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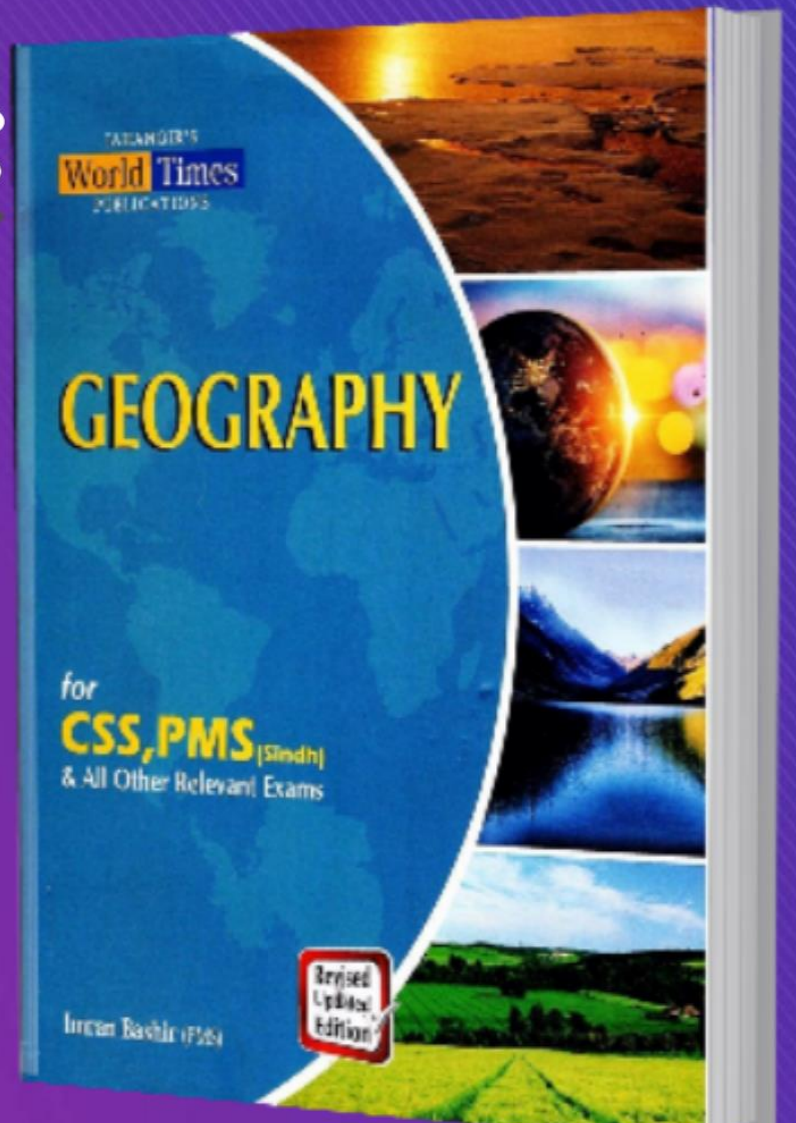
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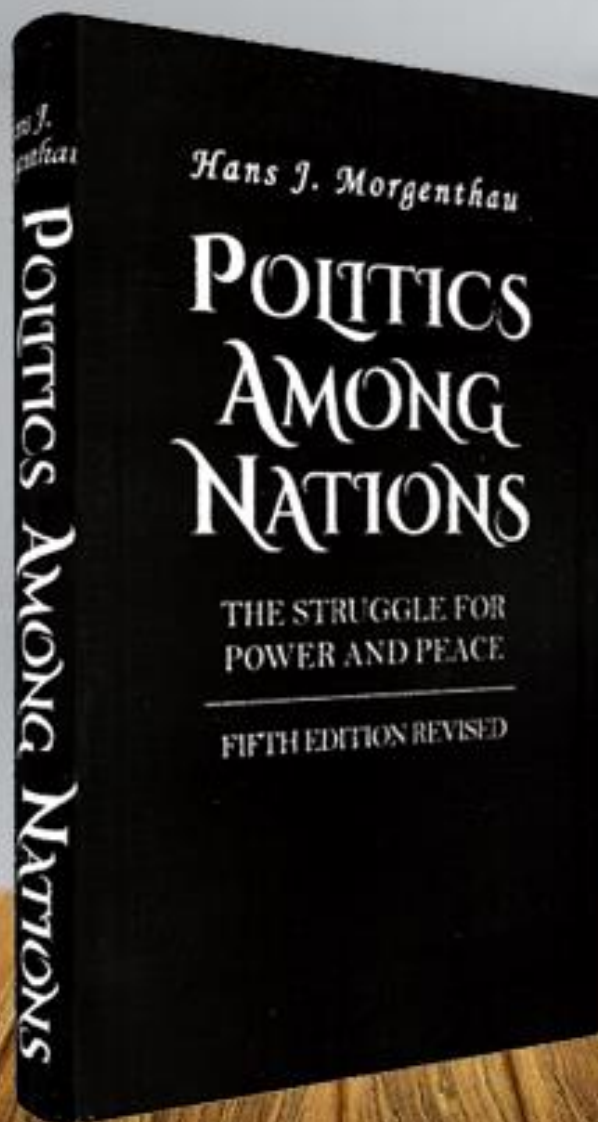
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PAKISTAN

Entering 2021 With Hope | Editorial

So the Covid-infected world lurches into 2021, with a mix of hope and concern related to the vaccine — like on its efficacy to the mutating virus; its availability in the poor and developing world; and a pretty serious resistance to vaccination even in the developed world, threatening an extended run for the deadly microbe. But while the world vigorously fights Covid-19 to get back to normal business, the raging pandemic is just another problem for the people of Pakistan, in general. Having a host of pressing problems to wrestle with, they don't precisely care about avoiding the lethal virus, be it by wearing the face mask, or using hand sanitiser, or keeping a safe physical distance.

At the official level too, the challenges abound. And while vaccination against the coronavirus does dominate the government's dispensation strategies and emerge as one of the foremost challenges, the heavy heap of perennial problems that the country carries into the new year constitutes the real burden. These problems are well-known: political instability, economic crisis, lack of internal security, though external one is pretty satisfactory, deplorable justice system, absence of transparent and across the board accountability, bad governance, poor service delivery, crumbling civic infrastructure, social inequality and human rights violations — not to mention some serious diplomatic challenges lurking in the background in view of recent realignments in the region and beyond.

So the new year throws the same old challenges at us — apart from Covid, of course. Unfortunately, these challenges have grown even more serious during the two and a half years of the incumbent government. The hostility between the government and the opposition has peaked way above the levels seen in the 1990s, denying the rulers the much-needed political calm to focus on issues of fundamental importance for the country and the people — mentioned above — apart from those that the reigning digital era demands.

The Prime Minister will have to understand — at least now that he is half way through his tenure — that the country cannot afford an 'us versus them' approach which has already given rise to extreme polarisation in society. There is no way the government can run the country by being at daggers drawn with the opposition all the time.

The wide-ranging impact of such an aggressive attitude of the government towards its political opponents is pretty visible — the economy is down in the dumps, with the depleting fiscal space taking its toll on the government's promises made with the public; governance remains a disaster; social services needs continue to go unmet; the business of legislation is only moving by fits and starts, with even important laws being framed through presidential ordinances; and the writ of the executive is virtually non-existent, as evident from the opposition's public rallies in Multan and Lahore that were staged despite the government refusing them permission in view of the mushrooming virus.

It is the lack of performance on the part of the government that the opposition that was initially divided and subdued has now grown defiant and is even planning to overthrow the government. Both sides are getting stronger on rhetoric by the day — something that must stop in order for the business of the state to run as desired. The government, being a major stakeholder in the current dispensation, will have to step out to bring the political temperature down and look for way to enter into some kind of working relationship with the opposition. Dialogue is the only way forward. The nation can't afford mistakes of the past year repeated.

Meanwhile, let's hope it turns out to be a Happy New Year.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 1st, 2021.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2278173/entering-2021-with-hope>

The Foreign Policy Challenge By Ashraf

Jehangir Qazi

Writing about Pakistan's foreign policy is not easy. It is a function of Pakistan's national policy which is determined by domestic realities and power structures that have, by and large, proven inimical to the interests of its people.

What needs to be done to break free of these vice-like limits on Pakistan's potential is generally known. Despite unwarranted constraints, the media is full of it every day. But the will and confidence to do anything to change the drift and stasis that afflicts Pakistan is absent, even though the existential costs of such national dereliction are well known.

If the home situation is seriously addressed, foreign policy will take care of itself. But, if not, foreign policy – however brilliant – can never be more than damage limitation and an exercise in postponing the inevitable. This function has been discharged. But it can at best reduce costs in the short run at the price of maximizing them over the longer term. The image of a country is determined by the quality of its domestic policies in the service of its people rather than the damage limitation capacity of its foreign policy. Moreover, a country's image determines the range of options available to its foreign policy to have its voice heard in the capitals of the world.

Domestic policies which can broaden the parameters for foreign policy include: (i) governance in accordance with constitutional authority; (ii) human resource development including healthcare, environmental protection, and science and education policies; (iii) essential freedoms, human rights protections and non-discriminatory policies; (iv) reducing social, economic and political inequalities that hamper nation-development, national solidarity and respect for national institutions; (v) elaborating and implementing economic, social and democratic institution-building strategies to meet today's challenges; etc.

A recent Grand National (Intellectual) Dialogue (for Reform) listed a number areas on which to focus, including democracy and the constitution; legal reforms; electoral reforms; institutions and governance; legislative efforts; civil service reforms; local government and devolution of power; the judiciary and its interaction with institutions; etc. This list could easily be expanded. Budgetary reform including the allocation of resources, which should be a transparent process, is a precondition for rationalizing national priorities and facilitating balanced and sustainable development.

The above is a massive undertaking without which foreign policy is left with little or no basis to develop its potential to serve the national interest, other than damage limitation through passive and reactive diplomacy. This undertaking has never been seriously attempted because political and representative institutions have not been allowed to develop and mature. On the contrary, subordinate institutions have taken over the commanding heights of national policymaking without the competence or capacity to discharge such responsibilities for which, moreover, they have no constitutional authority.

As a result, the Pakistan that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Pakistan Movement brought into existence was lost within its first 25 years. Moreover, no lessons from this trauma were learned because those who had disastrously wielded arbitrary and unconstitutional power, and their successors, never permitted it. Undoubtedly, elected democratic leaders and their political parties are also to blame for the plight of Pakistan. Too many avoid the risks of relentlessly insisting on discharging their constitutional and democratic obligations to the people who elect them and, instead, settle for the perks and privileges of elected office. The few who do demur are dealt with.

There are other non-elected and powerful constituencies and institutions that stand in the way of rational policies and strategies to deal with national challenges. They have weaponized religious, political, security, economic and social discourse, and have tended to accumulate economic and political power – instead of looking at the well-being of the country. One of the consequences has been the subordination of national sovereignty to the agendas of predatory global capitalism including some ‘brotherly’ countries that are handmaidens of their great power protectors.

The governing elites of Pakistan have similarly been happy to be co-opted by international elites who insist on prioritizing their own agendas over Pakistan’s national survival, stability and prosperity imperatives. Within this milieu, Pakistan’s handicapped foreign policy has to discharge its responsibilities as the country’s first line of defence. It is also the easiest target of criticism for the failures of other more powerful institutions which refuse to take responsibility for their misdemeanours which have crippled Pakistan.

Very much apart from these constraints on Pakistan’s foreign policy, there are global developments that represent major challenges. In an age of globalization, governance has failed to keep pace with and manage the challenges of climate catastrophe, possible nuclear conflict, global pandemics, fake news, and the undermining of international law, especially international humanitarian and human rights laws. These challenges are global in their dimensions. But each

of them has a national aspect which requires national governments to contribute to the world's response to them.

Pakistan, for instance, is among the least contributors to climate change and yet it is among those countries which will be among the first and worst hit by it. If the world does not prioritize a Global Green New Deal (GGND) to prevent irreversible climate change within this decade its fatal consequences will ensure the 21st century will be the final century of human civilization. These consequences include: (i) unprecedented pandemics; (ii) loss of animal and plant diversity; (iii) desertification and loss of arable land; (iv) ever increasing temperatures; (v) the loss of coastlines as sea levels rise; (vi) international climate refugees numbering in the billions; (vii) conflicts and wars over disappearing resources; (viii) governance collapse at the international and national levels; (ix) genocidal culling of human populations; and (x) the emergence of political ideologies that support such crimes.

This is not conjecture. It is the scientific consensus of the world. Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenage climate activist, seems to have more common sense and human decency than most of the national and international leadership of the world.

The foregoing provides the frightening but real context for Pakistan's foreign policy. The traditional foreign policy agenda of Pakistan includes relations with neighbours, regional countries, the major powers and the international community including international institutions of various kinds. More specifically, it includes relations with China, India (including the Kashmir dispute), Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, the Arab and Muslim world, the US, Russia, the UK and Europe, Japan, ASEAN countries, Africa, etc. These relations have the common objective of promoting Pakistan's security, well-being and stability, the strengthening of the structures of peace and cooperation, and developing modalities for the peaceful resolution of differences.

As mentioned, such a foreign policy agenda requires Pakistan to put its own house in order which will be a humongous but inescapable undertaking. All this has to be accomplished on an emergency basis if Pakistan is not to be overwhelmed by the combined impact of global, regional and domestic challenges. This will require a total national and foreign policy transformation.

Is this a possible or impossible undertaking? Do those in charge have any real intention to even try, given their past records? Are the people ready to take charge of their fate or will they continue to leave it to the tender mercies of those who have never included them in their priorities? Cynical answers are easy but, even if they are justified, they are useless.

Kashmir Dispute — A Stark Proof of UN Failure By Muhammad Raza Malik

THE people of India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir have been facing the worst kind of Indian state terrorism for challenging its illegal occupation of their soil for more than 73 years. Unfortunately, the international community has failed to fulfill its obligations towards resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Kashmiris' aspirations. Even the world's august body, the United Nations Security Council, has not been able to implement its resolutions on Kashmir passed several decades ago.

The UNSC had adopted an important resolution on 05 January 1949, acknowledging the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control and the world over observe the Right to Self-determination Day on 05 January to remind the world community that the United Nations' resolutions on Kashmir remain unimplemented even after the passage of more than seven decades.

India had illegally occupied the then Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir against the aspirations of the Kashmiris after landing its troops in Srinagar on 27 October 1947, leading to the creation of the Kashmir dispute. This Indian invasion was in gross violation of the Partition Plan that had resulted in the division of the Indian British Colony into two sovereign states of Pakistan and India in August 1947. India consisted of Hindu majority areas while Pakistan comprised Muslim-majority areas of western provinces and East Bengal. As per the understanding behind the Partition Plan, the then princely states were given the choice to accede either to Pakistan or India. With overwhelming 87% Muslim population, Jammu and Kashmir had natural tendency to accede to Pakistan but that could not happen due to Indian invasion.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir strongly resisted India's illegal occupation of their soil and they launched a Movement to liberate it from the Indian yoke. Their resilience forced India to seek the help of the world community to settle the Kashmir dispute. Sensing a humiliating defeat to its armed forces, India approached the UNSC on 01 January 1948, seeking its help to resolve the dispute. The World Body in its successive resolutions nullified the Indian invasion and called for settling the dispute peacefully.

A resolution passed by the UNSC on 05 January 1949, is of enormous significance as it states that the question of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir either to India or Pakistan will be decided by the Kashmiri people through the exercise of their right to self-determination in a free and impartial plebiscite held under the supervision of the World Body. India had promised before the

world community to settle the Kashmir dispute by allowing the Kashmiris exercise their right to self-determination. However, instead of fulfilling its commitment, it is applying every brutal tactic in IIOJK to force the Kashmiris to give up their just struggle for securing freedom from its subjugation. After strengthening its occupation, India started claiming Jammu and Kashmir as its integral part to mislead the world about the Kashmir dispute and the prevailing grime situation of IIOJK. On 05 August 2019, Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government moved even a step further by repealing the special status of the occupied territory, illegally and unconstitutionally annexing it with India and putting it under strict military siege. Since then, the Indian troops have stepped up their state terrorism in IIOJK to intimidate the Kashmiris into submission. However, the worst kind of Indian brutalities have failed to subdue the freedom sentiment of the Kashmiri people and they are committed to take their ongoing freedom movement to its logical conclusion at all costs.

It is a fact that the UN has played an important role in settling many international disputes including East Timor, Kosovo and Southern Sudan. But it has totally failed to discharge its obligations with regard to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute despite the passing of many decades, resulting in the continued sufferings of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The criminal silence adopted by the international community and the UN has emboldened New Delhi to continue with its brutal actions in IIOJK.

It is high time for the UN to take practical steps to implement its resolutions for settling the Kashmir dispute according to wishes of the Kashmiri people to save them from the Indian state terrorism and ensure durable peace and stability in South Asia. The World Body must fulfil its responsibility sooner than later to save the region from a catastrophe as the Kashmir dispute involves two nuclear powers – Pakistan and India.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/kashmir-dispute-a-stark-proof-of-un-failure/>

Reconnecting the Pak-US Strategic Dots? By **Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi**

THE US State Department announced that the US Administration has resumed the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) (for more than a decade a pillar of US-Pakistani military ties) with Pakistan. President Donald Trump authorized the resumption of Pakistan's participation in a US military training and educational programme in order to strengthen military-to-military cooperation on shared priorities and "advance US national security", senior US diplomat Alice Wells said on Saturday. "The said move to resume a military training programme indicates to have a thaw in relations between Washington and Islamabad.

To strengthen mil2mil [military to military] cooperation on shared priorities and advance US national security, @POTUS [President of The United States] authorized the resumption of International Military Education and Training #IMET for Pakistan. The overall security assistance suspension for Pakistan remains in effect, "the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State said on Twitter. In May 2018, the U.S. State Department suspended most of its security aid, delivery of military equipment or transfer security-related funds to Pakistan on the pretext that Islamabad provided safe haven for terrorists in Afghanistan, which Islamabad had denied. In 2018, both Pakistan and Russia also signed a military training agreement. The said development came just hours after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke to Pakistani Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa to discuss the killing of senior Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani. Prima facie, it appears that Washington envisaged a role for Pakistan in dealing with the tension caused in the Mideast region by Soleimani's killing. Veritably Pakistan has good ties with both Tehran and Riyadh, the two instrumental players in West Asia. President Trump reportedly had asked Imran Khan to broker peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia in September 2020 in the aftermath of the bombing of Saudi Aramco's oil facility. Riyadh had accused Tehran of involvement in the bombing. Recently, Pakistan's Foreign Office expressed concern about the growing tides in the Mideast crisis.

The resumption of IMET for Pakistan, more than a year after it was suspended, vindicates warming relations that followed last year's meetings between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan. Washington has also credited Islamabad with helping to facilitate negotiations on a US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. The resumption of the IMET programme "provides an opportunity to increase bilateral cooperation between our countries on shared priorities," the State Department spokesperson added. "We want to continue to build on this foundation through concrete actions that advance regional security and stability." IMET also extends the spaces to foreign military officers at US military education institutions, such as the US Army War College and the US Naval War College. The U.S. military has traditionally sought to shield such educational programs from political tension, arguing that the ties built by bringing foreign military officers to the United States pay long-term dividends. Such as, the U.S. Army's War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which would normally have two Pakistani military officers

per year, boasts graduates including Lieutenant General Naveed Mukhtar, the former DG (ISI). The War College, the U.S. Army's premier school for foreign officers, says it has hosted 37 participants from Pakistan over the past several decades. It will have no Pakistani students in the upcoming academic year, a spokeswoman said.

The United States' Department of Defence (DoD) fosters a range of policy instruments in that pursuit, exclusively among them is International Military Education and Training (IMET), one of the foreign assistance programs overseen by the Department of State but implemented and managed by the Department of Defence. The US Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) of the National Defense University is the mentor of IIMET's programmes. The US Department of Defence (DoD) conducts the IMET.

Basically, IMET is designed to accomplish two primary goals. The first is to help strengthen foreign militaries through the provision of skills (and exposure to values) that are necessary for the functioning of a civilian controlled, apolitical, and professional military. Secondly, IMET is an 'instrument of influence' through which the U.S. shapes the doctrine, operating procedures, values, choice in weaponry of foreign militaries and occasionally the policies of the recipient governments. Foreign students – many of whom will occupy the upper echelons of their country's military and political institutions – are taught infantry tactics and operations by American instructors, learn how to operate and maintain American weapons systems, and establish ties with American officers. The resulting doctrinal and operational commonalities, and institutional and individual ties that form between the U.S. armed forces and their foreign counterparts, lead to more interaction and thus, in theory, to stronger relations between the two militaries. Additionally, the U.S. government claims that more interaction translates into more U.S. access to foreign military facilities and bases, which in turn allows the U.S. to establish a military presence in more regions and facilitates the use of military force, or the threat of military force, to address regional threats.

Against this backdrop, a US Congressman (a Republican) Congressman Andy Biggs has currently introduced the bill to remove the designation of Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally, a status that allows for various benefits such as access to excess US defence supplies and participation in cooperative defense research and development projects. Given the fact that the Trump Administration has restored the IMET programme with Pakistan, the said bill loses its logical appeal. There can be no denying the fact in the post- withdrawal phase from Afghanistan, the US will need Pakistan's strategic support in the region. In this backdrop, there appears the inevitable imperative of reconnecting the Pak-US strategic dots. There can be no denying the fact that the professional military training of Pakistan Armed Forces is very exemplary. This is why the leadership and capacity development building is an important tool of Pakistan military personnel.

The restart of the military training between the US and Pakistan will boost professional enhancement and growth. Pakistan believes that a robust military training is the pivot of our military professionalism. The Trump Administration's resumption move paves way for Biden Administration to revise the status of Pak-US strategic relationship based on mutual understanding to build durable peace and stability in South Asian region.

—The writer, an independent 'IR' researcher-cum-international law analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR, Critical Peace & Conflict Studies, also a member of Washington Foreign Law Society and European Society of International Law.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/reconnecting-the-pak-us-strategic-dots/>

Reforms in Bureaucracy By Kanwar

Muhammad Dilshad

DEVELOPMENT on reforms in bureaucracy aiming at a depoliticized and corruption free bureaucratic structure would be discussed later on. Before that, it is pertinent to mention a grim reality that through calculated Machiavellian manoeuvres bureaucracy has misguided the government towards a wrong direction by keeping her ignorant of core issues and their preliminary complications. So far as reforms in bureaucracy are concerned, the government in this regard has enforced "Civil Service Efficiency and Discipline Rules 2020". The PM gave the consent to these rules and the Establishment Division duly notified them on 11 December. As per these rules, a government servant would be decried a corrupt officer on account of alleged non-conformity between his assets and income and would be punished with recovery, removal from service or compulsory retirement from his job in case his misappropriation is proved.

In case of his inability to prove the alleged charge against him, the authority would announce its verdict within thirty days. As the misconduct has been duly interpreted through a thirteen-page document based upon an SRO released by Establishment Division. Misconduct also means using political influence in appointment, promotion, transfer, retirement or any other service matter. Doing plea bargain with any agency after committing corruption also comes under the ambit of misconduct. A disciplinary proceeding against any civil servant shall immediately be conducted in case there would be a clear difference between his apparent means of income and his own property or the properties of his dependent family members; or their way of living does not match with their means of income; or he is allegedly found to be involved in terrorist or dubious activities or he is found to disclose any officially confidential matter to any unauthorized person. In all these situations he would be liable for a disciplinary action.

The SRO also delineates the punishment. The minor penalties include, warning, stoppage of the annual promotion, freezing annual promotion for a certain period at the maximum for three years, degradation from the existing scale and revocation of the due promotion at the maximum for three years. The major penalties include, in case of financial embezzlement by a government servant, recovery from him as per financial rules, downgrading from existing scale, forced retirement or suspension or may be sent on forced leave. Salary and other allowances would be given as per Rule 53 during suspension period. Nonetheless, the accused shall be informed with the basis of due proceedings against him. The case of inquiry against the officer shall clearly bring forth the justification of inquiry in black and white including the issuance of show cause notices. He would be given a minimum ten-day period for submitting his reply. In case the accused would

not prove him innocent against the charges during the said period then the authority would announce its verdict within 30 days except where the authority rests with the PM or President.

The inquiry officer would be provided with the record within seven days against any civil servant who would be the object of that inquiry. The authority can extend the period only for 10 days. It's mandatory that the inquiry officer must be senior to the accused civil servant and the justification for inquiry should be clear. Inquiry procedure may be conducted through a single inquiry officer or an inquiry committee also. Inquiry officer or any member of the inquiry committee may also be changed on account of any reason. Witnesses' statements may be recorded and cross examination may also be conducted on the witnesses of both the parties. If the accused officer would not prove himself innocent against the charge then the inquiry officer would be authorized to conduct one sided action.

An Enquiry officer or inquiry committee would hold the proceedings on a daily basis and would provide for the reasons in black and white in case of postponement of the same but not for more than seven days. In case the inquiry officer or the inquiry committee finds the accused is affecting the inquiry procedure then he may be issued with a warning. The committee may adopt its course as it may deem fit in order to meet the standards of justice if it finds that the accused is still affecting the procedure despite warning issued to him. Delay in the proceedings on medical reasons would be recommended by an authorized registered medical officer. Inquiry officer or committee would dispose of the case within sixty days. Inquiry officer would be authorized to call any person and record his statement during the inquiry proceeding. He would also be authorized to constitute a commission for evaluating the witnesses' statements.

A civil servant accused of any charge at the time of his joining the mandatory training course would be permitted to complete the same. This facility would remain the same in case of availing of any scholarship. If a civil servant would be on leave then the authority would call him back after cancellation of that leave provided that he would also be provided with a chance of personal hearing. In case of deputation of any officer the department of deputation in case of any charge against that officer would formulate a charge sheet against him and send it to the parent department. The Establishment Division would communicate to the Chief Secretary to conduct a Fact Finding Inquiry to be completed within two months against any officer of Pakistan service appointed in any province. In case of any disciplinary proceedings against any Chief Secretary, the Establishment Division would carry on proceedings with the prior approval of the PM. Every civil servant awarded with the penalty would have the right of appeal against the same, except in that case when the penalty is awarded through the President. Nevertheless, only a review appeal may be filed in this case.

Towards a Polio-Free Pakistan in 2021 By Dr Rana Muhammad Safdar

Year 2020 will be remembered for the challenges it brought to global public health. Like others, Pakistan had to focus on mounting best possible response to control Covid-19. But perhaps the most critical contribution came from the national polio eradication programme. By using all available resources, its team helped build Covid surveillance and data management systems and raised awareness among people.

While Pakistan was applauded for successfully tackling the pandemic, questions were raised as to why we couldn't eradicate polio so far. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only ones left where wild polio virus continues to threaten children's health — underlying the urgency we must work with in order to deliver a polio-free world.

Our surveillance system stays highly sensitive as 84 wild polio cases were detected from Pakistan's 38 districts in 2020. Amidst Covid, it represents 43% decline, over the 147 cases reported in 2019. Nevertheless, environmental surveillance indicates presence in Pakistan's different geographical zones. As part of the epidemiological bloc, Afghanistan recorded 56 polio cases in 2020.

Efforts to eradicate polio suffered immensely in 2019. With persistent challenges in ensuring optimal essential immunisation coverage, the slip in programme oversight in 2019 was enough to impact vaccination campaign performance to generate marked immunity gap. Meanwhile, vaccine hesitancy soared due to false propaganda. High rates of malnutrition, poor basic healthcare and poor water, sanitation and hygiene services further provided environment rife for increased polio transmission.

Learning from these, in 2020, the programme identified ways to bring communities along, improve operational performance, and contain polio spread. A comprehensive structural transformation was initiated and implemented to retain the best performing staff, improve management structures and enhance utility of data collected for decision-making.

The reinvigorated programme promoted polio eradication as a shared priority across political divide and society. 'One Team' approach was revived, and a battle initiated from Dec 2019 conducting two nationwide and subnational door-to-door campaigns before Covid. Later, the programme's strengths were successfully diverted towards Covid surveillance and response.

Sensing risks associated with disruption of essential and supplementary immunisation, the programme resumed campaigns in July using revised modalities. Since then, six campaigns have been conducted, with national engagement of leaders ensuring successful implementation of door-to-door campaigns. The security and armed forces continue their support, including security to frontline workers vaccinating children. Vaccinators were trained on Covid-19 preventative measures, while strict rules were enforced to prevent Covid spread amongst vaccinators and citizens.

Essential immunisation was also heavily affected due to lockdown. With strong support, services were resumed and enhanced outreach activities increased coverage above pre-Covid times with focus on populations living away from health facilities.

We are confident in steps Pakistan Polio Programme took in 2020 to re-think, re-strategise and innovate. Comprehensive reviews of operations and data analysis helped the programme battle polio with renewed energy. We're implementing a new communication strategy to support high vaccine acceptance. Further investments through community engagement are underway.

We look forward to sustaining high leadership and support levels in 2021, consolidating programme structure change, better engagement, reinforcing essential immunisation, delivery services to underserved communities, and coordinating with our Afghan colleagues to manage polio spread. Through committed frontline workers, the programme aims to restrict the geographic scope of polio and eradicate it in 2021!

We thank all polio frontline workers, our heroes, who contributed to the progress in 2020, and our partners who supported the polio eradication efforts. Above all, we thank parents and caregivers, and urge their support in vaccinating all children in 2021 for a polio-free Pakistan!

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279256/towards-a-polio-free-pakistan-in-2021>

Impact of the Pandemic | Editorial

The efforts of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) must be lauded for bringing out data about the effects of the pandemic on the people. And since reliable numbers have now confirmed that almost all the jobs (about 85 percent) lost during the first wave of the coronavirus were eventually recovered, Federal Minister Asad Umar is well within his rights to say 'I told you so' about the V-shaped-recovery that seems to have taken place. Yet even though the government did a fine job back then, and the rest of the world appreciated as much, this celebration does amount to too little too late considering how the second wave is strengthening.

There' also the added trouble that the new, far-faster spreading strain of the virus that first appeared in the United Kingdom (UK) has also been found in Pakistan. So we're already at a position where coming events are completely unrelated to whatever miracle was achieved over the summer. Not only is the positivity rate very high once again and healthcare facilities have started coming under a lot of strain, the government could also be forced to come up with yet another comprehensive relief package for the economy. Sad as it is, it means that however well we did last time is already of no consequence.

Therefore senior ministers should be more worried about how PBS's next round of job trends will look. Now that the economy is going to grow a lot slower than expected – 0.5 percent according to the World Bank's estimates – a lot of jobs that were recovered will be lost again. And something must also be done about the capacity of hospitals. Last time the government was able to weather the storm by erecting temporary Covid wards all over the place, and since the infection rate is again on a sharp rise it might have to repeat the exercise. Such issues should be worked out before the storm hits with full force. That last thing one expects of a government that did so well the first time is for it to be caught unawares.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/712233/impact-of-the-pandemic/>

Pakistan's Deterrence Capability & Escalation Control By Dr Mehmood-ul-Hassan Khan

CONSTANT Indian “warmongering” has now forced Pakistan to take “concrete” steps to further strengthen its “Deterrence” “Capabilities (DCs)” and upgrade its “Escalation Control System (ECS). Most recently, according to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Major General Babar Iftikhar, Pakistan successfully conducted a test flight of “indigenously” developed “Fatah-1”, Guided Multi Launch Rocket System (GMLRS). The DG ISPR highlighted that the new weapon system is capable of delivering a “Conventional Warhead (CW) up-to a range of 140 kilometres (87 miles). It has further enhanced its “operational” and “tactical” capabilities in which its wide range of Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM), Medium Range Ballistic Missiles ((MRBM), Battlefield Ballistic Missiles (BBM), Surface to Surface Cruise Missiles (SSCM) and Rocket Artillery would play a “decisive” role in the “war theater”. The newly developed GMLRS weapon system will give Pak Army capability of “Precision Target Engagement (PTE). Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and COAS have also congratulated the participating troops, technicians, engineers and scientists on successful conduct of flight test.

Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and the COAS General Qamar Bajwa have been projecting Indian “hegemonic” and “destructive” designs as “potential” threat to regional peace, stability and harmony. Pakistan’s political leadership and defence forces have been on “alert” because of imminent threat of aggression from India since last year. Last February, amid heightened tension with India, Islamabad carried out a successful test of its “Ra’ad-II” cruise missile. In March 2020, Pakistan tested the “Ghaznavi Ballistic Missile (GBM), which has a range of 290 kilometers (180 miles), just days after India tested its submarine-launched K-4 ballistic missile. It is bitter reality that bilateral relations between the two neighbors have worsened since New Delhi revoked Jammu and Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status and imposed a lockdown in August 2019. Unfortunately, Indian massive arms purchasing “madness” and Strategic Security Deals (SSDs) with USA and others also flared up tension and have started a fresh arms race in South Asia.

The 140 Kilometers range capable Fatah-I GMLRS has a significant “tactical” and “strategic” importance because the majority of “Indian Air Force (IAF)” bases situate within its “range”. In this connection, the Multi-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) is basically a type of Rocket Artillery System (RAS) that contains multiple rockets assembled and fired from the same platform. The rocket fired from MLRS is “self-propelled” and has different capabilities and a larger effective range than Conventional Artillery Shell (CAS). It helps to “devastate” hell on the enemy by

“striking” different rockets in Multiple Rapid Successions (MRS). It has lots of significance in terms of “operationalization” and “channelization” for Pakistan and defence forces of Pakistan. It has probably either Beidou or GPS inertial navigation system.

Deep analysis of “modern” and “advance” warfare system and weaponry reveals that during the war it will provide “comparative advantage” and essential “strategic cushion” to defence forces of Pakistan because, according to defence experts, distance of Fort Abbas (Pakistan) to Bikaner Air Force Station (IAF) is 130 kilometers. Distance of Lahore to Adampur Air Force Station (IAF) is 125 kilometers. Distance of Berwala to Sirsa Air Force Station (IAF) is 140 Kilometers. Moreover, distances from Haveli Lakha to Bhatinda, Kausar to Halmara, Shakargarh to Pathankot and last but not the least, Murree to Srinagar (Air Force Station, IAF) is 100, 120, 45 and 130 kilometers. It conceptualizes that all important strategic air force bases of India are now in the “line of fire” and fall within the range of recently fired Fatah-I GMLRS. In case of any “misadventure” of India, Pak Army can easily thrash all strategic air force bases of IAF in a “matter of minutes”.

According to various prominent defence analysts, the GMLRS Fatah-I the new system is very “fast”, “accurate”, “survivable” and “difficult” to intercept. It is primarily developed to hit targets without leaving behind the unexploded ordnance. The extended range guided MLRS is a developed variant of the guided MLRS family usually with an extended range of up to 150km. The development of a conventional system by Pakistan seems to be a response to the Indian focus on the development of its conventional capabilities, besides improving response options to India’s Cold Start Doctrine. President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan also congratulated the participating troops and scientists on the success of the test flight.

For the further strengthening of air defence of Pakistan its Air Force marked a major progress as it announced beginning the production of the state-of-the-art JF-17 Thunder Block-III war jets, while also acquiring 14 dual seats JF-17 aircrafts. The JF-17 Thunder Block-III of the PAF will be operational with a new radar, electronic warfare system and better engine set-up and will be better than the Rafale aircraft acquired by India. So far, 4 Rafael war jets have been handed over to Indian Air Force (IAF) and remaining 36 will be delivered till 2022. Whereas, according to PAF officials, more than new 50 JF-17 Thunder Block-III will be included into PAF till 2024, 12 in each year. Moreover, two new variants of JF-17 Thunder Block-III have been in the operation units of PAC.

If we compare JF-17 Thunder Block-III with Indian “borrowed” French Rafale fighter jet we will come to know that Pakistan’s “indigenously” developed JF-17 Thunder Block-III has certain “superiority” in terms of “manoeuvrability”, “multi-roll orientation”, “modern avionics”, “advance electronic warfare”, “price” and above all “upgradation facility” and “overhauling” mechanism

because Pakistan manufactures itself in the country while India buys from other countries. Furthermore, it has Superior Missile System (SMS) in terms of “design”, “range”, “effectiveness” and “accuracy” than Rafael war jet. It has all the combination of air-to-air, air-to-earth, and air-to-sea missiles making it a perfect “killing machine” in any war theater. It has superior Target Lock Apparatus (TLA) which has already showcased at Balakot “dog-fight”.

Moreover, if we compare its price, JF-17 Thunder Block-III is much “cheaper” and affordable than Indian Rafael war jet enabling the Air Force of Pakistan for its “huge” manufacturing in the days to come. In a recently-held Corps Commanders meeting the top military brass of Pakistan Army discussed the current security situation and noted that defeat of the complete threat spectrum is only possible through a comprehensive national effort, where all segments of the society play their rightful role. “Forum specially discussed the ongoing security situation along the LoC and Working Boundary & Eastern Border”. Being a prominent regional expert, I term firing and induction of Fatah-I GMLRS and JF-Thunder Block-II & production of its third version a giant step for the protection of national security.

—The writer is Director, Geopolitics/Economics Member Board of Experts, CGSS.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistans-deterrence-capability-escalation-control/>

Time to Rethink US-Pakistan Relations By **Syed Mohammad Ali**

Countries around the world are awaiting the Biden administration assuming office and wondering what the foreign policies of the new American government mean for their own countries.

How the Biden team will respond to prevalent geostrategic challenges within South Asia is a matter of significant debate. It is likely the incoming Biden administration will need to focus on securing a graceful exit from Afghanistan and continue cooperating with India to contend with the growing presence of China in the region.

Some analysts have argued that there is diminishing utility for the United States to partner with Pakistan. However, such assessments are short-sighted, as there is instead a good case to be made at present for a re-evaluation of America's bilateral relationship with Pakistan.

Pak-US relations go back a long way. Pakistan joined the US Cold War pacts in the 1950s, and it then became a conduit for the decade-long proxy conflict with the Soviets during the 80s. After 9/11, Pakistan again provided crucial support for American presence in Afghanistan. Yet their bilateral cooperation remained strained. The US has suspected Pakistan of playing a duplicitous role in the fight against terror, while Pakistan blamed the US of being under-appreciative and insensitive to its national security compulsions.

While there is scant domestic support for a continued American intervention in Afghanistan, Biden will hesitate to leave Afghanistan if ongoing violence has not abated in the country, and till there is some roadmap for the political future of the country.

The US has significant economic and strategic convergence with India, a much larger country than Pakistan. Yet, the US needs to pay closer attention to prevent its growing security cooperation with India from inflaming Pakistani insecurities or causing an escalation of ongoing regional arms race. Pakistan and India are already locked in a nuclear arms race which is exacerbated by Indian attempts to achieve credible deterrence with China, which in turn is trying to contend with American nuclear capabilities. This quadrilateral competition is increasing tensions in what was already considered the world's most dangerous nuclear flashpoint. As the regional strategic rivalry plays out in disputed Himalayan land borders, the US must rethink how it can avert a dispute between India, China and Pakistan spinning out of control.

Working more closely with Pakistan, instead of only building ties with India, would help the US temper Pakistan's tilt towards China. Building a more comprehensive relationship with Pakistan can provide the US additional leverage points and alternative means to exert influence in South Asia instead of primarily relying on an increasingly majoritarian and economically disappointing Indian state.

It is in America's national interest to go beyond primarily betting on India's capability to stand up to China, and simultaneously working with Pakistan, to explore possibilities of more constructive engagement with the Chinese. Pakistani policymakers must also proactively identify opportunities for US-China cooperation within Pakistan, to help avoid America viewing the growing Chinese influence in Pakistan as a zero-sum game.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279994/time-to-rethink-us-pakistan-relations>

Prospects of Pak-US Ties under Joe Biden By **Dr Muhammad Khan**

IN the historical perspective, Pakistan-United States relationships have been uneven and mostly interest driven. There have been prominent institutional role in this over seven decades of bilateralism. During the Trump era, US institutions were undermined by the White House, resultantly; there came new low in the Pak-US relationship in first two years of President Donald Trump. Later, President Trump needed Pakistani support for a contract with Afghan Taliban, thus approached Pakistan to facilitate in bringing the Taliban on the negotiating table with US. Pakistan fully supported the process and finally an agreement was reached between US and Taliban on 29 February 2020. Pakistan is also supporting the reconciliation process for a likely deal between Afghan Government and the Taliban to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Since President Trump had less insight of Pakistan at the time of assumption of power in January 2017, therefore he was aggressive towards Pakistan, stopped all economic and military assistance of Pakistan including Coalition Support Fund (CSF). Moreover, he abruptly stopped the training of military and civil officers of Pakistan in US training institutions. Besides, he was discriminatory towards Pakistan on almost all aspects whereas accommodated Indian interests at; political, military and economic level. Compared to Trump, the President Elect, Joe Biden has a better know-how of Pakistan, its contributions against terrorism and the dedicated assistance it provided to US and NATO forces during drawdown from 2013-15.

As a former vice President, he should be forthcoming to acknowledge the unprecedented Pakistani sacrifices, during the prolonged war against terrorism. Based on his first-hand knowledge, Joe Biden must accommodate Pakistani interests particularly in addressing its economic challenges. It is most likely that, President Elect Joe Biden reverse the policies of President Trump on the issue of economic and military support of Pakistan, since he was instrumental in the sanction of \$1.5 billion US aid annually, which was later stopped. Besides, the strong institutional linkages between Pakistani and US institutions which remained closely associated for decades must be restored straightway. It's good for US too, to institutionally re-engage with pivotal states like Pakistan. President Trump had in fact isolated the US on many diplomatic and strategic aspects which immediately needs to be rewired and made functional. Indeed, during Trump era US lost the space it had through institutional linkages with Pakistan. As a key state, Pakistani geopolitics is significant for the rising China as well as the resurgent Russia. Then, the sudden drift away from Pakistan, after drawdown of its forces from Afghanistan has proved that, U.S uses other states as per its own national interests and discard them once no longer required. This fact was recognized by former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in 2011, during her visit to Pakistan. Joe Biden needs to address this aspect too.

On the Afghan issue, President Elect Joe Biden must respect the US-Taliban Agreement of February 2020 which is only worth appreciating act of President Trump in his era. Honouring the agreement by Joe Biden may allow US to bring peace in Afghanistan where 150 military of NATO and US could not subdue the Taliban. Pakistan would like that Joe Biden to honour the agreement and let Afghan decide their future without any dictates from external powers. Besides, Afghan masses need peace, stability and economic prosperity in their own motherland. Instability in Afghanistan has seriously impacted Pakistan from four perspective; constant export of terrorism in Pakistan from Afghanistan, return of Afghan refugees, use of Afghan soil by India for its nefarious activities and a hostile relationship between both brotherly Muslim states. The current tense relationship between US and Iran are being viewed with lot of concern in Pakistan. Since Pakistan and Iran have common border of almost 959 kilometres which may get disturbed in the event of a conflict between Iran and US. Pakistan expects President Elect Joe Biden to fully respect and restore the Iranian Nuclear deal between Iran, P-5+1. As a vice President, Joe Biden was part of this deal which brokered by President Obama in 2015. Restoring the original deal and honouring it thereafter will promote a broader regional peace and balance of power in the Middle East from two aspects; a balance in Iran-US relations and stability in Iran-GCC relationship. President Trump created a rift between Iran and Saudi Arabia on one hand and within GCC (Qatar and Kingdom) on the other.

Within South Asia, Joe Biden will have to keep a balance in US relations between Pakistan and India. The irrational US leaning towards India has seriously marginalized Pakistan in last two decades. Pakistan would like that; President Elect Joe Biden must play a vital role towards resolution of long-awaited Kashmir dispute as per the wishes of its subjects. The massive human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOJK), the demographic changes being made by India in the occupied state must be stopped forthwith with the restoration of its pre August 5, 2019 status. In fact, without resolution of Kashmir dispute, there will be no peace in South Asia. While pursuing an independent foreign policy, Pakistan desires a dignified bilateral relationship between Islamabad and Washington. It would like US to respect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and acknowledgement of its heroic contributions against terrorism. Islamabad would also like that; it should not be dictated on the issues of its national interests, especially the project like Gwadar Port, CPEC, Kashmir and nuclear programme. Pakistan would also like US to facilitate its trade through market access of Pakistani goods without any discrimination. Indeed, as a pivotal state in Asia, Pakistani geopolitics can neither be ignored by major powers nor the regional states. Therefore, a win-win situation will be the best way forward in the bilateral relationship of Pakistan and United States.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/prospects-of-pak-us-ties-under-joe-biden/>

Biden's Approach Towards Pak-India By **Khadijah Saeed**

THE whole world has set its awaiting eyes upon the White House as the 46th President of the United States of America is going to take charge tomorrow (20 January). Experts are debating about the contours of the President-elect Joe Biden administration's approach towards different geopolitical hotspots of the American foreign policy. Among these, Biden's anticipated foreign policy approach towards South Asia is of growing importance to regional peace and stability as the two nuclear states – Pakistan and India – have turned cold over the past few years.

Under President Trump, however, the relations between India and the US are cozier than ever. Irrespective of Biden's expectedly reconciliatory approach towards China, the mutual concerns about China will continue to keep both the countries in strategic partnership. Besides a huge level of trade partnership between the two countries, the US desire for greater Indian role in the Pacific will continue to build stronger defence ties with New Delhi. Therefore, China's rise as a mutual threat and a shared responsibility to protect the rule based order in the Indo-Pacific leaves room for both the countries advance their strategic partnership.

Immediate and complete overturn of foreign policy cannot be prophesied by the Biden administration, however, the President elect Joe Biden Presidency will have the institutional stability and case for human rights as among its 'earliest priorities'. Trump's official visit to India in February 2020 was the height of his muted response to the human right violations, especially on the Delhi Pogrom. However, Biden is more critical to human rights violations. The Vice President-elect Kamal Haris, in presidential voiced concerns over Indian human rights violations in Kashmir; she not only reminded Kashmiris that "they are not alone", but also called for a need "to intervene if the situation demands".

On the other hand, the relations between Washington and Islamabad have seen many ebb and flows, more frequently under Trump administration. The cord that connects these two countries is Afghanistan. Following tensions after Trump's severe criticism of Islamabad's inability to crackdown on terrorists, in the last two years of Trump administration, Islamabad and Washington have come to a cordial phase based on US needs and Pakistan's interest. The U.S desire to bring an end to the 'Long War' in Afghanistan and Pakistan's leverage in facilitating the US-Taliban Peace Talks has kept the two countries in close relationship.

President Biden remained relatively favourable to Pakistan under Obama administration for his role in approving Kerry Lugar Bill and appreciating Pakistan's commitment to fight the US-led

global war on terror as the frontline ally. Moreover, Biden's interest in keeping a considerable presence in Afghanistan and strategic relevance of the region is likely to grow Pak-U.S. relations even stronger in the coming years. Also, Biden administration's relatively vocal approach towards Kashmir and human rights gives Pakistan an anchorage to dynamically highlight the issue of disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir in the international community.

In the nutshell, the kind of pro-India tilt visible in Trump's foreign policy is less likely to continue as Biden administration will play by the rules of strategic engagement which means a balance approach is expected; it also means engaging India as a close strategic partner vis-à-vis China but also keeping Pakistan at arm's length to bring stability in Afghanistan. The efforts of conflict resolution between Pakistan and India including Kashmir can be prognosticated by Washington and is inevitable for maintaining a comprehensive strategic environment favourable to Washington's interests in the region.

—The writer is a research scholar at National Defence University, Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/bidens-approach-towards-pak-india/>

Challenge and Solutions of Population Explosion By Prof Abdul Shakoor Shah

ALTHOUGH increasing population is our victory against death and disease, yet population increase is the ultimate cause of wars. In a state with an escalating population, if you're doing nothing, you're losing ground. We all are perturbed about the growing population but the dilemma is we do not bother about it in time. Our eternal foe, hunger, is at our threshold. The world's population is increasing by 1.10 % annually which means 83 million additional people. The worldwide population is expected to touch 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100. 50.4 % of the global population is male and 49.6 % is female.

Pakistan's population is projected to reach over 227 million by 2025. We must make New Year's resolutions to cope with the mounting population. Our future population will comprise younger people on a large scale. Pakistan's 63% population will be below 30 years of age, in other words it means unemployment on an enormous scale. We are bound to create 1.5 million new jobs annually just to maintain the current unemployment rate. Exception of oil-rich countries, no one has succeeded yet to make a breakthrough with high income. High population rate impedes the growth rate of the country in every field. It will also intensify nutrition problems which are already in the worst state.

According to a recent national survey, our 60% population is facing food insecurity and nearly 50% women and children are malnourished. These nutritional inadequacies hinder the development of the intellectual faculties of school-going children and young adults consigned to such diets, and could thus perpetuate intergenerational inequalities of opportunity and income. Human development will jolt back and vital fields like education, health, security, housing and others will get severe setback. Mounting population will badly affect our natural resources. The worsening climatic changes will be triggered up. If population growth is not taken seriously, our social fabric will be shattered. We must follow the Chinese model to stop population shift from suburbs to cities. We have to decentralize our infrastructure and human development projects. Our cities are getting overcrowded from every aspect.

The reason is we have utterly failed to facilitate the people in rural areas. We have focused Lahore as the whole Punjab. We are in dire need to integrate the public and private sector through a transparent accountability system to launch a joint mission in this regard. Government cannot solve every issue solely, it must give due heed to the entrepreneurial private sector to generate the required number of jobs. It seems that the government is determined neither to do something for public welfare nor it will let anyone else do. We should come out of the typical

shell and look for new regional opportunities. We must develop a sense of competitiveness among the citizens with security assurance.

The government must trigger search and research for more natural resources for addressing the population phenomena. Rapid GDP growth is the sure way to curb this monster. We must eradicate all regional and social inequalities in our economic sector for the smooth growth of GDP. It is the need of the hour to review our development history and hew out the roadmap for future planning and development to avoid the past blunders. We must collaborate with emerging world economies in all fields to learn new approaches and techniques to better ourselves. We should implement the best practices of the successful nations in our country in this regard. We have to prefer and respect our local manufacturing to be called Pakistani-Model. We should rely on our own resources so that our local industries can grow.

The method of developing social and human capital, empowering women, raising awareness can prove very fruitful. Empower women. Studies show that women with access to reproductive health services find it easier to break out of poverty, while those who work are more likely to use birth control. We must promote education, it is observed that highly educated people have small families. The government should give incentives to people along with family planning so that the population can be controlled. We can use the Thailand model to reduce population increase. We should give due attention to our agricultural research, agricultural technologies and agricultural production. We cannot kill the people we have either to control birth rate or boost up our agriculture so that the phenomenal overpopulation can be handled. We must plan out to send the immigrants back to their homelands so that overpopulation can be controlled.

Our government should plan to start social marketing on a national scale about the danger of overpopulation. There is a large number of orphan children in our country, they need parental love and care. We can focus on adoption to stop population explosion and the government should give due concession to the families who adopt children in the country. The government should strictly stop child marriage and early marriage especially in rural areas where this problem is in prevalent form. The government can offer baby bonuses to families for controlling the population. Provinces and districts should marginalize population boundaries to keep a check on increasing population in their area. The distribution of funds and subsidies can be linked to population control. The government can start an online program for raising awareness. We must also review our academic syllabus and include lessons about the havoc of population increase on all levels. Let us all exert our energies collectively as one nation to stop the population ball from rolling on.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/challenge-and-solutions-of-population-explosion/>

Diplomatic Triumph for Pakistan By Malik

M Ashraf

LAST Wednesday the situation in the India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) in the backdrop of scrapping Article 370 of the Indian Constitution ending special status of the state and the blatant abuse of human rights was the focus of a debate held at the Westminster Hall of the UK Parliament in which ten MPs belonging to different parties and a minister participated. What transpired at the debate constituted the strongest repudiation of the Indian narrative of the situation in IOJ&K being its internal matter and her indictment as violator of human rights in the state besides advocacy for the need to settle the issue according to the wishes of the people of Kashmir. It would probably be pertinent to briefly mention the observations made by the MPs and the British Minister who participated in the debate.

Sarah Owen MP said “Lockdown in occupied Kashmir was not for the protection of the people but for coercion. More than 500,000 Indian troops have held the people of occupied Kashmir captive. Kashmiri Muslims were also being prevented from going to hospitals. Indian women were being harassed and raped on their doorsteps.” James Barry Daly observed “Tragic incidents of rape and sexual violence are taking place in occupied Kashmir. The lockdown is not like our lockdown. This lockdown attacks the very fundamental human rights. There are people detained in Kashmir who have been waiting for 15 years for a trial and there is not a single word from international community in their support.”

John Spellar said “We reject any argument in relation to Kashmir and Punjab that these are internal matters and of no concern to those outside. Human rights are a universal matter. The current crisis has been deliberately instigated by Indian authorities with their rewriting of the long-standing Constitution. There has also been the change to property law, to try to change the facts on the ground in Kashmir, fundamentally by changing the population and, therefore, trying to secure a different outcome from a possible referendum.” Sara Britcliffe said “The citizens of the region have been living in the world’s most militarized zone, with the fallout damaging the life of the men, women and children of Kashmir with curfews, a ban on communications access, the closing of media outlets and widespread arrest of politicians and human rights activists. We must ensure that we do all we can to protect the fundamental human rights of the Kashmiri people.”

Naz Shah deposed “In Kashmir occupied by 600,000 Indian soldiers, women are raped, political activists are in prisons, Indian Government is changing demography and thousands of non-

Kashmiris are getting domicile. From 2015-2020 Britain sold more than half a billion pounds worth of arms to India which will contribute to shedding the blood of the Kashmiri people". Robbie Moore claimed "No foreign journalists are being allowed into Kashmir by the Indian Government, communication is heavily controlled by Indian authorities. Thousands of people have been arrested and face harassment and imprisonment without due cause including lawyers, small business owners, journalists, students and, of course, human rights activists. Over 300 Kashmiris have been killed since special status was revoked. UK's fundamental values are freedom and democracy. That applies not only to the situation in Kashmir, but around the world".

Paul Bristow reiterated "We would urge Ministers to raise with their Indian counterparts the arbitrary detention of Kashmiri political leaders, enforced lockdown, ban on communication and massive human rights violations. India is a friend so I would urge to discuss with Indians on Kashmir. A resolution to this problem is bilateral approach by Pakistan and India but self-determination is a universal right". Jim Shannon observed" There are still more 400 people who remain in custody under the draconian Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978. There is also a freedom of religion or belief element to the human rights violations of Kashmir, such as the shutting down of many mosques."

Stephen Kinnock asserted" The Labour Party strongly supports the conclusions of the Simla Agreement and agrees that issues involving India, Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir should be negotiated between the parties. Kashmir is the longest unresolved conflict in a heavily militarized zone of the world. We see that the situation on the ground in Kashmir is bleak. Some accounts state that over 95,000 have been killed in Kashmir in the last 30 years alone. The Labour Party will always speak up vociferously in defence of the human rights of the people of Kashmir. Our position on Kashmir has not changed. We support and recognize previous UN resolutions on the rights of the Kashmiri people."

Nigel Adams minister for Asia said" We enjoyed relation with both Pakistan and India. We still believe that it is on India and Pakistan to find political solution for lasting peace according to the wishes of Kashmiri people. Since 2019 we have been closely watching the detentions in India-occupied Kashmir. Any allegations of human rights violations must be investigated promptly. We strongly believe that everyone everywhere should enjoy equal rights and protection". Reportedly UK Secretary of State for Justice, Robert Buckland, replying to a question about the debate said that UK has asked India to lift all restriction and allow a team from British High Commission to visit the occupied territory for a first hand assessment of the situation.

I am particularly intrigued by the remark of John Spellar that India was probably trying to change demographic realities in IO&JK to secure a different outcome from a possible referendum. The

remark makes sense. The Indian leaders probably have it at the back of their mind that they would not be able to hold on to Kashmir for an indefinite period and a time might come when they would have to agree to a plebiscite as enunciated in the UN resolutions. It was, therefore, necessary to change the demographic contours of the State before that eventuality. The foregoing represent a triumph of the diplomatic offensive launched by Pakistan to sensitize the world about illegal action of India in the occupied Kashmir and the brazen violation of human rights by the Indian security forces. It also is a vindication of Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue.

— The Islamabad-based writer is former Director Administration, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/diplomatic-triumph-for-pakistan/>

Biden Administration to Revive Military-to-Military Ties with Pakistan By Anwar Iqbal

The Biden administration sees Pakistan as an “essential partner” in any peace process in Afghanistan and believes that “continuing to build relationships with Pakistan’s military will provide openings for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on key issues,” says its nominated defence chief Gen Lloyd J Austin.

Gen Austin made these remarks during his confirmation hearing for the post of secretary of defence before the United States Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

“Pakistan is an essential partner in any peace process in Afghanistan,” Austin, a former head of the US Central Command, told the committee. “If confirmed, I will encourage a regional approach that garners support from neighbours like Pakistan, while also deterring regional actors, from serving as spoilers to the Afghanistan peace process.”

When asked what changes he would recommend to US relations with Pakistan as the new defence chief, Gen Austin said: “I will focus on our shared interests which include training future Pakistan military leaders through the use of International Military Education and Training funds. Pakistan will play an important role in any political settlement in Afghanistan. We also need to work with Pakistan to defeat al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) and to enhance regional stability.”

Asked if he has perceived any change in Pakistan’s cooperation with the US since the Trump administration’s decision in 2018 to withhold security assistance, Gen Austin said: “I understand Pakistan has taken constructive steps to meet US requests in support of the Afghanistan peace process. Pakistan has also taken steps against anti-Indian groups, such as Lashkar-i-Taiba and Jaish-i-Mohammad, although this progress is incomplete.”

The general, however, acknowledged that “many factors in addition to the security assistance suspension may impact Pakistan’s cooperation, including Afghanistan negotiations and the dangerous escalation following the Pulwama terrorist attack.”

“Pakistan is a sovereign country,” he said when asked what tools and options the US had to influence Pakistan.

“I will press Pakistan to prevent its territory from being used as a sanctuary for militants and violent extremist organisations. Continuing to build relationships with Pakistan’s military will provide openings for the United States and Pakistan to cooperate on key issues.”

Peace deal review

Meanwhile, Tony Blinken, who appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for his confirmation hearing for the post of secretary of state, said he wanted to review the US-Taliban peace deal but clarified that the new administration would also continue the peace process started by the Trump administration.

Blinken, who is a former State Department official, would undertake a review of the peace deal because like the outgoing Trump administration, which negotiated the deal, the new US rulers also want to end the almost 20-year long war in Afghanistan.

“We want to end this so-called forever war,” he insisted. “We want to bring our forces home. We want to retain some capacity to deal with any resurgence of terrorism, which is what brought us there in the first place,” Blinken said. “We have to look carefully at what has actually been negotiated. I haven’t been privy to it yet.”

America’s President-elect Joe Biden has stated that while he would reduce the number of combat troops in Afghanistan, he would not withdraw US military presence.

Last year, during a debate between Democratic presidential candidates, Biden had said: “We can prevent the United States from being the victim of terror coming out of Afghanistan by providing for bases — insist the Pakistanis provide bases for us to air lift from and to move against what we know.”

In his hearing on Tuesday, Blinken also promised to consider the rights of Afghan women and girls whose freedoms were severely curtailed during the Taliban regime.

“I don’t believe that any outcome that they might achieve,” Blinken said of nascent talks between Taliban and the Kabul government, “is sustainable without protecting the gains that have been made by women and girls in Afghanistan over the last 20 years.”

Relations with India

The Biden administration, Blinken said, would also like to continue a close relationship with India.

“India has been a bipartisan success story of our successive administrations. It started towards the end of the Clinton administration,” he said.

“During the Obama administration, we deepened cooperation on defence procurement and information sharing. The Trump administration carried that forward including its concept of Indo-Pacific and to make sure we were working with India so that no country in the region, including China, could challenge its sovereignty.”

The US, he said, would also continue to work with India on concerns that the two countries share about terrorism.

“There are many ways we can deepen that cooperation that successive administrations have put us on,” Blinken told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1602541/biden-administration-to-revive-military-to-military-ties-with-pakistan>

Civil Service Reforms | Editorial

Reforming the bureaucracy had been a major part of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)'s administrative plan. It is no secret that there had been a litigant of complaints against the bureaucratic process—it has been criticised as one which lets corruption off the hook, of not being a meritocratic structure, that its system does not prioritise deliverance and that it is still continuing the colonial-era legacy with its hierarchies and its commitment to structure rather than performance.

While there have been attempts to reform the civil service, with some good efforts being made with the Police system, there was still indisputable need for some institutional change. The PTI government has now unveiled some of the most sweeping changes—the government okayed the Civil Servants (E&D) Rules-2020 in December, and on Wednesday, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood announced some major reforms, with the intention to introduce more accountability.

How do the new reforms help? A consistent complaint with the civil services had been that it was too stable an occupation—an officer could work till retirement, even with weak performance, with little evaluation. The reforms are designed to inculcate more transparency on performance and have more evaluation methods by transferring the authority from a hierarchical one to the new appointing authorities. Promotion will be made with more scrutiny, to hold those with corruption allegations or pending investigations to account. More discipline and efficiency rules have also been announced.

These reforms are good and are bound to increase transparency and keep the civil service on its toes—for a while. The struggle of the bureaucracy is not lack of rules but also a culture of slow work and inefficiency. The government will need to keep checking on the appointing authorities to make sure the rules are being followed; otherwise, that same culture could seep in the accountability mechanisms as well. One step towards countering that would be to make enquiries and the civil service process more public so the authorities are accountable to the public, as well as the government.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/22-Jan-2021/civil-service-reforms>

Time to See the Bigger Picture at UNSC |

Editorial

At the first meeting convened by the long-running Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) to discuss the UN Security Council reforms, Pakistani envoy, Munir Akram, vehemently opposed those calling for a permanent seat at the table.

Criticising the permanent seats' aspirants—India, Brazil, Germany and Japan—for tactfully spreading fears that SC reforms and permanent memberships go hand-in-hand, Ambassador Akram reiterated that while Pakistan “was prepared to breathe new life in IGN ... some states are bent upon killing the process.”

Pakistan holds an immensely special relationship with the UN; enjoying respect because it joined the body within months of gaining independence. Ever since the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to use a framework text to bring forth much-needed and long-overdue reforms in its principal organ six years ago, the country has staunchly championed effective and feasible changes through across-the-table consensus. However, instead of supporting the addition of new permanent members, it believes in the potential of long-term, electable seats that can “meet aspirations of states who want to play a leading role on matters of international peace and security” without diminishing space for smaller members.

Time and again, the state, through its principled membership of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group, has stood for accommodating the needs of the African Group, small island developing states, the Arab Group and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Giving in to the wishes of the G4 nations would only add the voices of more developed countries to the already inundated pool of “victorious powers” of World War 1. This would be at the expense of making the peacekeeping body less representative, less effective and more divided. After all, the last 75 years have only seen the council reducing its representation from 20 to eight per cent of the UN membership.

Founded in 1945 amid the crisis of World War 1, the global peacemaking body and its executive branch, the Security Council, were to uphold their primary aim of maintaining international peace and security. However, fundamental transformations in world affairs can hardly be compared to the power politics of the past. Those with a permanent, veto-carrying seat on the table—the US, the UK, France, Russia and China—can no longer claim lion's share in the global leadership today. With the constantly evolving nature of threats (climate changes and more recently, virus pandemics), renewed geopolitical tensions between East and the West, and the unimaginable dwindling confidence in democratic institutions, the UNSC often finds itself paralysed and dysfunctional on core issues. Kashmir and Palestine remain amongst the most heated and

unresolved conflicts still left in an inconclusive state. While internal polarisations and P-5 divisions lead to deadlocks on key issues, the credibility of the peacekeeping body continues to falter.

If the UNSC is to be made fit to function in the transient world of 2021, full-scale negotiations hold crucial importance. Apart from immediate changes to the representation, accountability measures should also be looked upon. The council would highly benefit from reforming its working methods. Resetting its relationship with the General Assembly so that there exists an equal division of responsibility would ensure a balance between the general membership and the military clout. In recent times, the body's criminally slow proceedings over the COVID pandemic has laid bare its inability to come up with lasting solutions. It took the UNSC three arduous months to pass a resolution for international cooperation as the deadly wave kept on taking countless lives the world over. If not to put out fires, the powers sitting at the helm of the council could at least get serious about cleaning their kitchen to save lives; prevent such catastrophic miseries in the future. Haven't we buried enough dead already? *

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/717809/time-to-see-the-bigger-picture-at-unsc/>

ECONOMY

Year of Growth | Editorial

While the prime minister might have exaggerated the effect of recent upside surprises in export and inflation figures a little, there can be no denying that whatever he said about the need to make business-friendly policies and incentivise industry was spot on. And there can be nothing better than the government dedicating all its energies towards making 2021 a year of growth. But for that the start would need to be rooted in ground realities rather than a false sense of optimism from some recent, very temporary trends. Low inflation, for example, is natural when there is very low growth. So it's good but not in the way we need it to be, especially since there is still artificial inflation in items of daily, necessary use; which itself speaks volumes about the state of the economy.

And exports have impressed, but that is because we faced the first wave of the coronavirus much better than others, just like the PM said, and it enabled us to capture some markets lost to producers still in lockdown. But how long can that trend last now that Pakistan is also firmly in the grip of the second wave and there's no telling really when things might turn for the worse? The right thing to do, as the government is very rightly doing, is target industries with export potential and prop them up for enhanced and improved production. Yet that too would first require a comprehensive audit of previously called zero-rated industries that were given all sorts of support for the longest time possible and there was still not much improvement in exports.

The good thing about the prime minister's new year's resolution is that it gives the feeling that the government has decided that increased revenue through improved exports is the way forward. Hopefully we can now begin the long process of identifying new export trends and transforming our own production machinery accordingly while all the time concentrating on value addition in our export mix. Governments usually shy away from such long-term projects because more visible items like power plants and motorways tend to fetch easier votes. But they fail to realise that such projects nonetheless generate a wealth of jobs and earning in the process, so it is actually unfair to deprive the electorate of such opportunities. So far this administration seems determined to go ahead with such a revolutionary transformation of our manufacturing sector. Let's hope that it succeeds.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/708729/year-of-growth/>

What Economic Experts Are Certain Of **About 2021: More Global Uncertainty –** **Analysis By Frank Kane**

The year just gone was the Great Accelerator. This time last year, the experts were predicting a slight downturn in global economic growth, continuing tensions in global trading patterns, and a tricky but negotiable time for oil markets as renewable sources slowly bit into demand.

Instead, 2020 was the year of the biggest economic downturn in nearly a century, a brief but dramatic collapse in world commerce, and the most tumultuous year for crude oil in 50 years. The COVID-19 pandemic seized every negative trend in the global economy — and made it worse.

In the Middle East, especially among the oil-exporting nations, the pattern was the same. Economic contraction and plummeting oil revenues exacerbated fiscal pressures that had already been building, with the result that governments had to live with a higher level of debt than they would have liked, while dipping into reserves to tide them over the downturn. Fortunately, most of them still have deep financial pockets.

Against that background of unpredictability, it would be rash to make any firm projections for what 2021 will bring.

Ellen Wald, consultant and author of the book “Saudi Inc,” wrote: “The truth is that on this New Year’s Eve, we hang a new calendar and head into the future with no certainty.”

There are many variables, but the big one remains the course of the pandemic and the effectiveness (or otherwise) of measures to combat it. The coronavirus is the determining factor for the global economy — most analysts agree there is a direct linear correlation between ending the pandemic and resuming economic growth.

The consultancy IHS Markit believes there is light at the end of the tunnel: “While the COVID-19 virus will stay with us throughout 2021, the rapid development and deployment of vaccines will enable a transition to a new post-pandemic economy. Thus, we approach 2021 with a mixture of caution and hope.”

On the other hand, there seems little likelihood the world will be able to officially declare the pandemic over in 2021. The World Health Organization issued its highest category designation —

“public health emergency of international concern” — last January when there were fewer than 100 cases worldwide, and it seems virtually impossible death rates will fall back to that level this year.

While global markets have taken heart from the speedy rollout of vaccines, financial and logistical challenges mean it will be a long time before vaccines reach all, or even most, of the world — assuming people can be persuaded to take them.

Against this backdrop, the economic forecasters are grappling. The International Monetary Fund — the most widely accepted guide to the health of the global economy — predicts that global GDP will rebound to 5.2 percent growth in 2021, after a 4.4 percent crash in the “Great Lockdown”, but admits “the forecast rests on public health and economic factors that are inherently difficult to predict.

Other experts are less conservative. Morgan Stanley, the American investment bank, thinks the rebound will be 6.4 percent globally this year. Its chief economist, Chetan Ahya, said: “We maintain that consumers have driven the recovery, and investment growth — a reflection of the private corporate sector’s risk tolerance and a key feature of any self-sustaining recovery — is bouncing back as well.”

Ahya added: “By March or April, we expect all geographies and all sectors of the global economy to be joining the recovery, with a stunning 9 percent GDP growth in China driving the resurgence.”

That rosy view is not shared by all commentators. “Headwinds to robust near-term growth include COVID-19-related lockdowns in early 2021, lingering consumer and business caution, diminishing fiscal support, and the strains of rising public and private debt,” said IHS Markit, trimming its own GDP forecast to 4.6 percent in 2021.

For the other big engine of global growth — the US — the signals are more confusing. The IMF predicted American GDP would fall by 4.3 percent in 2020 before recovering 3.1 percent this year. But that forecast was made before the divisive and disruptive November election, which still has the capacity to impact the US economy.

Europe remains the potential problem in 2021, bedeviled by the impact of Brexit and the recent surge in new forms of the virus. A big drop of 8.3 percent in 2020, according to the IMF, will be only partially compensated by a 5.2 percent rise in 2021.

For the Middle East, the IMF predicted a 4.1 percent decline followed by a 3 percent increase in 2021, with Saudi Arabia down by 5.4 percent in 2020 before recovering 3.1 percent, roughly in line with the assumptions made in the Kingdom's own December budget.

Others are more optimistic about the pace of the Saudi recovery. Nasser Saidi, economics expert, told Arab News that he was penciling in 3.5 percent GDP growth for the Kingdom this year, as recovery from the economic lockdowns coincided with the diversification measures of the Vision 2030 strategy to reduce oil dependence.

One of the debates in the Kingdom in 2020 was whether the government had provided enough fiscal stimulus to combat the effects of the pandemic. While the amount of stimulus was low in comparison with other G20 countries, the counter-argument is that Saudi policymakers took such swift action to slow the spread of the virus that the drastic fiscal interventions of other countries were unnecessary.

Saidi agrees. "They did not need to inject as much as other G20 countries," he said.

The other big imponderable in 2021 is whether the benign financial market conditions of last year can continue. Some pessimists spent much of the past year anticipating a big correction in global financial markets, which kept on soaring to new levels even as the global economy was heading deeper into the doldrums.

The S&P Index, the main barometer of global equity health, appeared to defy gravity, ending the year 15 percent higher at a new all-time record. The doubters pointed out that much of that increase was down to government stimulus packages that reached more than \$11 trillion globally in the course of the year.

They also stressed that most of the equity value increase was due to the performance of a handful of US technology companies like Apple and Amazon, which exploited the new world of social distancing and telecommunicating during the pandemic. There appears little to contradict the argument that these companies have already reached a post-pandemic new normality, and that the equity rise will continue in 2021.

In Saudi Arabia, financial markets also swam against the lockdown tide in 2020. The Tadawul had one of its best ever years, and generated big sums in initial public offerings. Against a background of ongoing economic recovery and improving oil revenue, most equities analysts see that rising trend continuing this year, when the privatization pace is due to accelerate.

For the Kingdom, as ever, much depends on the health of global energy markets. There were signs of a rebalancing and recovery in crude oil at the end of the year, with the OPEC+ alliance proving effective in limiting supply and putting a new floor under prices — \$50 a barrel was sustained for most of December. Some analysts believe it could spike to as much as \$65 in 2021.

If the coronavirus led to the “great reset” — in the words of the World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab — then economic forecasters must be hoping 2021 will see that fundamental rearrangement of the global economy continuing, but at a slower rate. The year just gone provided enough excitement to last a decade.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/02012021-what-economic-experts-are-certain-of-about-2021-more-global-uncertainty-analysis/>

Global Economic Outlook For 2021 By

Rashid A Mughal

YEAR 2020 has been a year of disaster for the global economy. All the predictions and forecasts made in January 2020 proved to be a wishful thinking. Covid-19 wrecked the entire economic system throughout the world and jolted the major economic powers — USA, China, Europe and played havoc with the emerging markets and developing countries. The IMF and World Bank revised their forecasts four times in 2020 as Covid-19 continued its ruthless and deadly journey from East to West and North to South with a million and half deaths, so far and the numbers rising exponentially every day. Under these horrifying circumstances the economic growth and recovery in 2021 is expected to be low, slow and timid.

However ,OECD has some good news as according to it “The global economy will gain momentum over the coming two years, with global GDP at pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021. After a sharp decline this year, global GDP is projected to rise by around 4.2% in 2021 and a further 3.7% in 2022,” the report said. The latest OECD economic outlook report, however, revised its global economy shrinkage forecast to 4.2%, down from 4.5% in September. It highlighted that for the first time since the pandemic began, there is hope for the future due to news of effective vaccines, but the near-term outlook remains very uncertain. The organization warned that governments will have to continue using their policy instruments actively, with better targeting to help those hardest hit by the pandemic.

The report projected that the recovery will not be equal across countries. For instance, China, which started recovering earlier, is expected to grow strongly with 8% in 2021, while OECD economies will rebound, growing 3.3%. China is the only country among OECD members that saw growth in 2020, with 1.8%. The contribution of Europe and North America to global growth will remain smaller than their weight in the world economy. The euro zone GDP is expected to rise 3.6%, while the US is set to rise 3.2% in 2021 and 3.3% in 2021. Notably, the UK is one of the countries which suffered the steepest GDP drop in 2020, with 11.2%. The country is predicted to recover in 2021 with a GDP increase of 4.2%. In report, contraction for the Turkish economy, which was 2.9% in Sept, was reduced to 1.3% for 2020 . The growth forecast of Turkish economy in 2021 was also reduced to 2.9%, which was estimated 3.9% in September, while the OECD estimated Turkey will grow 3.2% in 2022.

Morgan Stanley projects strong global GDP growth of 6.4% for 2021—led first by emerging markets, followed by reopening economies in the U.S. and Europe—in a macro outlook that

diverges from the consensus. Rising COVID-19 case numbers in the U.S. and Europe make it difficult right now to envision a return to normal. U.S. GDP growth is expected to hit 5.3% in 2021, Goldman said-above consensus estimates of 3.8%. The firm anticipates that the unemployment rate will drop to 5.3% at the end of next year, down from 6.7% in November and a record 14.7% in April, 2020, the highest level since the Great Depression.

Though the jobless rate is still high, it's been dropping steadily since peaking in April 2020. And if that trend continues, more jobs could open up in 2021. Still, we can't count on the global economy staging a full recovery in 2021 — especially not in the first part of the year. The coronavirus pandemic has done a number on the U.S. economy. Not only has it cost millions of Americans their jobs, but it has forced thousands of small businesses to permanently shut down, thereby hurting communities and contributing to the general unemployment crisis. And while both the stock and housing markets have performed well this year, the general economy is still worlds away from a complete recovery. So no miracles should be expected in 2021.

But will things get better in 2021? Without a crystal ball, it's impossible to tell. Right now, COVID-19 cases are still popping up at an alarming rate, and hospital systems throughout the country are finding themselves overwhelmed. Meanwhile, counties around the nation are imposing restrictions in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus, and while those may help from a public health perspective, from an economic one, they can be devastating.

There's some good news, however. First, there are a number of promising coronavirus vaccines in the pipeline that may be available to the general public as early as April 2021. Already the Vaccination for front line workers, doctors, nurses, hospital staff and people aged 70 plus, has started. If enough people get vaccinated, it could help quell the outbreak. Still, we can't count on the economy staging a full recovery in 2021 — especially not in the first part of the year. But one thing we do know is that the start of 2021 is likely to be the same rocky continuation of 2020, and while there is reason to think things will improve, that could take months. As such, here are a few moves to make in case the economy doesn't end up looking much better by end of next year.

Hopefully, jobs will become more plentiful in the coming year, not less. But you never know what impact the recession will have, so a good bet is to boost your emergency fund if you have spare cash in your current paychecks. In fact, at a minimum, you should aim for three months' worth of living expenses in savings, but if you can do better, you'll buy yourself even more protection in light of the economic uncertainty that abounds. Debt can be dangerous at any time, but if you lose your job or see your income take a hit, it could be catastrophic. Unless a true emergency

arises that your income and savings can't cover, make it a point to avoid debt until the economy is more stable.

Given the way the coronavirus has been spreading, now may not be the best time to go out and sign up to work the cash register at your local supermarket or wait tables at a nearby restaurant. But if you're able to find a secondary gig to do on the side from the comfort of home, or in a manner that's not hazardous to your health, you'll buy yourself some financial security as we head into an iffy time. Say you're able to work as a web developer from home a few nights a week or walk other people's dogs while they're out of town. If your hours at your main job are cut in the New Year, you'll have your side gig to fall back on. And having that income stream at your disposal could also help you build a healthier savings account balance while steering clear of debt. While there is reason to believe the economy will improve in 2021, but whether it will recover fully is the big question. Much will depend on how well the pandemic is managed and what aid, if any, is finally delivered to the public in the form of a relief bill or financial assistance. While it's always good to hope for the best, it's important to be realistic about the fact that the global economy's recovery may be prolonged. Prepare for that possibility so you can minimize your own financial stress during what's apt to be another interesting year.

— The writer is former DG (Emigration) and consultant ILO, IOM.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/global-economic-outlook-for-2021/>

Pakistan-China Trade in Iffy Times By S M Naveed

PAKISTAN-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been striving hard to continue trade relations between business communities of Pakistan and China despite prevailing Corona pandemic. Besides organizing online webinars and workshops, a mega exhibition titled as “Pakistan-China Industrial Expo 2020” was also arranged last month in Royal Palm Country Club Lahore, which was open to the visitors of both the countries offline as well as online. The exhibition led the way in delivering the most exquisite opportunities for all participants in different sectors including CNC machinery, construction machinery, new energy, building material, agricultural machinery, plastic machinery, hardware, chemical and auto parts.

Pakistan and China share close and friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in May 1951. Over the years, this relationship has blossomed into an “All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership”. The two neighbouring countries’ bilateral relationship and trade is characterized by feelings of mutual trust, respect and goodwill toward each other. There is a regular, highest-level exchange of visits between the two countries. Pakistan-China strategic cooperation has grown in the last several decades. According to the statistics of Pakistani customs, so far, China has been Pakistan’s largest trade partner and the second export destination country for consecutive years, and topping the FDI original country for consecutive years. Along with the constant upward trend of the China-Pakistan trade, a rising concern on trade deficit with China has been echoing in the Pakistani business communities.

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister has apparently denied the idea that in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic there will be any stopping of trade between Pakistan and China. In an interview with Global Times in Beijing, he said that amid virus outbreak, the two great nations maintained transport and trade ties. He said that China had shared her experience battling the deadly coronavirus with Pakistan and had sent teams to assess the situation and provided testing kits in thousands. Just a few days after the visit of Pakistan’s President to China, where he shook hands with Xi Jinping during this period of physical distancing, the Chinese government sent medical supplies that have already arrived in Karachi. The most sought after item in many countries today is the planeload of supplies: 500,000 face masks, including 50,000 N-95 masks, donated to the provincial government. President’s visit, the first by any nation to go to Beijing following the Covid-19 outbreak, was seen by diplomacy experts as a sign of Pakistan’s unity at a difficult time for China.

Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Pakistani Senate, said, “Not only did we display trust in our friendship, but it was a scientifically sound decision, as there is not a single Covid-19 case coming from China in Pakistan.” It appears the decision has yielded results. China is offering Pakistan preferential treatment in providing the medical supplies desperately needed. The medical equipment sent by China today and in high demand in Pakistan is on the wish-list of all doctors worldwide. By the morning of 30 March 1,593 confirmed cases of coronavirus were present in the country. In Pakistan, Digital marketing and trade do not have many professionals and this field is still relatively new. Pakistan-China trade is directly connecting the companies from both countries and providing them chance for business match-making.

Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry has always been on the forefront to server cross-border business delegations through its special services which includes but not limited to direct interaction with top business leaders of China-Pakistan through digital meeting, Business match-making, offering conversational Chinese language course for removing language barrier, Capacity building of local entrepreneurs with the collaboration of Chinese experts under the auspices of National Productivity Organization. Under the prevailing global pandemic it is important to strengthen the bilateral trade between two nations. To increase the trade, many initiatives have been taken to digitally link Pakistan-China companies with Chinese enterprises of electronics, auto-spare parts, machinery, metal, industrial parts, and hardware primarily to strengthen bilateral trade of industries under the promotional package of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The concept of online business interaction is to provide contemporary solutions for carrying out normal business operations by avoiding physical concentration of business people.

—The writer is an industrialist and currently also President Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-china-trade-in-iffy-times/>

Economic Development and E-commerce By

Durdana Najam

Pakistan's economic progress is directly linked to the participation of its youth in the economic process. For their effective involvement, we will have to take a departure from the routine processes of doing business and present organisations new opportunities based on science and technology. One area to explore in this regard is e-commerce. From the dot-com era to digitalisation, businesses have undergone a complete infrastructural overhaul. During the 90s, the market lacked a secure financial transactional system for online purchases. Only organisations with an appetite to take a risk and tolerant to uncertainty would plunge into this less trodden path. That is no more the case. Today digital solutions are increasingly explored by organisations to compete successfully in the international market.

The Covid-19 crisis has brought a change in customer behaviour for more than 65% of companies. People went online to buy essential products. Sales categories such as groceries, pharmaceuticals, health and hygiene products, restaurant delivery, as well as financial services saw the largest increases in the Covid-19 crisis through both third-party online marketplace and e-commerce. This trend has also caught up in Pakistan and today almost all retailers have switched to online shopping. Those unable to establish an online retail organisation are using Facebook and Instagram to create a market for their products. In short, the prospects of growth through online sales are huge and promising.

The private sector in Pakistan is contributing significantly towards business transformation processes and enhanced readiness of consumers to embrace e-commerce. Though there are countless initiatives on-board today, such as Zameen.com, Daraz.pk and Pakwheels.com, one name that stands out is that of Saqib Azhar. He is running an organisation with the name of Enabler. This venture aims to bring more people into the folds of e-commerce with the purpose to eradicate poverty through job creation. According to Azhar, e-commerce is a prosperity enabler. He facilitates people in two categories. One, he aligns his clients to the e-commerce opportunities in the online marketplace; two, he trains his clients on how to run the online venture to earn a living.

Pakistan faces an acute shortage of skilled labour and there is a dire need to bridge this gap. According to UNICEF's report titled 'Developing Skills in Youth to Succeed in an Evolving South Asian Economy: A case of Pakistan', the labour market of Pakistan is beset with several challenges that have caught it into a skill trap. Employers are forced to settle for the low-skilled workforce because of a strong disconnect between the demand for a specific skill and its supply.

To correct the course of Pakistan's economy we have to equip citizens with skills they need to compete in the global market.

In his book, *Passive Income*, Azhar has given a detailed account of the varying opportunities we have at our disposal to enhance economic development through skill development related to e-commerce. Recently he met President of Pakistan Arif Alvi and was given assurance of complete government cooperation in his endeavour. However, to make e-commerce successful, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and the labour will have to converge on a single platform. It is about having a common narrative leading to a unified policy on e-commerce. Anything short of that can be perilous to Pakistan's progress in this regard.

Having said that, the question is what steps Pakistan would have to take for the development of e-commerce. One, we have to agree that e-commerce is the new digital solution for business ventures and, therefore, support companies facilitating online transactions like PayPal. Two, we have to remove impediments in the access of internet facility for almost everyone in the country. This would also include enabling a widespread 4-G connectivity. Third, we would have to update our curriculum and include subjects such as marketing, sales, advertising and e-commerce. Historically, the disconnect between skilled labour and entrepreneurs has been identified to the disengagement between industries and academia. Outdated and irrelevant curricula taught in vocational institutes and even in universities have been producing an irrelevant workforce. Therefore, for a healthy economic development it is essential to remove these institutional inefficiencies along with establishing a culture of research and development that supports e-commerce. Fourth, we will have to digitalise our business structure on international standards so that e-commerce becomes a way of doing business rather than an exception.

Having almost assumed the status of a messiah, all our bets are now on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, to bring us the long-cherished economic boost. For a full advantage of this so-called game-changer project, Pakistan cannot rely on a traditional method of doing business. By increasing the uptake of e-commerce and digital solutions, Pakistan can effectively address its widening inequality, reduce cost of doing business and create an enabling environment where a taxation regime facilitates rather than obstructs the system.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279849/economic-development-and-e-commerce>

Economic Growth | Editorial

MOODY'S Investors Service expects Pakistan's economy to grow by a modest 1.5pc in FY2021, much higher than the World Bank's projection of 0.5pc but lower than the government's target of 2.1pc and the State Bank's estimates of 1.5pc to 2.5pc. Unlike the World Bank that recently predicted the country's growth would remain lacklustre even over the next two fiscal years at just 1.3pc, the research arm of Moody's Credit Rating Agency sees the economy expanding to 4.4pc in FY2022. The wide divergence in growth projections for the present year is not surprising as these are based mainly on different sets of data and policies, short- to medium-term trends, global economic drifts and other variables. Yet a reading of the texts accompanying the differing forecasts underlines the challenge to the subdued recovery from the Covid-19 shock: resurgence of the virus. Even though short-term macroeconomic trends are showing improvements over the last year when the economy contracted by 0.4pc for the first time in 68 years, Moody's expects economic activities to remain below pre-Covid-19 levels for some time and vulnerable to successive waves of infection.

The agency says the perceived risks to Pakistan's economy are lower than for similarly rated peers, as it is a relatively closed economy with lower dependence on exports and private capital flows, besides limited trade and supply chain linkages which reduce its exposure to weaker global demand. But this 'advantage' will also prove to be a major snag even after the world recovers from the pandemic. The slow economic revival may hurt government finances, as is reflected by the FBR missing its target for the first half of FY2021, with Moody's anticipating the budget deficit at 8pc of GDP compared to the target of 7pc. The agency acknowledges that different initiatives and fiscal stimulus packages given by the government and the central bank helped put the macroeconomy back on the growth track but did not fully offset the pandemic's impact on the economy. That means private credit growth will reach only a modest 5pc to 7pc, with banks facing the prospect of rising defaults from companies and households because of economic hardship amid the pandemic when repayment of rescheduled loans becomes due in the next few months. In other words, it isn't time for the government to declare victory; rather, it is time to tweak policies and undertake structural reforms to help the economy get back on its feet on a sustainable basis.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1601552/economic-growth>

Trading Across Borders By Dr Pervez Tahir

With the economy in difficult straits and its spokespersons desperate, the tendency to keep catching at a straw continues. Instead of the December deficit in the current account bringing the surplus celebrators to their senses, there is more to rejoice. An FBR presser claims that its new initiatives have improved Pakistan's standing on the Trading Across Border Index from 142nd to 111th. The index is a subset of the Doing Business index of the World Bank. Essentially, it measures the time and cost of documentary compliance, border compliance and domestic transport. The data relates to May 2019. The presser also notes that border facilitation is amongst the top priority areas of the comprehensive trade framework of the government.

This is as far as it goes, given our increasingly restrictive borders. As a result of the constraints behind the borders, trade with neighbours is well below the potential, and declining. The largest trade volume is with China, but with a massive imbalance. In FY20, exports were \$1.7 billion against the imports of \$12.1 billion. This is a special case as a large bulk of the imports are related to CPEC investments. As major projects near completion, imports have begun to decline. In FY19, imports were of the order of \$15.7 billion. A worrying thing is that exports were still around \$1.7 billion. As opposed to friendly China is the unfriendly India. In this special case, Pakistan's exports in FY20 were \$8 million and imports were \$380 million. A third special case is Iran. The US sanctions and the Arab influence have led to negligible exports and imports of \$438 million in FY20.

Afghanistan is, however, the most interesting case. Neither friend nor foe, but the trade relationship is again nothing to write home about. In FY20, exports to Afghanistan stood at \$855 million and imports were \$473 million. Exports were \$1.5 only two years ago and \$2.1 billion in 2013. In the peak years of the War on Terror, the exports to Afghanistan increased from a mere \$168 million in FY02 to \$1.06 billion by FY06. It became the third largest export destination after the US and UAE and maintained this position until FY10. In FY11, with exports peaking to \$2.3 billion, Afghanistan became the second largest export destination by displacing UAE. Throughout, imports were an insignificant proportion of the exports. How is it then that exports have recently fallen to less than a billion dollars from over \$2 billion in earlier years? Afghanistan's exports to Pakistan, from an insignificant start, are now 55% of Pakistan's exports to that country. This is the state of affairs when Afghanistan is rid with conflict. Once the country finds peace, tables might turn against Pakistan. Iran and India have already gained stronger footprints in Afghanistan. Iran, indeed, has already replaced Pakistan as the major source of imports into Afghanistan.

Improvement in the Trading Across Border Index is fine. But there is more to constraints behind the border. Closure of borders at the drop of a hat is one. Informal controls at the borders is another. The recent optimism expressed at the bilateral review of the Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement died down the moment the Afghan delegation crossed Torkham. The thorny issue of allowing Afghanistan its most economical land route to imports from India is becoming thornier. If fencing of borders fences minds as well, the free or freer flow of trade is not likely to follow. Bangladesh stands at the bottom of the index with a rank of 176, but it trades several times more than Pakistan across its borders.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2280866/trading-across-borders>

Pakistan-China Trade in the Hour of Crisis

By S M Naveed

PAKISTAN China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been striving hard to continue trade relations between business communities of Pakistan and China despite prevailing pandemic. Besides organizing online webinars and workshops, a mega exhibition titled as “Pakistan China Industrial Expo 2020” was also arranged last month in Royal Palm Country Club Lahore, which was open to the visitors of both the countries offline as well online.

The exhibition led the way in delivering the most exquisite opportunities for all participants in different sectors including CNC Machinery, Construction Machinery, New Energy, Building Material, Agricultural Machinery, Plastic Machinery, Hardware, Chemical, and Auto parts.

Pakistan and China share close and friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations in May 1951. Over the years, this relationship has blossomed into an “All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership”. The two neighbouring countries’ bilateral relationship and trade is characterized by feelings of mutual trust, respect and goodwill toward one another. There is regular, highest-level exchange of visits between the two countries. Pakistan-China strategic cooperation has grown in the last several decades.

According to the statistics of Pakistani customs, so far, China has been Pakistan's largest trade partner and the second export destination country for 5 consecutive years, and topping the FDI original country for 6 consecutive years. Along with the constant upward trend of the China-Pakistan trade, a rising concern on trade deficit with China has been echoing in the Pakistani business communities. Pakistan's Foreign Minister has apparently denied the idea that in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic there will be any stopping of trade between Pakistan and China. In an interview with Global Times in Beijing, he said that amid virus outbreaks, the two great nations maintained transport and trade ties.

He said that China had shared her experience battling the deadly coronavirus, with Pakistan and had sent teams to assess the situation and provided testing kits in thousands. Just a few days after the visit of Pakistan's President to China, where he shook hands with Xi Jinping during this period of physical distancing, the Chinese government sent medical supplies that have already arrived in Karachi.

The most sought after item in many countries today is the planeload of supplies: 500,000 face masks, including 50,000 N-95 masks, donated to the provincial government. President's visit, the first by any nation to go to Beijing following the Covid-19 outbreak, was seen by diplomacy experts as a sign of Pakistan's unity at a difficult time for China.

Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Pakistani Senate, said, "Not only did we display trust in our friendship, but it was a scientifically sound decision, as there is not a single Covid-19 case coming from China in Pakistan." It appears the decision has yielded results. China is offering Pakistan preferential treatment in providing the medical supplies desperately needed. The medical equipment sent by China today and in high demand in Pakistan is on the wish-list of all doctors worldwide. By the morning of 30 March 1,593 confirmed cases of coronavirus were present in the country. In Pakistan, digital marketing and trade does not have many professionals and this field is still relatively new. Pakistan-China trade is directly connecting the companies from both countries and providing them chance for business match making.

Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry, has always been on the forefront to server cross border business delegations through its special services which includes but not limited to direct interaction with top business leaders of China/Pakistan through digital meeting, business match making, offering conversational Chinese language course for removing language barrier, capacity building of local entrepreneurs with the collaboration of Chinese experts under the auspices of National Productivity Organization.

Under the prevailing global pandemic it is important to strengthen the bilateral trade between two nations. To increase the trade, many initiatives have been taken to digitally link Pakistan-China companies with Chinese enterprises of electronics, auto-spare parts, machinery, metal, industrial parts and hardware primarily to strengthen bilateral trade of industries under the promotional package of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The concept of online business interaction is to provide contemporary solutions for carrying out normal business operations by avoiding physical concentration of business people.

—The writer is an industrialist and currently also President Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-china-trade-in-the-hour-of-crisis/>

The Current State of the Chinese Economy

By Shahid Javed Burki

Pakistan's relations with China would depend to a considerable degree on the latter's economic situation. The promised set of investments China has included in the CPEC investment programme would yield returns if the Chinese economy remains vibrant and dynamic. Recent data released by the authorities shows a rate of growth in GDP of 2.3% in 2020, making China the only major world economy to show positive increase during the year. The country's GDP surpassed a milestone in 2020, topping ¥100 trillion or about \$15 trillion. "In an extraordinary year, China's economy was able to record an extraordinary accomplishment,' Ning Jizhe, head of the Chinese statistics bureau told journalists. 'It's a performance that is satisfactory to the people, watched by the world, and can be recorded in the annals of history.' The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences predicted this month, that China could grow 7.8% in 2021 as it fully bounced back, a pace that would be reminiscent of prior decades. But that was not guaranteed."

Whereas most other large economies suffered from the spreading Covid-19, in China, where the disease had originated the economy dipped into negative territory only once, during the first quarter of 2020. That was when authorities locked down Hubei Province and its capital Wuhan. Senior Chinese leaders including Wang Yi, its globe-trotting foreign minister, told the world that his country's fast recovery could lift the rest of the world. International trade would be a major contributor. Chinese officials said that exports hit an all-time high of \$2.6 trillion in 2020. Despite a bitter trade war with Trump's America, China's trade surplus with the United States reached a record \$13.6 billion for the year. China's share of world exports rose to a record 14.3%.

China's robust economic performance was reflected in the value of its currency, the yuan or renminbi. Through January 11, 2021, the US dollar was worth ¥6.47, compared with ¥7.16 in May 2020. Beijing has kept its currency on a tight leash; increasing its value seemed to be a part of government policy.

One of the reasons for the appreciation of the value of the Chinese currency is that its central bank has kept its interest rates at a level higher than those of other major world currencies. This has attracted foreign capital deposits into the banking system. According to one assessment, "a strong currency has benefits for China too. Chinese consumers can more ably buy imported goods, helping Beijing nurture a new generation of shoppers. It looks good to economists and policymakers who have long been pressing China to loosen up its tight control of the country's financial system."

It is not unusual for even serious economists to look at the same economy from very different angles. I was director of World Bank's China Operations when, in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and disintegrated. The Soviet leadership that oversaw this transition wanted to recast the Russian economy in the image of the West. Soon after the end of the USSR, Russia applied for and received membership in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. At that time, both institutions had developed a strong belief in the sets of policies that came to be known under the broad heading of the Washington Consensus. This approach to policymaking minimised the role of the state in economic management. Private sector and the entities that functioned in it were to be left alone to find their own way in the economy. With the Washington Consensus becoming the guiding philosophy, Moscow was advised to quickly move towards this style of economic management. This quick transition was called the "big bang approach" to aligning the former socialist economies with those in the West. The magazine, *The Economist*, wrote a couple of strong editorials suggesting that Beijing should follow Moscow in adopting the big bang approach to making the transition.

I had a couple of conversations with Rupert Penant Rea who was then the editor of the London-based magazine. I told him that I would not advise the Chinese to follow the Russian example. They should reduce the reach of the state in the lives of the people but do so gradually and bring in the private sector to perform the services it would be better at managing. Housing was a good example. We in the bank, after doing some serious economic work, convinced the authorities in China to let housing be a private sector activity. The Chinese agreed to try our model of making the transition from state ownership of housing to private ownership. This would first be done on a pilot basis in Tsingtao City near Beijing. The World Bank staff designed the pilot programme for making the transition. The Chinese watched the pilot carefully and when they were persuaded the transition would work, they brought the private sector into home ownership. I use this as an example of how Chinese state involvement can be viewed so differently by economic experts.

"China's economy continues to power ahead with remarkable momentum, leaving other major economies, most of which are still struggling to register some semblance of growth in the dust," said Eswar Prasad, a professor at Cornell University and former China director for the IMF. "China has cemented its position as the primary driver of what has been dismal global economic recovery." Prasad's comment was made after Beijing released the latest economic data. He was of the view that a stronger renminbi "will take more than currency appreciation to get the China-US relationship back on even keel, although this certainly removes one of the potential flash points," for the new Biden administration. But some economists pointed out that China's recovery, while impressive at first glance, belied a return to old tactics that China had hoped to shift away from; debt fueled spending on infrastructure and reliance on dirty heavy industries, including state-owned coal and steel production and retail that could help the middle class. For

them although the numbers were good, the state of the economy appeared fragile. Real wages had stagnated compared to GDP. “Growth last year came from real estate and infrastructure investment which is a kind of bad growth that China for years has relied on,” said Michael Pettis, a professor of finance at Peking University. Yes, some things did turn out well, economic activity grew, and unemployment was brought down, but many other indexes performed very badly.”

Several commentators feared that the arrival of Covid-19 virus and the response to it of the Chinese authorities could have adverse economic consequences. For instance, Chinese officials cancelled public gatherings associated with the Chinese New Year. “Reduced confidence and travel during the Chinese New Year holidays in February could hamper” first quarter, said Louis Kujis, an economist at Oxford Economics. “But for now, we think the risk of major economic impact is low, given China’s track record of containing outbreaks.” Pakistan can count on at least one economy on its borders for remaining strong and robust.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 26th, 2021.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2281325/the-current-state-of-the-chinese-economy>

Global Cooperation | Editorial

While addressing the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), PM Imran Khan pushed for the importance of striving for global welfare in the midst of a disabling pandemic. In recognition of the barriers that developing countries still have to overcome, he urged the international community to incorporate special provisions in their foreign policies to provide relief to all those struggling to keep up in such trying times. Promoting such levels of cooperation through diplomatic means is commendable and needs to continue to inspire positive change throughout the world.

According to his speech, Imran Khan highlighted the dire need for an equitable supply of COVID-19 vaccines, debt relief, the return of stolen and frozen assets as well as the provision of additional financial aid for fighting the virus and climate change alike. Without such help, developing countries stand to lose more people to poverty, hunger and disease. Considering such associated risks, it is vital for prominent members of the government, especially heads of states, to make sure that they are heard on a worldwide platform. Through the application of his welfare model on an international scale, our PM has not only addressed the grievances of the developing

states but has also proposed viable solutions that can be implemented by those who have abundant capacity to help.

Such diplomatic efforts to incur greater collaboration are a marker of good governance and fortunately. There is no denying that many countries like Pakistan are suffering with crippling debt, inefficient national and local bodies, rising inflation, unstable economies, extreme scarcity of resources and the inability to produce and procure vaccines in abundance. This paints a grim picture for all those living within the nation, who battle a lowering quality of life as well as the coronavirus. The only way to get through this is with the empathetic support of our developed counterparts.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/27-Jan-2021/global-cooperation>

EDUCATION

Matter of Reopening Schools | Editorial

Federal and provincial education ministers are set to put their heads together once again and decide what to do about reopening educational institutions across the country. All such institutions were closed on the advice of the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) from 26 November 2020 to 10 January 2021. But now it seems that the high number of infections and deaths from the second wave of the coronavirus, as well as the news about the new, more easily transmissible variant making its way to Pakistan, is forcing authorities to push the date of reopening further ahead.

This is a very serious matter of course since many of the problems brought about by the pandemic, especially the widespread economic recession, will go away slowly but the break in students' education across the world could make it something of a generational problem. Both schools and households are doing what they can to manage the situation as well as possible, but in countries like Pakistan where internet penetration is still low and poverty levels are very high a very large number of children are just left outside the loop for no fault of theirs. Therefore the urgency expressed by different sections of society, not just schools since they also have business interests to protect, shows that there is a growing desire for schools to open sooner rather than later.

That does not mean anybody wants to compromise in any way on the safety of the children or the school staff. Education has thus presented one of the biggest problems to governments across the world. For far too many countries, children dropping out of schools also automatically translates into yet higher poverty and crime levels. These are the kind of issues that will confound administrations long after vaccines provide a credible level of defence against the coronavirus. Education ministers due to meet tomorrow to discuss the matter have their work cut out for them. For there are no easy choices here. That is why their focus would naturally be on choosing the option that will minimise the risk of transmission most forcefully. And if that means keeping all educational institutions shut till the storm lightens up a bit, then so be it.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/709083/matter-of-reopening-schools/>

Sacrificing Quality | Editorial

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) unilaterally passed a new PhD policy on January 1, entailing that BS students can get an admission into a PhD programme right after graduation. Considering that incompetent research, plagiarism and a lack of academic rigour already plague the education environment, the benefit of such a policy seems to be questionable. Focus seems to be misplaced now on producing larger quantities of doctoral candidates instead of capable ones. With most institutions dubious of this development, the HEC must step up and provide justifications.

According to this new policy, candidates do not need to send their dissertations to foreign experts for review, can pursue the degree in new fields and must have a minimum of a 3.0 CGPA. Furthermore, they must spend at least two years in Pakistan during their degree. As such, major restrictions that were effective in ensuring that excellence prevailed within the ambit of this degree have been removed. Now that they are more accessible, a clear shift has been made towards quantitative production rather than qualitative. Most graduates already battle inefficiencies within the system that stem from limited research facilities and academic dishonesty. With such a policy, matters are only made worse.

Another line of criticism that HEC has been subjected to is the fact that it took this decision without consulting major institutions, academics or administrative members. Furthermore, the HEC termed the policy to be binding for institutions. As such, non-compliance may result in warning, suspension of admissions, revocation of NOC, public alerts, non-verifications of documents and the like. Such regulatory action compels universities to adhere to the new law for the sake of their survival. Already, the HEC has not given concrete reasons as to why this decision was taken and what problem in the status quo they seek to rectify through it.

A positive way to move forward, and improve the academic situation, would be to counter violations like plagiarism, expand research platforms and introduce greater transparency within the system so that the work produced is nothing short of excellent.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/15-Jan-2021/sacrificing-quality>

Education is Identity By Nimra Akram

In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, story of education is a nightmare. The data on Federal Education and Professional Training Pakistan speaks for itself: almost 40% of children are out of school. It is believed that youth fuels modernization and economic growth of country. We have failed to amalgamate youngsters into education system. In consequences, they ended up choosing labour market which in turn created multiple adverse impacts such as inequality, unemployment, population growth and discrimination. It is shockingly unbelievable that Pakistan recently stands with the second highest number of out of the school children, according to UNICEF.

For the roughly 22 million children not attending school, 11 million not achieving formal education as well as attendance averages 60%. Sindh and Balochistan signify the worst scenario. Gender comparison display boys higher number than girls at every stage of education. Pakistan literacy rates hang at 60%, increased by 2% from 2014 and horrifically missing Global Goals of 88%. Literacy consistently lags behind: 50% of class 5 students cannot read a simple Urdu story meant for class 1. A worrisome list of other catastrophic concerns on education level and quality, corruption, infrastructure and more has been left out for the purposes of minimizing reader hopelessness. However, problems abound; desultory analysis reveals prospective and potential for simple outcomes.

Pakistan follows predominantly two systems of education: traditional religion based education system and modern formal education system. The reasons behind the educational problems are lack of tolerance and awareness. The lowest budget has been spent on the system of education since decades which has weakened the foundation of the quality of the system. Hence, it has failed to raise the nation as socially, economically and politically.

Educational policies change with political situations which mark an adverse impact on individuals. The great philosopher Iqbal wanted Pakistan's education system to be based on uniformity. Different systems are working over here simultaneously as well as the curriculum is not uniformed. Nations develop their generation on the basis of vigorous training and education on social, economic and politics. The weak and directionless education system of Pakistan has not been able to guide its people on social grounds. Furthermore, it lacks cohesion that promotes a situation of deprivation among masses. And, this is the reason for cultural and political unrest in the communities.

Students have been facing incredible loss of identity and stress when they are forced to learn a foreign language. English has become an educational language and every subject is taught in it. On the other hand, Urdu is the national language which has been taught in schools and has been speaking by nationals. More than 30 local languages are spoken by people over here. Hence, a lot of nationals cannot communicate in Urdu or English. In consequences, they ended up learning languages rather than getting knowledge which creates communication gaps among people. It creates mental health problems as well. Extensive educational reforms are required to enhance the system; otherwise it would be completely the wastage.

Private institutions should collaborate with govt sectors to improve public schools and provide quality context to students. As education system in Pakistan is in a shambles, reforms are certainly required to bring unity amid individuals. Muslim-majority state, mixed system of education, more than 50% of literacy rate, big socio-economic concern, and political unrest can be resolved with one single improvement, and that is to provide basic quality education to individuals of this state.

—The writer is contributing columnist, based in Karachi.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/education-is-identity/>

Education and Internet | Editorial

With the timeline for the acquisition and rollout of the vaccine in Pakistan still uncertain, and news reports speaking of the second wave of the coronavirus soon giving way to a third wave, the decision about reopening schools hangs in the balance; and understandably so. It's not just that the virus is spreading much faster, it's also that new variants are cropping up all the time and just about everywhere, some of which – at least the faster spreading one from the UK – have already reached Pakistan. And new research that some of these strains are also transmissible to children and could affect them just like adults is enough to send chills down the spines of parents as well as policy makers.

Therefore it is no surprise that the education ministry is once again double minded about when to allow students back to their schools. A few schools have been able to manage just fine because of access to the internet and online learning, etc. But that still leaves out the vast majority of students in the country who do not enjoy such luxuries. And that, not very surprisingly, has already led to hundreds if not thousands of schools shutting down up and down the country. Now, even if the decision to return to schools is taken a lot of students will have nowhere to go to because their schools could not survive the financial crunch and went bankrupt.

All this is very unfortunate yet we must make the best of the situation that we find ourselves in, just like everybody else in the whole world. Therefore while the government is at the mercy of the virus as far as schools are concerned, it is advised to do what it can to spread internet coverage and affordability as far and wide as possible in the shortest manageable time. For, nearly all problems caused by the virus will go away with time. The economy will slowly come back to its feet, people will live better once again, but the lost years of education will be very difficult to make up for. And since all countries, especially poor ones, are in the grip of this problem at the moment, this could well become a generational issue. As the government watches for the most opportune to reopen schools, it must work on promoting online education for all.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/714582/education-and-internet/>

WORLD

India's Politics and Society By Amna Ejaz

Rafi

THE Hindu nationalist political parties struggle towards constitutional empowerment has brought religion as a political and social factor in India. Whether, it has strengthened the country's political culture or it has made India a Hindu democracy? India's democracy and secular character are often cited as progressive tools. During initial years of independence, the Nehruvian policies focus was to project India as a secular socialist democratic country. In fact, the principles of pluralism and secularism were employed to defeat the two-nation theory, and to disapprove the Hindu-Muslim divide. In later years with Bharatiya Janata Party's advent, the Hindu nationalists' constitutionally entered the political corridors of power.

Was it the end of Nehru mantra, the idea of "Mother India"; the country in which people of varied castes, creeds and religions can live freely? Well, Hindutva is the political say of Hindus living in India and their constructing of conditions for minorities in the country. Shashi Tharoor, a former diplomat rightly points: "Hindutva has nothing to do with Hinduism as a faith or a religion, but as a badge of cultural identity and an instrument of political mobilization." The BJP's political ascendancy is closely linked to Hindutva. This may augur well for making India a Hindu country. The people in India look at Narendra Modi as a staunch proponent of Hindu ideological outlook. But what about the country's secular character? And the political say of minorities?

Mr. Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat abetted the killings of Muslims, the inhumane treatment rendered upon the Indian Muslims could not disqualify his credentials and he was able to secure premiership on Hindu democratic grounds. Prime Minister Modi has introduced the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which has constitutionally declared faith as a condition to secure Indian citizenship. The Act allows Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan citizenship. The application of CAA is the constitutional empowerment of Hindu nationalist forces. There have been protests against the CAA in India; certain segments of society have criticized the Hindu centric policies. A.G.Noorani looks at Hindutva as: "It splits the nation into 'us' and 'them' and discards Indian nationalism in favour of Hindu nationalism."

The increasing voice of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics has opened up the dividing lines with minorities in the country. Rahul Gandhi remarks to this: “BJP only wants to divide people, make people fight each other”. The ‘Indian Union Muslim League party’ has called the Act in conflict with the secular character of the country’s Constitution. The All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) has also protested against the CAA. The opposition to CAA by political groups show the concern over the growing discrimination of minorities in India. It is also indicative of conflict of interest among the various communities, perpetuated on religious lines. Despite the dismay and opposition to CAA, the political leadership’s adamant stance proves that no matter what the circumstances are, the policy to uplift the Hindutva will remain pivotal.

The question that is it under Congress that India has adopted a balanced political path or under BJP rule? The perception that the liberals’ carry a more accommodating and flexible policy towards minorities does not hold true always. The demolition of Babri Masjid took place when Congress was in power, and the Gujarat riots under BJP reign. In both the cases, the anti-Muslim sentiment failed the cause of secularism. Thus, the interests of Hindus in India, irrespective of political party in power have always been regarded as supreme. The terms like liberalism and secularism are nothing but to gain international support. The Indian society has walked away from the Nehruvian policies, the Hindu nationalistic forces have made inroads at societal and political fronts; and Hindutva has emerged as a political force.

—The writer is a Research Associate at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/indias-politics-and-society/>

Reviving ‘Vision East Asia’ By M Ziauddin

The Covid-19 related global lockdowns have massively disrupted the international shipping industry, adversely affecting global supply chains. A dire shortage of shipping containers in some countries matched by an oversupply in others has created bottlenecks worldwide. Resultantly, costs of freight have skyrocketed, in some cases forcing importers to cancel certain orders.

Freight rates have gone up by two to four times and in some cases as much as eight to 10 times. Cargo to China used to cost \$400-\$500. Now it costs \$4,000; to the US it now costs \$4,000-5,000 from the previous \$2,500. Freight charges from Far East and China have swelled to \$2,500 per 20ft container from \$500. Charges from China and other countries for the same have risen to \$3,200-3,400 from \$700-800.

Containers from Far East and China used to arrive in Pakistan in 19-24 days, but are now facing a delay of seven to 15 days. Due to congestion at international ports and supply chain issues, the automobile industry is facing a delay of 15-21 days in getting raw material, parts and accessories for local assembly of vehicles. Coal imports have been impacted by port congestion, whereas cement exporters have been hit by the shortage of containers.

But this kind of disruption in supply chains the world over, however, is not likely to impact trade within regional blocs like the ASEAN group. And now that five more countries of the region (Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea) have joined under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), cornering what seems to be 30% of the world trade in a bloc of countries comprising 30% of the world population, it is estimated that the global GDP would increase by \$186 billion despite the global pandemic.

Indeed, RCEP is set to change the geo-economic and geopolitical map of the world. And the future of the international order will be decided in Asia as the Partnership is expected to improve relations among its member-states by creating economic interdependence with companies investing in each other's countries. The agreement is intended to reduce tariffs and red tape and includes unified rules of origin throughout the bloc which may facilitate international supply chains and trade within the region.

With CPEC, a flagship project of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, RCEP presents a great opportunity to Pakistan for strengthening and broadening economic linkages in the larger Asia-Pacific region. This is also in line with the broad market diversification strategy of Pakistan which is targeted to reduce its export dependence on EU and US.

In case Pakistan stayed out of RCEP, exporters would find it difficult to sell their products to member countries. Therefore, Pakistan should continue to speed up unilateral product and factor market liberalisation for better integration into the global economy. The time is said to be right to revive Pakistan's 'Vision East Asia'. Meanwhile, Washington is helping by launching a fund to encourage investments in the South and Central Asian region from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

The RCEP covers 20 chapters spread over 520 pages providing for, among other things, tariff reductions (sometimes not particularly ambitious and with very long transition periods), cutting red tape, a simpler framework for intellectual property rights and investments, harmonisation of standards and guidelines on rules of origin. As a result, internal Asian value and supply chains and production in the region are likely to be strengthened. RCEP has therefore been welcomed by companies in the region. India pulled out of the agreement in 2019, over concerns about cheap Chinese goods entering the country and was a notable absentee during the virtual signing. It can join at a later date if it chooses.

China and the US are, meanwhile, caught in a decades-long systemic competition for political, economic and military dominance, and supply routes, resources, artificial intelligence and technological hegemony in the 21st century. That has consequences for Asia and the rest of the world.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2278322/reviving-vision-east-asia>

The Reconstruction of America By David W. Blight

In 1882, Walt Whitman, the American poet of democracy and nearly everything else in the human spirit, worried that his book *Specimen Days*, compiled from jottings, diaries, and memorandums written during and after the Civil War, would be read as nothing but a “batch of convulsively written reminiscences.” But he decided to publish it anyway. The writings were “but parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke and excitement of those times,” Whitman admitted. “The war itself, with the temper of society preceding it, can indeed be best described by that very word convulsiveness.”

The American Civil War was a tragedy of cataclysmic proportions. Some 750,000 combatants and other military personnel perished on the battlefield and from disease. Great political, constitutional, and economic transformations followed from the results of the struggle. The American experiment died but was then reborn. The republic tore itself asunder over slavery and conflicting views of the federal Union. After unimaginable slaughter, the United States experienced a second founding of its polity and its constitution. Nearly everything had changed. The Civil War, wrote the southern poet and essayist Robert Penn Warren in 1961, is the country’s “felt history,” the past “lived in the national imagination.” It draws Americans, he said, “as an oracle, darkly unridled and portentous, of national as well as personal fate.” Americans still contemplate its enduring influence in classrooms, in jurisprudence, in scholarship, in elections, and in the public square.

Today, Americans are polarized in a cold civil war. Many core questions of the Civil War and the Reconstruction era remain unresolved: Who is an American? What is equality, and how should it be established and protected? What is the proper relationship between states and the federal government? What is the role of government in shaping society? Is federalism a strength or a weakness?

In November, the United States held a presidential election that inspired record turnout, but many Americans legitimately worry that some of the country’s basic institutions are broken. One political tribe has to fight constant efforts to suppress the right to vote; the other tribe cries voter fraud without evidence. The federal enforcement of voting rights, once a matter of settled law, is now a free-for-all in the courts. The Senate and the Electoral College are undemocratic institutions by any contemporary measure. The Supreme Court is more politicized than at any time in nearly a century. The idea of equality before the law has become as fiercely controversial as it was when it debuted in the Constitution in amendments that followed the Civil War.

President Donald Trump turned the White House into a vehicle for authoritarianism and personal corruption, shattering norms and creating a level of chaos unrivaled in U.S. history since the crisis sparked by the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson in 1868. Meanwhile, the ideology of white supremacy, always waiting in the wings of the American consciousness, has experienced a potent and violent resurgence on the political right.

These echoes of Reconstruction abound and will shape the coming era. If there are any lessons that Americans should take from that troubled time, they are that when it comes to protecting basic rights, there is no substitute for federal power, and that in the wake of national crises, healing and justice must be pursued together—which is no small feat.

HELL ON EARTH

The most stark and immediate legacy of the Civil War was loss. From his three years of working in hospitals, caring for suffering and dying soldiers, Whitman weighed that loss in anguished terms. Civil War prisons, he wrote, could find comparison only in “Dante’s pictured hell.” He evoked the lonely passing of those slain in battle but left unburied: “Somewhere they crawl’d to die, alone, in bushes, low gullies, or on the sides of hills—(there, in secluded spots, their skeletons, bleach’d bones, tufts of hair, buttons, fragments of clothing, are occasionally found yet).”

Some of the country’s best writers wondered if there could be any meaning at all in the trenches filled with corpses. The writer Ambrose Bierce, a badly wounded veteran of the Union army, was haunted all his life by what he called “phantoms of that blood-stained period.” Death on the battlefield, he wrote, was “not picturesque, it had no tender or solemn side—a dismal thing, hideous in all its manifestations and suggestions.” The poet Emily Dickinson saw the mounting dead in her imagination: “And then I hated Glory / And wished myself were They.”

Racial strife was often easier to foment and more politically useful than democracy.

In the roiling contest over the memory of the war that took place in the decades that followed it, most Americans would come to prefer more sentimental narratives: stories of unquestioned valor on both sides, tales of sacrifice and reconciliation in which no one was wrong and everyone could be right. But an assault on the dignity and rights of Black people became the terrible price paid for sectional reunion. A racially segregated society would demand and forge a segregated memory of the struggle that ended slavery.

The fall of the Confederacy and the second founding embodied in the constitutional amendments of the Reconstruction era, which lasted from 1863 to approximately 1877, could not banish

racism and neoslavery in the United States or solve the inherent challenges of federalism. In the decades that followed, despite technological and social progress, it remained the case that racial and ethnic strife were often easier to foment and more politically useful than democracy.

RADICALISM AND RESISTANCE

In his first annual message to Congress, delivered on December 3, 1861, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln expressed his hope that the Civil War would “not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle.” At that point, he still hoped to limit the North’s aims to preserving the Union, rather than expanding the mission to include ending slavery. Just over three years later, in his second inaugural address, Lincoln—who by then commanded a war machine that officially sought abolition—admitted that now “all knew” that slavery was, in fact, “the cause of the war.” He declared that both sides had “looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.” Then, with a chastened sense of tragedy and firm purpose, he acknowledged that the war had brought about the very revolutions that he and many others had tried to avert. The extended crises that followed, and the lasting markers of what those revolutions meant, are what became known as Reconstruction.

After Confederate forces surrendered in 1865, most of the armies of the United States and the Confederacy disbanded. But varying degrees of military occupation lasted for around three years across much of the South, and in some areas until 1871. As the historian Gregory Downs notes in his book *After Appomattox*, in the early years of Reconstruction, the federal government enacted an “ideologically and spatially ambitious occupation” of the conquered South. But the politics of restoring the Union and extending basic human rights to freed slaves became war by other means. Without any blueprint, members of Congress in the Republican Party—in particular, a faction known as the Radical Republicans—adopted an aggressive vision of using activist government to remake the South and the rest of the country. The lesson of their efforts was clear: true freedom can be forged and protected only by the state, by law enforcement, and sometimes by military means.

The Radical Republicans, who were ascendant in Washington in 1866–68, made revolutionary strides for racial equality by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the first statutory definition of citizenship rights in U.S. history, and by pushing forward the 14th and 15th Amendments. The 14th Amendment enshrined birthright citizenship and equality before the law in the Constitution, and the 15th Amendment extended voting rights to Black men. The Radical Republicans sought to root out the causes of the Southern rebellion and dismantle its leadership and to create a new political order. They crafted the four Reconstruction Acts, passed in 1867 and 1868, which divided the defeated Confederate states into five military districts and established new governments in all of them. The result was an experiment in multiracial democracy. Black men embraced the

right to vote as a sacred act; in 1868, their support was a crucial factor in the victory of the Republican candidate for president, Ulysses S. Grant. More than 1,500 Black men were elected to state and local offices during Reconstruction across the South, and 16 won seats in the U.S. Congress. The Republican regimes in the South, while they lasted, fostered the region's first public schools, democratized political institutions in the former slave states, and in limited ways tried to redistribute property to freed slaves.

This agenda put the Radical Republicans on a collision course with Johnson, who, after replacing the martyred Lincoln, pushed for a lenient vision of Reconstruction based on the protection of states' rights, white supremacy, and a decidedly nonrevolutionary approach to the remaking of the federal Union. His slogan was "the Union as it was, the Constitution as it is." In practice, this meant that as long as former Confederate states renounced secession and ended slavery (however reluctantly), they could swiftly regain full statehood without having to confer any civil or political rights on freed slaves. Johnson envisioned a postwar order in which former slaves would transition into permanent serfdom, destined for labor but no independent economic life and no place in politics. He resisted radical Reconstruction by vetoing nearly every act passed by the Republicans in Congress. But Republican success in the midterm elections of 1866 gave them a veto-proof legislature, and they overrode most of Johnson's vetoes.

Johnson's continued obstructionism, obstinate personal behavior, and virulent racism led to his impeachment in early 1868. Owing to a complex set of deals and votes, as well as the Republicans' use of a law of dubious constitutionality, Johnson was not convicted and removed from office. By the spring of 1868, the Republicans did not want to be tarnished as the party of impeachment (an unpopular position then, after so many years of strife), nor did they want to hurt Grant's chances in the election that fall.

RETREAT FROM RECONSTRUCTION

That Reconstruction did not ultimately succeed proves only that revolutions, even those firmly grounded in law, always prompt counterrevolutions. By 1870, all of the ex-Confederate states had been readmitted to the Union. But in the South, the Democratic Party revived itself by clinging to an ideology of white supremacy, stoking embittered war memories, and deploying violence through the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist groups. In time, these revanchist forces defeated Reconstruction on the ground. In the 1870s, white Southerners "redeemed" their states, their societies, and especially their control over the racial order. Several thousand African Americans, as well as some white Republicans, were assaulted, tortured, or murdered, especially when they attempted to vote. In 1873, a paralyzing economic depression hit the country, leading to a national retreat from Reconstruction. Numerous corruption scandals tarnished the Grant administration, limiting its leverage. Meanwhile, as the war receded, the Republican Party began

to change, leaving behind its abolitionist, egalitarian roots and aligning itself with big business and railroad interests. By the late 1870s, the Republicans were the party of low taxes and high tariffs.

These political changes were accompanied by demographic and economic shifts. In the wake of the war, immigration surged; three million new immigrants entered the country between 1865 and 1873. In the South, whites violently and successfully opposed efforts to distribute land to freed slaves. By 1868, a new system of tenant farming and sharecropping had emerged. In a cash-poor economy with few sources of credit, millions of former slaves, as well as some poor whites, became mired in dependency, working “on halves”—giving half of their crop to a landlord and using the other half to try to feed their families and acquire goods from “furnishing merchants,” whose extortive practices usually forced farmers into a dead end of debt. By the 1890s, roughly 20 percent of former slaves and their descendants owned some land or other property, but the vast majority possessed no real hope of material independence, as their political liberty was slowly crushed.

Meanwhile, an emerging alliance between big business and the political class began to stifle some of the victories won by the emancipation revolution, as financial scandals distracted Republicans and the country from the cause of equal rights. Railroads, built with ample federal subsidies, became the symbol of the dawning age of American industrial capitalism. By the end of the century, for the first time in U.S. history, nonagricultural workers outnumbered farmers and wage earners outnumbered independent artisans.

As poor Blacks and whites in the South found farming less and less tenable, they moved to cities, and especially new mill towns. With investments from Northern capitalists, textile mills grew steadily all across the former Confederacy. As one North Carolina evangelical preacher shouted, “Next to God, what this town needs is a cotton mill!” In 1860, the South had some 10,000 mill workers. By 1880, that number had grown to 16,700; by 1900, it was 97,500. In this way, the so-called New South bred not only a system of racial apartheid but also a vulnerable new class of wage earners in an industrializing economy.

THE DISPOSSESSED

Racial strife and economic transformations played out vividly in the American West, as well. The Indian Wars between 1860 and 1890 left a trail of blood and agony across many landscapes; in a sense, the Civil War did not end in 1865. From 1860 to 1864, the Navajos of Arizona fought white incursions into their lands; defeated and starving, their houses and livestock destroyed, they were forced in “the Long Walk” to a reservation in New Mexico. At the Sand Creek massacre in Colorado in 1864, an entire Cheyenne village was slaughtered by the state militia. The most

famous battle of the Indian Wars took place along the Little Bighorn River in southern Montana in June 1876, just before the United States was to celebrate the centennial of its independence. There, Lakotas and Cheyennes, led by Chiefs Rain-in-the-Face, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse, surrounded and annihilated 256 U.S. cavalry troops under the command of the Civil War veteran George Custer. But it was a Pyrrhic victory for the Native American people of the Upper Plains, one that provoked a brutal counterstrike. By 1879, 4,000 U.S. troops forced the surrender of the Utes in western Colorado and in effect requisitioned their ancestral lands. In California, white ranchers and farmers often forced Native Americans into captive labor; some practiced “Indian hunting,” treating the indiscriminate slaughter of Native Americans as a murderous sport. By 1880, 30 years of such violence had left an estimated 4,500 indigenous people dead.

Racial strife and economic transformations played out vividly in the American West.

The dispossession of Native American peoples across the West resulted from ecological as well as human conquest. Indigenous groups depended on buffalo in the Great Plains, on shepherding in the Southwest, and on salmon fisheries in the Northwest. By seizing lands and expanding railroads, white settlers threatened all three livelihoods. In 1820, there were some 25 million buffalo on American soil; by the 1880s, there were just a few hundred. Washington made treaties with tribes but routinely violated them.

Other, less overt forms of dispossession took a toll on Native Americans, as well. The federal government instituted a reservation system and established a “reform” policy of separating Native American children from their families and educating them in Christian schools, hoping to break their identification with their tribes and prepare them to become property-owning farmers. But the limits on such assimilation were clear: Supreme Court decisions in 1884 and 1886 defined Native Americans as wards of the state, denying them the right to become U.S. citizens and therefore all the protections of the 14th and 15th Amendments.

THERE IS NO ARC OF HISTORY

Among all the enactments of Reconstruction, none embodies its lasting significance better than those two amendments, which spun a tenuous web of possibility for the American ideal of equality. Both were products of political compromise; their lack of specificity meant they would be perpetually open to interpretation. But as the historian Eric Foner writes in *The Second Founding*, “ambiguity creates possibilities.... Who determines which of a range of possible meanings is implemented is very much a matter of political power.” Indeed, that is the legacy of Reconstruction’s “Second Constitution”: a series of never-ending fights over race and federalism.

Today, Americans live in a country forged by Reconstruction and remade again by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the profound social movements that forced their passage. Pluralism and equality were born and reborn in those two revolutions, which took place a century apart. But the events of recent years, especially during the Trump era, serve as a reminder that no change is necessarily permanent and no law can itself protect Americans from their own worst impulses: racism, nativism, authoritarianism, greed. The past few years have revealed the potency of sheer grievance, whether born of genuine economic travail or ludicrous conspiracy theories. It should be clear to all now that history does not end and is not necessarily going to any particular place or bending in an inevitable arc toward justice or anything else.

Some of the convulsions of the Civil War and Reconstruction advanced the American experiment, and some set it back. Whitman worried that the “real war will never get in the books” and that its “undream’d of depths of emotion” and the “infinite dead” would be forgotten. His fear was misplaced: poets have chronicled the war and its toll, scholars have searched and found Whitman’s “convulsiveness,” historians have written its great and terrible story. Americans, however, have not yet solved the most profound questions the era left in its wake, and their country is now in desperate need of another remaking.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-12-08/reconstruction-america>

Global Reset and the New World Order

Just one year ago, in the first few days of January 2020, no one could have predicted or imagined that the world would go through such tectonic changes within a period of just 12 months. No one, in their reasonable mind, could have foreseen the spread and impact of COVID-19 across the world. No one could have imagined that, in the wake of COVID-19, entire industries (like airlines and tourism) would collapse overnight; that the oil-dependent economies would suffer irrecoverable losses; that the West would be forced to yield to the irresistible rise of China (and the East); and that the myth of Indo-Pacific, designed to ‘contain China’, would evaporate into thin air, resulting in the ‘containment of India’ instead.

We seem to be living through the flux of a tectonic shift in world history. Much like the period of the two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century, or collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991—when the global power dynamics resulted in the rise and fall of global powers.

Funeral prayers of slain coal miners to be offered today

History bears witness to an empirical fact; that an alteration in the global power structure necessarily affects the governance systems of corollary States.

Let us investigate this claim.

Modern history, its alliances and its flashpoints, stretch only as far back as a hundred years. At the turn of the twentieth century, the world was an unrecognisably different place. Europe and the Middle East was predominantly split between the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the British Empire, the Ottoman Caliphate, and French pockets of power. Russia, China and Japan had empires of their own. India, which had been ruled by the Mughal Empire for centuries, now belonged to the British. And this “empire” structure of the ruling powers, also dictated the manner in which local governments operated.

Raj, Khilafat and Kingship, were the accepted norms. Democracy was not the mantra of any people. The only exception, at the time, was the United States, whose influence did not extend much beyond its oceanic boundaries.

Shehbaz pleas accountability court to form medical board

The First World War changed all that, completely transforming the old-world order. All of the major empires collapsed, or were reduced to a fraction of their past glory. The Ottoman Empire, along with its Khilafat structure, was entirely obliterated. The Austro-Hungarian Empire

disintegrated, giving way to the creation of German Austria, Hungarian Republic, Czechoslovak Republic, and the spinning off of Croatia, Serbia and parts of Romania.

The United States, which had just arrived at the international scene, was not yet the power we see today. And its governance structure, an open democracy, had not been proclaimed as the preferred form of State structure across most parts of the world.

Then came the Second World War, and its decisive victory for the Allied Forces. This victory abolished the “Empire” structure of the old, ushering in the age of American-esque democracy. Japan effectively shed its cloak of kingship, under American dictate, and adopted western governance structures. Even the British Empire, which was among the victors of the Second World War, could no longer retain its empire status, and chose the allied form of democratic enterprise.

Pakistan reports 1,895 new COVID cases in 24 hours

Importantly, as empires crumbled, the ruling powers carved out a new map of the world. Israel was born out of thin air. The Middle East was (literally!) split across borders that the Queen drew at the back of a napkin. The Indian subcontinent was split through a border drawn by the Viceroy—in many places, against the will of the domestic people. Parts of Africa were split into smaller nation States. And institutions such as the United Nations (and other Western alliances) were established to institutionalise the allied power structure.

Importantly, the Western global powers, which redrew most of the global map at their whim, also guaranteed the sanctity of the new borders—either directly or through their proxies.

For almost four decades after the Second World War, the only real challenge to Western hegemony was the Soviet Union. Within the territories controlled by the Soviet Union, the ‘American democratic enterprise’ was resisted. These territories—from Eastern Europe to Cuba—took their governance lead from the communist State structure of the Soviet Union.

Rain turns weather cold in Lahore

Fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, once again resulted in remaking of international boundaries. The eastern part of the Soviet Union was carved into 18 different international territories. Each of these borders were redrawn with the consent of the only remaining superpower (the United States). And the consequent governments formed within these territories, also took their lead from the United States.

Collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in the age of a unipolar world. For the first time, since the Roman Empire, the world was 'dominated' by a single country: the United States. This extraordinary turn of events ushered in the age of American imperialism. Since 1990, the United States has enjoyed almost hegemonic power. It has invaded countries at whim, ousted governments it didn't like, and supported despots of its own choosing. Just as importantly, this period saw the growth of the 'American form of government'. Democracy, of the US brand, was the preferred system of government. Even when the domestic population did not want it—e.g. Afghanistan and Iraq. International governance bodies (e.g. IMF) forced countries to undergo domestic reforms that suited interests of the United States, and to adopt American style of governance. Those who followed the American lead, were rewarded (South Korea, India etc.). Those who differed with the United States, were punished (e.g. Venezuela, Iraq, Syria etc.).

Headquarters of Saudi forces in Southern Yemen rocked by explosion

But 2020 seems to have changed all that. Crippled by the spread of COVID-19, and having been drained of its global energies during two ill-conceived wars, Donald Trump's reactionary "American First" policy—which shuns the idea of an inclusive American Dream—resulted in withdrawal of America's hegemonic global influence. And American withdrawal has prompted competing interests to fill this vacuum. In Syria and Lebanon, for example, France and Russia are already more important to the local power structure than America is. Countries like UAE and Qatar are looking East, towards China and Russia, for their long-term goals.

In particular, the rise of China, which was slow and sluggish till recently, has gained tremendous pace during the course of the Coronavirus epidemic. As the West reels from the effects of COVID-19, and America loses itself to the madness of domestic strife, China is gaining ground. Already, institutions such as WHO and even the EU are no longer in the strangle of American influence. In the South China Sea, as China asserts its claim on various territories (including Taiwan), American influence is dwindling. Maintaining status quo in the South China Sea may require the United States to threaten military conflict. One that the Americans are not sure they can win.

Biden's adviser says Iran's missile program must be 'on table' in JCPOA talks

China's aggression in Ladakh, and a speeding up of the CPEC projects (despite COVID-19 lockdowns) is a testament to the global repositioning of China. A global reset is afoot. And the new age of "Look East" is about to start.

This shift in global power has real consequences for international boundaries that were artificially drawn across the Middle East and even Asia. The powers that created those boundaries, and guaranteed their sanctity, can no longer do so. And places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, even Ladakh, are a perfect example of this. As China decides to consolidate its control over these areas, will

the US risk a war to 'liberate' them? If China stays in Ladakh, or expands its dominion across the Indian border through Nepal, will the United States and its friends come to the military aid of India? Will they fight a war to jeopardise CPEC, or the larger Belt and Road Initiative?

In the months and years to come, countries in our region (and perhaps across the world) may be forced to pick sides between the United States and China. Those who come to the Chinese camp, may also have to grow out of the borrowed American model of democracy, and follow something closer to the "Chinese Model"—where a loose democracy is coupled with a decisive writ of the State.

President criticises killing of coal miners in Balochistan

Of course this claim is speculative for now. But history bears witness to the fact that the rise of a new global power usually results in the corresponding spread of its peculiar governance structures. Like the structure of the 'Empires' in the time before the First World War. And the structure of American democracy, in the post-World War II period.

2021 may be the first year of the rise of the East. And this new world order, which seems to be evolving before our eyes today, will have profound impacts for Pakistan and its dysfunctional democratic enterprise.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/04-Jan-2021/global-reset-and-the-new-world-order>

The Destiny of Brexit By Khurram Mateen

Britain has finally reclaimed its ‘sovereignty’ and regained control of its ‘destiny’ – the much-touted objective of Brexit – ending decades of a love-hate affiliation with the European Union and with it the stinging uncertainty that had hovered over Britons since the 2016 referendum.

The long-sought UK-EU trade deal, just a week before the end of the transition period on Dec 31, at last calmed nerves and offered the Tory government breathing space to focus on an unrelenting pandemic.

Brexit, however, has not come cheap for the Conservatives, as two prime ministers, David Cameron and Theresa May, and several MPs on both sides of the political divide quit midway or were led out as the party moved ahead with delivering on its in/out referendum pledge outcome, a manifesto promise made by Cameron – himself a Remainer – ahead of the 2015 general election.

It has also not come cheap for the United Kingdom: Brexit is fuelling a sort of nationalist sentiment in Scotland, a nation which was against the UK’s departure from the EU. While the architects of Brexit were patting themselves on the back in London, Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister in so many words said that because the nation did not vote for Brexit, it now has the “right to choose its future as an independent country and once more regain the benefits of EU membership”. The Tory government would have to promptly arrest any undesirable economic implications of Brexit, especially when it comes to Scotland and Northern Ireland, otherwise it would provide political fodder to pro-EU parties and the opposition at large.

The historic 668-billion-pound a year trade agreement, allowing tariff- and quota-free trade in goods from January 1, 2021, has dissipated the clouds of ambiguity and the disruption which a no-deal scenario was threatening to ignite in the form of price hikes, stringent customs controls and tariffs under WTO rules.

That being said, the relationship will not be the same anymore as new sets of rules will come into force. Unhindered travel will now end, and British nationals will now be restricted to staying in the EU for three months in any 180-day period without visas and the same rules apply to EU citizens travelling to the UK.

Fishing rights, one of the main sticking points aside of the level-playing field in terms of labour and environmental standards and state subsidies, continue to be the focus of heated debate, as

the UK's fishing industry feels let down after Prime Minister Boris Johnson, according to them, conceded ground and sacrificed fishing to secure wider objectives. The Scottish government has also claimed a projected fall in the quantity of key fishing stocks landed by the Scottish fleet.

The UK has agreed to a five-and-a-half-year transition period to increase its fishing quotas from the current half to two-thirds. Following the end of transition in 2026, the EU and the UK will hold annual talks to decide on fishing quotas. In case the UK halts EU access to UK waters, the 27-nation bloc could opt for tariffs on fish exports. Interestingly, fishing has a tiny share in Britain's economy, but enjoys political weight and offers jobs to the coastal population.

The real losers are likely to be French fishermen who rely on British waters for their catch, and after the cut in fishing quotas, they will also have to compete with other EU vessels in their shrinking space. Related fishing industries in coastal EU countries might also feel the negative impact of the changes.

The fallout of immigration from European countries, especially low-skilled labour, and the European Court of Justice's (ECJ) jurisdiction on the British justice system emboldened calls for the UK to distance itself from the bloc. The UK is now going to introduce a new points-based immigration system from January 1, discouraging low-skilled labour from abroad. But the move is set to bite into the wallets of British employers who relied on cheap labour from the EU. Domestic workers, farming, patient care and the hospitality sectors are set to see some disruptions.

On the legal front, Britain will now be free to decide on vital questions of law and justice, with no more challenges from the ECJ. However, EU judges' orders are said to be still enforceable in Britain, in connection with EU programmes. Moreover, the special status of Northern Ireland agreed in the Brexit withdrawal agreement could possibly invoke some role for the ECJ.

On the demand for a level-playing field in trade – a vital feature of the EU single market – the deal is said to have mandatory enforcement and dispute settlement mechanisms to protect the rights of businesses and individuals, even though the UK claims to have secured relaxations in this regard. The future of the agreement now hinges on the level of commitment and cooperation between the two sides.

The British government has expressed its resolve to maintain the agreed upon high standards. However, a think tank, IPPR, believes the deal leaves workers' rights and environmental protections at risk of erosion, as the new process agreed for protecting a level-playing field sets such a high bar for proof that it would be rarely enforced.

The last-minute pact spared the Johnson government from legislators' ruthless scrutiny that was seen even from treasury benches in the earlier Brexit-related legislations, as the eleventh-hour arrangement left little choice for the main opposition Labour Party to scuttle the "thin" and "flawed" deal. It comfortably sailed through the Commons, despite opposition from smaller parties such as the Scottish National Party. The EU ambassadors have already given a go-ahead for the deal provisionally, but it must still be approved retrospectively by the European Parliament in the months ahead.

While the Johnson government has on many occasions spoken of its preparedness for a no-deal outcome, it remains to be seen how it provisionally implements it in such a short timeframe now that an agreement has been reached.

The wide-ranging pact also encompasses a certain level of cooperation in the fields of security, health, energy and other areas of life. But the UK will surely miss the unfettered access to some EU databases. It is to be seen how the Brexit trade deal plays out for the UK job market at a time when coronavirus-spurred redundancies pose a challenge to the country. Several financial institutions have already moved some of their staff to other European cities. But the mass exodus that was feared has not yet come to pass. There is said to be little to cherish in the trade-in-goods focused deal for the services sector – a major pillar of the UK economy. Now service providers will have to grapple with separate rules of states.

The shift in the level of decades of close alliance could, no doubt, cause short-term disruptions at borders and confusion in terms of new rules and regulations, but it is up to the two sides on how far they go to rebuild bridges of trust and cooperation and adapt to the new reality. Ideally, there had to be a timeframe for gradual implementation to prevent any problems that could arise out of new paperwork and other formalities. Both sides will now need to condone minor lapses to keep the trade flow friction-free in the initial days and months.

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Europe Has Handed China a Strategic Victory By Gideon Rachman

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, says she wants to lead a “geopolitical commission”. But Ms Von der Leyen concluded 2020 by sending a truly awful geopolitical message — as her commission signed off on an investment treaty between the EU and China.

Over the past year, China has crushed the freedom of Hong Kong, intensified oppression in Xinjiang, killed Indian troops, threatened Taiwan and sanctioned Australia. By signing a deal with China nonetheless, the EU has signalled that it doesn’t care about all that. As Janka Oertel, director of the Asia programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations think-tank, puts it: “This is a massive diplomatic win for China.”

It is also a considerable kick in the teeth for Joe Biden. The US president-elect has stressed that, after Donald Trump, he wants to make a fresh start with Europe. In particular, the Biden administration wants to work on China issues together with fellow democracies. Jake Sullivan, Mr Biden’s national security adviser, issued a last-minute plea for the Europeans to hold off on signing the deal — at least until they had a chance to discuss it with the new administration. He was ignored.

EU officials offer several justifications for their decision. They say that many of the concessions the EU has got from China have already been granted to the US, as part of America’s own “phase-one” trade deal. (These include sectoral openings in several industries, as well as changes to joint-venture requirements.) Brussels officials point out that the US did not ask for European permission before concluding its own deal with China. They justify the EU’s decision as a demonstration of “strategic autonomy”.

These EU arguments sound tough-minded. But, in fact, they are naive. It is naive to believe that China will respect the agreement it has signed. It is naive to ignore the geopolitical implications of doing a deal with China right now. And it is naive to think that the darkening political climate in Beijing will never affect life in Brussels or Berlin.

The EU says that this deal will “discipline the behaviour” of China’s state-owned enterprises, which will now be required “to act in accordance with commercial considerations”. But China made very similar commitments when it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001. Pledges to rein in state subsidies made 20 years ago are now being offered up again as fresh concessions.

Beijing's promise to "work towards" enforcing international conventions on labour standards are also laughably weak. As Shi Yinhong, a prominent Chinese academic, pointed out: "On labour, it's impossible for China to agree. Can you imagine China with free trade unions?"

Over the past year, China has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to ignore treaty commitments. Its new national security law violates an agreement with Britain that guaranteed the autonomy of Hong Kong. China has also imposed tariffs on Australian goods in violation of the China-Australia free trade agreement.

The timing of this deal is exquisite for Beijing, since it presents the Biden team with a fait accompli. Reinhard Bütikofer, chairman of the European parliament's delegation on China, says: "We've allowed China to drive a huge wedge between the US and Europe."

The EU-China deal was pushed hard by Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, and concluded right at the end of her country's presidency of the EU. Ms Merkel is seen as a champion of liberal values. But her approach to China is largely driven by commerce. She knows that the German car industry has had a rough few years, and China is its largest market.

Ms Merkel's determination to press ahead may also reflect her own scepticism about the future of the US. In a speech in 2017, she said that Europe could no longer rely on America. The election of Mr Biden has probably not changed that view. Many Europeans also believe that the US is on the brink of a new cold war with China — and want little part of that.

Some of these arguments are reasonable enough. It is hard to look at current events in Washington and feel totally confident about the stability of the US or the Atlantic alliance. A European desire to avoid military confrontation in the Pacific is also rational.

But relying on an American security guarantee in Europe, while undermining American security policy in the Pacific, does not look like a wise or sustainable policy over the long run.

The Europeans are also kidding themselves if they think they can be blind to the increasingly authoritarian and aggressive nature of Xi Jinping's China. For the past 70 years, Europeans have benefited from the fact that the world's most powerful nation is a liberal democracy. If an authoritarian nation, such as China, displaces America as the dominant global power, then democracies all over the world will feel the consequences.

Even in the current geopolitical order, China has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to use its economic power as a strategic weapon. By deepening their economic reliance on China —

without co-ordinating their policy with fellow democracies — European nations are increasing their vulnerability to pressure from Beijing. That is a remarkably shortsighted decision to make, for a “geopolitical commission”.

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Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/2d759671-0b1d-4587-ba63-7480990f0438>

Trump's Final Foreign-Policy Report Card

By Stephen M. Walt

A lifetime ago—January 2017—I sat down to assess outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama's foreign-policy performance. Obama inherited a global financial panic and two unsuccessful wars, behaved with exemplary poise and dignity throughout his two terms as president, and achieved several clear foreign-policy successes. Yet despite having voted for him twice, I concluded that "in foreign policy Obama's record was mostly one of failure."

Now, as President Donald Trump's single term staggers to a chaotic and undignified close, it's time to perform a similar evaluation. Having run for office calling U.S. foreign policy "a complete and total disaster," was Trump able to right the ship of state and chart a better course? Compared to other countries, did America's power, prestige, and global influence rise on his watch? Or does Trump's handling of foreign policy call to mind his bankrupt casinos, the Trump Shuttle, Trump University, or other failed business ventures?

It's worth recalling what he promised to do. Like most of his political platform, Trump's foreign policy sprang from a sense of grievance. He thought the rest of the world was taking advantage of the United States; he was going to put "America first" instead. Allies would pay full price for U.S. protection, adversaries would be confronted and vanquished, and the United States would pursue its own self-interest with scant regard for diplomatic niceties. He'd stop China from "stealing" American jobs and take the United States out of "bad deals" like the Paris climate accord and the nuclear agreement with Iran. Portraying himself as a master negotiator, he promised to reach "beautiful" new trade deals that would restore U.S. manufacturing and usher in a new era of prosperity. The United States would play the sucker no longer: It would get "out of the nation-building business," crack down on immigration, rebuild a supposedly weak defense establishment, and get Mexico to pay for a wall on the southern border.

In sum, Trump offered a seductive vision that promised unbroken success with little or no additional effort. Restoring U.S. dominance wouldn't require personal sacrifice, national unity, or even a well-conceived strategy—putting a "very stable genius" at the helm was all it would take to "make America great again." Once he became president, Trump promised, Americans would "be so sick and tired of winning."

So how did this all work out? Although Trump can claim a few foreign-policy successes, his overall record is dismal. America's adversaries are more dangerous than they were in 2016, the United

States is weaker, sicker, and more divided, relations with many U.S. allies are worse, and any aspirations to moral leadership that Americans might have harbored have been badly tarnished.

To be fair, Trump can claim a number of genuine achievements. For one thing, he didn't start any new wars or create any new failed states. That might sound like a low bar, but none of his three predecessors can make a similar claim. The administration also negotiated a new trade agreement with South Korea and an updated version of NAFTA, although neither deal marked a dramatic improvement over the prior arrangements. By repeatedly hinting that he might take the United States out of NATO, Trump encouraged European efforts to take a bit more responsibility for their own defense and may have convinced some fence-sitters to accede to U.S. requests not to employ the Chinese firm Huawei to construct their digital infrastructure. Some observers would also give his administration credit for midwifing the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab states, although these steps did little to advance the cause of peace or justice in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, this modest list of successes must be matched against a long list of more consequential failures.

For starters, consider how he handled relations with China. He tried to get Chinese President Xi Jinping to put more pressure on North Korea; Xi refused. He tried to get China to make major structural reforms and end its predatory trade and investment practices, and he eventually launched a costly trade war in an attempt to force Beijing to comply. That didn't work either, because China retaliated and adapted; U.S. businesses, consumers, and farmers bore most of the costs of Trump's tariffs; and Trump chose to pressure China unilaterally instead of lining up other countries alongside the United States. The administration's escalating campaign against Huawei, ZTE, TikTok, and other Chinese technology firms has hurt these firms in the short term, but it has also spurred Chinese efforts to reduce its dependence on U.S. technology and may eventually cost U.S. firms a lot of future earnings.

Not surprisingly, relations with China have spiraled steadily downward over the past four years.

That decline is not entirely Trump's fault; it is in many ways hard-wired into the emerging structure of the international system. What is Trump's fault is America's deteriorating position within that structure and its failure to take advantage of Beijing's own missteps. China has cracked down in Hong Kong and on its Uighur minority (reportedly with Trump's approval), clashed with India along the Himalayan border, continued its territorial encroachments in the South China Sea, and gone to considerable lengths to bully Australia, a longtime U.S. ally. It has taken advantage of Trump's abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to negotiate

and sign a new Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with 14 other Asian nations, and it just completed a new investment agreement with the European Union. After mishandling the coronavirus outbreak at the start, China now appears to have the pandemic under control within its borders and has reopened its economy. The United States, meanwhile, continues to add tens of thousands of new cases each day and remains in partial lockdown.

Trump's handling of the other Asian great power—Russia—was no better. He told supporters back in 2016 that “we are going to have a great relationship with Putin and Russia,” and Trump's steadfast deference toward Russian President Vladimir Putin remains something of a mystery. Yet Trump never made a serious effort to improve relations or drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing, even though doing so would have made good geopolitical sense. Apart from sanctioning a few more Russian officials, however, Trump didn't do very much to challenge Russia either. Instead, Trump got himself impeached for trying to bolster his reelection prospects by withholding U.S. aid to Ukraine until Kyiv dug up some dirt on the Biden family.

The result? Russia is still interfering in Ukraine today, still supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria and warlord Khalifa Haftar in Libya, and still conducting murderous attacks on perceived threats at home and abroad. Moscow is also the likely perpetrator of the massive cyber-breach that compromised U.S. government computer networks, including the Defense Department, State Department, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the National Security Agency. Can you imagine what Trump might have said had this happened on Obama's watch?

Trump's amateurish handling of North Korea offers another example of foreign-policy ineptitude. After exchanging some childish taunts on Twitter with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Trump had the good sense to turn to diplomacy instead. Instead of orchestrating a systematic negotiation to limit North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, however, Trump opted for a pair of “reality show” summits with Kim that were long on spectacle and short on substance. Convinced that his personal charm and deal-making skills could convince Kim to give up the nuclear deterrent on which the survival of his regime depends, Trump ended up getting nothing. Although the summits produced the sort of media attention that Trump craved, they succeeded only in enhancing Kim's stature and underscoring Trump's gullibility. The president lost interest in the issue as soon as his PR stunt failed, and North Korea's nuclear arsenal and missile capabilities have continued to improve ever since.

And then there are the more obvious blunders. It was a mistake to leave the Paris climate accord, which was at least a useful first step toward addressing the greatest long-term peril humankind is facing. It was a mistake to abandon the TPP while simultaneously trying to balance China, and an even bigger blunder to leave the nuclear deal with Iran. Trump, Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo, and hard-line elements of the Israel lobby keep insisting that Trump's policy of "maximum pressure" is working, but such claims are blatant nonsense. Yes, a lot of ordinary Iranians have suffered as a result of U.S. sanctions, but the clerical regime is still in power, hard-liners have gained more influence, and Iran has resumed enriching uranium, increased its stockpile eightfold, and cut its breakout time in half.

Finally, one cannot omit Trump's corrosive impact on the core elements of U.S. power, on which its security and well-being ultimately depend. With respect to COVID-19, Trump has provided a master class in how not to handle a serious emergency. He allowed pandemic preparedness to languish before the coronavirus emerged, then denied that it was a serious problem, openly discouraged mask-wearing and other preventive measures, insisted the virus would disappear "like magic," and proved incapable of coordinating a testing-and-tracing system that might have contained the pandemic months ago. Not only has his failure cost more American lives than World War I, the Vietnam War, and the Korean War combined, but it has also done enormous damage to the U.S. economy and badly damaged America's image of competence.

Furthermore, despite his early pledge to rebuild the sinews of American power, Trump did little to improve U.S. infrastructure, and his immigration policies made it harder for U.S. firms to recruit the best talent from overseas. Instead of encouraging national unity and a broad sense of patriotic respect for our fellow citizens, he spent his four years in office sowing greater divisions. He has presided over an unprecedented hemorrhaging of senior officials in the Department of State and other national security institutions, leaving key positions either unfilled or staffed with poorly qualified loyalists. In the world brimming with complex challenges, this was nothing short of unilateral diplomatic disarmament.

The end result is both ironic and tragic. Trump had reasonably sound instincts on a number of issues and a refreshing willingness to challenge certain well-established but dubious orthodoxies. He was correct to accuse Europeans of neglecting their defenses, correct to accuse China of renegeing on some of its trade commitments, and correct to oppose endless efforts at nation-building in distant lands of little or no strategic importance to the United States. Public support for a less ambitious, more realistic, and more successful foreign policy was widespread. Yet he was unable to translate his instincts into a successful foreign policy. Why?

To be fair, Trump faced a major dilemma from the start. His criticisms of U.S. foreign policy had alienated most of the existing elite—including dozens of veteran Republican officials—and left him with few experienced aides to staff his administration. Hiring inexperienced outsiders would inevitably lead to a lot of rookie mistakes; appointing people who knew how to make the government machinery run would enable them to continue the policies he had promised to end.

This problem was especially acute in the area of national security, where Trump's knowledge was particularly limited, and it helps explain his erratic responses to issues like NATO, Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Second, Trump was a poor judge of talent. He repeatedly picked top officials who either had little or no government experience (e.g., Rex Tillerson, Jared Kushner), checkered personal histories (Michael Flynn, Larry Kudlow), profoundly goofy ideas (Peter Navarro, Steve Bannon), or a long history of prior policy failures (Elliott Abrams, John Bolton). His more conventional appointees (Gary Cohn, James Mattis, H.R. McMaster) eventually fell out of favor, leaving foreign and national security policy in the hands of second-stringers or die-hards like Robert O'Brien or Richard Grenell.

Trump also proved to be a petulant, unpredictable, volcanic, and ungrateful boss, who managed to burn through four chiefs of staff and four national security advisors in less than four years. One staffer called Trump's White House "the most toxic working environment on the planet," and turnover rates inside the administration remained at historically unprecedented levels throughout his term in office. Trying to manage a complex world in the midst of such chaos would have taxed a Bismarck, a Lincoln, or a Roosevelt, and Trump was a far cry from those canny and subtle strategists.

Last but by no means least, Trump's handling of foreign policy succumbed to his own defects of character. His genius for self-promotion and remarkable ability to defy existing norms could not overcome his ignorance of most areas of policy, distrust of genuine expertise, short attention span, incorrigible dishonesty, and inability to place the national interest ahead of his own need for attention and adulation. Qualities that had sometimes worked in his up-and-down business career, in reality TV, and even on the campaign trail proved wholly unsuited to the tasks of governing, especially in the unforgiving world of foreign policy. In the end, even America's many remaining advantages could not make up for Trump's innate incompetence.

Fortunately, American voters seem to have figured this out, too. Trump is the only president whose approval ratings never exceeded 50 percent—not once—and he lost his bid for reelection even though the Electoral College currently makes it much easier for Republicans to win. Indeed, Republican candidates for House and Senate seats did better than expected in the November 2020 election, while the man on top of the ticket went down to a decisive defeat. Trump has no one to blame but himself, which may be why he's refused to accept it.

In many ways, Trump's presidency was a missed opportunity. His predecessors had mismanaged the unipolar moment, and Trump had the chance to put U.S. foreign policy on a sounder footing.

The general public had made it clear that they didn't want isolationism, but they did want a more restrained and successful foreign policy. Trump could have built on that base of support and worked with U.S. allies to bring the country's commitments into better balance. He could have built on the Iran nuclear deal to move toward a more even-handed, balance-of-power posture in the Middle East and ended the Afghan War promptly. He could have worked with other advanced economies to confront China together and worked to reform the World Trade Organization instead of trying to gut it. Properly implemented, a shift to a more realistic grand strategy would have kept the United States secure and prosperous, and freed up resources needed to address pressing priorities at home. Had Trump moved in that direction, the country would be much better off today, and he wouldn't have to find a new place to live in three weeks.

But it was more than a missed opportunity, because Trump's blunders have left the United States in much worse shape than when he took office. For President-elect Joe Biden and his team, the bad news is that they have an enormous amount of repair work to do. The good news, such as it is, is that it won't be hard to do better than the people they are succeeding.

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Source: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/05/trumps-final-foreign-policy-report-card/>

Opening Borders | Editorial

The world saw significant development on the evening of January 4 after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ended Qatar's blockade. The timing was perfect for such a spectacle. As the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit was nearing, the decision to lift the embargo was a diplomatic masterstroke from Saudi Arabia. Reciprocating the Saudi gesture, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Ganad al-Thani confirmed his attendance at the summit. Indeed, the GCC Summit's highlight would be the video clip where Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomed the Emir of Qatar with a warm and tight hug. The warm welcome of the Qatari leader suggests that international actors' diplomatic efforts, especially those of Kuwait, have borne fruits.

In the light of the 41st GCC Summit, the latest developments are positive signs. The Middle East (ME) needs this sort of stability after the latest escalation in tensions in the region. Under the present unprecedented global political, economic and security challenges, a divided ME becomes one of the most vulnerable areas. Thankfully, international diplomacy has removed most hurdles in the way of cooperation between Gulf countries. The recent summit in Al-Ula can be seen as a new beginning for the ME. It is expected that the parties to the Gulf crisis will sign a pact to end the three-year-long GCC crisis.

Like many other countries, Pakistan welcomes the recent show of friendship and cooperation between the two most important states in the region. Islamabad sees the uplifting of the blockade as the first step to paving a path for mutual respect and cooperation. The past few days' events are a practical demonstration of the adage that no animosity or friendship is permanent in international relations; national interests trump all else. Building on this statement's wisdom, Pakistan is more than willing to mediate between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to resolve the outstanding differences between our old allies for more cooperation where possible.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/06-Jan-2021/opening-borders>

Inside Spoilers & Afghan Peace Process By **Reema Shaukat**

PAKISTAN has always supported Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process while extending its all-out political and moral support to Afghanistan. Last year witnessed some active political happenings for Afghanistan where peace process was again kicked off with hopes for peaceful Afghanistan. Though initially peace process seemed moving with slow pace, yet some major breakthroughs happened in 2020 regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan relations. It was the visit of the Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Dr Abdullah Abdullah's marked journey to Pakistan with his delegates which was as vital to the success of Afghan talks aimed at ending decades of war.

It not only provided an opportunity for wide-ranging exchange of views on the Afghan peace process and strengthening of Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations and people-to-people interaction. Later Pakistan also hosted Afghan Parliamentary delegation in October 2020 led by Speaker of the Wolsey Jirga (Afghan Parliament). Hence, Pakistan fully supported and intends to do all efforts for peace, stability and prosperity of the Afghan people. It is important to note that the Afghan peace talks come after a deal signed in February 2020 between the US and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, delineating the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan to end the longest military engagement of US in history. The Taliban have been remained key element in Afghanistan politics since their government was toppled from power since the US-led invasion in 2001 in Afghanistan.

The US-Taliban agreement signed in February had four key elements. First a Taliban guarantee that it will not allow foreign armed groups to use Afghanistan as a launch pad to conduct attacks, the complete withdrawal of the US-led forces, an intra-Afghan dialogue and a ceasefire. The intra-Afghan talks were initially set to begin in March 2020 but were delayed for six months because of a disagreement over a US-brokered prisoner exchange between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Last year on 12 September 2020, peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban opened in Qatar's capital with an objective of ending 20 years of war in Afghanistan with the agenda of focusing on permanent ceasefire, political future of Afghanistan and social equality. After the initiation of talks, in different ongoing rounds, most important thing and often considered at stake is the political future of Afghanistan after US withdrawal, law enforcement and security situation in Afghanistan and steps taken, for gender justice and social equality.

In December 2020 a delegation led by the head of Taliban's political wing Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar visited Pakistan. In a statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said the visit was

“part of Pakistan’s policy to reach out to key Afghan parties in the Afghan peace process with a view to facilitating the intra-Afghan negotiations”. Whereas the Afghan Foreign Ministry said in a statement the visit had taken place in consultation with the Afghan government to facilitate the peace process and that Kabul “appreciates these efforts.” Pakistan’ FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who met the Afghan delegation for the third time, mentioned that in meeting they had a comprehensive discussion on the Afghan peace negotiations, including the need for reduction in violence leading to a ceasefire. However, “Taliban cannot be held single-handedly responsible for it. All sides had a role to play.” He also said Pakistan has told Taliban that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan was not possible without a “comprehensive and inclusive settlement.” Taliban delegation also expressed their desire to end the decades of conflict that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives in Afghanistan.

Pakistan invited this Taliban delegation in consultation with Afghan government to take all stakeholders in confidence for reduction in violence and ceasefire efforts but what now concerning are the statements by the Afghan Vice President Amralluh Saleh who in his tweet said that “Mullah Baradar did three things in Karachi: inquired about his wounded Taliban comrades in Pakistani hospitals, visited a Taliban training centre, and thanked the Pakistani government for helping them”. However, it is important to highlight that meeting of Afghan refugees with Mullah Baradar is something which any Afghan leader or organization can do for its people as a goodwill gesture and moral support to them. But Amraullah Saleh tried to portray it another way via his tweet either to criticize Pakistan or Taliban while forgetting that it is the same Pakistan who is supporting initiatives for peaceful Afghanistan and with same Taliban leadership they are going to hold another round of talks sitting on the same table from 5th January 2021 onwards.

It is not the first time that such irresponsible statements are coming from a person sitting on a high position in Afghan political set up while having tilt or sympathies towards anti-Pakistan elements. Earlier he said that the root cause of the increase in explosions and suicides in Kabul and other provinces is the smuggled exports of 15,000 to 20,000 tons of ammonium nitrate from Pakistan, the chemical material that plays a key role in making improvised explosive devices. Amraullah Saleh remained head of NDS from 2001-2010 till he was removed from his position by Hamid Karzai, partly because of his opposition to Pakistan. His statements continue to strongly criticize Pakistan for allegedly sheltering the Taliban and his views about the recent visit also reflect that he is trying to point fingers towards neighbouring state which can be unproductive and detrimental to regional peace and his own country.

Another story which kept circulating about Saleh were the claims by Speaker Afghan Assembly Rahman Rahmani, who blamed Amraullah Saleh for running a death squad, involved in killing of politicians and journalists in Afghanistan. Earlier in one of his calls to police, he was heard of

ordering killing of Afghan populace. Now by giving such baseless statements and spitting venom against Pakistan, he is giving a dent to peace process as a spoiler and this could be highly damaging to his own country, where he has been a strong critic of the US-initiated Taliban talks and at the beginning of it, he categorically refused to talk to the Taliban leadership. Importantly, Afghan government must not let him play role of spoiler where all stakeholders are making their best efforts for restoration of peace.

—The Islamabad-based writer works as Senior Coordinator at PAYF.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/inside-spoilers-afghan-peace-process/>

Indo-US Relations Under Biden By Inam Ul Haque

When I penned “Joe Biden, South Asia and Pak-US Ties”, printed on November 26, 2020, in this space, the administration of US President-elect was shaping up. As member and twice chairman (1997-2003) of the influential Foreign Relations Committee, President-elect Joe Biden is well-versed in the South Asian region. Like any enduring relationship, Indo-US ties are bound by constants and variables.

While discussing the entire gambit of Indo-US relations, four constants emerge, namely history; democracy & human rights — issues likely to remain important for the Biden presidency; US-India relations as a balancer to a rising China; and the enduring US national interests, given US economic and security relationship with India. The variables include regional dynamics like Pakistan, Iran and the Middle East situation and to some extent the “Kamala factor”, etc.

In shared history as a constant, it is instructive to note that president Roosevelt provided strong support for Indian independence in the 1930s and early-1940s, despite Churchill’s opposition, notwithstanding US alliance with Britain. India has always captivated US attention. Henry Kissinger in his epic, *White House Years* (1979), laments the fact that officials in the State Department would dither issuing favourable messages to Pakistan but do so on the instant for India during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. As per a Gallup survey, 72% Americans viewed India favourably in 2019; India being their sixth favourite nation in the world.

Second, on human rights there is an expectation that Biden’s administration would pressurise India over its contentious domestic developments, which were ignored by the Trump administration, given the Modi-Trump nationalistic credentials. Democrats are, otherwise, strong advocates of human rights and liberties and Vice-president-elect Kamala Harris has spoken against the Modi government’s anti-Muslim policies and human rights violations in Kashmir and elsewhere. The US is likely to be critical of divisive politics of Mr Modi’s Hindu nationalist party.

Mr Biden’s campaign documents squarely urged the Indian government to “take all necessary steps to restore rights for all the people” in Kashmir, expressing “disappointment” in Mr Modi’s citizenship law. Recently a group of seven US lawmakers (six Democrats and one Republican) wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressing “serious concern” on the farmers’ unrest and urged raising the issue with S Jaishankar, the Indian External Affairs Minister. So, a State Department that is back at work, the Biden administration is likely to ramp-up some heat on India for the cited abuses.

However, given the persistent constants and variables of Indo-US relations, no drastic deviation from the present US South Asia policy should be expected. Both nations ostensibly have greater convergences, being the world's two largest democracies besides their expanding economic and military relations. As an enduring theme, each president has improved upon the Indo-US relations since president Clinton (1993-2001).

Propping India against China is likely to be the main driver of Indo-US ties under the Biden presidency. This bilateral constant has brought both countries together in the recent past. The US expects India to act as a regional balancer in the wider China-US competition.

Sequel to the 2020 Sino-Indian stand-off in Ladakh, India committed to reinforce its multilateral partnership with the US, Japan and Australia under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad. India had initially dithered to accept US military assistance during initial days of the stand-off for fear of upsetting its trade ties with Beijing. China criticised Quad as the "Asian version" of NATO aiming against her interests. It is believed that the US will use the Quad platform to arrest the precipitous slide of the 'Indo-Pacific balance of power' towards China. Although some Indian analysts feel Biden's approach towards China would be more nuanced and less favourable towards India.

In October 2020, the US and India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) that provides India with real-time access to American geospatial intelligence. This would greatly improve the accuracy of Indian missiles, armed drones and automated systems. Although the US effort to boost arms sales to India remains complicated due to Indian closeness to Russia and India's multi-source inventory. American officials are also sensitive to the risks that Indo-Russian amity might cause to the technology transfers.

Indo-US militaries — especially the navies — have been regularly training together, undertaking visitations and exchange programmes. Kenneth J Braithwaite, the US Secretary of the Navy, recently visited India.

On the broader US national interests, the US National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017 welcomes "India's emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defense partner". NSS seeks to expand "defense and security cooperation with India" and "support(s) India's growing relationships throughout the region." This is an enduring commitment buttressed by increased Indo-US bilateral trade and investment; US cooperation with India on global security and related decisionmaking (UNSC); India's upgraded representation in the World Bank, IMF, APEC; and the

US' help in allowing India into multilateral export control regimes (MTCR, Australia Group, Wassenaar Arrangement, etc.) and finally admitting her in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

In 2018, Indo-US bilateral trade (both goods and services) reached \$142 billion after 12.58% yearly growth. India has procured US defence hardware worth around \$18 billion in the decade since 2008.

This brings us to some bilateral variables. The persona of Vice-president-elect causes pointed reference, though her utterances on Kashmir are conciliatory to minorities as she remains mindful of her ethnicity. Mr. Modi's push for a "self-reliant India" and wavering to sign a comprehensive trade agreement — ostensibly over concerns of importing American dairy products and medical devices (i.e, coronary stents) — are some bilateral frictions. Recent suspension of H-1B visas for high-skilled Indian workers is another hiccup in the ties.

Indian analysts are also apprehensive that Mr. Biden may be less critical of Pakistan, due to Pakistan's geo-strategic relevance and her role in assisting US military's draw-down from Afghanistan.

Under the regional dynamics, the US would want India to be on her side whether it is Iran, Palestine or Saudi/UAE circumstances... particularly after the recent recognitions of Israel. It would want that India adheres to the anti-Iran sanctions and does not act as a spoiler in the Afghan settlement. Mr. Biden's would also need India's cooperation for his priority climate change initiative.

In sum, the US-India bonhomie is likely to continue under President-elect Biden with Kamala Harris cementing the ties. The situation would likely take a phenomenal turn, if and when, the vice-president becomes president — a sinister campaign theory espoused by the Trump camp.

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What Has Not Changed in U.S.-China Relations

By John Cookson

In the last few years, it has become gospel in Washington that the status quo of U.S. policy toward China cannot continue—that China’s rise has reached a tipping point where the mix of containment and trade that characterized U.S. policy for decades is doomed. As a result, advocates of this view argue, a radical change toward a more aggressive stance is needed to protect U.S. interests in Asia.

Recognizing the shift in U.S. views of China is necessary. No serious policy proposal can ignore the sea change in attitudes that is already evident among U.S. policymakers, scholars, and even the general public. But recalling what has not changed—what is unlikely to change—between the two superpowers is even more important when crafting a responsible U.S. policy in East Asia.

First, neither China nor the U.S. wants to invade the other. Nuclear weapons make regime change an assured catastrophe. Nor are there any real gains to be had from invasion and occupation were it possible without nuclear annihilation. The era of extractive colonialism and overt imperialism is thankfully over.

Mutual deterrence against invasion is easy to take for granted, but it is precisely this feature that separates the current competition from earlier great-power conflicts resulting in open war. While today the U.S. and China may disagree, neither’s very existence is threatened. That fact should frame all disagreements in a less confrontational light.

Second, China is surrounded by capable powers and geography that make territorial expansion difficult. Beijing is unlikely to sweep across Asia like Berlin did across Europe between 1939 and 1945. Water and mountains around China have stopping power. Russia, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are nuclear powers. Vietnam and other neighbors can mount considerable nationalist resistance. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are wealthy, and each currently spends less than 3 percent of its gross domestic product on defense. Each could ramp up military spending if needed. All of this limits China from becoming a hegemonic force that could then credibly threaten the Western hemisphere.

Third, China wants trade. Concern about China’s rise has focused on the growth of Beijing’s military, and in particular its navy, which could come to dominate sea lanes in the region. But what would “domination” mean?

At home, the Chinese Communist Party has staked its survival on the stick of police-state coercion and the carrot of continued economic growth. The latter depends on trade, and trade depends on safe-enough sea lanes for shipping. Because Beijing wants trade to continue, the Chinese navy's frequent harassment of U.S. navy vessels does not mean that a wider harassment of commercial vessels is next. Most commercial shipping is unhindered in areas where China's navy operates. The limited instances when Chinese ships have harassed commercial interests—Vietnamese fishing vessels, for example—are not worth sending the U.S. Navy to contest.

Alone, military capability is not a threat. Instead, a threat is military capability and the intent to use it, and the latter matters. The United States, a military superpower, for example, has the capability to send its troops south and not stop until they reach Tierra del Fuego. The reason it does not is because it lacks the intent. It lacks the intent because there are no strong benefits and plenty of steep costs. Trading with other countries, instead, offers more advantages at less cost. The situation for China in East Asia is similar.

Fourth, outside powers still cannot do much about what happens within China. Make no mistake: Beijing is running internment camps; arbitrary imprisonment is common; techno-authoritarianism is oppressive. But the U.S. has no clear levers to stop these things from happening other than at the margins. And for the tools America does have to try to change Beijing's internal behavior, there cannot be done at an acceptable cost.

Instead, what happens between the United States and China should be the main focus. Beijing and Washington disagree on important bilateral issues such as intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers, espionage, and unfair industrial policies. Some bilateral issues can be remedied, and some cannot—but none will be if rectifying a range of human rights concerns within China is a prerequisite. Beijing will bristle at the encroachment on its sovereignty, and it could then worsen the abuses. Moreover, an expanding middle class in China through global engagement remains—even if the notion has become déclassé in Washington—the best route to Chinese citizens demanding more from their government in terms of rights.

Fifth, Taiwan is not a U.S. ally. There is no official defense treaty between Washington and Taipei, and the U.S. declaring one could push Beijing to risk an invasion attempt. The status quo is better preserved by keeping the pretense that Taiwan could one day peacefully reunite with the mainland while Washington continues to sell Taipei weapons to increase the cost of an invasion for Beijing.

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Joe Biden's Foreign Policy Dream Team Is Disappointing By Ted Galen Carpenter

Anyone hoping that Joe Biden's presidency might embrace new thinking on foreign policy and a greater receptivity to the concept of restraint needs to abandon such hopes at this point. Most of the president-elect's personnel selections for defense and foreign policy posts were members of the Obama administration's junior varsity. Their undeserved elevation to the varsity team reflects the pervasive attitude within the establishment wing of the Democratic Party that everything was just fine with U.S. foreign policy until the irresponsible, "isolationist" Donald Trump wrecked America's position in the world. The proper goal, according to that view, is to restore the status quo ante.

But everything was not fine with U.S. foreign policy when Obama left office. Far from it. The administration had launched not one, not two, but three disastrous military interventions—in Libya, Syria, and Yemen—thereby sowing more destruction and chaos throughout the Middle East. Obama and his minions also had further damaged already frayed relations with Russia by supporting demonstrators who overthrew the duly elected, pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. Too many of Biden's announced appointees were proponents of those misadventures.

As I've written elsewhere, Biden himself was surprisingly cautious regarding the missions in the Muslim world. He strongly opposed the decision to overthrow Libya's Muammar Qaddafi—for very good reason, as the subsequent tragic situation in that country confirmed. Biden also was extremely worried that radical Islamist elements were dominating the Syrian rebellion against Bashar al-Assad that Washington and its allies were supporting. His instincts proved to be correct in that case as well. According to Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, "the only senior official who consistently opposed sending more troops to Afghanistan was Joe Biden."

Unfortunately, Biden exhibited no such worthwhile instincts regarding U.S. policy toward Ukraine and Russia. Indeed, as the transcript of the infamous leaked phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt showed, Biden was the designated point man to bless the successor regime in Kiev that Washington was helping to take power. Nuland was confident the vice president was ready and willing to play that role.

While Biden's views on foreign policy appear to be mixed, those of his new appointees are almost uniformly troubling. Biden's choice for secretary of state, Tony Blinken, favored an activist, militarized approach in both Libya and Syria. In the latter case, his policy preference included

arming the motley Syrian rebels. Several of Biden's other choices for key positions, including Jake Sullivan, designated to be national security adviser, and Avril Haines, the nominee for director of national intelligence, have well-earned reputations for embracing regime-change wars and other dubious positions. His choice for secretary of defense, retired Gen. Lloyd Austin, was the head of the U.S. military's Central Command, and there is little evidence that he ever dissented regarding Washington's ill-starred Middle East interventions. Perhaps worse, Austin comes from the board of Raytheon, one of the corporations profiting the most from Washington's continued, heavy-handed military presence in that region. We're unlikely to get consideration of a more restrained Middle East policy from the crew that Biden is forming.

Prospects are no better for new thinking on other foreign policy issues. Members of Biden's team seem fully on board with respect to maintaining, or even intensifying, a hardline policy toward Moscow. In a November 25, 2020 interview, Blinken stated: "President Biden would be in the business of confronting Mr. Putin for his aggressions, not embracing him. Not trashing NATO, but strengthening its deterrence ... and give robust security assistance to countries like Ukraine, Georgia, the Western Balkans." There was no indication of flexibility on Blinken's part about extending even a small olive branch to Moscow.

Equally sterile thinking on European issues is evident from the comments of other Biden nominees. His choice for deputy secretary of defense, Kathleen Hicks, even opposed Trump's tepid plan to withdraw some 11,900 U.S. troops from Germany. She did so even though approximately half of those forces were simply going to be redeployed to other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries—including some 1,000 to Poland, a move in line with a more confrontational policy toward Russia. Moreover, the move had little operational military significance: Washington still intended to retain nearly 25,000 military personnel in Germany. It's worth recalling that during portions of the Cold War, the United States had nearly 400,000 troops in Europe—most of them in Germany. If reducing force levels from that figure all the way to 34,500 (the level that existed when the Trump administration announced the drawdown) didn't drastically alter the military equation, it's difficult to see how withdrawing another 11,900 would have much impact.

The attitude that Hicks exhibited confirmed that proposals for even the mildest change in NATO policy toward a less dominant U.S. role likely will be summarily dismissed in a Biden administration. Once again, that is not a blueprint for policy innovation.

Surveying the views of the Biden foreign policy team, one is struck by the extent of utterly conventional thinking. That might not be so bad if the underlying assumption that U.S. foreign policy was in good shape before Trump took office was true. But U.S. policy exhibited multiple

signs of dysfunction during the pre-Trump era, and those problems badly need to be addressed and corrected. Unfortunately, the policy team that Biden has assembled exhibits little or no ability to undertake that vital task.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/joe-biden%E2%80%99s-foreign-policy-dream-team-disappointing-175924>

Global Dynamics in 2021 By Maleeha Lodhi

AT this time of the year many reports and assessments are published looking at the year ahead, identifying global dynamics and forecasting geopolitical shifts. They usually offer a big picture view of trends as well as global risks.

There is little doubt that the coronavirus pandemic that dominated 2020 will continue to be the overwhelming challenge across the world. Managing its economic fallout will preoccupy and test governments everywhere. Several dynamics are in play at the start of the year — another surge in Covid-19 cases in many countries and rollout of vaccines that offers the promise of eventually ending the pandemic. But mass inoculation will take time while vaccine distribution will be uneven with richer countries having greater access to supplies while poorer states will have to wait.

WHO officials have repeatedly urged that the vaccine be equitably shared. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has made similar entreaties saying vaccines should be viewed as a ‘global public good’. Despite such calls to make vaccines available to people everywhere, ‘vaccine nationalism’ will be more in play in 2021. Tom Standage, editor of The Economist’s ‘World in 2021’, named this as the year’s top trend, predicting “fights over vaccines...within and between countries over who should get them and when”.

A striking aspect of the pandemic has been the lack of international solidarity that was needed to deal with the common challenge. While global cooperation is essential to negotiate the pandemic’s economic and social consequences, will the trend continue of countries turning inwards and acting on their own? “Insularity” is posited as the defining feature of 2021 by

Geopolitical Futures' (GPF) annual forecast, with countries "consumed" by their own problems. The annual survey of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) describes this trend in a wider sense, as not only a national approach to the pandemic, but also a national impulse in geopolitics. It sees "strategic self-determination" driving more efforts by states to "develop their own strategic identity rather than have this shaped for them by regional or institutional affiliations."

The year will present both risks & opportunities at a time when global leadership will be in short supply.

This raises the much-debated question about the future of multilateralism at a time of growing multipolarity. The retreat from multilateralism emerged as a dominant trend in the last decade with the rise of hyper nationalism and right-wing populism. Major powers and regional 'strongmen' have been pursuing unilateralist policies in defiance of international law, which has eroded a rules-based international order. The advent of the Biden administration in the US has however raised hopes that the trend away from multilateral cooperation will be gradually reversed. President-elect Biden has already declared his intention to rejoin the Paris Climate agreement, return to WHO and re-enter the Iran nuclear deal. 2021 will certainly offer an opportunity to strengthen multilateralism although Stratfor's 2021 Forecast sees a "constrained return to multilateralism" by Biden.

Most assessments agree that the greatest geopolitical risk of 2021 concerns relations between two global powers, the US and China — the world's most pivotal relationship with global impact. Some see Biden trying to mend ties with China while others predict intensifying tensions between them. The US-based Atlantic Council says relations could reach a denouement over Taiwan. GPF predicts a freeze in relations. Still others think the relationship will stabilise. It may not be as "overtly confrontational" as it was under President Trump according to the Eurasia Group's report on Top Risks for 2021. This asserts that "both sides will seek some breathing space". But it also says that the desire for stability will be offset by other factors to rule out détente. Many assessments suggest an intensification of both trade tensions and the tech war. The Economist report says that fragmentation of the digital world and its supply chain into two parts, "one Chinese-dominated and the other American-led", will continue. The IISS survey also cites the prospect of "digital spheres of influence."

Many Western analysts see a fundamental difference between Trump and Biden in engaging allies to pursue the competition with China. The Economist argues that Biden will seek cooperative ties with allies to "more effectively" wage the trade war with Beijing. Most annual reports however failed to anticipate the diplomatic skill and speed with which China has moved

to forge deals with US allies — an investment treaty with the EU and a trade deal (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) with 14 Asia-Pacific states. This has begun to limit US options to enlist allies in this regard and has been described as a “strategic win” for China by The Financial Times.

Economic recovery will be the main preoccupation for all countries in 2021. Varied prospects are forecast for a global financial rebound from the impact of the pandemic. There seems agreement that this will be patchy as the virus will take time to contain and continue to induce a deep recession and job losses. Developing countries will face tougher challenges. Despite some debt relief initiatives by richer states, debt liabilities have risen to record levels for them. The World Bank forecasts that millions more will be pushed into extreme poverty. Contraction in growth will greatly inhibit job creation and set back poverty alleviation efforts in developing countries. The overall outlook is for an increase in inequality within and between nations. This obviously has implications for social stability.

The IMF in its outlook says the crisis is likely to leave “deep and unequal scars” with “uncertainty and risks exceptionally high”. Financial market turbulence can be expected to continue for much of 2021. The speed and extent of recovery in countries will depend on several factors especially on how effectively they get the virus under control and effects of their economic stimulus policies. Only China’s economic growth is expected to be robust.

Although many other risks are identified by several annual assessments, the one that finds common emphasis is cyber security. This will continue to loom large as a concern for governments and businesses. The Eurasia report calls 2021 “the year that cyber conflict will create unprecedented technological and geopolitical risk”.

Thus 2021 will present both risks and opportunities but at a time when global leadership will continue to be in short supply.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

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The Shame Of Global Hunger – OpEd By Graham Peebles

We live in a world of plenty, resource rich, financially wealthy, but despite this abundance an estimated 700 million people go hungry every day. Millions more are food insecure, meaning they may have food today, but have no idea if they will have any tomorrow or next week. Additional millions can only afford nutritionally barren, poor quality food laced with salt and sugar, increasing the risk of illness and obesity.

According to a detailed report published by the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in September 2020 if rich countries doubled “their aid commitments” to \$330 billion, and supported poor countries to improve “agricultural R&D, technology, innovation, education, social protection and trade facilitation,” the world could be free of hunger by 2030. In fact with effective food distribution under the stewardship of the UN World Food Programme hunger could be eradicated long before then; there is an abundance of produce and foodstuff in the world.

Hunger and malnutrition statistics are disturbing and shameful; the GHI lists 11 countries with ‘alarming levels of hunger’, eight of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa; two are war zones: Yemen and Syria. A further 31 nations (26 are in Africa) are listed as having ‘serious levels of hunger’. Since 2015, after years of decline, the number of undernourished people has been increasing yearly: from 2018 to 2019 it grew by 10 million, and Covid has intensified this trend. Hunger is a violent act, a shameful scar on our collective consciousness that now affects 9% of the world population – 60% of whom are women and children. The World Health Organization (WHO) state that around 45% of deaths among children under 5 years of age are linked to under-nutrition.”

The principal cause of hunger is routinely stated to be poverty, and while it’s certainly true that those with money don’t starve, the underlying cause is social injustice, and a set of perverted assumptions about the worth of one human being compared to another. In addition climate change and armed conflict are two main drivers. Where there is war (often erupting in poor nations with fragile social support structures) there is hunger; people are displaced and food shortages are quickly created. Climate change, which is affecting poor countries more than the rich, comfortable, and complacent Nations, is the other key trigger. Oxfam lists five links between changing climate and hunger:

1. Lost livelihoods as harvests diminish through extreme conditions, e.g., the 2020 locust infestation that decimated the horn of Africa. In addition to intensifying food insecurity such events can force people to leave the land and migrate in search of opportunities elsewhere.

2. Increased prices/food shortages. Food may be available but when weather impacts on infrastructure (roads, bridges docks), food cannot reach markets, shortages occur, prices rise, the poorest go without.

3. Access to water, particularly in drought-prone areas, e.g. Somalia.

4. Nutrition/health: Climate change-driven water scarcity impacts on the ability of farmers to produce enough quality food. Children are the most affected. Oxfam – “climate change is intensifying the threat from the three biggest killers of children – diarrhea, malnutrition, and malaria.”

5. Inequality: Climate change intensifies inequality. Developed/western countries are historically responsible for greenhouse gas emissions; those most at risk are the southern hemisphere nations, with women and children hit hardest.

Hunger, and poverty, are issues of social justice; it is deeply unjust that simply because a child is born into a poor family in Sub-Saharan Africa or a city slum in South-East Asia e.g., that he/she is at greater risk of malnutrition, hunger-related illness and starvation, than a child born in the lap of middle class prosperity. Hunger could be ended tomorrow but complacency allows it to continue, because it doesn't affect the privileged, the comfortable, and on the whole takes place elsewhere.

It is a consequence of a particular approach to life, and of systemic structures rooted in the ideology of greed and division. The commodification of all aspects of society has taken place, selfishness and competition fostered and, in spite of routine acts of community kindness a 'dog eat dog' mentality has taken root. To the extent that, as a global community, we let children die or suffer from crippling levels of malnutrition simply because their family or community are poor, their country, often culturally rich and diverse, economically undeveloped.

Crisis of Values

As the West emerges from the Season of Overindulgence and Waste, and Covid-19 continues to impact public health and national economies, the divisions in our world are more visible than ever; the privileged versus the marginalized; the supported versus the neglected; the hungry versus the satisfied; the rich versus the poor or economically anxious.

While hundreds of thousands lost their jobs in 2020 and were forced to turn to governments and charities for support, Forbes record that the number of billionaires in the world increased and

their overall wealth surged “by more than \$2 trillion...to reach an all-time high of \$10.2 trillion,” (perhaps these billionaires could fork out the required \$330 billion to end hunger?). In China alone the countries super-wealthy earned a record US\$1.5 trillion – more than the past five years combined.

Such increases are the inevitable consequence of a socio-economic system designed to concentrate wealth, and with it power, in the hands of a few. It is totally unjust and immoral and has fostered a set of destructive divisive ideals that allow hunger, poverty and the environmental emergency to exist.

At the core of the interconnected crises facing humanity is a crisis of values, which can cogently be described as a spiritual crisis. As a consequence of the reductive values of the time, ‘value’ has been equated to gain: Monetary worth/profit, status and influence. Someone or something capable of generating income or return that is higher than another is prized. Business strategies and decisions are chiefly dictated by profit, the ultimate value and principle factor in determining action. Countries (like Australia, Canada, the UK) have adopted immigration policies based on the ‘skillsets’ or human values they require. Refugees/asylum seekers are valued (and earn points) or not, depending upon their ability to add worth to the overall national economy. Those with no such attributes (and not enough points) are deemed to be of no value to society and are rejected, relegated to the shadowy peripheries of society.

This valuation of human beings as economic commodities or assets is utterly abhorrent and is a contributory reason why hunger still stalks the land. The notion that some people are more worthy, are of more value than others, that some can be left to starve or become ill due to lack of nutrition while others cannot.

Humanity is, on the face of it at least, confronted with a choice between values and ways of organizing society that flow from the unifying magnetic force we call love, and those rooted in fear, selfishness, and greed, which, while fading, are pervasive. But as millions of people around the world know, if the issues of the day are to be overcome there is actually no choice at all. The solutions to the issues of the day lie in totally rejecting attitudes that divide humanity, and adopting values that rest in and cultivate unity and brotherhood. Perennial values held within the hearts of men and women everywhere that encourage social/environmental responsibility, cooperation and tolerance and give expression to our essential oneness.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/09012021-the-shame-of-global-hunger-oped/>

Power, Water And Climate By Eurasia

Review

As the planet continues to warm, the twin challenges of diminishing water supply and growing energy demand will intensify. But water and energy are inextricably linked. For instance, nearly a fifth of California's energy goes toward water-related activities, while more than a tenth of the state's electricity comes from hydropower. As society tries to adapt to one challenge, it needs to ensure it doesn't worsen the other.

To this end, researchers from UC Santa Barbara, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and UC Berkeley have developed a framework to evaluate how different climate adaptations may impact this water-energy nexus. Their research appears in the open access journal Environmental Research Letters.

"Electricity and water systems are linked in many different ways," said coauthor Ranjit Deshmukh, an assistant professor in the environmental studies department. "Climate change is expected to stress these links so we presented a framework that maps these interdependencies and will enable us to understand and quantify its impacts on the energy-water nexus."

Although it's not the first study to look at these topics, it takes a more nuanced approach than the papers that have come before. "There have been many analyses on how climate change could affect the water and energy sectors separately, but those studies were not typically looking at interactions and feedbacks between the two," said lead author Julia Szinai of Berkeley Lab's Climate and Ecosystem Sciences Division. "Our paper develops a generalized framework that identifies how climate change affects these coupled water and electricity systems and potential adaptations to future gaps in supply and demand. By doing so we illustrate often overlooked tradeoffs and synergies in adapting to climate change."

The framework uses systems analysis to identify the biggest potential climate stressors on the water and energy sectors. It quantifies actions that will be needed to adapt to climate change, and examines the feedbacks that would result from these actions.

"For example, our framework shows how increased temperatures due to climate change will likely increase electricity demand for air conditioning and water demand for irrigation," Deshmukh explained. "Whereas snowpack loss in the Sierras and variable precipitation will affect the water supply, not just for urban and agricultural use, but also for hydropower generation and thermal power plant cooling."

California relies on snowpack in the Sierra Nevadas to slowly mete out water over the course of the year.

The team applied the framework they developed to California, which relies on the snowpack for a good deal of its water and expends significant amounts of energy to transport water from the north to the southern part of the state. They examined multiple adaptation strategies in the water sector and found that some are energy intensive while others can actually save both water and energy.

The researchers integrated data across a number of fragmented studies to estimate the overall range of possible water and energy futures for the state under various climate scenarios at the end of the century. Their analysis found that two factors will likely dominate climate change's direct impacts on California's electricity sector: higher air conditioning loads and decreased hydropower availability.

"One of the most important points of the paper is that adapting our water system to climate change can either significantly exacerbate electricity grid stress, or on the flip side, it could help to alleviate it," said co-author and Berkeley Lab climate scientist Andrew Jones. "If we focus on adapting the water system by using big transfers of water across basins, or by using energy-intensive desalination, that's just going to make the electricity problem much more difficult. If, on the other hand, we adapt the water system by conserving water, it's actually a win-win situation because you're also reducing the energy required for water."

Currently, a staggering 19% of California's electricity consumption goes toward water-related applications, such as treating, transporting, pumping and heating. Additionally, about 15% of in-state electricity generation comes from hydropower.

The state has already seen some impacts of climate change on its water-energy systems. Extended droughts exacerbated by climate change have led to spikes in electricity consumption for groundwater pumping, and corresponding hydropower deficits have required replacement by dirtier fossil fuels.

The team is certain that the climate crisis will have a huge impact on the state's future water supplies. That said, the effect is wildly uncertain. In the worst case, available water supplies could decrease 25%; however, they could increase 46%.

“There are significant uncertainties in the climate model projections for precipitation,” said Deshmukh. “But irrespective of those uncertainties, the adaptation measures offer significant co-benefits.” Conserving water would save energy as well as money for consumers, and allow for greater flow in the state’s natural streams and rivers.

When the team applied their framework to the worst-case scenario, they found that choosing the most energy-intensive adaptation strategies in the water sector could result in an energy imbalance as large as that caused directly by climate change.

“I think this is the first study to show that water sector adaptation can have as large of an impact on the electricity sector as the direct effect of climate change itself,” said Jones.

“This study has highlighted the benefit of coordinated adaptation planning between the two sectors,” added lead author Szinai, “so we’re now linking a more detailed water resources management model and an electricity planning model that can demonstrate resilient pathways for building out electricity infrastructure in the Western U.S. when climate change impacts are included from the water sector.”

Deshmukh is currently leading a team to explore the connections between energy, water and the climate by quantifying the impacts of climate change on hydropower dams and thermal power plants in 12 countries across southern Africa. He hopes to identify optimal investments in electricity infrastructure.

“California has a choice in how it wants to adapt its water sector to the impacts of climate change,” Deshmukh stated. “The state can either pursue energy intensive climate adaptation measures such as desalination or develop a portfolio of measures that maximize water conservation potential. Planners and policymakers in the water and energy sectors need to coordinate their actions and plans for adapting to climate change.”

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/11012021-power-water-and-climate/>

The United States Needs a Democracy

Summit at Home By James Goldgeier and

Bruce W. Jentleson

It seemed like something straight out of a dystopian movie. Incited by the outgoing president of the United States, insurrectionists waving Confederate and Trump flags broke through the barricades surrounding the U.S. Capitol, scaled the stairs, and stormed through the legislative branch complex, including the chamber where members had just been meeting to certify the presidential vote. The scenes at the heart of American democracy were hard to comprehend, and yet given the nature of Donald J. Trump's presidency and its Republican enablers, few should have been surprised at the American carnage at the end of these four years.

Joe Biden will be inaugurated as president at noon on January 20, with the expressed hope of declaring that "America is back." But the new president will face a world that has tremendous reservations about whether the country that has held the mantle of world leadership since World War II should continue to do so. While U.S. allies in NATO and in Asia will be relieved that a committed internationalist will once again lead the United States, the views we have expressed previously in these pages—that global leadership is not an American entitlement and Biden's plan to host a global "Summit for Democracy" will create more problems than benefits—have been profoundly reinforced by this week's Battle of Capitol Hill.

After 9/11, the United States received supportive messages from allies, with NATO invoking its Article 5 collective security provision for the first time. This week, allies expressed shock and dismay. Most pointedly, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas tweeted that "the enemies of democracy will be happy to see these incredible pictures from #WashingtonDC." No other Western democracy has witnessed anything close to this type of political violence in recent years.

On Wednesday, Biden declared, "Decency, respect, tolerance—that's who we are, that's who we've always been." The country has certainly aspired to those values, and it will soon once again have a president who believes in them. But in fact Americans have not always been decent, respectful, and tolerant. Those who stormed the Capitol were not outsiders, like the British in 1814. They were Americans, egged on by a sitting president and supported by members of Congress, one of whom even raised his clenched fist in salute before the mob swarmed his workplace.

Americans have not always been decent, respectful, and tolerant.

Congress did reconvene and certify the electoral vote, but as Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, said, “This will be a stain on our country not so easily washed away.” Indeed, it is hardly the only such stain of late. Earlier the same day, a former Ku Klux Klan member combed the Georgia State Capitol looking for Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. In mid-December, the Proud Boys rampaged through Washington. The FBI broke up a plot to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer in October.

For all the focus on Fox News, QAnon, and others on the “supply side,” the “demand side” is an even greater concern. As the journalist Charlie Warzel stresses, “Millions of Americans are actively courting conspiracies and violent, radical ideologies in order to make sense of a world they don’t trust.” Scholars of white nationalism and militias warn that Wednesday’s events were not sui generis; and as Seyward Darby, the author of a book on women in the white nationalist movement, warns, “Just because a coup attempt fails doesn’t mean the next one will.”

The Biden team should hold not an international summit for democracy but a domestic one that recommits the nation’s political leadership to the system’s institutions and to the effort to overcome injustice and inequality. Such an endeavor could bring together a bipartisan group of congressional leaders, governors, and mayors to pledge the renewal of American democracy. Among its priorities would be devising measures to ensure the implementation of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, increase police accountability, protect the freedom of the press, and combat disinformation. Such a summit would be not just a Washington event but a multifaceted problem-solving effort, true to U.S. federalism, drawing in state and local actors, in rural communities as well as cities, and engaging civil society as well.

Even with a Democratic majority now in both houses of Congress, Biden’s foreign policy agenda will likely depend on his administration’s ability to show U.S. allies and others that it can deliver the domestic support necessary for a robust internationalism. Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama both had Democratic Congresses their first two years yet were constrained in their foreign policies. Issues such as climate change and pandemic prevention will require Biden to muster support for major initiatives. Even if Democrats can keep their slim majorities together (as few as four in the House, none to spare in the Senate), the filibuster is still a potent tool that soon-to-be Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is more than willing to use.

Calls for strengthening the domestic foundations of foreign policy may sound hackneyed at this point. But there can no longer be any doubt that fixing American democracy at a level deeper even than the damage Trump has done must be the new administration’s most essential order of business.

The Changing Relationships By Dr Muhammad Ali Ehsan

From time to time all relationships need review, repair and recalibration. Whether personal or inter-state, relationships must adjust, adapt and evolve in the light of changing realities. The Indo-Pak relations are very important as any twists and turns in these relations affect the lives of 1.6 billion people constituting about 21% of the global population. And when the populations of China, Russia, Bangladesh, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian states are added, it becomes a whopping 46% of the world population. These people must not suffer just because their leadership has failed to take advantage of the emerging opportunities to turn around their lives.

It is in this context that promotion of peace and stability stands out as the most important foreign policy agenda, supporting and implementing which is the responsibility of the entire leadership of the region. The fast-changing realities and circumstances are pushing countries to perceive new ways of exploring their partnership, but India's scant acknowledgment of these changed circumstances — indicative in how it keeps pushing to compete, at times violently and with the same old-fashioned ways, with some of its neighbouring states — is making the world grow apprehensive of its real security and strategic designs. What pressures is India suffering from and what are its fears?

The Indo-US engagement is a thorn that will keep pricking India's relationship with its historical partner and great friend, Russia. This partnership is clearly arousing concerns in Russia and is manifested in how Russia reads 'US-led West' trying to draw in 'anybody and everybody' to create a unipolar world that would stand up against Russia and China whom the US perceives as the rising threats to its security. This Russian perception of the latest Indo-Russian relations is clearly demonstrated in the remarks of its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov last month at a meeting of the Russian International Affairs Council. In that meeting, Lavrov described India as "an object of Western countries persistent, aggressive and devious policy... trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called 'Quad', while at the same time attempting to undermine [Russia's] close partnership and privileged relations with India".

'Quad', also known as 'Asian NATO', is a strategic partnership between US, Australia, Japan and India — all of whom share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific. But this 'Asian NATO' is viewed both by Russia and China as an alliance to defer and contain their interests in the region.

The recent growing 'Russia-China relations' are a clear signal to the US that 'Quad' will be competed against and confronted. One cannot be sure of Russian conviction that its historic

'strategic and privileged strategic partnership' with India is on the decline but India must read, in the growing Russian-China relations, a warning sign of its relationship decline with Russia. President Putin termed Russia-China relations as being 'at their highest level in history' when he extended his New Year greetings to President Xi. Previously, speaking to a Chinese journalist in Oct 2020, Putin expressed his admiration at the 'significant military-technical cooperation involving sharing of technologies' between the two countries. He said it was "boosting the defence potential of the Chinese army which is in the interest of both Russia and China". And when asked if a military alliance between the two countries was possible, Putin replied, "It is not currently on the agenda but could not be ruled out in future." As much as there is an Indian tilt away from Russia, there is now growing evidence of a Russian tilt away from India as well. Is this a strategic fear that India suffers from?

India's access to Central Asia, West Asia and Afghanistan is dependent on its connectivity projects such as Chabahar and International North South Trade Corridor (INSTC) through Iran. But it all depends on the new Biden administration in how it dilutes its posture against Iran. The world expects the sanctions to be lifted against Iran, but the question is: will it actually happen, especially when Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif expects the "US to join back JCPOA first, without any pre-conditions". We all know the US pre-conditions of rejoining JCPOA are linked with Iran giving up its missile programme and curbing on its regional activities. If Biden-Rouhani duo doesn't click, what will happen to India's plan to access Central Asia, West Asia and Afghanistan through Iran (considering Iran remains under sanctions). The way Russian-China-Pakistan interests converge in Afghanistan is quite different from the way India perceives and pursues its interests in that country. India is the only country in the region that has not shown a desire to join the BRI and has not either recognised Taliban as a political entity. No wonder, alarms bells rang when India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval travelled to Kabul on an unannounced visit on January 13 amid an ongoing second phase of intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha. What can be the purpose of this visit during such a crucial stage of the peace talks?

Not just in this region, India is also competing for a dominant role and strategic space in the Arabian Peninsula also. After the Indian external affairs minister's visit to Qatar in the last week of December, the Qatar Investment Authority is exploring ways to invest in the entire energy value chain in India. Its army chief has already paid first-of-its-kind visits to the UAE and Saudi Arabia. In a grand US design for the Arab world to recognise Israel, a 'Quad-2' is fast shaping up. Its members are the GCC countries, the US, India and Israel. The benefits for the GCC countries to join this club are immense. The Saudi-Qatar relations have also improved and besides Qatar participating in the GCC meeting in Riyadh this month, both countries are also looking forward to other partnerships in the coming years. One of them is jointly holding the Asian Games for 2030 and 2034 which have been awarded to them by Olympic Council of Asia.

The amazing story of the review, repair and recalibration of relationships that I mentioned right at the outset of this write-up is on the rise and countries, including neighbouring India, are making strategic choices to adapt to the changing geopolitical realities and are therefore not only protecting their national interests but also selling their reliability and credibility to a world that is more and more interested in the growing Indian market.

But what are we doing all this while? Have a look at the headlines in our news channels and the issues being discussed on some of the talk-shows on these channels, and you can easily determine the trajectory that politicians don't want this country to take. There is this dire need for these time-wasting talk-shows, whose participants only fight and abuse each other in the name of discussion, to be replaced with information-laden shows where experts review all instruments of our national power, diplomacy, information, economy and military to identify why we lagged behind as a nation.

Post Script: While in power we do nothing to empower state institutions, but once outside and being made accountable on the charges of corruption, we lead protests against them. This isn't the kind of leadership that can ever lead my country in the 21st century with all its complexities.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2280216/the-changing-relationships>

Biden's North Korea Challenge – Analysis

By Naoko Aoki

US President Donald Trump chose an unconventional style of diplomacy with North Korea that was characterised by an emphasis on leader-to-leader relations and a go-it-alone approach that minimised consultation with other stakeholders. While this approach resulted in three summit meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, it did not lead to a meaningful rollback of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

When US President-elect Joe Biden takes office on 20 January, he will face a North Korea that is frustrated about what it sees as failed diplomacy and eager to continue expanding its nuclear and missile arsenal. To raise the chances of progress in denuclearising North Korea, Biden should seek better coordination with US allies South Korea and Japan than Trump had in any future diplomatic process. Biden would also need to seek cooperation from China as well, given its important role.

Biden, who criticised Trump for legitimising Kim through summitry, is unlikely to repeat Trump-style diplomatic negotiations. Biden confirmed that he would only be willing to meet with Kim if the North Korean leader agrees to draw down Pyongyang's nuclear capability.

It is unclear what kind of negotiation process, if any, North Korea will be willing to pursue after Trump leaves office. North Korea preferred the top-down approach with Trump, placing importance on the personal chemistry between the two leaders and avoiding the working-level talks that are necessary to hammer out details. Kim was likely hoping that Trump's free-wheeling style — that was also dismissive of lower-level dialogue — would produce results in his favour. The lack of follow-up was another key feature of this diplomacy, which produced vague statements but no tangible denuclearisation results.

While North Korea has not ruled out diplomacy with the new administration, the country has made clear that it wants to see the United States make concessions. At the recently concluded 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea in early January, Kim Jong-un labelled the United States as North Korea's 'biggest enemy' and emphasised that the key to establishing a new bilateral relationship is for the United States to withdraw its 'hostile policy'. This phrase refers to a broad range of measures on its wish list, including the lifting of economic sanctions and an end to US–South Korea joint military exercises.

In the same meeting, North Korea also said it will continue to pursue quantitative and qualitative improvements in its nuclear forces and weapons systems. The country referred to an unusually detailed list of sophisticated weapons that are in development, including tactical nuclear weapons and a multiple warhead capable missile. Pyongyang likely believes that time is on its side, as more weapons mean not only more measures to defend the country but also greater leverage in any future diplomatic negotiations.

A choice that Biden faces early in his presidency is whether to reverse a pledge Trump made after his first meeting with Kim in Singapore in June 2018. Trump announced then that he would stop US–South Korea joint military exercises — which North Korea considers provocative — even though there were no tangible concessions in return. The United States and South Korea have since suspended or downsized large-scale combined exercises. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the drills in 2020.

Resuming such exercises would help US and South Korean forces better prepare for any possible contingencies. But Pyongyang could also use their resumption as an excuse to carry out new provocations.

An easier decision for Biden that is in line with his overall foreign policy would be to facilitate closer consultations with US allies South Korea and Japan on security issues in general and the North Korean threat in particular. South Koreans were shocked when Trump announced the suspension of US–South Korea military exercises without consulting them. And Japan was worried that the United States would scale back or even withdraw troops from South Korea, which would have major security implications for the country. Such differences could be exploited by North Korea. To ensure stability in the region, the United States needs to carry out closer consultations with its allies about the format of negotiations with North Korea and concessions that may impact them in any future diplomacy.

Biden will also need to seek cooperation with China over North Korea despite the chilliness in overall relations between Washington and Beijing. While the United States and China do not see eye-to-eye on the North Korean threat, and perhaps never will, they have had success in coordinating approaches in a limited manner in the past. Biden needs to find this common ground with China, which continues to be North Korea’s most important trading partner and political ally, holding a key to any stable solution to the North Korea problem.

Whether diplomacy will take place between the United States and North Korea is unclear. Should it do so, Biden should make sure that his administration coordinates with key stakeholders to the best extent possible.

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Modi—A Threat to Peace By Ahsan Zia

Blowing the lid off the Pulwama attack on its first anniversary, the WhatsApp leaks of Arnab Goswami, a journalist close to the Modi government has established that the incident was nothing but a false-flag operation orchestrated by the Indian leadership for getting selfish political gains through maligning Pakistan. The conversation also evidently exposes the fact that up to what extent the ruthless and callous Narendra Modi and his cronies can go in their pursuit by slaughtering even their own military men.

The WhatsApp communication between Republic TV anchor, Arnab Goswami and then Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) chief executive Partho Dasgupta clearly indicated that Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration had masterminded the Pulwama false-flag operation as well as airstrikes near the Pakistani area of Balakot before the election, in a way that would 'elate' the Indian people.

The WhatsApp messages also revealed that Arnab Goswami was in prior knowledge of the conspiracy hatched apparently by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his administration to carry out airstrikes near Balakot—several hours ahead of the intrusion into Pakistan's airspace, that ended up in a worldwide embarrassment for their country in 2019.

During the tête-à-tête dated 23 February 2019, Republic TV anchor Goswami told Dasgupta that "something big will happen". Nonetheless, when the latter asked if it was about "Dawood", Goswami replied, "No sir, Pakistan. Something major will be done this time." The conversation apparently proved that Goswami had known that airstrikes were going to be conducted shortly in order to win the hearts of the Indians securing Modi's victory in the parliamentary election that year. "It's good for the big man this season. He (Narendra Modi) will sweep the polls", responded Dasgupta, inquiring if it will be "a strike" or "something bigger".

Not only did the revelation of the conversation between the two clearly point towards the fact that how easily some blue-eyed media persons could have prior information and access to the top-secret military operations of the Indian army, but also the extent the present Indian leadership of BJP can go to achieve their political gains. Obviously, it has been proved now that PM Narendra Modi and his chums can go to any extent to ensure their presence in the corridors of power. In the pursuit of this goal, they do not hesitate even in slaughtering their own army and putting the blame on Pakistan. It has vindicated Islamabad's stance on the Pulwama operation as well as the terrorist attacks.

IBCC to digitize records under Shafqat Mehmood's direction

Meanwhile, the way the Pulwama attack was carried out raised many an eyebrow within and outside India on the authenticity of the claim made by the Indian leadership that has since been pointing fingers towards Islamabad for the terrorist operation.

A whole slew of questions, from killing low-caste Indian soldiers to supplying arms and ammunition in a heavy quantity in the hands of terrorists normally used only by the Indian Army, have yet to be clarified.

Pertinent to mention here is an investigative report published in an Indian magazine The Caravan, which revealed the system by the dint of which low-caste communities, especially low-caste Hindus (Dalits) are subjected to all sorts of exploitation across India by the ruling upper class of Brahmins—the truism is starkly visible everywhere in India right now.

The report comprehensively threw light on how cruelly and inhumanly the Indian troops, belonging to low caste backgrounds were butchered in the Pulwama attack by their own countrymen from the upper class at the behest of the Modi government.

Proposal to ban Islamic veil sparks criticism in France

The report revealed that the 40 Indian soldiers primarily hailed from lower-caste communities. In all, they comprised 19 troops from other backward classes (or backward castes); seven from scheduled castes; five from scheduled tribes; four from upper-caste backgrounds; one high-caste Bengali; three Jat Sikhs; and one Muslim. Moreover, twelve of the 40 troops who died in Pulwama were from Uttar Pradesh, and they included two Brahmins, three from Scheduled Castes, and seven from OBC communities. So, only five out of the 40 soldiers, or 12.5 percent, came from Hindu upper-caste backgrounds. The BJP government never spoke of the caste and class dimensions of those Indian soldiers who died in Pulwama.

The answer also begets another question about the use of weapons shown in the video footage of the Pulwama attack. As told by Indian authorities shortly after the attack, the weapons were the American made M16s with a telescopic optic, LMG with night-vision devices, and laser-range finders. The question arises here; are these kinds of weapons as well as 350 kilograms of explosive easily available in the Valley where the heavy presence of Indian troops has already made it impossible for the local Kashmiris to move around unchecked? How come the footage of the attack appeared on social media hardly minutes after the attack? Moreover, it was known in five minutes that an improvised Explosive Device (IED) was used in the attack.

Alibaba founder re-appears after months of silence

The stark reality is that the Indian Premier Narendra Modi, through his dangerous actions has become a constant threat to regional security and peace of not only South Asia but also the world. India's behaviour is increasingly that of a rogue state. Through unilateral military actions, disinformation campaigns false-flag operations and state-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan, Delhi has already led the region to the brink of a potential war.

The Indian narrative of isolating Pakistan is on its last legs. Whereas, the Indian leadership has now been pushed to the wall by its own internal and external crises and problems. The fact of life is from held Kashmir to Assam; India is burning. Besides the farmers' protest movement, a number of other separatist movements across India have crippled both its economy and security. So, India has virtually become turbulent for the Modi government which is finding it very difficult to cope with the situation.

Therefore, there is a strong possibility that in order to divert the attention of its people from internal pressures, Indian leadership can go on yet another misadventure by mounting an attack on Azad Kashmir. If this happens, it would be a great mistake for which India has to pay a heavy price as Pakistan will not sit back and its reply will be prompt and devastating for India. Thus, it is high time the world powers took notice of the volatile condition in South Asia before it is too late. The international powers should also take into account what the BJP is doing within and outside India.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/20-Jan-2021/modi-a-threat-to-peace>

US-Taliban Deal | Editorial

RECENT statements from both the Afghan Taliban and the new US administration indicate that the peace agreement signed between Washington and the Afghan militia in Doha last year may be in peril unless both sides make more of an effort to save it. A statement from the Taliban on Friday accused the US of ‘violating’ the accord by targeting civilians, though the militia’s spokesman tweeted that they remain “fully committed” to the plan. This appears to be a reaction to recent American statements, in which senior members of the Biden administration have questioned the sustainability of the Trump-era peace agreement. A top Pentagon official said that while the US stood by the Doha agreement, the Taliban would have to meet “their commitments to renounce terrorism” and stop violent attacks. While the Taliban and the Kabul government have been meeting to talk peace, violent confrontations on the battlefield between both sides continue, which has prompted the new American administration to question the Taliban’s commitment to the peace plan.

Indeed, it would be ideal for all foreign forces to exit Afghanistan and leave the security of the country to the government. The country has seen decades of instability primarily due to foreign meddling in its internal affairs. However, the Taliban’s paradoxical stance of talking and fighting at the same time has cast serious doubts over the peace process, and in this regard the Biden administration’s concerns are genuine. If the Doha agreement is to survive, and if the talks between Kabul and the Taliban are to succeed, there needs to be an immediate cessation of hostilities from the militia, particularly attacks targeting civilians. If these processes fail, there is a strong likelihood that the ‘forever war’ in Afghanistan will continue. While outsiders have played a role in destabilising Afghanistan, Afghan warlords and power-hungry factions have also done their bit to ensure peace is not established in their homeland. Today, the onus is on the Taliban to silence their guns and give peace a chance.

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