transform its image and bring transparency and accountability both, in its domestic and foreign policies.