

Headlines:

- **Islam on the Rise in Mexico**
- **America Needs Iranian Cooperation**
- **Pakistan Among States that Will Face Turmoil for Decades: Obama**
- **Beijing Steps up Building in South China Sea Despite US Resistance**

Details:

Islam on the Rise in Mexico

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, as of 2010, there were 3,760 Muslims in Mexico, most of them living in Mexico City. However, these estimates vary widely. For instance, the Washington-based Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life estimated there were approximately 111,000 Mexican Muslims in 2010 and projects a population of 126,000 Mexican Muslims by 2030. Although they are a very small minority, the figure is growing and Islam is establishing a presence in what is a strongly Catholic country. This is consistent with the global trend: Globally, Islam is the fastest growing religion with a projected 73% growth in the number of Muslims worldwide from 2010 to 2050. Aside from statistics about Muslims in different parts of the globe, the Newsweek en Español article describes the basic tenets of Islam and defines Islam as “the submission by human beings to the will of God.” It also includes a brief historical narrative of the birth of Islam, Prophet Muhammad and the Quran. The author, Rodrigo Perez Rembao, clarifies that Islam is not limited to the religious and spiritual facets of a person, but includes the political and social realms as well and, besides being a religion, it is also a legislative system, a code of honor and a way of life. [Source: Morocco World News]

Despite the Western media’s negative publicity about Muslims, Islam continues to grow in America’s backyard. More and more people are converting to Islam because it offers solace and a comprehensive way of life.

America Needs Iranian Cooperation

The Iran nuclear talks saw for the first time Iran and the United States engaging in serious negotiations at the highest levels after over 35 years of hostility. An Iranian foreign minister and a U.S. secretary of State sat down and directly talked with one another to resolve one of the most pressing international crises. In terms of abiding by its commitments under the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran has done a commendable job. According to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Iran has implemented its commitments under the agreement in a

timely manner, including recently completing the process of shipping out of the country its 11,000 kg stockpile of low-enriched uranium. Neither the IAEA nor the P5+1 group of nations have ever publicly found Iran to be in violation of either the Nov. 2013 interim deal or the JCPOA. However, there have been some distressing developments as the JCPOA's "implementation day" has approached. The more Iran moved to complete its commitments, the more the U.S. Congress has in parallel explored new ways to impose sanctions on Iran. One notorious example is recent visa legislation, which would discourage the flow of foreign investment and tourism. Even worse than the visa bill, there are also now reports of multiple other Iran-related bills circulating in the U.S. House of Representatives that would undercut the nuclear deal. One seeks to limit the president's authority to waive sanctions; another to prevent sanctions relief for Iranian banks that the JCPOA mandates. From the Iranian perspective, the JCPOA is a test of whether or not it can trust the United States. One school of thought in Iran holds that America's policies and nature are based on bullying and not rationality. Their contention is that if Iran shows flexibility towards the United States, it will only encourage more aggressive behavior towards Iran. Thus, Iran must pursue a tit-for-tat strategy and raise the costs of pursuing aggressive actions against Iran. [Source: US Today]

The Iranians like the Iraqis before them are quickly learning about the fickle nature of their new 'friend' the US. Rather than fulfilling a host of commitments made to Tehran, politicians in Washington are thinking of new ways to punish Iran for surrendering its nuclear capability. So much for the visionary leadership of Iran.

Pakistan among States that will Face Turmoil for Decades: Obama

In his last State of the Union Address on Tuesday night, US President Barack Obama urged American lawmakers to authorise the use of military force against Daesh, the Arabic acronym of the militant Islamic State (IS) group. While underlining the challenges the United States may face in the near future, Mr Obama warned that both Afghanistan and Pakistan were among the countries that would continue to face instability and turmoil for decades. Mr Obama also identified a link between militancy and instability and warned that some unstable regions might become safe havens for terrorists. "Instability will continue for decades in many parts of the world – in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in parts of Central America, Africa and Asia," he said. "Some of these places may become safe havens for new terrorist networks; others will fall victim to ethnic conflict, or famine, feeding the next wave of refugees." [Source: Dawn]

The instability in all of these countries is due to America's foreign policy, and yet, no one points a finger at America, especially the rulers of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before the Soviet war in Afghanistan, there was no upheaval in Pakistan and militancy was unheard of. Nevertheless, after America's arrival to the region in the 1980s, Pakistan has witnessed all manner of problems from refugee crisis to extreme militancy.

Beijing Steps up Building in South China Sea Despite US Resistance

China has stepped up its construction of runways in the South China Sea since President Xi Jinping visited Washington in September, underscoring how US efforts to counter China's assertive stance there appear to be having little effect. Satellite images of Subi Reef and Mischief Reef obtained by the Financial Times suggest that Beijing will soon complete two runways that will join a newly operational landing strip on a third reef called Fiery Cross in the contested waters. "The runways at Subi and Mischief Reef are nearly complete. The work at Mischief has gone nearly twice as fast as it did at Fiery Cross Reef on which test flights landed earlier this month," said Gregory Poling, director of the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, a Washington-based project, which supplied the images. Maritime tensions in the South China Sea have mounted in recent years as China has rapidly built a string of man-made islands and taken a more combative stance towards its neighbours, particularly the Philippines. A US Navy warship sailed close to Subi in November to signal it does not recognise China's claims to the islands. China insists it will not militarise the islands, which Mr Xi repeated in Washington, and says the runways are for civilian purposes. But many analysts see the rush to build runways that can accommodate fighter jets and long-range bombers as a move to boost power projection in the western Pacific, where the US has long been the dominant naval power. China recently said it planned to manufacture an aircraft carrier for the first time, as it strives to build a "blue-water navy" that can operate far from shore. China recently conducted civilian test flights on Fiery Cross, raising concerns in Washington. American officials believe that China is conducting the flights to test the runway for the possible use of fighter jets and also to make the facilities operational without making their intentions clear. A senior official from the Obama administration said the test flights appeared to be part of "a broader pattern of Chinese behaviour to attempt to advance its claims over disputed areas". The official added that "this pattern of Chinese unilateral activity" exacerbated tensions and undermined regional stability. "We again call for all claimants to reciprocally halt land reclamation, further development of new facilities, and militarisation on their outposts and instead focus on reaching agreement on acceptable behaviour in disputed areas," said the official. [Source: FT]

China is taking aggressive steps to challenge US hegemony in the Asian Pacific, Contrast this with the pathetic steps taken by the rulers of the Muslim world to cement American hegemony over Muslims. What Muslims require is an independent Islamic state that represents Muslims and defends Islam no matter what Western powers may say or do.