

Headlines:

- **Saudi Arabia Driving Ban on Women to Be Lifted**
- **Survey Reveals Scale of Hostility towards Arabs in Britain**
- **Threats from America Will Move a Wary Pakistan Even Closer to China**

Details:

Saudi Arabia Driving Ban on Women to Be Lifted

Saudi Arabia's King Salman has issued a decree allowing women to drive for the first time, to the joy of activists. The Gulf kingdom is the only country in the world that bans women from driving. Until now, only men were allowed licences and women who drove in public risked being arrested and fined. Praise for the move has been pouring in from inside Saudi Arabia, as well as around the world. US President Donald Trump said it was a "positive step" towards promoting women's rights. The country's US ambassador, Prince Khaled bin Salman, confirmed that women would not have to get male permission to take driving lessons, and would be able to drive anywhere they liked. He said it was "an historic and big day" and "the right decision at the right time". The move was welcomed by the US state department, which called it "a great step in the right direction". UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres echoed that sentiment. Manal al-Sharif, an organiser of the Women2Drive campaign who has also been imprisoned for driving, said on Twitter that Saudi Arabia would "never be the same again". The hashtags "I am my own guardian" and "Saudi Women Can Drive" quickly gained traction on social media. [Source: BBC]

The lifting of the ban comes on the heel of Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia that has seen the Kingdom undertake a number of initiatives to open up the country under American auspices. What a great shame! The Saudi regime has proved true to its colours in abiding by American efforts to change certain practices in the society.

Survey Reveals Scale of Hostility towards Arabs in Britain

The scale of hostility in Britain towards Islam and Arabs is revealed in a YouGov survey showing most UK voters believe Arabs have failed to integrate themselves into British society, and their presence has not been beneficial. The survey also shows that most voters back security policing based on assumptions about the likelihood of races to commit crimes – so-called racial profiling. Only 28% believe migration from the Arab world has been beneficial to the UK, and 64% believe Arabs have failed to integrate. The survey also shows most voters believe the number of refugees entering the UK from war-torn Syria and Iraq has been too high. The three characteristics most closely associated with the Arab world by British people are gender segregation, wealth and Islam, with extremism and a rich history the next two identified characteristics. The degree of association with innovation or forward thinking is miniscule. The poll, commissioned by the Council for Arab-British Understanding and the Arab News newspaper, also reveals scepticism about UK foreign policy in the region with only 15% of those surveyed saying they agreed that the UK's foreign policy in the Arab world had helped human rights and global security. Only 13% believe UK foreign policy has been a stabilising force in the Arab world. An astonishing 85% say they regard the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the UK and the US as a mistake, but there is still majority support for the current UK

involvement in the air campaign against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The weighted survey, due to be formally unveiled at a conference on Monday, was conducted among 1,200 people from a YouGov panel in August. The published results exclude “don’t knows”. The emerging picture – fear, ignorance and hostility – underlines the tensions in UK society about attitudes to Islam and the Arab world in the UK, with the strong backing for racial profiling likely to disturb those worried by the civil liberties implications. A total of 55% of voters regard it as right for the police to use racial profiling against Arabs or Muslims for security reasons. Only 24% disagree. Racial profiling allows the security services to police on the basis of working assumptions about the likelihood of ethnic, religious or national groups to commit offences in the UK. Support for racial profiling among Conservative voters reaches 72%. In a survey that also reveals widespread self-confessed ignorance about the Arab world, a total of 63% say they believe Arabs have failed to integrate themselves into western society and live in isolated communities. That belief is held by 78% of leave voters in the 2016 referendum, but also by 47% of Labour voters in the 2017 election. [Source: The Guardian]

The results of the survey are hardly surprising considering that the UK media has incessantly painted a negative picture of Arabs and Islam, and used it to justify Western intervention in Arab world.

Threats from America Will Move a Wary Pakistan Even Closer to China

US President Donald Trump may have expected sheepish compliance from Pakistan when he said his country would “no longer be silent” about “safe havens” for terrorist organizations. Pakistan is sheltering terrorists that the United States is fighting, Trump said in a speech last month, “and that will change immediately.” Or will it? Pakistan allies so tightly with China that it hardly need worry about getting scolded by Trump. The US president’s comment may even serve to pull Pakistan and China closer together. “The Trump administration’s growing pressure on Pakistan to shut down jihadi terrorist networks operating from its soil will have the effect of forcing Pakistan into an ever-tighter embrace of China,” says Mohan Malik, Asian security professor with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. After China’s border war with India in 1963, China and Pakistan established their own border by ceding land to each other. The friendship has only grown in the face of geopolitical changes since then, particularly each side’s ongoing issues with India. Back to the US threat, which was vague. Was Trump threatening to withdraw some kind of aid if Pakistan harbors anti-US terrorist groups or the Taliban, an Islamic movement fighting a war for control in neighboring Afghanistan? He mentioned that the United States had paid Pakistan “billions and billions of dollars.” The South Asian country offers sanctuary to the Taliban, terrorism source al-Qaeda and local militant groups, the American think tank Council on Foreign Relations says here. Pakistan may see no cause for emergency. Trump’s original statement is now being “played down” by both sides, says Sulaiman Wasty, a Pakistan scholar with Sharakpur Financial Integrity Services in Washington. The US government has given Pakistan about \$80 billion in economic and military help since the 1950s, more than China has offered, but Pakistani officials see relations with the United States as “one-sided based on short-term needs and expediency, driven primarily by American security concerns at any given time,” Malik says. [Source: Forbes]

Rather than oscillate between US and China, Pakistan is more than capable of playing one off the other. And thereby creating the necessary conditions to emerge as a major power. However, the present leadership is unable to see beyond Pakistan a client state for either US or China.