

## Headlines:

- **Muslim Safe Space Plan sparks Row in Australia**
- **Britain in political chaos after election shock, uncertainty over Brexit talks**
- **China to set up Military Bases in Pakistan – Pentagon Report**

## Details:

### Muslim Safe Space Plan sparks Row in Australia

A proposal by an Australian Islamic group to allow "safe spaces" for young Muslims to discuss "inflammatory" issues has sparked a row. The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) said such forums enabled young people's opinions to be "respectfully and intelligently debated and challenged". But State Premier Daniel Andrews said he was "very troubled" by the idea of a space where people "could be radical". Victoria was rocked by a suspected terror attack earlier this week. Gunman Yacqub Khayre killed a man, wounded three police officers and took a woman hostage during a siege at an apartment building on Monday night. He was later shot dead by police. Australia has prevented a number of extremist attacks on home soil in recent years, and has been on alert amid fears over the return of Australians fighting for Islamist militant groups in Syria. The ICV, which says it represents some 200,000 Muslims in Victoria, says the community is suffering mental health and other problems because of the widespread suspicion it faces. It recommends, to a parliamentary inquiry into freedom of religion, funding a number of community-led initiatives - saying financial resources at the moment are concentrated mainly on national efforts to counter violent extremism. ICV spokesman Adel Salman said they did not consider the "safe space" proposal controversial, because it is a practice that is already used to help young people in countries around the world. "This is about good practice because the youth require an avenue to express their views in a safe environment... where they feel their views are valued, where they can be respectfully challenged and counter views presented," he said. He said such spaces would be "conducted with experts who are familiar with the methodology, and understand the way the conversation can be guided". And he criticised headlines which called the proposal "rage space" and "hate space", saying the media had misconstrued what they were asking for. But Premier Andrews ruled out any possibility of funding such an initiative. [Source: BBC News]

**The Muslim community in Australia is under tremendous pressure to stamp out "radicalization", however, they have received no help from the government. Unless the Australian government curtails its foreign policy ventures in the Muslim world the wellspring of anti-western feeling will compel vulnerable people towards violence. Muslim safe places or safe zones for Australians only addresses the symptoms and not the root cause behind violent behaviour, which is Australian foreign policy.**

### Britain in political chaos after election shock, uncertainty over Brexit talks

British voters dealt Prime Minister Theresa May a devastating blow in a snap election she had called to strengthen her hand in Brexit talks, wiping out her parliamentary majority and throwing the country into political turmoil. With no clear winner emerging from Thursday's election, a wounded May signaled on Friday that she would fight on. Her Labour rival Jeremy Corbyn, once written off by his opponents as a no-hoper, said May should step down and he wanted to form a minority government. In the aftermath of one of the most sensational nights in British electoral history, politicians and commentators called May's decision to hold the election a colossal mistake and derided her performance on the

campaign trail. She appeared determined to tough it out, however. "Theresa May has no intention of announcing her resignation later today," BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg told BBC radio. With 649 of 650 seats declared, the Conservatives had won 318 seats. Though the biggest single winner, they failed to reach the 326-mark they would need to command a parliamentary majority. Labour had won 261 seats. With complex talks on Britain's divorce from the European Union due to start in 10 days, it was unclear who would form the next government and what the direction of Brexit would be. From the EU's perspective, the upset meant a possible delay in the start of Brexit talks and an increased risk that negotiations would fail. "We need a government that can act," EU Budget Commissioner Guenther Oettinger told German broadcaster Deutschlandfunk. "With a weak negotiating partner, there's a danger that the negotiations will turn out badly for both sides." The EU's chief negotiator said the bloc's stance on Brexit and the timetable for the talks were clear, but the divorce negotiations should only start when Britain is ready. "Let's put our minds together on striking a deal," Michel Barnier said. [Source: The Reuters]

**Britain has inflicted another wound upon itself, and it is very likely that brexit talks with the EU will become protracted and difficult for Britain. Another general election cannot be ruled out.**

### **China to set Up Military Bases in Pakistan – Pentagon Report**

China is set to expand its military capabilities across the globe, with new overseas bases in countries like Pakistan as the world's largest army seeks an increased role in defending China's interest abroad, a report by the Pentagon has said. China's spent \$180bn on the People's Liberation Army last year, according to the annual report from the US defence department, but officials admitted that figure could not account for all spending due to "poor accounting transparency". That estimate is significantly higher than China's official defense budget of about \$140bn. China most likely will seek to establish additional military bases in countries with which it has a longstanding friendly relationship and similar strategic interests, such as Pakistan," the report said. "This initiative, along with regular naval vessel visits to foreign ports, both reflects and amplifies China's growing influence, extending the reach of its armed forces." Last year China began building its first overseas base in the African nation of Djibouti, already home to Camp Lemonnier, a large US installation responsible for counter terrorism operations in the Persian Gulf and east and north Africa. The new base is frequently cited in the Pentagon report along with wider ambitions for additional installations. Pakistan was singled out as a likely location and it is already the largest buyer of Chinese-made arms. "China wants the capability to negate American primacy in the region, and after that to become the strongest military in the region," said Sam Roggeveen, a China military expert at the Lowy Institute for International Policy. "For now China's ambitions remain regional, but it is becoming clear China has broader global aspirations, and while they are still in the early stages, they beginning to take shape." China has become increasingly assertive militarily in recent years, especially in territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, where it frequently challenges US warships and planes. Military expansion overseas also ties into a \$900bn infrastructure initiative championed by president Xi Jinping to create a new Silk Road, with some of the planned projects in unstable regions like Afghanistan and Pakistan. But some say the plans are a natural extension of China's desire to be more involved in international security. [Source: The Guardian].

**While China has vehemently denied the report, questions are bound to be raised about Pakistan's willingness to return a favour to China in exchange for billions of dollars. Pakistan's leadership is corrupt to the bone. Allowing China to establish military base is no crime in their eyes. Pakistan's leadership has sold Pakistan's sovereignty before, when Musharraf allowed America to set up bases to prosecute its global war on terror. Doing the same for China is no big deal for them.**