

Headlines:

- **New Missile Shows Capability**
- **Competition in Iran's Clerical Leadership**
- **The Coalition of Terrorists**

Details:

New Missile shows Capability

On Friday, the 11th of December, Pakistan managed to successfully test fire its surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Shaheen-III. A Missile capable of carrying a nuclear payload as far as 2750 kilometres. *"The test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system,"* Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Director General Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General Mazhar Jamil, congratulated the scientists and engineers on achieving a significant milestone in complementing the deterrence capability. He asserted that Pakistan desires peaceful co-existence in the region for which nuclear deterrence would further strengthen strategic stability in South Asia. Despite these developments, the Pakistani political leadership operate from a position of weakness in the face of the US and other regional powers. Without Pakistan the US would have bled to death in Afghanistan and the US relied upon supply routes for its logistics through Pakistan. But still the Pakistani leadership operate as it needs the US.

Competition in Iran's Clerical Leadership

In a surprising move, former president Hashemi Rafsanjani alluded to discussions amongst the clergy of Iran concerning the successor to the current supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Khamenei, now 75, has assumed the position of supreme leader for more than 2 decades which has placed him at the head of the Iranian state. It is clear that this is a popular position as both Rafsanjani and Rouhani have declared their interest in the position. What is interesting is how this election, despite involving no members of the public as it is the 66-member council that decides, is being covered by western media in a positive light. This reflects a recent change in position towards Iran where over the span of a few months they have gone from public enemy number one to partners in international affairs. Political moves such as the nuclear deal and US eagerness to discuss with Iran concerning conflicts in Yemen and Syria has consolidated the existing political apparatus in Iran. It is clear that whoever comes in will be required to continue this trajectory

The Coalition of Terrorists

Saudi Arabia on December 15 announced the formation of a 34-nation Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism, according to a joint statement published on Saudi state media. According to Saudi Arabia's defense minister, the campaign will coordinate anti-terrorism efforts to in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan, but he provided few details about what future military efforts will entail. Notable coalition members include Arab countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Qatar, and the UAE. Notably, Iran was absent from the list. Once again it has been shown that the Muslim rulers can come together when there is the political will. It is not the military capability that divided them but the political will. When it comes to their sectarian and narrow interest every coalition can be built, be it Yemen, Afghanistan or even oppressing their own population. The announcement that this coalition has been built to tackle terrorism is an ominous sign as the US is looking for troops for the conflict in Syria.