

Headlines:

- **Brexit Costs Likely to Build Slowly as UK Enters End Game**
- **New Law Passed to Dismiss Extremists from State Institutions in Egypt**
- **Pakistan's Plan to Make Disputed Region a Fifth Province Angers India**

Details:

Brexit Costs Likely to Build Slowly as UK Enters End Game

Brexit talks are going to the wire. The UK left the EU in January and entered a transition period under which trading conditions remained the same until the end of 2020. As November began and with two months left, differences between the two sides on the terms of a free trade agreement were still substantial, but both sides also thought it made sense to keep talking “intensively” in a last-ditch effort to bridge the gap. For the vast majority of the world, Brexit is a sideshow. It pales into insignificance compared with the economic and social problems caused by Covid-19, but for the UK and parts of Europe, the possibility of a rupture at the end of this year adds another dimension to the uncertainties ahead. The UK government still insists it wants a deal similar to that agreed by the EU with Canada, but Boris Johnson also says the country would “prosper mightily” if it fell back on World Trade Organization terms for UK-EU trade. If the prime minister strikes an agreement, he would have to sell it as a good outcome, leading some close observers to think he might prefer being able to blame Brussels for the failure of talks. As Professor Jonathan Portes of King’s College London puts it: “While a deal is better than no deal economically [for the UK], it’s worse than status quo and it’s that loss that is visible. A deal requires politicians who make it to defend it and therefore own those losses. No deal lets them blame the other side.” The outlook is therefore a choice between a rupture between the UK and the EU, or “skinny” free trade agreement which would involve no tariffs or quotas on goods, but many new border checks and restrictions on services trade. With the UK government’s economic modelling suggesting long-term costs to the UK economy of roughly 5 per cent over 15 years for this sort of deal versus 8 per cent costs for trading on WTO terms, the calculation might be close, but there are other differences that will weigh on the negotiators minds as they work out whether they should make the compromises necessary to complete Brexit on friendly terms. According to Mike Hawes, head of the UK’s Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, “a no-deal Brexit would have an immediate and devastating impact on the industry, undermining competitiveness and causing irreversible and severe damage”. Border bottlenecks could be eased if a deal was signed with customs co-operation agreements to limit checks for an interim period and ease the flow of traffic if queues build. The short-term economic difference between deal and no deal would therefore be significant for the UK and its neighbours. Under any plausible scenario, the UK’s trading relationship with the EU from 2021 will be significantly more distant than it is today. People will no longer be able to work freely in both economies by right, all goods will require significant additional paperwork to cross borders and some will be checked extensively to verify they comply with local regulatory standards; finally, it will no longer be easy to sell many services across the UK-EU border. [Source: FT]

The UK still has not tied up trade agreements with major countries like the US, China and India. In the absence, of such deals it will be difficult for the UK to compensate for losses incurred from Brexit. There is a real risk for the UK to become an insignificant player both in Europe and the world.

New Law Passed to Dismiss Extremists from State Institutions in Egypt

The Egyptian Parliament has approved, in principle, a draft law requiring the dismissal of employees of state agencies without taking disciplinary measures, in order to confront the spread of extremist ideologies. Speaker Ali Abdel-Aal postponed taking a final decision on the bill, in

order to present it to the State Council for review. The new law aims to exclude employees and workers who are intellectually affiliated with terrorist organizations from working for state entities, according to the explanatory notes for the new amendments to the law. The first article of the draft stipulates that it will not be permissible to dismiss employees or workers, depending on the circumstances, in any of the state's administrative apparatus units, unless they violate the duties of the job in a way that would seriously harm production or the economic interests of the state or the bodies stipulated in the article, and if serious evidence had been established tying the employee to violating the security and safety of the state. Ali Badr, who presented the bill, confirmed in press statements that the aim of it was to rid the state's administrative apparatus of terrorist elements in order to preserve the Egyptian state. Badr stressed that the law was a continuation of a series of laws issued by Parliament to dry up sources of terrorism and deter anyone tempted to break the law. Earlier this year, the Egyptian Minister of Education Tarek Shawki decided to dismiss 1,070 teachers because of affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood group. "It is a small percentage of 1.5 million teachers, to protect our children," Shawki said at the time. [Source: Arab News]

Purging Islamic minded people from state institutions will never conceal the crimes committed by Sisi and his cronies. The real danger to Muslims of Egypt are secular fundamentalist who have usurped not only the wealth of the country but ensured that Western domination of Egypt continues.

Pakistan's Plan to Make Disputed Region a Fifth Province Angers India

Pakistan and India have been drawn into a fresh dispute following an announcement by the Pakistani prime minister, Imran Khan, that he will provisionally declare the border territory of Gilgit-Baltistan the country's fifth province. The strategic area bordering China and Afghanistan forms part of Pakistan-administered Kashmir – an area claimed by Pakistan and India, but controlled by Pakistan since the war of independence in 1947. Gilgit-Baltistan, for decades ruled by Pakistan's central government, has no representative in the federal parliament and cannot bring cases to the supreme court, but making it a provisional province gives the region stronger constitutional and voting rights, more local autonomy and increased powers for its legislative assembly. "Administrative, political and economic reforms are a longstanding demand of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan," said a statement by the Pakistan government. For the state to officially become Pakistan's fifth province, it would require an amendment to the constitution. India, which claims sovereignty over the entire state of Kashmir, responded vehemently to the announcement by Khan, stating that it "categorically rejects" the move. India's ministry of external affairs said "so-called Gilgit-Baltistan" was Indian territory and the declaration of the region as a Pakistan province was an attempt to camouflage an "illegal and forcible occupation" of the area. The announcement by Khan is the latest escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan over the troubled territory of Kashmir. In August last year, India infuriated Pakistan by removing the special semi-autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir – the part of the Kashmir region that falls on the Indian side of the border – and bringing the state fully under the control of the Indian government for the first time since partition. The announcement by Khan also came less than a month before the 2 million people of Gilgit-Baltistan are to go to the polls for their legislative assembly, which currently has very limited powers. The move has been seen as a clear attempt by the prime minister to win over voters at a time when the popularity of Khan's ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) is in severe decline amid economic collapse, record levels of inflation and increasingly united political opposition. [Source: The Guardian]

Cheap stunts like this will never erase the failures of IK-Bajwa government to liberate Kashmir from the despotic Hindu rule. The only way to secure all of the so called disputed areas is to annex the whole of Kashmir and make it part of Pakistan.