

Headlines:

- **Far-rights EU Politicians Band Together Against Islam**
- **US to Take Unilateral Steps in 'Areas of Divergence' with Pakistan: Pentagon**
- **Trump's Security Strategy Draws India Closer, Targets Pakistan and China**

Details:

Far-rights EU Politicians Band Together Against Islam

Far right leaders in Europe admired US President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration policy and promised to build a new Europe without any involvement of the EU as they assembled against Islam at a meeting in Prague. "For a Europe of sovereign nations," read the banner upheld by the Populist politicians from France, Poland, Austria, the Netherlands and the UK on Sunday. The Czech Republic's anti-Islam Freedom and Direct Democracy party, which won almost 11 percent of the vote in October, hosted the conference chaired by a Czech-Japanese politician, Tomio Okamura. Members of the Freedom Party of Austria present at the Prague meeting, were lauded for having entered the country's new coalition government. Marine Le Pen, who lost on the French presidential election after reaching the final round of voting, said the development was "tremendous new for Europe." These successes show that the nation states are the future, that the Europe of tomorrow is a Europe of the people," she said. One of the group's major targets is to close Europe's border to asylum-seeker." Because we like Europe, we say that the EU is going to kill her," Le Pen said on Saturday, calling for supporters to help overthrow the union. "None of us are xenophobic – we are opposed to the EU because we believe it is a catastrophically disastrous organisation. "Migration is close to unbearable – our respective cultures are being destroyed." "We do like diversity but I like the Dutch to be Dutch, the Czechs to be Czech, I like the French to be French and I like the Italians to be Italians. Far-right politician, Geert Wilder, also targeted Muslims believing that the continent would be overrun by them and rejected Islam as "totalitarian ideology". "We must have the courage to have travel bans as President Trump has done in the United States," he told delegates. "We must have the courage to send every boat with illegal immigrants back as Australia is doing for such a long time." Later, he commended the Czech Republic and the other Visegrad states as "heroes" for their defiance of EU refugee quotes. "We want also to remain the masters of our own house," he said. This month, the European Commission called the European Court of Justice (ECJ) against the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland over their mismanagement to accept their required share of refugees. The Czech Republic has accepted only 12 out of 2,000 asylum seekers which was assigned. "In the regional sense, the post-communist countries are particularly fragile and have always been, with the arrival with the now perceived danger from foreigners and Muslims," Jan Culik, a lecturer in Czech studies at the University of Glasgow. "They have very little immunity to xenophobia and now the Czech Republic and Poland are among the worst in this regard. [Source: The Tribune]

Trump's vitriol against Islam is providing fuel for Europe's far right to advocate draconian measures against Muslims.

US to Take Unilateral Steps in 'Areas of Divergence' with Pakistan: Pentagon

The Trump administration has informed Congress that it will take unilateral steps in areas of divergence with Pakistan while expanding cooperation between the two countries where their interests converge. In a report to Congress, which was released to the media this weekend, the Pentagon also underlined the need for a joint US-Afghan platform for combating more than 20 militant groups active in the region. This is the Pentagon's first report on Afghanistan since Aug 21, when President Donald Trump announced his new South Asia strategy, which deepens American military involvement in Afghanistan while urging Pakistan to back US efforts for defeating the Taliban. The report to Congress emphasised the need for a "fundamental change" in the way Pakistan deals with the alleged terrorist safe havens on its territory. The Pentagon also informed the lawmakers that the new US strategy calls for a whole-of-government, regional approach to isolate the Taliban from "sources of external support" and to mitigate any malign influence from outside actors. "Our military-

to-military relationship with Pakistan remains critical to the success of our mutual interests in the region,” says the report. “To move forward, we must see fundamental changes in the way Pakistan deals with terrorist safe-havens in its territory.” To induce that change, the Pentagon proposed working across the US government, “using a range of tools to expand our cooperation with Pakistan in areas where our interests converge and to take unilateral steps in areas of divergence”. The report noted that more than 20 terrorist or insurgent groups were still active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and their existence “requires an Afghan-supported US platform in the region to monitor, contain, and respond to these threats”. The report said that the Pak-Afghan border region remained a sanctuary for groups like Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, ISIS-K and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. “Sanctuary on the Pakistani side and presence on the Afghan side remain security challenges for both countries and pose a threat to regional security and stability,” the report added. The Pentagon said that recent Pakistani military operations had disrupted some militant sanctuaries, certain extremist groups — such as the Taliban and the Haqqani network — “retain freedom of movement in Pakistan”. “The United States continues to convey to all levels of Pakistani leadership the importance of taking action against all terrorist and extremist groups,” the report added. The report acknowledged that the hard-won US gains in Afghanistan were fragile, but worth defending and the United States had aligned its diplomatic, military, and economic resources to seek a negotiated settlement to this 17-year-old war. “We have recommitted to helping the Afghan government and people navigate through these challenges with a new approach that leverages additional support from allies, partners, and regional actors,” it said. The Pentagon also informed the Afghan government that the US commitment to them was “enduring but not unlimited” and this support was “not a blank check”. [Source: The Dawn]

17 years on and both the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan behave as if the US is a trusted partner working for peace and stability. Nothing could be further from the truth. The US is determined to manufacture instability in order to justify its occupation of Afghanistan as well as putting pressure on Pakistan to cede sovereignty to the Pentagon.

Trump’s Security Strategy Draws India Closer, Targets Pakistan and China

The first National Security Strategy from the Trump administration offers lots of support to India, while taking a tough stance against Pakistan. The US National Security Strategy paper, being released by President Donald Trump on Monday Washington time, seeks to support “India’s emergence as a leading global power” and promises to “to increase quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India.” On Pakistan, the paper, believed to be the defining policy statement of US strategy for the coming months, there is a lot of tough love. It clearly states that the United States “continues to face threats from transnational terrorists and militants operating from within Pakistan.” It also expresses concern that there are fairly high chances of an India-Pakistan conflict, which could lead to a nuclear confrontation and therefore calls for “consistent diplomatic attention.” What will cheer Indian policymakers is the unambiguous recognition of India as a major emerging global power by the Trump administration. It also takes forward the current Indian government’s push for a seat at the high table. The security strategy paper also reiterates Trump’s earlier stance on Pakistan’s “destabilizing role” in Afghanistan, when he outlined his broad strategy in August. At that time he said, “Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror. The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict.” Along with Russia, the paper calls China a “challenge to American power, influence and interests.” Trump and his team are facing a major probe by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and special prosecutor Robert Mueller over possible collusion with Russia in subverting the 2016 US elections. The paper says that both these nations are attempting to “erode American security and prosperity,” a possible indication that the US administration recognizes Russia and China as major threats. It points out that both nations are also building advanced weapons and capabilities that can “threaten critical infrastructure” and the US “command and control” architecture.” [Source: Asia Times]

The US Strategy paper contains no real surprises and is a continuation of the policy enunciated by previous US administrations.