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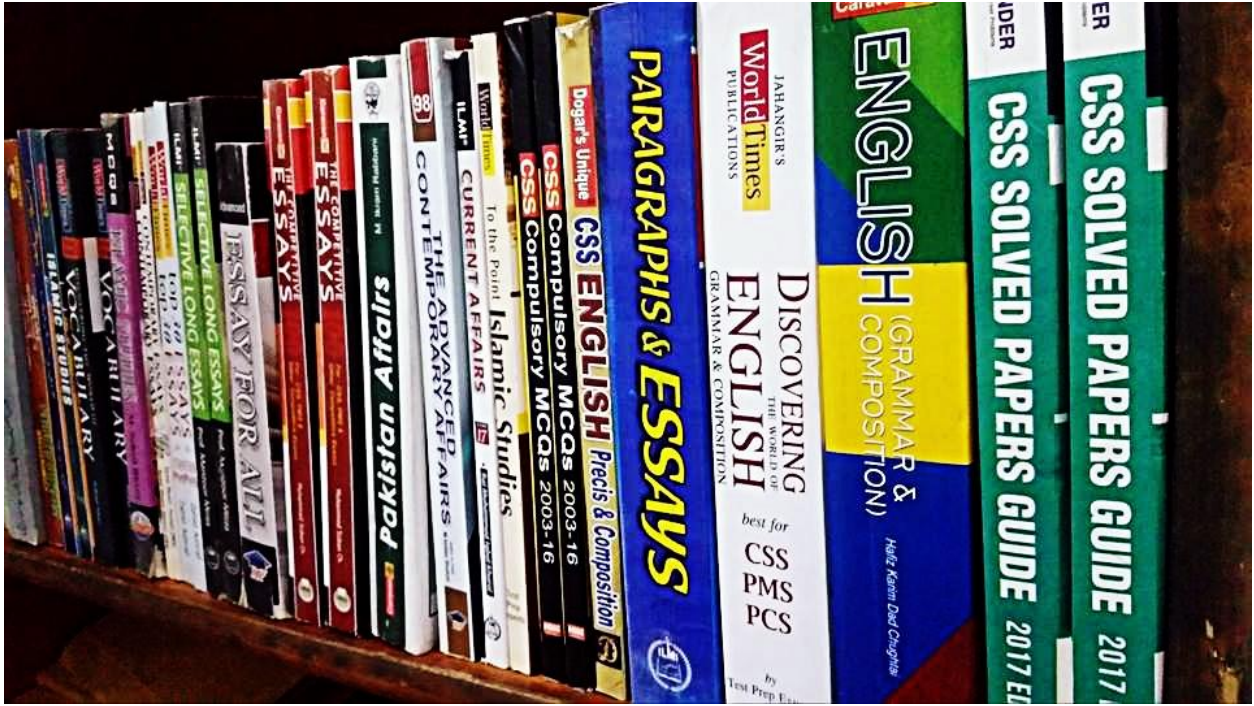
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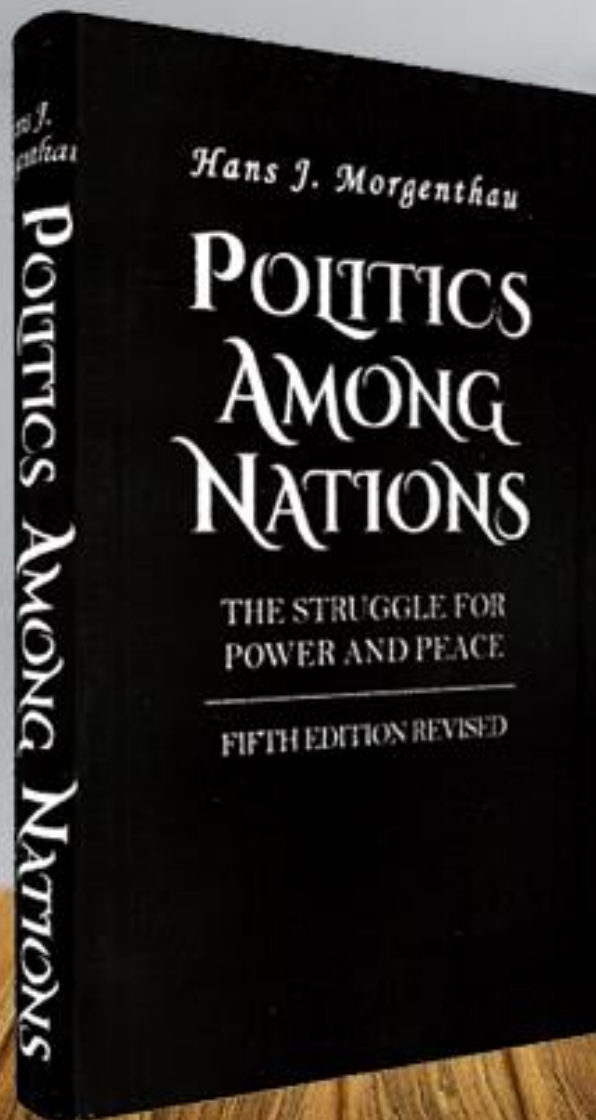


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PAKISTAN

A Promising Relationship | Editorial

Relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan and China have not always been smooth. The United States' involvement in Afghanistan, the tumultuous relationship between Pakistan and the Afghan government, and India's repeated attempts to sow discord into the region have often left the three neighbours in a precarious position and unable to reap the many benefits that a good working relationship between the three countries could bring.

In this context, the trilateral dialogue that took place between Chinese, Afghan and Pakistani officials this weekend holds promise. The third round of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue took place in Islamabad this Saturday, where the three sides "agreed on a list of initial projects of enhancing counterterrorism cooperation". This meeting and the subsequent agreement are a step towards working towards the implementation of the trilateral MoU on "Cooperation in Counterterrorism", which had been signed by all three parties last year in Kabul.

The fact that this initiative was furthered, one year later, is a good sign that this trilateral relationship can be sustained. All three countries stand to benefit immensely from a partnership. With the United States' impending withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Afghan government will have to step up and make allies with neighbouring powers to get the country back on track. The strategic geographical location of all countries is an asset which, if they come together, can shift the dynamics of the region. From Kazakhstan to Tajikistan and other regional countries, this is a potential bloc of so many countries that can benefit mutually.

Yet the success of this trilateral relationship is contingent upon peaceful relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, something which has been a struggle in the past. Past relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been mired with suspicion and hostility, aided by India's interference. The Afghan government will have to set aside its anti-Pakistan bias and extend a hand, for its own sake.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/09-Jul-2020/a-promising-relationship>

Is COVID-19 on Way Out? | Editorial

In pandemics science, not politics, should guide decisions

Several government leaders, the latest being Information Minister Shibli Faraz, have claimed that the coronavirus is on the decline in Pakistan. The conclusion is reportedly based on four parameters: the number of daily positive cases, of hospitalized patients, of those on ventilators and of deaths. The government maintains that all the four parameters have been showing positive signs which indicates that the pandemic cases are decreasing.

The media campaign has led many to observe the SOPs though there are still people who defy wearing masks. The government's critics maintain that the figures of positive cases have gone down due to a reduction in tests. Even if the stand taken by the administration is accepted, so many government leaders announcing victory to gain political advantage can only make people careless and stop taking precautionary measures, thus reversing the slight improvement in the situation. The government would do well not to lower its guard.

The government must not forget the warning by the WHO of the possibility of a second wave of the pandemic issued after a cluster of cases appeared in Beijing suddenly after there being no new case for 50 days. It is widely realised that Pakistan can ill afford a second wave. Being extra careful might irk some but it is wiser to err on the side of caution. As the Punjab Health Minister has observed, any failure to take preventive measures in cattle markets around Eidul Azha can take the coronavirus to the villages. This could be calamitous as health facilities in Tehsil HQ hospitals are simply inadequate to deal with a pandemic-like situation.

While the coronavirus has done incalculable damage to the country, it provides an opportunity to improve and expand the health infrastructure, provide many more beds and reduce the existing doctor-patient ratio. The government has managed to set up 128 testing laboratories across the country which is still a very small number. About 5000 health workers are to be trained by Chinese experts, of whom 1000 are reportedly ready to perform duties in critical care management wards. With about 240,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus, about 5,000 dead

within four months and the virus still infecting people, the situation should convince the government to allocate much larger funds to the health sector.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/07/08/is-covid-19-on-way-out/>

Foreign Policy Success: Myth vs Reality By

Kamran Yousaf

In his recent speech on the floor of the National Assembly, Prime Minister Imran Khan highlighted achievements of his government on foreign policy. He particularly mentioned the transformation in the relationship between Pakistan and the United States while taking credit for galvanising world public opinion against Narendra Modi for his fascist policies. But these claims by the Premier need a close scrutiny.

It's true when Imran Khan became prime minister in August 2018, the relationship between Pakistan and the US was at the lowest ebb. But turnaround came in a matter of months when President Donald Trump, in late 2018, wrote a letter to Imran Khan seeking Pakistan's help for the Afghan peace deal. Pakistan responded positively to the US call as it not only brought the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table but also helped brokered the deal on February 29. Meanwhile, in the middle of this, a direct contact between Pakistan and the White House was established through Senator Lindsay Graham, an influential Republican considered close to Trump. Senator Lindsey, who frequently travels to Pakistan, was impressed with the vision of Imran Khan on Afghanistan. He played an instrumental role in obtaining a White House invite for Imran Khan. In a short span of nine months, Trump and Imran met thrice. Unlike the past, Trump visibly toned down his criticism against Pakistan. On the contrary, the US officials started praising Pakistan's positive role in the Afghan peace efforts. So, in terms of optics there has definitely been an improvement in Pak-US ties. But has there been a qualitative change in the relationship? The answer lies in the recently released annual report by the State Department on terrorism. The State Department report starts with this: "Pakistan continued to serve as safe haven for certain regional focus terrorist groups." This just summed up how the US establishment views Pakistan.

The Foreign Office rejected the assessment of the US. But isn't it a failure of Pakistan's diplomacy that at a time when Islamabad is going out of the way to support Washington on Afghanistan, yet we are being blamed for supporting terrorists? If there were tangible results of improvement in the relationship, the State Department would not have made such harsh references in its report. The

other areas where the US could have supported Pakistan includes getting Islamabad out of the FATF grey list, negotiate a better IMF deal (remember being the largest contributor, the US has influence over IMF), restore the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), which is not aid but money owed by the US to Pakistan in the fight against terrorism. On top of this the US could have been more proactive on Kashmir.

It appears Islamabad has been assisting the US to ensure its honourable exit from Afghanistan but without getting anything in return. Remember, in international relationships there are no free lunches. Pakistan seems happy that Trump made a few references on Kashmir and offered audience to our Prime Minister thrice. If we call this a success, then certainly our yardstick to measure it needs to be changed.

Similarly, on Kashmir, Imran Khan did launch an offensive against Modi on Twitter but what's the end result? The people of Kashmir still remain under siege while the world looks the other way. Diplomacy on Twitter or speeches here and there can't be a substitute to strategy. Our failure is that we couldn't even convince the OIC on Kashmir. Pakistan's proposal to have an exclusive conference of OIC foreign ministers on Kashmir in Islamabad never saw light at the end of tunnel since some of our "Muslim friends" don't want to antagonise India. Therefore, we need to take a holistic view when claiming success on foreign policy.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2252461/foreign-policy-success-myth-vs-reality>

Changing Dynamics | Editorial

THE geopolitical calculus in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood is clearly changing, and those who formulate this country's foreign policy must plan now to ensure we are comfortably placed to take political and economic advantage of the emerging scenario.

Over the past few days, reports have emerged of a 25-year strategic bilateral deal involving China and Iran being hammered out between the two sides; the deal is said to cover both economic and military aspects.

Moreover, relations between the US and China seem to be going into a deep freeze, with some talking of a new 'cold war' between Washington and Beijing. The US has ordered the Chinese consulate in Houston to close in order to "protect American intellectual property", with China slamming the move as "outrageous". Moreover, on a recent trip to the UK, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for building a "global coalition" against the People's Republic.

Considering Pakistan shares borders with both Iran and China, and has had a long, chequered relationship with the US, Islamabad will need to play its cards right to protect national interests on the highly treacherous international chessboard.

The Iran-China deal — said to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars — offers an opportunity to Pakistan. While Pakistan enjoys cordial relations with China, this can be a good occasion to improve relations with Iran. China seeks to build a 21st-century Silk Road in the form of the Belt and Road Initiative, envisioning a global network of trade routes emanating from Beijing. It is in this context that it seeks to cement a deal with Iran, while CPEC is also a product of the same strategic thinking.

On the other hand, Tehran — struggling to stay afloat under crushing US-led sanctions — will gladly accept foreign investment, as well as a chance to sell its oil and gas. Pakistan can play a positive role in this budding relationship, with a chance at becoming a key conduit in an energy and trade corridor linking the Eurasian hinterland to South Asian and Gulf ports.

But there is a catch. As stated above, the US is in a combative mood vis-à-vis China, while Iran has been Washington's bête noire for over four decades. America has already spoken in unflattering terms about CPEC, while it is widely believed India has backed out of Iranian projects in order to avoid enraging Washington.

To take advantage of regional developments, Pakistan will need some deft diplomacy. Regional integration can help this country and its neighbours economically and politically if proper planning is done. The US must be told that while Pakistan values its relationship with America, Islamabad cannot isolate itself regionally by alienating neighbours with whom Washington does not get on.

India should also weigh its options; does it want to chase the fantasy of becoming a US 'strategic partner'? Or would it rather live in peace and prosperity with its neighbours?

Published in Dawn, July 23rd, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1570650/changing-dynamics>

Tyranny of power asymmetry By Maleeha Lodhi

PAKISTAN'S foreign policy objectives have been remarkably consistent over the years. They have principally been shaped by its geostrategic location in a tough neighbourhood which imposed heavy security burdens on the country. This explains why security concerns — given Pakistan's enduring quest for security — had such a dominant influence on the evolution of its foreign policy. The sweep of the country's foreign policy over the decades also reveals a complex interplay between internal and external factors, and between domestic goals and an ever-changing international environment.

Of course, big power interests in the region had a major impact on policy, intersecting with elite interests to sometimes complicate if not aggravate Pakistan's challenges. An unedifying aspect of this was a mindset of dependence fostered among officials during prolonged periods of the country's alignments. This dependence proved to be habit forming. Reliance on external financial assistance — as a consequence of these alignments — created a perverse incentive for urgent economic reform and serious domestic resource mobilisation. It also encouraged ruling elites to constantly look outside to address financial deficits and other sources of internal vulnerabilities, even see outsiders as catalytic agents to promote development and solve problems at home.

Abdul Sattar's book *Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1947-2019*, whose fifth edition has been published this year, does not examine this linkage between the internal and external and how they have been intertwined in such a consequential way. But it offers a useful beginner's guide to the many twists and turns of foreign policy. Meant primarily for students of international relations, it remains a valuable starting point for anyone interested in learning — in concise form — about the factors driving Pakistan's external engagements since the country's inception.

Sattar witnessed first-hand many of the watershed developments in foreign relations during his 39-year career in the foreign service. As foreign secretary he was a participant in several key policy decisions. I had the privilege of working briefly with him in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 when I served as Pakistan's ambassador to the US and he became foreign minister. I found him anxious to

listen to the assessment and advice of the mission — rarely done now — and eager to share his perspectives with our team. His visits to Washington at a challenging time were marked by candid conversations with our interlocuters, often punctuated by a dry wit. He passed away last year, a month after he finished updating his book.

The central theme of his book is summed up in the foreword by a towering figure in Pakistani diplomacy, Agha Shahi. The “tyranny of power disparity” in the region was brought painfully home when the country was unable by its efforts and those of the UN to achieve the settlement of disputes after independence. To address this situation, Shahi writes, Pakistan “began to look outward for friends and allies” to “safeguard its independence, strengthen security and build the economic sinews of the infant state”. The need to address this power asymmetry tyranny drove Pakistan into alliances during the Cold War and beyond.

This led, until the Cold War ended, to a prolonged pursuit of a strategy of external balancing though Sattar does not use this expression to describe Pakistan’s search for alliances. The cost of alignment with Washington was high, he asserts, and second thoughts arose on the wisdom of this policy, but Pakistan couldn’t afford to abandon this course aimed as it was to “contain the Indian threat in which the US had little interest”. But in those early Cold War years, Pakistan, by abjuring a non-aligned policy, lost the support of influential Arab nations and found itself isolated among African-Asian countries.

Meanwhile, Pakistan sought to engage the US, when it became America’s most allied ally, in efforts to promote a settlement of Kashmir. These attempts were blocked by an intransigent India and its Cold War ally. In 1962, when the Security Council took up the Kashmir issue, India’s foreign minister Krishna Menon reneged on New Delhi’s commitment to hold a plebiscite. The US president then persuaded his Irish counterpart whose country held the Council presidency to sponsor a resolution recalling past resolutions that called for a plebiscite. Despite support from seven members the resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union.

In reviewing the history of Pakistan’s foreign engagements Sattar identifies a number of turning points. The first was alliance with Washington and turning away from non-alignment, “dictated by the necessity of containing the tyranny of power-disparity”. The second was the growing strategic relationship with China and end of the alliance with the US when it failed to help Pakistan in the 1965

war. The third was the post-1965 turning to the East and distancing from the West. The next turning point came with the 1971 debacle and the lesson Pakistan drew, which dictated the pursuit of the nuclear option. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked another turning point which led to Pakistan's long involvement as well as resumption of the alliance with Washington. This ended with the Soviet exit from Afghanistan. Then came the turning point after 9/11 when Pakistan "was dragged into partnership in the war on terror", which Sattar argues "brought more problems than benefits".

The most recent turning point that Sattar did not live to write about has seen Pakistan tie its strategic future more firmly to China while facing an implacably hostile India that has sought to illegally change the status quo in occupied Kashmir. In fact, the country's daunting foreign policy challenges in the present phase call for a more imaginative strategy to navigate a more complex and unsettled multipolar world.

The world has changed fundamentally but habits ingrained over the years by the ruling elite have yet to do so. Pakistan learnt to rely on itself for its defence when it pursued and acquired the strategic capability to deter aggression. But the habit persists of seeking help from foreign donors to deal with chronic financing gaps — frequently dramatised by frantic trips to Arab capitals. A similar lesson has yet to be learnt about financial self-reliance which is only possible through bold fiscal reform and a reordering of budget priorities. The tyranny of dependence waits to be overcome.

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

Published in Dawn, June 29th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1565900>

Looking To Bangladesh | Editorial

Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh have always experienced a deep freeze. But in the current stint of Sheikh Hasina Wajid as the Prime Minister (PM) of Bangladesh, ties between Islamabad and Dhaka practically took a nosedive. Of late however, Islamabad is trying to improve its relations with Dhaka. Despite a common history and conformity on major international and regional issues, both states have failed to come out of the bitter shadow of the past.

Today, these efforts to achieve normalcy in bilateral terms are needed more than ever. Therefore, the government deserves appreciation for trying to reset its ties with Bangladesh. Pakistan must undertake all that is needed to initiate a dialogue process to reset its relations with Bangladesh.

The recent meeting between Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Pakistan's High Commissioner Imran Ahmed Siddiqui in Dhaka hopefully suggests the dawn of a new era. The meeting indicates that both sides realise the need for burying the hatchet. The changing regional dynamics demand that both sides come closer to cultivate benefits from the developing geopolitical shifts. With China and Pakistan's partnership becoming the cornerstone for a regional bloc in Asia, Bangladesh and Pakistan can both gain something out of mutually beneficial trade relations, for a start.

Given the fact that India is not as close to Bangladesh as many imagine—at least lately—and the politics in the region are nowadays focusing more on partnerships and greater cooperation in the economic arena, Pakistan's overtures to Bangladesh represent a smart foreign policy. Islamabad must offer Dhaka gradual resolution of the outstanding issues and simultaneously continuing to liaise politically, economically and culturally. This approach is a more common and successful one in international relations today. Relying on this strategy will help Pakistan win Bangladesh's friendship; subsequently, the bond between the two sides will also mean encirclement of India.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/21-Jul-2020/looking-to-bangladesh>

Pakistan ‘Most Improved’ Country on US Nuclear Security Index

A United States study on worldwide nuclear materials security for 2020 has said Pakistan is the ‘most improved country’ after increasing its overall score by seven points. On the whole, Pakistan ranked 19 with 47 points, while India ranked one place below at 20th spot with 41 points.

According to the National Threat Initiative Nuclear Security Index report for 2020, the majority of improvements were in the ‘Security and Control Measures’ category, which increased by 25 points, because of the passage of new regulations. An improvement was also witnessed in the ‘Global Norms’ category, in which the ranking improved by one point.

The report stated that Pakistan’s improvements in the ‘Security and Control Measures’ category are ‘significant’ because ‘strengthened laws and regulations result in durable boosts in Pakistan’s score as well as provide sustainable security benefits’. It noted that the country has steadily improved in this category over time with the passage of new regulations, improving by eight points in 2014, two points in 2016 and six points in 2018.

“The country’s score in 2014 improved owing to new regulations for on-site physical protection. In 2016, it passed new cybersecurity regulations. In 2018, it improved its inside threat protections. Pakistan’s] newest regulations mark a much larger shift. Compared with other countries’ score improvements in the Security and Control Measures category, Pakistan’s increase of 25 points is the second-largest improvement of any country since the Index first launched in 2012.”

The report also highlighted Pakistan’s ranking in other categories. “Pakistan scores high (67-100) in Domestic Commitments and Capacity, medium (34-66) in both Security and Control Measures and Global Norms, and low (0-33) in Quantities and Sites, owing to its continued increases in quantities of weapons-usable nuclear materials, and low in Risk Environment.”

The report also highlighted key steps required to fill existing gaps. These include requiring more stringent control and accounting measures, strengthening regulations on insider threat prevention, requiring security culture assessments, ratifying the International Convention for the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism, and taking voluntary actions to support the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

It also ranked Australia first for the fifth time, among countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials. The country was also ranked first in the sabotage ranking for the third time. “Despite its repeated position at the top of the ranking, Australia continues to better its score, improving by one point in both rankings,” it stated.

In the ranking for 153 countries and Taiwan without materials, New Zealand and Sweden tie for first, it said. The report further noted that global progress on protecting nuclear materials against theft and nuclear facilities against acts of sabotage had slowed significantly over the past two years, despite ongoing, major security gaps.

“An alarming development at a time of growing global disorder and disruption, the decline in the rate of improvement to national regulatory structures and the global nuclear security architecture reverses a trend of substantial improvements between 2012 and 2018,” it said.

The Index is a first-of-its-kind public benchmarking project of nuclear security conditions on a country-by-country basis in 176 countries, according to the site. Initially launched in 2012, the NTI Index, prepared with the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), has sparked international discussions about priorities required to strengthen security and most important, is encouraging governments to provide assurances and take actions to reduce risks, it said.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/644892/pakistan-most-improved-country-on-us-nuclear-security-index/>

Pakistan's efforts against COVID-19 By

Mohsin Saleem Ullah

Across the globe, more than 180 countries have been grappling with the coronavirus pandemic, including Pakistan. With the outbreak, countries have begun reporting the economic losses, due to the business shutting down drastically, and continue laying off millions of workers, without any hope to resume their work anytime soon. The healthcare system has been overwhelmed to an alarming level, as people continue to fall sick, making hospitals run out of beds. Pakistan, a country of over 200 million, which is already struggling with macro-economic stabilisation tells the same story; it has fallen below the world average ranks of human development indicators.

The surge in COVID-19 cases have already surpassed the death toll of the outbreaks of Ebola, and other localised deadly epidemics. Dengue, measles, and Hepatitis have been a point of concern within Pakistan until a cure was developed. But a large-scale coronavirus outbreak has posed challenges and dire consequences for the country. As of now, 255k coronavirus positive cases have been reported, and many remain unreported. The government and surveys have suggested that in the beginning of August, there could be a new spike in confirmed cases, after Eid is over, because people usually disobey social distancing rules, and other SOP's have been violated for days. This could soon be a cause of the surge in mortalities. Additionally, burdening the already overwhelmed healthcare system is unlikely to be avoided; it will not be easy for Pakistan to handle this time.

EU-UK talks hit a snag again

Through a full-fledged pandemic, Pakistan has realised its potential, and loopholes in its fractured healthcare system, including the non-availability of basic healthcare facilities, lack of isolation procedures, falling short of testing kits and the issues related to resource constraints faced by medical staff. Sadly, Pakistan has only allocated 2 percent of its GDP to this sector, in contrast to a global average of 10 percent. Moreover, unequal and late access to the healthcare system is a problem for everyone, rich or poor, but the poor are the most-affected compared to the rich. Their inability to access private healthcare

facilities or avail the option to work from home makes them more vulnerable to the disease.

Amid the corona outbreak causing political and economic crises, the government has distributed a \$6.76 billion stimulus package to provide monetary assistance to the vulnerable class and keep businesses running in these unprecedented times. Furthermore, the announcement of an emergency cash transfer programme has successfully provided every household Rs12,000, using data analytics to assess eligibility to receive monetary compensation. PM Imran Khan's effort to implement smart lockdown measures has gained popularity amongst various segments of society who were opposing a countrywide lockdown, which could have worsened economic conditions.

Heavy rainfall wreaks havoc in Karachi, interior Sindh

Furthermore, the new policy to revamp the healthcare system by equipping research labs through direct investments to produce local ventilators has been undertaken. The government has allocated nearly \$299 million to purchase the much-needed medical equipment. Funds have also been released to further enhance the testing capacity of state-run hospitals, as per the latest guidelines released in WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response plan, which is to ensure that the government remains informed of the cost of health facilities for any future outbreaks.

With enhanced testing and accessible medical facilities, the government has come up with innovative ideas to help spread the awareness of coronavirus through the telecommunication industry.

To avoid a hike in food prices, and ensure food safety for everyone, the government has nearly lifted taxes on daily consumable food items and reiterated its support to make government-owned utility stores supply subsidised, and quality food to consumers. To keep the wheels of supply and demand moving, the government has funnelled \$1.68 billion to help sustain the agriculture sector. Amongst the farmers, wheat producers have benefitted the most to prevent cash-flow problems and continue producing wheat at the same pace. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is working day and night to track the virus' spread and provide logistical support to the federal and provincial governments with the help of the Pakistan Army, which is at the forefront to safeguard our frontiers from the enemy.

No country can completely overcome the corona outbreak until we find a cure or vaccine for it. However well-planned strategies and proper execution of those guidelines can help a government address the underlying vulnerabilities, and face challenges to counter it smoothly. The challenges faced by Pakistan are dealt with strategically through government interventions in a timely fashion which could mitigate the further loss of life and the economic turmoil Pakistan faces.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/22-Jul-2020/pakistan-s-efforts-against-covid-19>

Pakistan's Kashmir diplomacy By Khurram Minhas

On August 5, 2019, the Modi-led BJP government wiped out the special status of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IoJ&K). During this year, Pakistan's diplomatic manoeuvring was effective, calculated and rational, which has been widely acknowledged by the international diplomatic community. Islamabad suspended its diplomatic and trade relationship with India. The Kashmir dispute was, after a long time, discussed at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) after almost five decades due to Pakistan's diplomatic efforts and with Chinese assistance. Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the UN General Assembly session has been categorised as one of the most persuasive speeches where he declared himself as the ambassador of Kashmir.

In November 2019, Pakistan opened the Kartarpur Corridor which is an explicit gesture by Pakistan to restart bilateral dialogue on the Kashmir dispute with India. A few weeks ago, a similar kind of goodwill gesture was shown by resuming the Afghan Transit Trade, allowing the Afghan government to send its goods to India. However, the ultra-nationalist BJP government has shown no positive gesture to Pakistan's diplomatic efforts of resuming dialogue. It seems BJP has considered Pakistan's goodwill gestures as its weakness.

EU-UK talks hit a snag again

Pakistan has tried every possible approach to resolve the dispute, even before the August 5 disaster. In international conflict resolution, scholars have identified two different approaches; both bottom-up and top-down, to resolve any territorial dispute between the two countries. Firstly, in case of the bottom-up approach, Pakistan tried to solve smaller political issues with India so that a conducive environment could be created for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Secondly, Pakistan also tried the top-down approach to solve the larger political issue, i.e., the Kashmir dispute, but all efforts went in vain. At Tashkent, which was a multilateral approach and Simla, which was a bilateral approach, Pakistan adopted a step-by-step strategy. Later, Rajiv Gandhi and General Ziaul Haq agreed in 1985 to start a comprehensive dialogue on four subjects, i.e. Siachen, Sir Creek, trade relations and issues related to terrorism and people-to-people contacts. Progress was achieved on all these issues, but unfortunately, when the

dispute of Kashmir was raised by Pakistan to India in 1990, New Delhi refused to discuss it and the dialogue process came to an end.

Fawad Ch lauds govt decision to bring back Nawaz Sharif

In 1997, Indian Prime Minister I.K Gujral and Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif agreed to hold dialogues on eight bilateral issues including Kashmir. However, the nuclear tests of May 1998 blocked the process. Pakistan started the dialogue process again in 2004 when Kashmir was discussed at the foreign secretaries' level. Several Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) were agreed upon. Musharraf's four-point formula was also discussed, but the Mumbai incident in 2008 again halted the process.

The government of PML-N took a step-by-step approach in 2014 once more. Despite all internal political criticism, Nawaz Sharif visited India and tried to restart the stalled dialogue process. However, India did not reciprocate with a positive response. In response to Pakistan's will to restart the stalled dialogue process, India has always tried to link Pakistan with terrorism. Due to the geo-strategic situation of the region and the vast Indian market, the West has turned a blind eye towards Indian atrocities in loJ&K. It is disturbing that on the one hand, India has continued human rights violations in loJ&K and on the other, it has waged a well-organised propaganda for the international isolation of Pakistan.

The future of bilateral relations will remain bleak until India agrees upon two points, i.e., to reverse its unilateral decision of August 5 and start a comprehensive dialogue on all outstanding issues including the Kashmir dispute. Until then, Pakistan's relations with India will likely remain frozen for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, Pakistan's priority should be to keep the Kashmir dispute alive on international forums. Pakistan should not be apologetic and highlight Indian atrocities in loJ&K. Pakistan should also highlight Indian subversive activities in Balochistan and other parts of the country. Lastly, Pakistan should keep its focus on completion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and on strengthening relations with Gulf countries, Russia, Afghanistan and Iran to minimise the Indian desire of Pakistan's isolation in the world.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/28-Jul-2020/pakistan-s-kashmir-diplomacy>

Inaction Regarding FATF | Editorial

The 3-month deadline extension for the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) review gives the government a chance to find a resolution regarding the completion of the remaining 13 points of the FATF to get us off the grey list. There is also the urgent need to do something about the rapidly increasing circular debt; currently at Rs2.2 trillion. However, instead of discussing these pressing issues, the meeting of the National Assembly's committee on Finance was called off due to a lack of quorum exhibited by parliamentarians.

As such, the pre-decided agenda of tackling crucial issues relating to the 2020 bills of the Government Savings Bank, Post Office Cash Certificate, Post Office National Savings Certificate and Financial Institutions (secured Transactions) was left in the air—odd considering how straightforward the proceedings would have been. When the committee will be able to reconvene and pass legislation that satisfies FATF requirements and meet the October deadline is yet to be announced.

EU-UK talks hit a snag again

Given that it is imperative for Pakistan to exit FATF's grey list, the need for prompt action cannot be understated. Parliamentary committees exist to give politicians a platform through which they can foster discourse and pass effective legislation. Only through maintaining decorum will the promise of the proposals be understood along with the reservations of the opposition. Thus, basic guidelines such as attendance, patience and respect need to become permanent features so that agendas can be followed, agreements can be reached and solutions can be implemented.

Complying with 27 FATF conditions is no mean feat but having already fulfilled 14 successfully, there is no doubt that it is well in the capacity for our government to resolve this matter. Through a little discipline, recovery from this setback, as well as the long-term rescue from jeopardy, is possible. Our political representatives just need to ensure that they work diligently on these issues.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/22-Jul-2020/inaction-regarding-fatf>

A Diplomatic Win | Editorial

In what can be seen as a success for Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, Munir Akram, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan in the United Nations (UN), has been elected as the seventy-sixth president of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This is the leading platform through which social and economic reform can be proposed, discussed and encouraged. Munir Akram's unanimous election to become president of the third principal body of the UN is international recognition of Pakistan's drive towards development and progress. The feat can and must be seen as a vote of confidence from the comity of nations.

The presidency of the organisation will motivate Pakistan to play a meaningful role at regional and international forums, especially at the UN. Pakistan, hopefully, will show more commitment to make ECOSOC as the central forum for discussing global economic and social issues and for formulating policy recommendations. It is a rare opportunity for the country to take centre stage in shaping the UN development agenda and would advance the interests of developing countries. The fact that one of our representatives has ascended to this position for a sixth time does not mean that this responsibility should be taken lightly. We hope that Munir Akram as president of the UN body will try to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation in the spirit of multilateralism.

EU-UK talks hit a snag again

The accomplishment shows that our diplomatic relations and strategic standing are much better than perceived. With the presidency, we can say that all efforts of rivals to tarnish the image of Pakistan have gone wasted. Islamabad must exploit the opportunity for implementation of the 2030 agenda both at home and abroad for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The fact that Pakistan has secured critical positions on the body's bureau for the third time in the last four years is a testimony to the international community's faith in Pakistan. Mr Munir Akram is undoubtedly the right man to build on this positive image.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/27-Jul-2020/a-diplomatic-win>

ECONOMY

A New Record | Editorial

According to the latest press release of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the tax collection body successfully collected the revised revenue target of 3989 billion set for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20. The FBR, its regional offices and all the staff deserve appreciation for surpassing the figure of four trillion in FY 2019-20 for the first time in history. The collected net revenue, which is 82 billion more than the revised revenue target of 3907 billion due to the pandemic's adverse effects on overall economic activity is worth appreciating.

Besides, the record collection also shows that the recent reforms to improve the country's tax collection system and widen the tax base bore fruit. The hard work of FBR officials in securing the revenue goals is evident from the fact that the body has lost more than thirty employees due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. The achieved numbers are reflective of the great devotion and zeal of officials to make Pakistan stand on its feet. While all these achievements are praiseworthy and FBR deserves all the praise, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that it did struggle in meeting the initial tax collections. That means that there are still some loopholes left in the working system and operations that must be corrected.

Nevertheless, mere words of appreciation will not be enough to praise and encourage the officials who worked day and night to collect these taxes. Reports from within the officer and inspector cadres though, are that employees are supremely unhappy to have not been given their yearly bonus for targets achieved. Individual officers have collected upwards of 100 million in several cases. They must be appreciated with bonus salaries. FBR's employees rely on these incentives for their yearly expenses. And the decision to not grant these payments will open up avenues for further corruption and allow the corrupt officers to use this as an excuse to steal more. At the very least, people that handle the country's money need to be cared for financially, or stealing is a forgone conclusion.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/03-Jul-2020/a-new-record>

Steps Towards Progress | Editorial

The incumbent government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) understands that developing road infrastructure and erecting energy projects are of utmost importance for Pakistan's progress. These projects are essential steps towards growth and prosperity. Thus, despite the government's battling with the pandemic, the officials are keen on inaugurating one project after another in these two sectors. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Chairman Asim Saleem Bajwa's statement that M-8 Motorway was a top priority shows the government's determination to create jobs for the locals and bring the most impoverished parts of the country at par with the rest of the country.

Hopefully, the road project will be a beacon of light for the people of South Balochistan, as road connectivity will enable the locals to access the main markets of the country and China. With the construction of the M-8 Motorway, the province of Balochistan will see socioeconomic and political modifications within the populace of the area for good. The M-8 project will boost the urbanisation process, which Balochistan is in dire need of. At the same time, it will attract the rural population towards their nearest cities. It is not wrong to argue that the M-8 Motorway project is a highway of hope for locals.

Similarly, the inauguration of the Azad Pattan Hydel power project is testimony to the government's resolve to make the country self-sufficient in the production of clean and green energy. The project is a multi-purpose one. On the one hand, it will produce 701 megawatts of clean energy. On the other hand, it will also be providing over 3000 jobs in the country. Such schemes that decrease our reliance on imported fuel for energy production are what Pakistan needs the most. The government deserves all appreciation for keeping CPEC a central priority since coming into power. Suffice it is to say that these are lasting development initiatives with indigenised construction that bring both jobs and future progress to us.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/08-Jul-2020/steps-towards-progress>

E-Commerce & Their Future After COVID-19

By Ehtisham Ali

WORLD has witnessed an unprecedented human destruction caused by Covid-19. As on 3rd July 2020, the virus has taken 516,210 lives and 10,694,288 have been tested positive worldwide. It started in December 2019 when Wuhan Municipal Health Commission China reported cluster of pneumonia cases which was eventually identified as novel coronavirus. On 5 January 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) made a flagship technical publication for global media as well as scientific and health communities on the first ever aperture on disease outbreak of new virus. Later on WHO declared health emergency worldwide and issued public health advisory when a large number of cases were reported outside China.

Subsequently, governments across the globe started taking precautionary measures to contain the infection rate which included lockdowns, border restrictions and even economic activities were strictly restricted. People themselves started opting for social distancing to avoid potential contagion and physical proximity. On the one hand this strategy has proved as the best measure to reduce the rate of infection but on the other, due to minimal economic activities, economies of many countries have been badly affected. Barring essential businesses like food and grocery etc., every other business got effected. Thousands of traditional style businesses and companies were severely affected and lot of them even went bankrupt. In these circumstances, E-Commerce appeared as a promising major pillar in the fight against COVID-19 as it helped reduce the rate of infection by offering online delivery of commodities and services. Supermarkets started online delivery of groceries by providing door-to-door services to their customers, preventing risks of in-store visits and subsequently online payments obviated in-person cash transactions.

Moreover, E-Commerce helped economies in preserving jobs during crisis. Online businesses strived to maintain the basic revenue stream which helped them get their businesses afloat through the crisis. Restaurants and famous food chains started offering online takeout services. Almost all famous brands of clothing, shoes and many others, transformed their business from traditional to online.

Many companies changed the nature of their businesses and were successful in creating new jobs as consumers shifted towards online offerings. Recently a Dubai based raw coffee supply company transformed its business from B2B to B2C due to emerging demand of consumer products. Interestingly many new small level ventures were set up during this period. People started delivering homemade food to meet the needs at both ends and the response from their customers is most encouraging. These continued availability of consumer goods helped the governments to increase the acceptance of persistent physical social distancing measures among masses.

Lockdown orders will definitely be lifted eventually but there are thousands and millions of customers whose patterns of purchase have changed drastically for a more comfortable way of getting what you need at your doorstep. They are comfortable with the online system not only for their convenience but also for getting into any risk of catching the virus. According to a recent survey on social media, young consumers are more motivated than ever to maintain social distancing and shop online while staying at home. This trend is creating ideal market conditions and great motivation for newly entrant digital entrepreneurs. The trend of changing customers' buying habits and behavior is an opportunity for digital entrepreneurs. Now how they react, it is the future of e-commerce that will be the deciding factor. Once the situation improves, sales of E-Commerce industry may stabilize at low growth rate than today but the changing behaviour of customers is already in action to overall change the retail and commerce for years to come.

—The writer is a Research Scholar pursuing his PhD from Zhengzhou University, Henan, China.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/e-commerce-their-future-after-covid-19/>

Allowing Afghan Exports | Editorial

The Foreign Office's (FO) announcement that Pakistan will allow the resumption of Afghan exports from July 15 through Wagah border after implementing COVID-19 protocols is praiseworthy. Helping a neighbouring country restore its pre-pandemic level transit trade is a tremendous diplomatic initiative of Islamabad. By honouring the request of the Afghan government, Pakistan has shown that it desires and sincerely intends to help its brotherly Islamic neighbour in all possible ways.

With this move, Pakistan also fulfils its commitments under the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA). The step taken by Pakistan's government shows that Islamabad understands the importance of Afghan exports for Kabul's economy. Islamabad wants to play a constructive role in saving the Afghan economy from paralysis. Honouring commitments under agreements signed between the states enhance the bilateral ties.

Islamabad wants nothing but everlasting good terms with the government in Kabul. President Ashraf Ghani and his government must reciprocate the Pakistani move. The Afghan government must provide complete and correct data of its imports to the global bodies, like the sub-body of the United Nations (UN) on international trade. Pakistan will see it as a symbiotic move, and it will further enhance the ties between the two neighbours. By resuming bilateral trade and Afghan export activity, Pakistan has also refuted Indian allegations about Pakistan leaving the Afghan economy on the verge of collapse.

Despite India's constant suggestions to Kabul to shift its transit trade activities to Chabahar to secure the "much-needed bargaining power" vis-a-vis Pakistan, the Afghan government has so far ignored them. President Ghani has given a clear message to India that his government is better equipped than any other state to take the right steps for protecting its economy. This latest glimpse of interaction between Kabul and Islamabad shows that the leadership of the two countries will not allow external actors to affect their ties in the slightest.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/14-Jul-2020/allowing-afghan-exports>

Developing World Under COVID-19 By Humera Malik

In most of the developed countries, the COVID-19 curve has flattened but this obscures a tragic reality that the second phase of the crisis has begun. As the virus has spread to the developing world, several developing countries as well as many emerging economies, led by Brazil, India, Russia and Chile, are experiencing largest new confirmed infections. The resulting devastation will likely reverse years if not decades of economic progress.

At first, it was expected that the developing world was being spared the worst of the Pandemic. Heat may have some effects in reducing the virus. The outbreak of coronavirus is very less likely to penetrate in the developing world because of its less connection for travel and trade as compared to the initial hot spots which were China and Europe.

Brooking Institutes report, as of April 30th, with 84 % of the world's population low income countries were confronted with just 14% of the world's known COVID-19 deaths. On the contrary, high-income countries took the lead by reaching 86%. Later, it was realized that several reasons are there for this low death rate in developing countries. It can be explained in part by a lack of testing and failure of diagnosis. There may be other factors such as a large share of nursing home deaths accounted for in wealthy countries which is uncommon in poor countries.

Over the last few months, coronavirus has moved slowly but steadily across South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Brazil has about 1,000 recorded deaths a day and the cases have risen exponentially. Apart from South Africa, the surge in confirmed cases has not been seen in other African Countries. The Wall Street Journal proved the proliferation/penetration of disease by reporting that the grave diggers are running out of space in northern Nigerian cities. They are resorting to burying bodies in the tiny spaces between existing graves or placing multiple bodies together in single graves.

The world has come to an economic stand still. What does the future hold, is unknown

If the curve in these countries does not start flattening, the damage will be worse than anything we have seen in the world. The population density and sanitary conditions make the rapid spread of disease inevitable. In India, a fifth of all known cases come from Mumbai, where around million people are residing in a slum which is 30 times more populated than New York City. Africa's largest City Lagos has had relatively new infections so far where 2/3 of its inhabitants live in slums many take crowded buses to work means that it is likely only a matter of time before the number rises. Hospital facilities in lower income countries are scarce. In Bangladesh, there are eight hospital beds for every 10,000 people which is a quarter as much as the USA and 8th as much as the European Union. There are fewer than 2000 ventilators across 41 African countries, compared to a 170,000 in the USA. In many of these countries, large segments of population make just enough each day to feed themselves and families. So governments face a deadly dilemma. If you shut down the economy, people will starve. If you keep it open, the virus will spread. The effects of pandemic will be brutal for the emerging economies. Then they will face a debt crisis which will hit the developing world very hard. The US, Europe, Japan and China also face economic setbacks but it will be ameliorated by massive government spending. These countries can borrow trillions of dollars at low interest rate with relative ease. That is not the case in poor countries; those are already trapped in a debt crisis. They have to borrow loans in dollars which must be paid back in their rapidly depreciating currency. In return, they will fall prey to hyperinflation. Over the last few decades, trade has been accelerated because closely evolved ties among several countries globally. The emerging economies grew at a rapid pace and standard of living rose. Even after the global financial crisis, developing countries recovered faster than the rich ones.

A massive reduction in extreme poverty was the reality of 21st century. From 1090 to 2010, the share of humanity living on less than a 1.25 dollar a day was cut in half. This UN Millennium Development Goal was attained five years ahead of schedule. Now the work of decades is being undone in months. Coronavirus could derail decades of progress in the developing world. Various studies estimate that somewhere between 100 and 400 million people will be pushed back into extreme poverty. In this the most crucial measure of human progress we are moving backwards and fast.

The world has come to an economic stand still. What does the future hold, is unknown. The giants of the world are trying to solve this massive financial and economic puzzle. The third world countries are in utter bewilderment and quite rightly so, looking at the superpowers for some direction and solution. There has to be measures taken to overcome this mess of a situation. HOW, WHO AND WHEN are the real questions. Let's hope there would eventually be some silver lining to this darkest of the clouds..

This writer is a PhD scholar and is teaching in a private college and various private universities

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/644921/developing-world-under-covid-19/>

CPEC and Digitalisation after COVID-19 By Mahvesh Mahmud

The 820-kilometer-long fibre optic cable project at a cost of \$46 million, stretches from China's western Xinjiang region and enters Pakistan through Khunjerab border and then travels through Gilgit Baltistan (GB) to Mansehra, KP to connect to Muzaffarabad, AJK and onwards to Islamabad and Rawalpindi, where it is connected with the existing optical connectivity network of Pakistan.

In order to optimise existing and future coordination in the supply chain within Pakistan and with the Chinese, digital connectivity would help the flow of information, financial transactions and physical goods and services. It will also promote and facilitate regional economic cooperation and will enable many ICT integration services between both countries. This connectivity spread from many soft to hard infrastructural projects such as paperless trade facilitation, e-commerce, e-government, playing a supporting role in the construction and management of industrial parks, roads, rail, aviation and ports. On the other hand, this cable connectivity will provide many opportunities to enhance people-to-people connectivity between China and Pakistan. The adaptation of China's Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcasting (DTMB) technology is an indispensable component for socio cultural collaboration. The arrival of the DTMB standard in Pakistan enables high definition (HD) broadcasting for digital television (TV) which will provide many opportunities for the Pakistani media industry for revenue generation and promote many cultural exchange programmes at a higher resolution between China and Pakistan.

EU-UK talks hit a snag again

CPEC fibre optics play a vital role for unimpeded trade through the China-Pakistan border. The digital infrastructural deficit in GB is one of the biggest hurdles for efficient cross-border trade facilitation between China and Pakistan through the Khunjerab border. The inception of a new fibre cable introduced the online WEBOC (Web Based One System) custom system at the dry port in GB, which is the first customs dry port through which all cargo coming from Khunjerab border must get cleared by Pakistan Customs before entering the country. It is recommended to have proper training for using this new system and address the queries of local traders before introducing new WEBOC at Sust port and further

integrate this new system with the Chinese customs system. This will help reduce leakages in shipped goods and delay due to cumbersome documentation procedures of the old system and reduce the trade facilitation problems persisting at the China-Pakistan border.

Heavy rainfall wreaks havoc in Karachi, interior Sindh

Laying the 820-kilometer-long China-Pakistan fibre optic cable between the city of Rawalpindi, Pakistan in the south and the Khunjerab Pass, China in the north, has been operational since July, 2018.

By 2020, 6,299 kilometres of underwater cables will extend to Djibouti from Gwadar and form the Digital Silk Route between Asia and Africa. At the same time, a space-based Silk Road will provide satellite navigation support to all BRI countries. The first Beidou base station of the Space Silk Road is already operational in Pakistan since 2017. BeiDou is making rapid progress with 30 BRI countries already linked up.

When completed, the ambitious global initiative would use an exclusive satellite navigation system; BeiDou, fibre networks and 5G on land and submarine cables will create a multi-dimensional digital mega-project across land, sea and space.

Huawei is already pushing for 5G deployment in Pakistan where it has already established a strong market presence. The Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA) has already identified spectrum in the 2.6 GHz, 3.5 GHz and millimetre wave band it plans to allocate for auction to 5G vendors. This will include both fixed and mobile 5G deployment. PTA has set up a 5G working group with members from telecom operators, vendors, manufacturers, academia, research and development organisations, regulator (PTA), government ministries and the Frequency Allocation Board (FAB).

Pakistan reports 586 COVID-19 cases in one day

Over 65 million Pakistanis now subscribe to 3G and 4G services launched 5 years ago. 5G uptake rate in Pakistan is expected to be rapid. Attractive tariffs for 5G users will be the key to encouraging a large number of customers. The Trump Administration sees China's aggressive 5G lead as a threat to the West's technology dominance. The US government has been warning its allies against using Huawei's 5G equipment in their networks based on its fears of Chinese government espionage operations.

Chinese 5G suppliers currently hold 36 percent of all 5G patents worldwide. In spite of US efforts, Chinese telecom giants Huawei and ZTE are beating their western rivals to acquire access to huge markets around the world in Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East.

China is aggressively pursuing its plans to build a global digital superhighway that runs through Pakistan. This “Digital Silk Road” involves laying fibre optic cables in Pakistan which connect with China to the north and link with Africa and the Arab World via undersea cable to be laid from Gwadar Deep Sea Port built as part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The global project will include 5G wireless networks deployment in the Belt-Road Initiative (BRI) member nations. Meanwhile, the United States is continuing its campaign to have its allies boycott 5G equipment built by China’s Huawei. However, for Pakistan the digital divide that exists with the West will be bridged through BRI systems incorporating communication and connectivity which will allow for manifold transfer of technology and a greater opportunity for our technological ecosystem to develop and flourish.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/19-Jul-2020/cpec-and-digitalisation-after-covid-19>

Pakistan's Debt Suspension | Editorial

The coronavirus hit Pakistan in the worst possible way. The country saw itself struggling not only with the economy but also with social services, especially public health. This was thanks to the global realisation that a collective fight is the only way forward against the virus. In this regard, the international financial institutions' decision to initiate the COVID-19 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) endorsed by G-20 and the Paris Club was a much-needed step to save countries like Pakistan from a complete collapse. Under the (DSSI), a portion of Pakistan's debt can be suspended; 2.4 billion dollars—the second-largest amount put on hold.

However, the carrot comes with a stick. The countries eligible for the debt service suspension have to focus on social/health and economic expenditure and development. The conditionality clause will closely monitor the situation of public health and social services in the states that requested for the suspension of debt. The deferral of payments will augment the government's efforts to mitigate the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chinese envoy meets chairman CPEC authority

Still, amid the crisis, the move is a welcome one as Pakistan can focus on fighting the pandemic while nurturing a worsening economy. The government will find some breathing space with the postponement of the principal payments and interest payments. That said, the government needs to keep this fact in mind, like last time, the payments are postponed and not altogether cancelled.

Also, given that the deal is also in effect only until the end of this year, the benefits that Pakistan can accrue from the relaxation will be minimal. Therefore, how much good it does to the country is still a debatable subject. As suggested earlier in this paper, developed countries must introduce a package along the lines of the Marshall Plan to save developing countries from complete collapse. The time-bound suspension while direly needed is not an adequate response to the devastations that COVID-19 has caused and is still causing in the developing countries.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/20-Jul-2020/pakistan-s-debt-suspension>

EDUCATION

Covid-19 and Digital Education Failure in Pakistan By Mohsin Rasheed

The Covid-19 pandemic has gripped life globally. Education system is getting worst in many countries because digital education. As coronavirus control measures spread throughout South Asia, universities such as India, Pakistan and Afghanistan find themselves poorly prepared for online learning or distance learning because their campuses are closed and their students return home, some remote areas are without internet facilities and offline facilities to continue the classes system.

Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) asked universities to engage faculty and quickly develop online courses and broadcast those to the students in view of the coronavirus situation in the country. Coronavirus pandemic has endangered us all and online education is the solution for the safety of the faculty and the students. But there are some issues regarding online system in Pakistan, most of the students don't have smart phones and internet facility which leads to failure. Before Covid-19 the education system was not up to the mark, after this pandemic era it badly effect the students and their future. Many students return from abroad because of this pandemic era, after the flights suspension most of the students stuck in their home country and facing problems such as study, financial and time research.

Pakistan has already faced university closure in Pakistan in the past due to the terrorist attack and the political threats but that time universities did not adopt the online education system for students. A suddenly change to online learning is create many challenges to the system as majority of student do not have their smart phones and personal computer for online classes. On the other side there are many other Government schools in Pakistan like "Government High School Barranga Bakkhar" which i have visited personally and asked some question with MR Asim Shahzad (School Teacher). He told that government is not providing

books to their student, and students do not have smart phone access even from their parents due to poor condition.

Boarding students have left for their homes located mostly in less developed areas, and the international students from different countries move to their home town. Another Student Muhammad Abbas from Pakistan who is Studying PHD in Zhengzhou China went back to his city Lahore, near Shezan factory, when the closure of academic institutions was announced. He said, he is on Chinese government Scholarship about 4500 yuan per month. After pandemic cause china has stop funding to all scholarships students except one or two universities from March onwards until 1 September 2020. It is very hectic situation for all PHD scholars, its creates financial, study, also lead to fail in research without labs availability he said.

In some countries like China where community transmission of the virus has reduced significantly, schools are reopening in phases by employing rotation models which use time and the school space flexibly. This seems like a plausible way forward. Although, it is interesting and ironic to note how the serious measures that are being put in place to protect children from a deadly disease are not very far from their everyday routine in schools i.e. sitting in assigned seats, usually remaining in the same room all day long, walking along a marked track, listening passively to instructions, and enjoying limited time outdoors.

Perhaps this lockdown has given us an idea of how we can improve our educational institutions to ensure that students get the maximum possible benefits. We can use this as an opportunity to redesign learning spaces / communities, in collaboration with parents, to further facilitate student learning. More than anything, this abrupt wake-up call should prompt all relevant stakeholders to reflect on the true purpose of schools and the future of learning in this country.

Students try to convince experts through all possible forums to review the decision about classes and exams online, but unfortunately their voices are simply ignored. Instead of suggesting academics with a logical path forward in this crisis situation, the administrators appointed at HEC and HEI are introducing policies to increase confusion among students. In the meanwhile Pakistan digital learning system failed due to covid-19. Most of the student have out their focused towards studies/education.

The provision of quality education is the sole responsibility of the government and educational institutions. HEC is mandated to guarantee the quality of education without compromising established standards. This unfortunate situation requires an intelligent contribution from all concerned. Advanced countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Prime Minister of Pakistan himself advise people to learn to live with the coronavirus for a certain period until such time as no lasting treatment is invented to fight the virus. Given this prevailing scenario, the government, HEC and universities are required to take a futuristic, achievable and positive approach to safeguard the valuable time of millions of students across the country and the sole purpose of education.

Source: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/07/07/covid-19-and-digital-education-failure-in-pakistan/>

Disequilibrium in Education By Faisal Bari

ONE post-pandemic prediction is that irrespective of when the Covid-19 threat goes away, online education, especially at the undergraduate level, is here to stay. For many, the trend towards online education predates the virus; Covid-19 has just pushed us harder and faster in the direction of exploring online potentialities for education.

What are the implications for how universities and the higher education sector are organised? Is there a potential for globalisation to work here too? Can a top university, like Harvard, MIT or Oxford, offer its degrees to students across the world, and in much larger numbers? How will this impact lower-ranked universities and/or universities in developing countries?

Some argue that the potential of online education is being overstated. Online education had been around for a decade and a half before Covid-19. And it made scant inroads in the market for higher education. Right now, universities have no option but to go online due to the pandemic. As soon as universities can open up, people will go back to their preference for in-person education.

Technology for communication is evolving very quickly. Even four months ago, few people knew of Zoom or Microsoft Teams. When people wanted online meetings, it was usually on Skype. The pandemic changed that almost immediately. And now technology companies are scrambling to bring newer innovations in existing platforms and/or creating new ones to facilitate even better online communication. Zoom has added a significant number of new features for security as well as ease of communication over a short period of time. Comparing the possibilities of online learning now with what was available a few years ago might be very misleading.

Can universities in Pakistan create value that global players cannot?

Perhaps, equally or more importantly, the experience of the last few months has shaken people out of their inertia and entrenched ways of doing things. It has weakened some of the shackles of habit and removed some of the blinkers on our sight and imagination. A lot of people are realising that, in many instances, communication that seemed to necessitate physical presence can be done

almost as well through virtual interaction. For example, many professional conferences have shifted to virtual spaces and are finding that the savings on time and money makes virtual conferences quite an appealing and competitive alternative. Similarly, for many people, remote work is quite possible, and might work even in times when there are no problems with having physical meetings.

Working from home saves substantially on time and money spent commuting. What benefits and opportunities are there in online education? We might be at the start of the innovation cycle in this area so it might be hard to predict but, clearly, even looking at what is currently available, online education is going to become a stronger and more competitive alternative.

Ronald Coase, a pioneer in law and economics, had long ago asked the question about the nature and boundary of the firm. He had asked, given economies of scale, why did we not just have a few or one large firm instead of so many firms. Researchers spent a long time answering the question about the boundary of a firm and factors like technology, transaction costs, economies and diseconomies featured prominently in the answers. It might be time to ask the same question for universities too. If technology allows us to deliver reasonable quality education online, do we need 200 universities in Pakistan? Or should we have a fewer larger ones? Will the higher quality ones expand their reach into smaller cities and even rural areas? What are the pricing models that will back up these expansions?

If a student has a choice between an online education from a well-recognised university and an in-person education from a not-as-well-recognised local university, which one would the student choose? What fee differential would tilt the individual's choice from one to the other? Imagine if the best engineering school in Pakistan was currently charging a million rupees per year in tuition fees and a local university was charging Rs300,000. If the best school offered an online degree, how much lower would it have to be priced in order to attract students from the local university? If the best school were able to reach that price, can the local university survive by cutting prices and enhancing quality, or would it have to close its doors? These are the type of issues that will come up, locally and globally, in higher education over the next few years.

If undergraduate economics is all theory and empirical techniques that apply globally, why would you not take the degree from MIT and why would you choose

to go to a Pakistani university? Can MIT make a competitive pricing model? Can the Pakistani school create value through local content and through processes of teaching that the global player cannot? Answers to such questions will determine the shape of the higher education landscape in the years to come.

Multinationals have driven local businesses to extinction in many areas, but in the provision of many goods and services — especially services, where customisation, localisation and/or contextualisation are important — local businesses have been able to effectively create competition.

Is undergraduate education a standardised product and/or service? If it is, the bigger players will, with the help of new technologies and innovations, be able to provide it to all and drive out local and smaller players. But if it is not, the impact of online education might not be strong enough to change higher education landscape much. Smaller players would be able to compete effectively by making their services more customised.

There is already talk in many universities of how their teaching, even online, is going to be more individualised than more standard offerings. Already, there is also talk of local content in many disciplines and sub-disciplines. Whatever the new equilibrium, there will be significant turmoil for universities across the world for the next few years.

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1568105/disequilibrium-in-education>

Reopening Schools | Editorial

The government has announced orders for schools to re-open on September 15, as institutions, both private and public, struggle with the lack of digital infrastructure to support online instruction and increasing operational costs.

With transmission rates for COVID-19 reaching 40 percent, the government threatens to endanger a large portion of the population by forcing them into a vulnerable environment with augmented exposure. This is likely to result in worsening bouts of infection, a more prolonged existence of the virus in Pakistan and risking the wellbeing of many—proving this policy is anything but promising.

As hard as it is to stomach, the pandemic is here to stay. In an ideal world, students could have stayed at home and studied, but that is simply not possible, primarily due to lack of quality internet services beyond major urban centres. Just recently, the lack of internet access to students in Gilgit-Baltistan has been identified as an exigent problem. Halting all education for the next year or so is also not a feasible plan, given the fact that large parts of the student body at all levels will be unable to participate in a digital-only medium of instruction. Reopening schools then, becomes necessary. However, this does not mean that the state forgets the need to urgently upgrade services all over Pakistan.

Even with schools open, attendance is likely to be shoddy and systems of operations inefficient. One group or the other will always be losing out either due to the inability to travel to cities to attend universities, connectivity issues in far-off areas or isolation born out of vulnerability to the spread of corona.

If normalcy is to resume, our ministers need to come up with contingency plans that revolve around a multifaceted approach, even if schools are opened at half capacity, like improving internet provision or revising curriculum sizes.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/10-Jul-2020/reopening-schools>

COVID-19 and the Educational Crisis in Pakistan **By Mohammad Jamal Ahmed**

The normal that we wish to return to no longer exists. COVID-19 is here to stay. Pakistan had slowly, but continually, made improvements in its educational structure. COVID-19, however, disrupted the momentum. There was a 14% decrease in the out of school children since 2012-2017 and our educational budget, unlike the general idea, has increased with a growth rate of 17.5% since 2010. However, the pandemic has flipped the paradigm as all educational institutions have been put in lockdown, consequently exposing the lack of internet infrastructure in the country.

Pakistan's education system has long been struggling with educational inequality, political interference, non-uniform curriculum, bureaucratic manipulation, insufficient funds, and the imperfect use of the allocated funds. Inevitably, this has given birth to further animosity and disparity in the environment.

The division on social and political grounds, instability, economic deterioration, sectarian violence, and lack of cohesion in the system are all being fueled by the disintegrated educational framework which is in turn further fueling its decomposition. It is a vicious cycle.

The lack of uniformity of the outdated curriculum present in the public and private sectors and deeni madaris is giving rise to three different ideologies that contradict one another on a fundamental basis.

Pakistan has an estimated 22.8 million children (aged 5-16) out of school, making it the world's second-highest number of children not attending school. Of the other 56% of this age group that does attend school, almost half of the children have to endure numerous obstacles and hurdles to obtain their basic rights as stated in the constitution by Article 25-A and 37-A B and C.

According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-17, of the total educational institutions (149,852), only 51.5% of the buildings in all Pakistan are deemed satisfactory: Whereas, 21% don't even have a boundary wall. Areas like

Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Sindh suffer the most, primarily due to socio-cultural restraints and political interference prevailing in the areas.

In Balochistan, a colossal 51.64% of school buildings require repair; 78.78% don't have electricity available; 70% don't have latrine facility and 43.8% of the schools are deprived of a clean drinking water facility. Due to the aforementioned factors and negligence on behalf of provincial and federal governments, 1.9 million children out of 2.7 million are out of school and the retention rate from grade 1 to grade 5 is 41% in the largest province of the country.

A report by Alif Ailaan states that each year 165,869 girls are enrolled in the primary section. Sadly, the number drops to 44,076 in the middle section and further down to only 20,015 in the higher section.

In Sindh, 36.5% of buildings don't have latrine facilities; 42.77% don't have drinking water available; with more than 6.4 million children out of school.

Post Covid-19, all educational institutions were closed down in Pakistan in mid-March, 2020 in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus. AS per HEC's orders, schools and universities are quickly developing platforms to teach the courses online. However, the drastic increase in online learning is not only exposing the already existing flaws in the structure, but also creating new challenges.

The effects of the digital divide have never been felt more severely than now

The Pakistan School Association has stated that schools will reopen on 15th August if the coronavirus figures. Teleschool, a dedicated TV channel launched by the government for online learning, has limited content. Quickly launching new learning applications and ensuring a steady flow of online content is proving to be a major challenge. With this channel being the only source of education for millions of children across the nation, it still isn't widely available for everyone.

The effects of the digital divide have never been felt more severely than now. Pakistan has always ranked low on international scorecards for providing Internet access. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Inclusive Internet Index for 2020, Pakistan is ranked 76th out of 100 economies. Commissioned each year

by Facebook, the ranking considers four major dimensions: availability, affordability, relevance, and readiness.

Maryam, a 6-year-old girl in Barakahu, says, "I hope the school starts soon. I miss the excitement of seeing my friends and learning new things in school". With no television at home and no internet facility, Maryam and all the other girls in such familiar situations are deprived of their right to education.

Although there are 164.9 million mobile connections in Pakistan, as of January 2020, there were only 76.38 million internet users from the 220 million population. Moreover, according to the PTA, there are only one million school-going children, out of an estimated 28.69 million school-going children, who have regular access to digital devices and the internet.

Access, relevance, and security are all major challenges facing the Internet in Pakistan. According to a report published by Bytes for All, Pakistan, 37% of those aged 15 to 65 know about the Internet, and 17% of the population uses the Internet, with only 14% on social media. Moreover, only 21% of males and 12% of females in Pakistan are online with an equal disparity among those that use mobile phones. This poses major challenges towards internet adoption in general.

One of the biggest problems in provinces like Balochistan, GB, and KPK's is a poor internet connection which resulted in protests by hundreds of students against the government's decision for universities to hold online classes. Students, being held hostage by no or poor internet connections and load-shedding, have to travel vast distances to be able to take their classes, submit their assignments, or appear in exams. From not guiding students to arresting them for the demand of their basic rights, the government's response has been nothing but abysmal.

Although organizations like Orenda Project, with their application like Taleemabad, and Teach for Pakistan are making considerable effort against the educational disparity, with aims to eradicate educational inequity and promote excellence in education, we still have a long way to go. Amin ul Haque, Pakistan's minister for information technology, said that the government is trying its best to provide internet facilities to people. It has set up a universal service fund (USF), a government initiative that aims to extend fiber optic connectivity to

the unserved. However, billions upon billions are required to effectively eradicate this divide.

The write is a digital marketer, freelance writer and education activist

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/645462/covid-19-and-the-educational-crisis-in-pakistan/>

WORLD

Hong Kong Is Part of the Mainland Now | **Michael C. Davis | Foreign Affairs**

Millions of protesters took to the streets of Hong Kong to promote democracy in 2019. The world looked on, astonished and impressed. Now, it looks on in despair: Beijing has imposed a hard-line national security law on the city, bypassing both public consultation and the local legislative process to go after protesters accused of “colluding with foreign forces,” advocating “separatism,” or merely damaging the city’s “premises and facilities.” A struggle for public order has been redefined as a national security crackdown.

China’s “one country, two systems” model—initiated with Hong Kong’s handover in 1997—sought to return the freewheeling city to Chinese sovereignty without destroying the basic freedoms on which it was grounded. Hong Kong was to continue to adhere to its own rule of law, rather than to the version applied in the mainland, where the law is a tool for forcing compliance with Communist Party dictates.

Twenty-three years after the handover, China has abandoned its promise of a separate system for Hong Kong. The city has done its part, serving China as one of the world’s leading centers of finance, culture, and education. But China never fully carried out its commitment to the democratic reform needed to sustain Hong Kong’s wavering autonomy. Now, it has brought Hong Kong fully under the national security state governed from rsBeijing.

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The Basic Law, enacted in 1990, provided Hong Kong with a “high degree of autonomy,” allowing for democratic self-rule and the preservation of legal and judicial systems from before the handover. The law supports the “ultimate aim” of “universal suffrage” and commits to maintaining the British-style common law system and applying international human rights covenants. This arrangement

was to last for 50 years, during which time the mainland system could not intrude.

Such avoidance was not to be left to chance. The Basic Law stipulates that mainland Chinese government departments cannot interfere in Hong Kong, nor do mainland laws apply in the city, except under limited circumstances. One article requires Hong Kong to enact national security laws “on its own.” Maintaining public order was likewise to be a local responsibility.

Beijing officials frequently accuse Hong Kongers of not understanding “one country, two systems.” They emphasize the “one country” component but downplay the “two systems.” But the Basic Law’s elaborate model makes no sense except as a formula to protect Hong Kong from the intrusion of the mainland system. Hong Kong, in contrast to mainland China, was not to be a place where those who opposed the government, defended rights, or reported on sensitive topics could land in jail on such charges as “inciting subversion” or “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”

The new national security law threatens these protections. But it is not the first instrument to do so. From the beginning, the Basic Law reserved to the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress (NPC) the ultimate power to interpret its provisions. That committee also controls the pace of democratic reform in the region. Hong Kong’s courts have vigorously applied international human rights standards in reviewing local statutes and the behavior of local officials—but they have done so under the oversight of the Standing Committee. Moreover, the Standing Committee has slow-walked democratic reform, leaving in place a system that ensures that Hong Kong’s chief executive will effectively be chosen by Beijing (through a Beijing-friendly election committee). The city’s Legislative Council, moreover, was designed in an annex to the Basic Law to ensure a pro-government majority.

Disempowered in this fashion, Hong Kongers have often taken to the streets to defend their autonomy and the rule of law. The more Beijing interferes, and the more indifference both the mainland and the local governments show toward public demands for democratic reform, the greater the intensity of the protests.

Such tensions came to a head in 2019, when the Hong Kong government put forth a bill that would have allowed China to extradite Hong Kongers across the

border to face mainland justice. Hong Kong has extradition treaties with several countries, including the United States, but it never made such an agreement with the People's Republic of China, because the system of justice there did not meet international standards. The extradition bill sparked such public outrage that first one million, then two million protesters filled the streets in June 2019.

The government eventually withdrew the extradition bill, but the concession was too little, too late. Rather than backing down, the protesters then added new demands that the government back an independent investigation into police behavior, withdraw severe charges against arrestees, cease to characterize the protests as riots, and advance democratic reform. "Five demands, not one less" became the mantra of discontent.

The authorities responded with increasingly aggressive police actions and excessive criminal prosecutions. A November election for the rather powerless District Councils served as a referendum of support for the protesters, with friendly candidates winning 57 percent of the 2.9 million votes cast and taking control of 17 out of 18 councils. But neither Beijing nor the local government was willing to address popular concerns. Ultimately, only the global pandemic was able to temper the protests.

The Standing Committee drafted its National Security Law for Hong Kong in June, a year after the protests began. The NPC had directed the committee to apply the law directly, bypassing the local Legislative Council. The measure was to "prevent, stop and punish" threats to national security and root out foreign interference, which Beijing loudly (and without evidence) proclaimed to be the driver of the protests.

The law, whose 66 articles elaborate multiple avenues of Beijing's control, was drafted and enacted in secret, without public consultation. It expressly overrides all local laws that are inconsistent with it, and it effectively amends the earlier Basic Law, although it was adopted without the required amendment procedures. The new law reiterates the Basic Law's requirement that Hong Kong "respect and protect human rights," but it provides no reliable mechanism for doing so. A local court would surely be condemned by mainland officials if it dared to declare parts of the new law invalid.

The new law calls for the central government in Beijing to set up an office in Hong Kong for the “safeguarding of national security.” Already, Beijing had declared its liaison office in Hong Kong exempt from the Basic Law requirement that mainland departments not interfere in the city’s affairs. This new national security office is explicitly tasked to “oversee, guide, coordinate and support” local national security activities and investigations. Under such constraints, could any local court declare the acts of the mainland public security officers who will staff it to be in violation of the Basic Law, let alone human rights? A provision of the law goes so far as to exclude local jurisdiction over the mainland officials exercising such duties.

The power to interpret the new security law rests with the Standing Committee, such that the local courts appear to be left with only a circumscribed role to play. The chief executive is to “designate a number of judges” among current or former local judges to hear national security cases. But under the new law, Hong Kong’s government will be required to establish a Committee for Safeguarding National Security, to which Beijing will appoint a national security adviser—an official from the mainland who will effectively oversee many of the chief executive’s national security duties, including, presumably, the designation of security judges. How can these judges act independently when they are appointed under such executive oversight?

Of greatest concern, however, is the new law’s provision for jurisdiction to be removed from Hong Kong courts and transferred to the mainland in complex cases involving a “major and imminent threat to national security.” The hated extradition law has seemingly snuck in the back door. How will ordinary people judge whether their actions meet these vague criteria, whose determination by mainland officials, as previously noted, is not subject to local jurisdiction? The chilling effect on free speech is already evident.

The problems with the National Security Law do not end at the courthouse. Much as the Basic Law did, the new law requires that elected officials swear their loyalty. Based on some official comments, many worry the government may add a pledge of support for the new security law. Many opposition candidates will see such a pledge as a betrayal and will be reluctant to swear their allegiance. And the main crimes the new law covers are vaguely defined: separatism, subversion, terrorism, and “colluding with foreign or overseas forces.” China has often used

counterterrorism as a cover for repressing or monitoring minorities and dissidents.

The collusion charge could be used to stifle international human rights advocacy, journalism, and even private meetings with foreign officials—presumably reaching anyone who lobbies for sanctions or support. Under Articles 37 and 38, the law applies to offenses by individuals and corporations, residents and nonresidents, within and outside the region. Those found guilty could in some cases face life sentences.

A little less than a quarter century ago, Beijing invited the international community to treat Hong Kong as separate from mainland China. As an autonomous region that respected the rule of law and protected human rights, Hong Kong enjoyed special trade arrangements, customs agreements, and global immigration that helped make the city a capital of international finance, its economy among the freest in the world. All of these achievements are now at risk. Many democratically minded Hong Kongers now feel that they are left with only two possible moves: to flee or to forgo their freedom to support their political beliefs.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-07-02/hong-kong-part-mainland-now>

Global Wake-up Call By António Guterres

From Covid-19 to climate disruption, from racial injustice to rising inequalities, we are a world in turmoil.

At the same time, we are an international community with an enduring vision — embodied in the United Nations Charter, which marks its 75th anniversary this year. That vision of a better future — based on the values of equality, mutual respect and international cooperation — has helped us to avoid a Third World War that would have had catastrophic consequences for life on our planet.

Our shared challenge is to channel that collective spirit and rise to this moment of trial and test.

The pandemic has laid bare severe and systemic inequalities both within and between countries and communities. More broadly, it has underscored the world's fragilities, not just in the face of another health emergency, but in our faltering response to the climate crisis, lawlessness in cyberspace, and the risks of nuclear proliferation. People everywhere are losing trust in political establishments and institutions.

The emergency is compounded by many other profound humanitarian crises: conflicts that are continuing or even intensifying; record numbers of people forced to flee their homes; swarms of locusts in Africa and South Asia; looming droughts in southern Africa and Central America; all amid a context of rising geopolitical tensions.

In the face of these fragilities, world leaders need to be humble and recognise the vital importance of unity and solidarity.

No one can predict what comes next, but I see two possible scenarios.

First, the “optimistic” possibility.

In this case, the world would muddle through. Countries in the global North would engineer a successful exit strategy. Developing countries would receive enough support and their demographic characteristics, namely, the youth of their people, would help contain the impact.

And then perhaps a vaccine would appear in the next nine months or so, and would be distributed as a global public good, a “people’s vaccine” available and accessible to all.

If this happens, and if the economy starts up progressively, we might move towards some kind of normality in two or three years.

But there is also a second, bleaker scenario in which countries fail to coordinate their actions. New waves of the virus keep occurring. The situation in the developing world explodes. Work on the vaccine lags — or even if there is a vaccine relatively soon — it becomes the subject of fierce competition and countries with greater economic power gain access to it first, leaving others behind.

In this scenario, we could also see greater movement toward fragmentation, populism and xenophobia. Each country could go at it alone or in so-called coalitions of the willing to address some specific challenges. In the end, the world would fail to mobilise the kind of governance needed to address our shared challenges.

The result may well be a global depression that could last at least five or seven years before a new normal emerges, the nature of which is impossible to predict.

It is very difficult to know if we are moving in one direction or the other. We must work for the best and prepare for the worst.

The pandemic, as horrible as it is, must be a wake-up call that prompts all political leaders to understand that our assumptions and approaches have to change, and that division is a danger to everyone.

This understanding could lead people to recognise that the only way to address global fragilities is through much more robust mechanisms of global governance with international cooperation.

After all, we cannot simply return to the systems that gave rise to the current crisis. We need to build back better with more sustainable, inclusive, gender-equal societies and economies.

In doing so, we must reimagine the way nations cooperate. Today's multilateralism lacks scale, ambition and teeth and some of the instruments that do have teeth show little or no appetite to bite, as we have seen in the difficulties faced by the Security Council.

We need a networked multilateralism, in which the United Nations and its agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, regional organisations such as the African Union and European Union, trade organisations and others work together more closely and effectively.

We also need a more inclusive multilateralism. Governments today are far from the only players in terms of politics and power. Civil society, the business community, local authorities, cities and regional governments are assuming more and more leadership roles in today's world.

This, in turn, will help lead to an effective multilateralism with the mechanisms it needs to make global governance work where it is needed.

A new, networked, inclusive, effective multilateralism, based on the enduring values of the United Nations Charter, could snap us out of our sleepwalking state and stop the slide towards ever greater danger.

Political leaders around the world need to heed this wake-up call and come together to address the world's fragilities, strengthen our capacity for global governance, give teeth to multilateral institutions, and draw from the power of unity and solidarity to overcome the biggest test of our times.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2253175/global-wake-up-call>

Will Putin Really Return To The Kremlin in 2024?

During a week-long national referendum, Russians voted on a package of constitutional amendments that included a provision to reset Putin's term limits, which would allow the Russian president to serve two more six-year terms after his current one expires in 2024. Putin has served almost continuously as Russia's president since 2000, with the exception of the period from 2008 to 2012, when he served as prime minister under his hand-picked successor Dmitry Medvedev.

Other prominent amendments included a ban on senior officials holding foreign citizenship, a prohibition against "expropriation" of Russian territory, and a provision defining marriage as being between a man and a woman. The new constitution also enshrined 'social rights' such as guarantees that minimum wages will exceed subsistence minimum income and that pensions will be adjusted for inflation.

Russia's Central Election Commission announced on Thursday that 77.9 percent of voters had supported the proposed amendments, while 21.3 percent had opposed them. Voter turnout for the referendum was reported at 65 percent.

Following the Kremlin's victory, all eyes are on Putin's political future. Although Putin now has the legal right to run for an additional two terms, some Russian political insiders and experts are not entirely convinced that he will opt to do so.

Alexey Chesnakov, a political analyst who previously served as a Kremlin aide, told the National Interest that Putin's future plans remain far from clear, and that is likely the way the Russian president would like to keep them.

"The Chinese have a concept known as 'dragon in the fog': a strong player in an incomprehensible space who can strike at his competitors at any moment from an unexpected angle," Chesnakov said. "This image does a good job of explaining the logic behind Putin's behavior: He wants to remain a 'dragon in the fog' until the end of his presidency."

Chesnakov explained that Putin does not want the Russian political elite to spend the next several years attempting to curry favor with possible successors instead of “working for stability.” Keeping the possibility of another run in 2024 open would help thwart such maneuvering. Resetting the presidential terms would also, Chesnakov argued, send a signal to foreign leaders that Putin feels confident about his ability to remain at Russia’s helm for at least the next decade.

But there is another possible reason behind Putin’s decision to push for a new constitution: a desire to secure his legacy.

“If this decision is viewed strategically, Putin undoubtedly wanted not only to give himself an opportunity to run again, but also to make changes that would fixate his ideological and political discourse into the Russian political system,” Chesnakov said.

If Putin does decide to return to the Kremlin in 2024, he will be able to exercise even greater power as president. The constitutional amendments adopted on Thursday strengthened the president’s influence over the judiciary. For example, the president no longer needs to seek approval from the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia’s parliament, in appointing or dismissing the Prosecutor General. The president also now has the ability to propose that the Federation Council dismiss senior judges, whereas under the old constitution, only fellow judges could make that recommendation.

At the same time, the president now has the right to appoint up to thirty senators to the Federation Council, including seven of whom are appointed for life. The president was previously allowed to appoint up to seventeen senators, none of whom were lifetime appointments. Additionally, upon leaving office, the president himself is now entitled to become a senator for life.

The parliament has also gained new powers. The State Duma, the lower house of Russia’s parliament, now has the ability to confirm or reject nominees for prime minister and other key cabinet positions. Some political experts, however, argue that these changes are not so significant in practice.

“If we look at the substance of these reforms, then the presidency becomes the dominant institution, whereas the new powers granted to parliament are non-

critical, peripheral, and in the big picture do not provide it with any leverage,” said Tatyana Stanovaya, founder of political analysis firm R Politik.

Stanovaya noted that in the case of the State Duma approving cabinet ministers, if the lower house fails to confirm the government’s candidates three times, then the president under the new constitution has the right to appoint them himself.

The referendum was originally scheduled for April 22, but the coronavirus pandemic forced the Kremlin to delay the vote. Although Russia initially succeeded in containing the spread of the disease, it later emerged as a global coronavirus hotspot, with 661,165 confirmed infections as of Thursday, according to a real-time database from Johns Hopkins University.

Coronavirus has likewise delivered a blow to Russia’s economic prospects. Alexei Kudrin, chairman of Russia’s Accounts Chamber, has warned that the number of unemployed Russians could triple by the end of this year, from 2.5 million to 8 million.

The combination of pandemic and economic troubles dampened Putin’s popularity ahead of the referendum. In April, Putin’s approval rating dropped to 59 percent, his lowest rating since 1999, according to polling reported by the independent Levada Center. The Russian president’s approval ratings have been steadily declining over the past several years due to mounting economic disillusionment.

Yet even against this background, the opposition failed to generate any significant momentum against the Kremlin’s proposed constitutional reforms. Even though the proposal to reset Putin’s term generated controversy, the new constitution’s new social guarantees enjoyed broad support among the Russian public. No less significantly, the opposition never managed to form a coherent strategy for opposing the new amendments.

“We see that the pro-government camp had a single strategy: to go out to vote for the amendments,” said Denis Volkov, deputy director of the Levada Center. “Among opposition camps, however, some argued for a strict boycott of the referendum, others advocated voting against the new constitution, and others still proposed an alternative package of amendments. This total fragmentation among the opposition allowed the system to achieve the needed result.”

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-putin-really-return-kremlin-2024-164030>

The US-China Rivalry By Talat Masood

The United States-China rivalry has intensified, as presidential elections in the US get closer. Both President Donald Trump and Democratic Party nominee Joe Biden have taken an aggressive position against China. It is a multifaceted attack that challenges China's economic policies as being exploitive and against World Trade Organization (WTO) standards that are harming US interests. On the political front Washington is denouncing Beijing's recently enacted Hong Kong national security law. It considers it a breach of the special status that Hong Kong was supposed to enjoy for 40 years. The US is also critical of Chinese policy on Taiwan and its handling of the Tibet situation.

President Trump emphatically blames China for being the originator for the spread of the coronavirus. This allegation has no solid basis but is meant to keep the pressure and demolish China's international standing. At the strategic level it is persuading Russia to bring China in the negotiations of the arms limitations treaty.

The US claims that China is fast building up a sophisticated nuclear arsenal and missile capability and its inclusion in the negotiations is necessary. This is a major area of interest on which the US would like to keep the pressure on China. It is possible that China's build-up is being exaggerated to bring it under a strategic regime. As expected, China would not be a party to any restrictive arms control regime at this stage.

The US-China relations are far more complex and parallel with the previous US-Russia relations during the Cold War do not apply. The two leading world economies are closely integrated and mutually supportive. While President Trump would like to extract trade concessions, tighten technology transfers and focus on indigenisation of strategic components, maintaining economic and commercial relations are in mutual interest. China is currently the US' largest goods trading partner with the goods trade totaling approximately \$660 billion both ways, according to 2018 figures. The balance of trade is heavily tilted in China's favour with goods exports to the US at \$539.5 and imports at \$120 billion. China has indicated that it would increase its imports. Meanwhile, the US is trying to diversify imports and rely where feasible by stepping up its own indigenous capability. At a time when millions of workers have lost jobs in the

US, this shift in policy is also politically popular. Despite these changes to reduce and diversify imports from other sources, economies of the US and China will remain interdependent. There is no clear alternative of China for the US in the near future. It is possible that after the US elections, there might be an easing of confrontational policies.

During a recent Zoom session, eminent author and political and security analyst Anatol Lieven was of the view that the US — having a bitter experience from its bellicose policies including the earlier in Vietnam and recent in Afghanistan and Iraq — is unwilling to undertake military operations.

It, however, is stepping up its economic pressure on China so that it yields to its economic and political objectives. China would only go that far to accommodate US interests without compromising on its primary objectives.

President Trump's aggressive policy toward China is having an adverse fallout on its ally, Britain. Cyber security and policy differences on Huawei have created dents between the two allies. The next few weeks will see how this unfolds.

The South East nations — Japan, South Korea, Australia — are supportive of US in its policy to keep political and economic pressure on China. India is fully backing President Trump's China policy as it coincides with its conflict in the Himalayas. But the economies of all these countries are so closely intertwined with China that no one country would like tensions to rise to a stage where its economy would suffer.

The Western industrial complex however finds the current political confrontation with China an opportunity to reassert itself and expand its global market share.

Trump's policies are self-centred and personalised and that is pulling the US down. While the world at large is focused on dealing with the scourge of Covid-19 what is different is that the US is so absorbed in its own problems that it has abdicated its leadership's responsibility.

With US presidential elections a few months away people would judge Trump's achievements and failures more objectively.

In the foreign policy realm, there have been serious setbacks. Initially, President Trump has been optimistic in being able to get a deal with North Korea in denuclearising it and invested considerable time and his reputation by engaging with its leader Kim Jong-un.

It would not be an exaggeration that the state of relations now is much worse than when engagement with Kim was initiated.

Trump is averse to international agreements and the hasty US withdrawal from the WTO is a classic manifestation of it. The President is contemptuous towards the IMF and World Bank and these have serious implications for the world order. Having walked out of the nuclear agreement with Iran, the US has created a security vacuum that has left other signatories to the agreement in a limbo.

Whereas it has been building India to challenge China at the regional level but the recent skirmish between India and China must have realised that the power potential between them is heavily tilted in favour of China. The US will be cautious and not involve directly in the China-India conflict while supporting India diplomatically. It would consider it an opportunity to enhance its trade and step up its sale of sophisticated weapon systems to India.

The opinion in India is also divided on what extent it should align itself with the US for Indian leaders and establishment have their own aspirations of playing an independent role in world affairs.

Despite US efforts to thwart China it has succeeded in carving an important position in the world order. China, through its BRI projects, is expanding its influence in African and Asian countries.

Henry Kissinger recently aptly remarked, “the world situation is very grave”. In this scenario it becomes even more important that world powers cooperate rather than pursue confrontational policies.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2253793/the-us-china-rivalry>

Afghanistan: Doha Peace Deal Amid COVID-19 By Humera Niazi

The peace deal between the Taliban and the US in Doha, Qatar is a landmark development since this has happened after almost twenty years of conflict, becoming the longest war in the history of the US. This resulted in large-scale bloodshed of the Afghan people. Afghanistan became totally devastated by war. Nonetheless, the deal is seen as a bold step by President Trump, as clearly he did 'get it started,' despite hurdles and criticism from some quarters. The effort is being viewed as promoting his re-election campaign in an election year. Ending the US war in Afghanistan was part of his election manifesto, however. Trump had reportedly stated in his State of the Union address in 2019 that, "Great nations do not fight endless wars."

It is an important concern that amid an international COVID-19 emergency, the Afghan government is not moving forward at speed to what was agreed upon at Doha, to enable peace and stability in Afghanistan to promote positive action to manage this colossal health crisis. The initial refusal of the Ghani government to the prisoner swap, as written in the Doha agreement resulted in the 'intra-Afghan talks' not taking place, which were scheduled for March 10, 2020 at Oslo Norway. The fact that the Taliban wants to talk to the Kabul government is itself a major breakthrough, because previously they had refused to do so, since they deemed it to be an illegal western-backed puppet regime. What is of great consequence is that a ceasefire is only possible when both sides have intra-Afghan dialogue, which is the need of the hour and a confidence-building measure. This was also stated in the 'agreement' between the Taliban and the United States. "A permanent and comprehensive ceasefire will be an item on the agenda of the intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations".

Additionally, the 'crisis of two presidents' in Kabul was a delaying impediment for the talks to take place. Taking too much time to adhere to the peace plan alongside the infighting and any additional power strife could tilt the country towards civil war and ethnic divide, thus becoming a rather anarchic and difficult situation which no one in Afghanistan would want.

How can COVID-19 be accounted for in Afghanistan amidst this political wheeling and dealing? International and internal concern and help is crucial. Sadly, this requires money and a responsible approach by all stakeholders, and peace of course, becomes vital. Many rich countries are spending tremendous amounts to counter this lethal virus. But nothing much appears to be reflected in the war-ravaged and coronavirus-ridden Afghanistan.

The COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan are reportedly not at a very high rate. But then how are we to know, since they have a weak health infrastructure? There is said to be only one public health laboratory in Kabul which was performing tests to diagnose COVID-19. Its testing capacity was only fifty tests per day in May. Reportedly as of early April, only two thousand persons have been tested for coronavirus from and with the help of this sole laboratory in Kabul. And presently they have more than 34000 cases for the virus, across 29 provinces. Around 1030 people have lost their lives to coronavirus in Afghanistan.

It is from the onset of this COVID-19 crisis that Afghanistan has been without ample diagnostic kits, PPE's, ventilators and monetary help. Reportedly, for every ten thousand people in Afghanistan there are approximately 1.8 physicians. But recently, the World Health Organisation, World Bank, Asian Development Bank have announced providing assistance to Afghanistan in the coming days.

Money and aid are definitely requirements. But what is really very important is that all in the country should unite for peace. This would help in overcoming the spread of this virus. The Afghans have a history of not recognising any occupation force on their soil. They had the Soviet Union withdraw. The other superpower, the US, is presently in an agreement to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. The coronavirus is no superpower but a new international challenge. The Afghans should unite and combat COVID-19 forcefully. The international community must help them because they have been subject to conflict for decades.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/15-Jul-2020/afghanistan-doha-peace-deal-amid-covid-19>

Chabahar Shock to Modi | Editorial

After Ladakh blunder comes the Chabahar shock. While the former inflicts a haunting military trauma, the latter deals a deadly diplomatic blow — shattering India's dream of regional hegemony that had already been jolted due to the latest situation in Afghanistan where Narendra Modi's ally Ashraf Ghani is only delaying a Taliban-led administration. All this points towards India's growing regional isolation. Not to forget that New Delhi's all eggs are in the Donald Trump's basket, while the latest popularity poll shows the American President lagging significantly behind his presumptive Democratic challenger, Joe Biden.

Coming to the latest setback to Modi, Iran has excluded India from the Chabahar rail project. Featuring the construction of rail line between Chabahar port to Zahedan, the project was part of a trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan, envisaging a trade route connecting the three countries and providing them access to Central Asian and Europe. However, Iran has now decided to construct the 628km rail line by March 2022 without the assistance from India. What has caused Iran to opt out of the agreement signed four years back?

While Tehran has cited financing delays on the part of New Delhi for fears of US sanctions, it is now widely reported that a \$400 billion strategic partnership deal between Iran and China has resulted in the Chabahar rail project ending up a political casualty. According to the reports, the cooperation between the two sides will span 25 years and extend from investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and upgradation of energy and transport facilities, to refurbishment of ports, refineries and other installations, and will commit Iranian oil and gas supplies to China during that period. Chabahar rail line is now a part of this massive deal.

While the \$400 billion strategic partnership provides the much-needed lifeline to Iran whose economy has been crippled due to the international sanctions, it will give China more access to the Indian Ocean region through the Chabahar port. As for India — for which the Chabahar port was to counter-balance Pakistan's Gwadar Port — the deal serves a knockout punch.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2255034/chabahar-shock-to-modi>

Egypt's Military Limitations: Cairo's Options To Defend Eastern Libya – Analysis

In late June, with the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) reversing several years' worth of gains made by the Khalifa Hafta-led Libyan National Army (LNA) in a matter of weeks, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi issued a fiery warning during an inspection of his armed forces. Sisi warned stakeholders of potential Egyptian military action in the conflict, which has the potential to spill into eastern Libya, should the GNA and Turkey, which supports the GNA, continue their campaign.

Speaking of such a possibility, the Egyptian president said, "If some think they can go beyond this line, Sirte and Jufra, this is a redline for us," and such a development would provide the Egyptian State with "international legitimacy" to intervene. The central district of Jufra represents a vital pathway into western Libya and hosts a strategically valuable military airbase that has been vital to LNA military operations against the Tripoli-based GNA. The coastal city of Sirte, on the other hand, which sits between Tripoli and the LNA stronghold of Benghazi in the east, is key to the control of Libya's Oil Crescent, the revenue from which has been a source of constant battle between the country's rival governments.

Since the beginning of Turkey's intervention in Libya in 2020, Sisi has used strong rhetoric and military posturing in the form of large-scale exercises to signal Cairo's displeasure and to caution that he may intervene should Turkey advance into territory that Cairo deems vital to its own national security. While Cairo has backed the Khalifa Haftar-led LNA with arms, training, and political cover for more than six years citing border security concerns and counter-terror interests in eastern Libya, it has played a secondary role to the more assertive United Arab Emirates, which has been the primary supporter of the rogue general's campaign. From the outset of the LNA's Tripoli campaign, Egypt had enabled and facilitated both Emirati and Russian operations in Libya by allowing them to use the country's western bases and transport arms over the border, but stopped short of playing a direct military role itself.

The reversal of the LNA's gains, however, and the threat of a geopolitical rival in Turkey on Egypt's doorstep, which can potentially spoil Cairo's energy interests in the Mediterranean and threaten its border security with deniable militias, has pushed the country's leadership into a position where they may be forced to act decisively.

Egypt now appears set on deploying its forces into Libya though the actual process of doing so and what these forces can realistically do is a subject of some debate. While Egypt's border with Libya may provide the country with relatively simple scenarios for the deployment of military forces into Libya's eastern coastal region of Cyrenaica, reaching the western Tripolitania-based line of conflict more than one thousand kilometers away is a difficult task, effectively limiting the courses of action available to Cairo. The challenge of reaching and operating military forces along the Jufra-Sirte red line, and the potential risk of escalation with Turkey, means Cairo is more likely to seek a symbolic intervention. In this scenario, the introduction of Egyptian military forces would be used to force Libya's warring parties into negotiations under Egyptian supervision, rather than engage in any actual combat. Egypt would rather leave the defense of Sirte and Jufra to its Emirati and Russian allies, who are backing the LNA.

If Cairo does intend to move towards the Sirte-Jufra line, then it would impose several logistical and operational challenges for Egypt's army and its relatively short-legged air force. These two military branches would likely play the most important role in any deployment. Rather than mimic Turkey's relatively light footprint (which is partly due to limitations in geography and distance, too), Egypt's exercise posturing indicates that any move into its neighbor is likely to include serious conventional formations, which include armored brigades, tactical fighter wings, and navy warships.

A deployment of this nature presents multiple challenges for Egypt's military and some unique issues for particular branches of their armed forces. For the army, long supply lines may require fighting formations to amass stockpiles to be transported with them rather than rely on consistent resupply, given the distance from Sirte-Jufra to the border and the potential for disruption by Turkish armed drones. This situation will only allow for short offensives, but if supplies are exhausted, then Egypt's ground forces may run the risk of significant loss in momentum should opposing forces not quickly capitulate in the face of

conventional armored forces. In fact, even within the confines of its own borders, the Egyptian army has consistently struggled to maintain offensives against Sinai-based insurgents and other militant groups for more than two months at a time without the need for significant delays and supply buildups.

Egypt's ground combat forces may face additional and significant challenges if the country's air force is incapable of providing consistent air support and protection from GNA drone threats. While the array of fighter platforms that the Egyptian air force operates can reach the Sirte-Jufra line, they realistically can only do so intermittently given the distance that needs to be covered and the time that it would take to reach these areas from their western airbases. Taken together, these factors mean that time on station can be short. While there have been suggestions from observers that the Egyptian air force could use bases in Libya itself, the majority of these sites lack modern infrastructure to support sophisticated fighters; would require significant effort to properly supply units stationed there; and would lack the security of operating inside Egypt's own borders. Only the Emirati-operated Al-Khadim is a viable possibility, though it may present capacity issues due to heavy Emirati and Russian use in support of the LNA. These concerns aside, it is some distance away from the Sirte-Jufra line.

Egyptian air strikes in Libya carried out in support of the 2015 LNA campaign on Derna and the initial push on Jufra airbase were always limited (if not completely symbolic), a symptom of both geographical challenges and Egypt's unwillingness to expend scarce military resources on protracted air campaigns. Just as in previous strikes, the Egyptian air force will want to avoid committing its relatively shallow strategic sophisticated munition reserves in targeting GNA ground targets or Turkish air defense networks unless absolutely necessary. The latter may also moderate any prospects of Egyptian air strikes across the Sirte-Jufra line as the potential for downed pilots and the difficulty of launching combat search and rescue missions deep into Libya or enemy territory represents a major risk for both material and reputational damage.

Off the Libyan coast, Egypt's navy may be deterred from operating within range of their Turkish counterparts in order to avoid potential confrontations. Such a scenario could turn what has primarily been a fight between foreign-backed proxies into a conventional conflict between two geopolitical rivals. Despite spending billions on warships and an amphibious project, the Egyptian navy may

play a marginal role in any deployment towards the Sirte-Jufra line given the persistent presence of Turkish vessels in Libyan waters since the beginning of its intervention. The Turkish navy's control of western Libya's waters may prevent its Egyptian counterpart from establishing a sea-based air defense network of its own, hamper its ability to strike ground targets across Sirte, and make amphibious or air assault operations from Mistral carriers a risky endeavor.

While the Egyptian military is often considered a sleeping giant and is spoken of in terms of its strength in the Arab world, its struggles in North Sinai over the past seven years have raised concerns over its performance and overall competence. Though the prospect of intervention in Libya presents a diametrically different challenge to Sinai's low intensity counterinsurgency, there remains a possibility that longstanding systemic tactical and operational frailties are exposed on yet another battlefield. Egypt's previous foreign military forays have been typified by poor performance. In 1991, the army's significant, but symbolic, deployment to Kuwait in support of U.S.-led multi-national forces had been described by former officials as mediocre and revealed weaknesses in the country's ability to effectively command and control its units far from home. In a similar vein, the air force's recent involvement in combat over Yemen resulted in airmen being sent for supplementary training in the United Arab Emirates after its Gulf partners cited inexperience with air-to-air refuelling operations, poor use of guided munitions, unfamiliarity working with ground-based combat controllers, and general teething issues with coalition operations.

For many of Egypt's military leadership, the disastrous intervention in the North Yemen Civil War remains a cautionary experience that has influenced Cairo's lack of appetite for foreign military adventures despite its emphasis on martial power and its regional projection. This institutional hesitation presents yet another limitation that may effectively stop Cairo from going beyond a symbolic intervention in Libya that would look to counterbalance Turkey. As Sisi explained in his June speech, any Egyptian deployment would principally look to force a ceasefire under the Cairo Declaration peace plan, rather than reverse any gains.

This assessment not only fits within Egyptian messaging and previous patterns of behavior, but it is also inextricably linked to Cairo's military limitations and the real risk of a protracted exhausting intervention or the more worrying prospect of an escalation with Turkey that could lead to a conventional confrontation and possible defeat. For the current Egyptian regime, any actions that could lead to

such scenarios are best avoided entirely, for fear that the image that it has cultivated domestically as a military power and from which it derives a sense of political legitimacy become irrecoverably tarnished. What this means practically is that Cairo may be content with amassing forces in eastern Libya, while the Sirte-Jufra line itself is fortified by the United Arab Emirates and Russian mercenaries should the GNA and Turkey seek to make further gains.

With that said, Egypt's threats should not be discounted or downplayed, given the potential for escalation and miscalculation by rival parties. While Cairo has been known to redraw its red lines and redefine its interests in Libya, the brazen threat of military action from the country's president and the very public nature of its military posturing requires some semblance of victory and assurance that its interests are not at risk before it can reasonably climb down the escalation ladder. Should this opportunity not make itself available, then the prospect of clashes in the Mediterranean between Egypt and Turkey may be the inevitable result of an inertia that forces these geopolitical foes to rise to each other's challenges without the presence of any avenues through which they could reasonably backdown without losing face or abandoning their respective campaigns.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a non-partisan organization that seeks to publish well-argued, policy-oriented articles on American foreign policy and national security priorities.

*About the author: Egypt Defense Review is a pseudonym for an Egypt security defense analyst who provides critical perspectives on Middle East and North Africa security issues.

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US Elections: Leadership Without Direction **Vs. Direction Without Leadership – Analysis**

President Trump's leadership style has been a highly controversial topic and opponents have been pointing to his often unorganized and impulsive approach to international affairs. Though the enthusiasm for his upcoming competitor, former vice president Biden, seems to be rather low at this point, many feel much more comfortable with his approach to political leadership, which has been on display for several decades.

Even if such criticism is justified, we should ask the question of how far does political leadership really go within the international arena? This is a contested topic on its own but even those who see the strategic orientation of a country as the product of systemic features of the international system, usually acknowledge that the personal style and agenda of leaders are at least influential in the short term.

Though realists tend to focus on the structure of the international system, they do not necessarily diminish the importance of political leadership. They rather interpret the role of a leader as an administrator of the state on the way to a preset strategic end-goal. Like a pilot in a modern airplane, the leader's task at hand is to ensure that his state arrives at its set destination safely and in due time. Like the plane, the state is on autopilot most of the time, but it is the leader's job to recognize irregularities as well as technical issues and to deal with them accordingly.

Therefore, the critics point is fair – bad leadership can indeed be very dangerous. Anyone who can imagine being on an airplane, where the pilot spontaneously decides to fly an air-show maneuver, might get an idea of how some foreign policy professionals felt since the current president has been inaugurated.

While “impulsive and unorganized” might be one style of bad leadership, it is not the only one. Another main issue of lackluster leadership is the misperception of where the strategic destination lies. To come back to the airplane analogy, I recently read a story about a pilot who was supposed to fly from London to Duesseldorf but flew to Scotland instead. As in air travel, getting the actual

destination wrong is a rare occurrence in the field of foreign policy making. Delayed take-offs and turbulent landings are more common occurrences. Similarly, political leadership often delays grand strategic adaptations or wastes crucial resources on non-vital issues or lost causes. Those failures are eventually corrected by systemic pressures, though damage might already be done, and important windows of opportunity will pass.

This brings us to Joe Biden's foreign policy pitch. Trump's critics claim that his leadership results in unnecessary risks and squandered opportunities due to a lack of a comprehensive strategy. Biden, they argue, would bring a "return to normalcy" and a more professional conduct of foreign policy.

In his essay in Foreign Affairs and his speech in July 2019, Biden lays out three core strategic goals – American prosperity, security and the promotion of democratic values. He also claims that every US president has pursued these goals except for Donald Trump. Accordingly, he sets forth to propose a reversal of the foreign policy course taken since 2017 and bring it back to the status quo ante (henceforth "return to normalcy"). This point is well received by those who criticize the blunt and often erratic leadership style of the president and wish for a foreign policy reset.

Particularly regarding NATO, many in the foreign policy community would like to see a full U-turn from Trump's transactional high-pressure approach and find themselves relieved by Biden's early focus on reinforcing the traditional alliance structure. Yet, this view ignores structural developments in the international system that make a simple return to the old counterproductive.

NATO's struggles are not new. The current administration only put them into the center of attention. The organization was created as an alliance of democracies with the goal of containing communist expansion into Western Europe. During the Cold War, the alliance was therefore a logical product of shared values as well as shared strategic interests, as the Soviet Union has clearly been an existential threat to all members.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the strategic ground suddenly disappeared, and NATO leaders set upon the task of finding new strategic meaning for the alliance. Neither the debates over moral guidelines of R2P concepts – nor the Global War on Terror- nor a renewed Russian threat to NATO's eastern flank filled this

strategic void. To many member states, none of those humanitarian and security threats were existential in nature. All those themes failed to result in cohesion and reliable commitment to the alliance that has existed during the Cold War.

Consequently, political leaders attempted to give NATO meaning by reinforcing the narrative of an “alliance of democracies” and started to use the organization as a proxy for the transatlantic relationship at large. Biden seems to follow this rhetoric repeatedly underlining the importance of NATO as the central pillar for democratic alliances in the world, which he seems set on revitalizing. I would argue this is an overly broad and unnecessary approach to military commitments. Instead of taking an aged military alliance that has been hollowed out of its original purpose as a proxy for the transatlantic partnerships, we should rethink existing alliance structures at their core.

Through its immense power and default geographic positioning, the US had the luxury of pursuing an ill-defined foreign policy since Washington’s last peer competitor bit the dust in 1989. This is changing now, and at an accelerating speed none the less. As has been outlined by the Trump administration in the 2017 National Security Strategy, the US will be refocusing on the containment of “revisionist” great powers, particularly Russia and China. Many nations of NATO’s former Cold War core do not prioritize the goal of containment.

Germany, the most prominent example of the Trump administration’s quarrels with the alliance, is one of those countries. Berlin likes to see itself as a *Zivilmacht* (civil power), a concept summarized by Hans Maull in 2007. This concept fits well with the country’s historically found reluctance of using military forces as a strategic instrument – or to even build operational military forces. Instead, Berlin prefers to utilize its economic and soft power to promote democratic values through multilateralism, and sees itself as a driving force on collective action problems, like climate change.

During the Cold War, Germany was able to sufficiently commit to NATO as the Soviet threat was existential and painfully visible in the division of the country along the Iron Curtain. The subsequent success of the alliance was the very factor that contributed to Germany’s unwillingness to meaningfully contribute. The end of the Cold War brought unification and relative security; Berlin’s outlook on NATO drastically changed and the country’s political elites were eager to reap the so-called “peace dividends” by continuously shrinking their defense budget.

Furthermore, Berlin is generally softer on Russia and tries to establish closer energy relations with Moscow, to the anger of their partners in Washington.

Germany is only the most prominent example for this. Freeriding and a lack of a shared strategic vision became an issue between the US and many other European NATO member states. In 2019, only nine of its 30 member states met the NATO guideline of spending 2% of their GDP on defense. Additionally, France and Italy, two other major European powers, also seek more cordial relations with Moscow than the US would like to see.

NATO's new members – Poland, Romania and the Baltic states on the other hand – have been willing to closely cooperate with the US and follow Washington's lead. Moscow's proven willingness to leverage military force to achieve its goals, is still an existential threat to these countries. While it might be viewed as an ugly violation of international law in Berlin or Paris, Russia's military adventures are downright frightening to the governments in Warsaw and Tallinn.

Though the president's rhetoric on NATO is controversial and might damage the trust between Washington and certain US allies, his actions lead in the right direction. In an international system drifting toward greater multipolarity, Washington should follow the saying of Frederick the Great: "He who defends everything, defends nothing." President Trump's initiative to shift the new military focal point from military bases in Germany to Poland is an important first step toward a functioning containment-alliance in the "Intermarium."

This is not an excuse for inept leadership on the matter. As I mentioned, the president's approach to America's NATO allies is too confrontational. In order to rethink the transatlantic partnership, US interests should not be reduced to a transactional relationship limited to economic and military cooperation. Western European partners, like Germany, are important and they are necessary to support Washington's leadership role on the global stage. Alliances are indeed multi-dimensional, but the US should attempt to disentangle its main military commitments to allow for a shared strategic ground between vital military allies.

US presidents should start to fundamentally rethink military commitments and alliances in Europe instead of pushing a "return to normalcy" narrative. It is not 1985; the global context has changed and so should the alliance structure.

Those who hang on to NATO often do so for nostalgic reasons. Most of their worries are unfounded. For example, the disappearance of NATO would not mean an end to the US-German partnership. It would arguable improve it at this point in time. Avoiding endless debates on burden-sharing between NATO's main security guarantor and a self-described "civil power" would allow for closer cooperating on common non-military interests on the global stage.

Other traditional partners might still share military interests. Yet, the most important ones do not even relate to the framework of NATO. France has arguably the most comprehensive grand strategy of all major European countries and is the best positioned European player in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of military ties and strategic vision. The UK enjoys its "special relationship" with the United States and both nations cooperate closely in several theatres. Yet, those partnerships are mostly realized on a bilateral basis and they precede NATO. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that military cooperation between such traditional partners with shared interests will not resume without NATO.

On the other hand, NATO's consensus-based decision-making prevents the US to efficiently pursue its national interest, because of the impeding influence of the original NATO-rump that diverges from the strategic outlook that the US and its Eastern European allies share (see John Deni's argument).

In the end, Biden might very well turn out to be the better foreign policy leader, combining a more professional style with cautious strategic adaptations to the fundamental changes in the international system. Nevertheless, he provided plenty of reasons to be concerned during his early campaigning efforts. Military alliances should not be established on a permanent basis. This confuses strategic means with strategic ends. The importance he attributes to NATO is not reflective of strategic realities anymore. If his stance is more than just comforting rhetoric for the swing-voter, who wishes Trump to simply go away, this is going to be a problem.

Indeed, being a foreign policy brute is a net negative and President Trump's transactional and undiplomatic approach to NATO might damage the trust of US allies. Nevertheless, "return to normalcy" and "anything but Trump" are political slogans and not a functioning strategy. Causing damage due to a disruptive leadership style is one problem. Ignoring the changing strategic demands of the international system is another. Therefore, those who support Biden's

presidential run should put him under serious pressure on the matter, if they want him to be a president who sets the US on the right path. Should the “return to normalcy” become the leading foreign policy principle, the US will pay a high cost of opportunity as Washington delays necessary strategic adaptations.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of Geopoliticalmonitor.com or any institutions with which the authors are associated.

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An Argument on Sino-India Conflict By

Ghanwah Ijaz

Lately, tension has built along the China – India disputed borders. Since the Doklam crisis, both sides have gradually increased their number of troops in the areas near Pangong lake and Galwan valley region. The expansion of the battalions in these particular regions, for the obvious reasons, fuelled the fear of an extensive confrontation between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Consequently, on May 5, 2020, scuffles broke out between the Chinese and Indian troops. This has been one of the most enduring disputes, grinding on the men on foot.

Moreover, the violent hand-to-hand clashes between the troops of the two sides are risking an open conflict.

Will the crisis heighten or the officials will be successful in defusing it through dialogue? What are the official claims of the two states? What are the reasons for increasing the number of troops in the disputed region? Is Galwan valley strategically significant? Does border infrastructure development play its part in stepping-up the conflict? Why both states cannot afford an all-out war, at present? All these questions need a well-articulated and calculated answer. This article tries to explain the strategic and economic aspects of the recent standoff. Furthermore, it endeavours to answer most of the abovementioned questions and present four reasonable scenarios, forecasting the possible outcome of the standoff.

The argument begins with the demarcated Line of Actual Control (LAC). China and India nourish different opinions on LAC, as it is not a determined frontier as both the states never agreed on where the actual official border lies (or should lie). The unresolved issue of ‘who owns which part of the land’ has been the exclusive cause of the 1962 war and the 73-day stand-off in the past. This time the 130 km long and 5 km wide Pangong lake became the new battlefield. LAC at Pangong lake is vaguely defined through pointers termed as ‘fingers.’ India claims that the LAC lies with finger 8 (F8) while China claims that it lies at finger 2 (F2) with the grey area laying in between. An unofficial Indian claim is that the Chinese troops have crossed F5. Some experts including Lt Gen (Retd) H S

Pang and Colonel (Retd) Ajay Shukla believe that a part of the grey area (F4 – F8) has been captured by the Chinese troops. They have also termed this disturbance in the status quo as ‘intrusion.’ On the contrary, the Indian government is hesitant in admitting the claim. Experts also opine that besides Pangong lake area, situation is also worrisome for the Indian administration in the valley of Galwan.

The Chinese claim that its border defence troops have bolstered border control measures and made necessary moves in response to India’s illegal construction of defensive facilities across the border into Chinese territory in the Galwan valley region. This region holds extensive strategic significance. It is believed that whosoever occupies this area first, enjoys the High Ground Advantage. Some experts reckon that the construction of 255 km long Darbuk- Shyok- Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road near the border in Uttarkhand’s Lipulekh area, was the crucial factor in sparking clash between the troops of the two states. China had expressed its objection to the road at different occasions.

On a cursory look, the patterns through which India is altering the status of the entire region are threatening its immediate neighbours. China has evinced its discomfort in India’s decision of making Laddakh a union territory, unilaterally. Probably it would not be wrong to deduce that the Chinese border activity was a response to BJP’s unbridled horse.

While the Indian government is mum on the issue, the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had initially conceded that a sizeable number of Chinese troops had come into the eastern Ladakh, though later it was claimed as erroneous information. So why the Indian government does not accept this aspect in the first place or why did the government rule-out any presence of Chinese troops on the Indian side of the Galwan valley? The answer is simple. If the government agrees to the claim of the Chinese intrusion, the Indian public would build-up pressure on BJP to take aggressive measures (most favored course of action) i.e. surgical strike against China. Realistically, India cannot demonstrate a jingoistic and aggressive approach towards China. So, if the surgical strike option is dropped, which option is left then? #BoycottChina?

Heading towards the economic aspect of the conflict, to teach China a lesson, Indian people have taken the issue in their hands. To do that, some opportunists have lamely directed the public to boycott the Chinese economy without

evaluating how hard it would hit China. Education reformist Sonam Wangchuk, for instance, has asked the Indian public to boycott Chinese software in a week and hardware in a year. It is argued that even with complete boycott, India cannot affect the Chinese economy much because China is not dependent on the Indian market. However, China is the 3rd largest export destination for India. In FY19, for instance, India exported goods worth \$16.7 billion to China. In the present state of the Indian economy, what if China boycotts in response? It is also argued that if China retaliates and boycotts Indian goods, 67% of drug export and 60% of electronic exports will get affected and Indian businesses will suffer gravely.

Without a doubt, the chances for the crisis to escalate are minimal. If the aggressor would have been Pakistan instead of China, PM Modi and his cabal would have set the stage for a ferocious and macho-styled response by now. So far, kudos to the Chinese and Indian governments in maintaining a stable and controlled environment in the handling of this crisis. As of now, both states are indulged in several rounds of talks to de-escalate the crisis.

Considering all the factors, this crisis could perhaps result in any of the four scenarios:

Scenario 1: Initiating War (Chinese Perspective)

At present, China cannot afford to indulge in an all-out war as it is experiencing acceptance in the western world, by holding its multilateralism agenda. As expressed in the Leipzig summit 2020, the Chinese government believes and extends the notion that the world economy could gain steam through solidarity, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, multilateralism, and strong global governance. Indulging in a severe military expedition would critically dent the Chinese efforts.

Scenario 2: Initiating War (Indian Perspective)

In the midst of an economic crisis and military modernization program, India's desire to fight a full-fledged war against China may not result in victory. The internal issues faced by the BJP government also do not qualify India to risk a war against China.

Scenario 3: India as a US Pawn

In the international arena, China being the sole hegemon challenger and a threat to the US interest in the Asia Pacific, if not shaken has at least weakened the standing of the US. Considering India's socio-economic and political problems, the US can covertly encourage India by extending a lucrative offer for the revival of its looming economy. India could be played as a tool and it would help the US to dent the Chinese rise, especially in the post-pandemic world.

Scenario 4: Peace Process Through Military Establishment

Beijing and New Delhi seem determined to proceed with the settlement through their military establishments. It would be a hard task for both the sides to re-establish the status quo they have rearranged. Considering the larger picture, both military forces would preferably secure their interests and de-escalate. However, it may take some time for the military to absorb the recent unilateral changes on both sides.

It would suffice to conclude, as war benefits none, there is a high possibility that the militaries of the two ends would intelligently manage the crisis. But what the outcome would be in reality and how much it would satisfy the interest of either side, will take time to ascertain.

Source: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/07/09/an-argument-on-sino-india-conflict/>

A New Cold War | Editorial

What looks to be the new cold war between the United States (US) and China is intensifying with every passing day. And the present cold war, like its predecessor, between two economic giants, is being fought outside the borders. The battle over Huawei is by far the most significant manifestation of this new round of hostilities between the two technological superpowers.

The ongoing battle between Washington and Beijing reminds one of the older rivalry between Washington and Moscow that defined the twentieth century's second half. But thinking that all patterns will remain the same is perhaps misleading to see the outcomes of this new acrimonious relationship. While the Soviet Union's economy was not linked with that of the West, China's is hard-wired into the international economic system.

The US is already using sanctions and coercion as the most reliable tools to fight the cold war against China. The statements of Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, and Robert O'Brien, the US National Security Advisor, confirm the assertion made above. From suggesting visa restrictions for the employees of Huawei to threats to telecommunication companies of not doing business with 'human rights abusers', Pompeo's statement tells us that the tech-war can prove more disruptive than Trump's trade war with China.

Britain's announcement on Tuesday to ban equipment from the Chinese technology giant Huawei has made matters worse. The reversal by the Britain Prime Minister (PM) Boris Johnson—that Trump labels as his win—makes it clear that the US and its allies are engaged in a full-scale technology war against China. The ban on tech companies to gain leverage in resolving the state-to-state disagreements will harm technology development by a great deal. The longer these restrictions remain in place, the harder it will get to go back to designing hardware and software that is both compatible and can be patchworked together for greater innovation and the benefit of humanity.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/18-Jul-2020/a-new-cold-war>

Proposed Iran-China deal By Najmuddin A. Shaikh

AS the Trump administration moves further towards confrontation with China and as China makes it clear that even while wanting to avoid a fight it will push back, a new factor has suddenly captured the headlines. This is a proposed agreement between China and Iran under which according to a 'final draft' received by The New York Times from Iranian sources China will invest \$400 billion in Iran and receive in return Iranian fossil fuel — oil and gas — at discounted prices. The initial report on this so-called agreement which is not part of the NYT revelation had said the discount was to be 32 per cent on the prevailing market price. Many commentaries in Iran have welcomed this agreement. Others have been suspicious.

On the face of it, there could be nothing better for Iran than an agreement that enabled Iran to sell its oil in return for the sort of investment that the leaked paper talks about. Currently, subject to some correction, reports from normally reliable sources suggest that Iran has 30 tankers each capable of carrying two million barrels. Its onshore storage is said to be about 63m barrels. In other words, about 120m barrels which, instead of being a source of income, are drawing on scarce resources to finance the storage.

It is true that before the JCPOA was signed in 2016 Iran had huge problems marketing its oil and had learnt many ways to evade the sanctions that were imposed at that time. They were credited rightly with having devised clandestine means to market their oil and these channels are probably being used even now. But the level of surveillance has gone up manifold since those days and in my view if the sale entailed a discount of 20pc then it probably entails a discount of more than 30pc today for the ship to ship transfers at sea taking place whenever the satellite is not operating in the area.

The Iranians have set aside the agreement reached with India for Indian participation in the construction of the railroad from Chabahar to Zahidan for connectivity to Afghanistan and Turkmenistan and thence to Europe where India was expected to invest \$1.6 billion and have also abrogated the agreement for Indian development of the Farzad-B gas field where an Indian investment of

\$6bn was expected. The Indians have said that difficulties arose because of US sanctions, while the Iranians said no progress was made in negotiations but that they would welcome India's return. This, of course, is verbiage. The current Iranian expectation is that with their rail expertise and thirst for fossil fuel, China will step in for both but this is not the Chinese focus.

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At the moment, there is little chance of China defying a sanctions regime for illusionary benefits.

China recognises, as the UBS Bank of Switzerland's study of December 2019 shows, that for the next 25 years the US dollar will remain the dominant reserve currency for central banks across the world. It also recognises that there has been little change in the leading role that the dollar plays in international trade. It will try to increase the role of the renminbi in international trade through currency swaps and other renminbi denominated trade but this will take a great deal of time. Sanctions imposed by the US will work quite well given the dollar's dominance of international trade.

China's principal focus is on the South China Sea and the steps the US is taking in this area to limit China's ability to work out arrangements with its Asean neighbours and to use the Hong Kong issue to seek condemnation of China's alleged breach of the 'one country two systems' that was promised for Hong Kong. The US has moved from suggesting that the countries of the region should take a concerted position on China's territorial claims to terming them illegal and a breach of the freedom of navigation required under UNCLOS (law of the sea convention). The US says that it observes UNCLOS but has not ratified it because it cannot muster the political will to get 66 senators to ratify the convention which many senators see as an unacceptable restriction on America's freedom of action.

China has also to be concerned about the US decision to insist that China become a party to arms control talks when the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) treaty has been abrogated. This is a matter of concern to Europe since they fear that the US will now ask for the stationing of these missiles in Europe but is also a matter of concern in terms of allowing these weapons into the South China Sea where China has these weapons but has very restricted ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missiles) capabilities.

Much has been made in the NYT about the fact that this agreement would allow China to develop military capabilities in the Persian Gulf region in the ports it develops. The truth is that China developed one base outside the South China Sea (Djibouti) only because the Western alliance said China was benefiting from the anti-piracy operations of Western navies without making a contribution. In my view, it has no interest in trying to question, let alone match, American naval supremacy in the Persian Gulf area.

As has been noted in the NYT article the Chinese spokesperson did not react initially to the news that the NYT story broke. He did so only

When pressed and then using anodyne language said: “China and Iran enjoy traditional friendship, and the two sides have been in communication on the development of bilateral relations. We stand ready to work with Iran to steadily advance practical cooperation.”

To sum up, there is little chance of China taking on at this time the challenge of defying a sanctions regime for illusory benefits.

Perhaps when the JCPOA is revitalised as Joe Biden may well do the position could change but the US attitude towards China remains adversarial in both parties and not much may change with regard to this particular issue.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and former ambassador to the US.
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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1569884/proposed-iran-china-deal>

The Pandemic Will Accelerate History Rather Than Reshape It By Richard Haass

We are going through what by every measure is a great crisis, so it is natural to assume that it will prove to be a turning point in modern history. In the months since the appearance of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, analysts have differed over the type of world the pandemic will leave in its wake. But most argue that the world we are entering will be fundamentally different from what existed before. Some predict the pandemic will bring about a new world order led by China; others believe it will trigger the demise of China's leadership. Some say it will end globalization; others hope it will usher in a new age of global cooperation. And still others project that it will supercharge nationalism, undermine free trade, and lead to regime change in various countries—or all of the above.

But the world following the pandemic is unlikely to be radically different from the one that preceded it. COVID-19 will not so much change the basic direction of world history as accelerate it. The pandemic and the response to it have revealed and reinforced the fundamental characteristics of geopolitics today. As a result, this crisis promises to be less of a turning point than a way station along the road that the world has been traveling for the past few decades.

It is too soon to predict when the crisis itself will end. Whether in six, 12, or 18 months, the timing will depend on the degree to which people follow social-distancing guidelines and recommended hygiene; the availability of quick, accurate, and affordable testing, antiviral drugs, and a vaccine; and the extent of economic relief provided to individuals and businesses.

Yet the world that will emerge from the crisis will be recognizable. Waning American leadership, faltering global cooperation, great-power discord: all of these characterized the international environment before the appearance of COVID-19, and the pandemic has brought them into sharper-than-ever relief. They are likely to be even more prominent features of the world that follows.

POST-AMERICAN WORLD

One characteristic of the current crisis has been a marked lack of U.S. leadership. The United States has not rallied the world in a collective effort to confront either the virus or its economic effects. Nor has the United States rallied the world to follow its lead in addressing the problem at home. Other countries are looking after themselves as best they can or turning to those past the peak of infection, such as China, for assistance.

But if the world that follows this crisis will be one in which the United States dominates less and less—it is almost impossible to imagine anyone today writing about a “unipolar moment”—this trend is hardly new. It has been apparent for at least a decade.

To some degree, this is a result of what Fareed Zakaria described as “the rise of the rest” (and of China in particular), which brought a decline in the United States’ relative advantage even though its absolute economic and military strength continued to grow. But even more than that, it is a result of faltering American will rather than declining American capacity. President Barack Obama oversaw a pullback from Afghanistan and the Middle East. President Donald Trump has employed mostly economic power to confront foes. But he has essentially ended the U.S. presence in Syria, and seeks to do the same in Afghanistan, and, perhaps more significant, has shown little interest either in alliances or in maintaining the United States’ traditional leading role in addressing major transnational issues.

Long before COVID-19 ravaged the earth, there had already been a precipitous decline in the appeal of the American model.

The prospect of this change was a big part of the appeal of Trump’s “America first” message, which promised that the United States would be stronger and more prosperous if it did less abroad and focused its energies on domestic issues. Implicit in this view was the assumption that much of what the United States did in the world was wasteful, unnecessary, and unconnected to domestic well-being. For many Americans, the pandemic will likely reinforce this view despite the fact that it should instead highlight how domestic well-being is affected by the rest of the world; the United States, they will say, will have to focus on righting itself and devote resources to needs at home rather than abroad, to butter rather than guns. That is a false choice, as the country needs and can afford both, but it is likely to be argued all the same.

Just as consequential as U.S. policy choices is the power of America's example. Long before COVID-19 ravaged the earth, there had already been a precipitous decline in the appeal of the American model. Thanks to persistent political gridlock, gun violence, the mismanagement that led to the 2008 global financial crisis, the opioid epidemic, and more, what America represented grew increasingly unattractive to many. The federal government's slow, incoherent, and all too often ineffective response to the pandemic will reinforce the already widespread view that the United States has lost its way.

ANARCHICAL SOCIETY

A pandemic that begins in one country and spreads with great velocity around the world is the definition of a global challenge. It is also further evidence that globalization is a reality, not a choice. The pandemic has ravaged open and closed countries, rich and poor, East and West. What is missing is any sign of a meaningful global response. (Newton's law—that for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction—has apparently been suspended.) The near irrelevance of the World Health Organization, which should be central to meeting the threat at hand, speaks volumes to the poor state of global governance.

But while the pandemic has made this reality especially obvious, the underlying trends long preceded it: the emergence of global challenges that no country, no matter how powerful, can successfully contend with on its own—and the failure of global organizations to keep up with these challenges. Indeed, the gap between global problems and the capacity to meet them goes a long way toward explaining the scale of the pandemic. The sad but inescapable truth is that although the phrase “international community” is used as if it already existed, it is mostly aspirational, applying to few aspects of geopolitics today. This will not change anytime soon.

The principal responses to the pandemic have been national or even subnational, not international. And once the crisis passes, the emphasis will shift to national recovery. In this context, it is hard to see much enthusiasm for, say, tackling climate change, particularly if it remains viewed—incorrectly—as a distant problem that can be shelved in favor of addressing more immediate ones.

One reason for this pessimism is that cooperation between the world's two most powerful countries is necessary to tackle most global challenges, yet U.S.-

Chinese relations have been deteriorating for years. The pandemic is exacerbating friction between the two countries. In Washington, many hold the Chinese government responsible, thanks to its weeks of cover-up and inaction, including failing to promptly lock down Wuhan, the city where the outbreak started, and allowing thousands of infected people to leave and spread the virus farther. China's attempt now to portray itself as offering a successful model for coping with the pandemic and to use this moment as an opportunity to expand its influence around the world will only add to American hostility. Meanwhile, nothing about the current crisis will change China's view that the U.S. presence in Asia is a historical anomaly or reduce its resentment of U.S. policy on a range of issues, including trade, human rights, and Taiwan.

The idea of “decoupling” the two economies had gained considerable traction before the pandemic, driven by fears in the United States that it was becoming too dependent on a potential adversary for many essential goods and overly susceptible to Chinese espionage and intellectual property theft. The impetus to decouple will grow as a result of the pandemic, and only in part because of concerns about China. There will be renewed focus on the potential for interruption of supply chains along with a desire to stimulate domestic manufacturing. Global trade will partly recover, but more of it will be managed by governments rather than markets.

The pandemic is likely to reinforce the democratic recession that has been evident for the past 15 years.

The resistance across much of the developed world to accepting large numbers of immigrants and refugees, a trend that had been visible for at least the past half decade, will also be intensified by the pandemic. This will be in part out of concern over the risk of importing infectious disease, in part because high unemployment will make societies wary of accepting outsiders. This opposition will grow even as the number of displaced persons and refugees—already at historic levels—will continue to increase significantly as economies can no longer support their populations.

The result will be both widespread human suffering and greater burdens on states that can ill afford them. State weakness has been a significant global problem for decades, but the economic toll of the pandemic will create even more weak or failing states. This will almost certainly be exacerbated by a mounting

debt problem: public and private debt in much of the world was already at unprecedented levels, and the need for government spending to cover health-care costs and support the unemployed will cause debt to skyrocket. The developing world in particular will face enormous requirements it cannot meet, and it remains to be seen whether developed countries will be willing to provide help given demands at home. There is a real potential for aftershocks—in India, in Brazil and Mexico, and throughout Africa—that could interfere with global recovery.

The spread of COVID-19 to and through Europe has also highlighted the loss of momentum of the European project. Countries have mostly responded individually to the pandemic and its economic effects. But the process of European integration had run out of steam long before this crisis—as Brexit demonstrated especially clearly. The principal question in the post-pandemic world is how much the pendulum will continue to swing from Brussels to national capitals, as countries question whether control over their own borders could have slowed the virus's spread.

The pandemic is likely to reinforce the democratic recession that has been evident for the past 15 years. There will be calls for a larger government role in society, be it to constrain movement of populations or provide economic help. Civil liberties will be treated by many as a casualty of war, a luxury that cannot be afforded in a crisis. Meanwhile, threats posed by illiberal countries such as Russia, North Korea, and Iran will still exist once the pandemic does not; indeed, they may well have increased while attention was trained elsewhere.

A WORLD IN EVEN GREATER DISARRAY

More than three years ago, I published a book titled *A World in Disarray*. It described a global landscape of increased great-power rivalry, nuclear proliferation, weak states, surging refugee flows, and growing nationalism, along with a reduced U.S. role in the world. What will change as a result of the pandemic is not the fact of disarray but the extent.

Ideally, the crisis would bring renewed commitment to building a more robust international order, much as the cataclysm of World War II led to arrangements that promoted peace, prosperity, and democracy for nearly three-quarters of a century. Such an order would include greater cooperation to monitor outbreaks of infectious diseases and deal with their consequences, as well as greater

willingness to address climate change, set rules for cyberspace, assist forced migrants, and tackle proliferation and terrorism.

But there is little reason to believe the past will repeat itself after this latest global calamity. The world today is simply not conducive to being shaped. Power is distributed in more hands, both state and nonstate, than ever before. Consensus is mostly absent. New technologies and challenges have outpaced the collective ability to contend with them. No single country enjoys the standing the United States did in 1945.

What is more, this United States is not currently disposed to take on a leading international role, the result of fatigue brought on by two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and rising needs at home. Even if a foreign policy “traditionalist” such as former Vice President Joseph Biden wins the November presidential election, resistance from Congress and the public will prevent the full-scale return of an expansive U.S. role in the world. And no other country, not China or anyone else, has both the desire and the ability to fill the void the United States has created.

After World War II, the need to meet the looming communist threat galvanized the American public to support their country in assuming a leading role around the world. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson famously said that the government had to make arguments “clearer than truth” to get the American people and Congress to buy into the effort to contain the Soviet Union. Some analysts suggest that invoking the threat of China could similarly galvanize public support today, but a foreign policy based on opposing China is hardly suited to addressing the global challenges that shape today’s world. Meanwhile, appealing to the American people to put tackling those global problems at the heart of U.S. foreign policy will continue to be a tough sell. Accordingly, the more relevant precedent to consider may be not the period following World War II but the period following World War I—an era of declining American involvement and mounting international upheaval. The rest, as they say, is history.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-07/pandemic-will-accelerate-history-rather-reshape-it>

China-Iran Strategic Partnership — Genesis and Future By Talat Masood

At the conclusion of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Tehran in 2016, the two countries announced a major agreement that covered a broad canvas of bilateral relations and regional and international issues based on "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership". It was meant to deepen and broaden the scope of their relationship.

President Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and impose comprehensive sanctions on it had a debilitating effect on Iran's economy.

With Iran under severe political pressure and economic squeeze was eagerly looking to reduce this burden by developing a close relationship with China.

It equally suited Beijing to strengthen its ties with Tehran. Apart from Iran being an important Muslim country and a close neighbour, it is also a major oil producing country.

In fact, the strategic agreement noted "that under the current conditions of deepening multilateralisation of international order and globalisation of the economy, the bilateral ties between Iran and China have gained strategic importance...." The two countries also aimed at concluding a bilateral 25-year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement on their agendas. Significantly, the Iranian side welcomed "the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" and the promotion of industrial and maritime capabilities by China.

Nevertheless, seasoned observers are of the view that there is nothing especially threatening to the US or its allies in the document. Military and security cooperation was already taking place and become a norm among friendly countries and allies. Cooperation in areas of counterterrorism, trafficking, and transnational crime is now a common phenomenon among friendly countries and is for the general good of the region and the world.

In essence, international observers downplayed these developments. Interestingly, the Chinese side has not tried to hype it either. This was evident from the recent foreign ministers meeting of China and Iran where they were more focused on coronavirus and the joint action plan.

What needs to be kept in perspective is that China has much larger interests in the region and has comprehensive strategic partnership agreements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It would certainly like to maintain a balance in its relations with these competing powers in the region to maximise its leverage. For China's ambitions go beyond regional alignments.

This is clearly evident from the fact that China has strong diplomatic and trade relations with Arab countries. It regularly participates in the ministerial meetings with Arab countries and values its ties with them. Incidentally, the last meeting was held only recently. It just so happens that other international events overshadowed the event and did not attract much publicity. As reported in press, it resulted in the signing of three policy documents that included a Covid-19 pledge of cooperation, an execution plan for the Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) from 2020-2022 and the Amman Declaration, which "expresses the desire of China and Arab states to deepen relations.... And reiterates mutual support on the issues of core interests and major concerns."

This is not to imply that the Arab governments would not be wary of the China-Iran ties. Unsurprisingly, as leaked media reports indicate that the China-Iran cooperation was discussed and Chinese representative tried to assure the members that it is not directed against them.

China has vast interests in the Middle East and is building a multifaceted relationship with major countries of the region. For Beijing, Iran has its importance, but it is not a zero-sum game. Chinese companies have invested heavily in the region and it would like to further expand and consolidate these relations and will ensure that its developing strategic partnership with Iran does not stand in any way with Arab countries.

The news that China will invest \$400 billion in Iran attracted global attention, but has been received with a high degree of skepticism by neutral observers. It seems to be a highly exaggerated assumption considering the present state of

Iran's economy and its ability to absorb such a huge amount of investment. Moreover, no Chinese bank would like to stake its credibility by defying international sanctions and invest in this project. China, maintaining a balanced approach, would make investments in energy and infrastructure in Iran somewhat more than it has done in other BRI countries. Apparently, Iran would sell its oil in return for investments from China.

According to international sources the draft agreement is very ambitious and includes nearly 100 projects that include high-speed railways and 5G telecommunication networks, free-trade zones, etcetera.

Previously, it was the US and other Western countries that invested in the Middle East and were also taking care of their security. With deep economic engagement in strategic projects China is also supporting Iran's efforts at strengthening its defence.

Iran's closeness to China is largely attributed to President Trump's inimical policies towards Iran. With the US hostility toward China becoming more intense nothing suits Iran better than to have a powerful partner as China. It equally suits China to have Iran, a major Muslim country, strategically located and a strong US adversary as an ally.

According to press reports, China plans to develop a port at Jask that would give it a huge advantage as much of world's oil passes through the region. It is in close proximity to Bahrain where the US Navy's Fifth Fleet is headquartered.

For quite some time Iran has been steadily turning toward developing closer relations with Asian countries rather than look towards the West. It not only wants to strengthen its relations with China but would also build bridges with South Korea, which it admires for its rapid economic progress and self-reliance in industrialisation and energy production.

Iran's relations with India have received a serious setback as under US pressure it set aside its agreement wherein it was supposed to develop the Chabahar port and associated infrastructure. This will provide additional space to China to expand its cooperation with Iran.

With Washington and Beijing all poised toward a potential cold war, the China-Iran proposed strategic partnership acquires even greater significance.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2256028/china-iran-strategic-partnership-genesis-and-future>

India out, China in By Kamran Yousaf

The 'cold war' between the US and China is very much here. The latest example of that rivalry is the decision by Iran to drop India from a key rail project linked to Chabahar Port. In May 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had signed an agreement to develop the Chabahar Port, located only 172km from Gwadar Port. At that time the trilateral agreement was seen as an effort by India to bypass Gwadar for an access to Afghanistan and beyond.

The agreement had raised the spectre of a new proxy war in the already volatile region. The relationship between Iran and Pakistan had already been marred by mistrust and growing Indian influence in its backyard further compounded the problem. The Chinese were also wary of Indian role in Chabahar Port and feared that external players would use proxies to target CPEC particularly in Balochistan. The only way to pre-empt such a scenario for China was to rope in Iran and instead of competing against it, allow Tehran to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

It was because of this reason that merely two months after India signed a Chabahar deal, Chinese President Xi Jinping travelled to Tehran where both sides agreed to work out a 25-year strategic partnership deal. Reports suggested that China would invest \$400 billion in next 25 years in Iran. On the other hand, India despite having strong ties with Iran spanning over decades did only lip service. It promised to fund Chabahar-Zahedan rail track but could not deliver despite the fact the US exempted Indian investment of its economic sanctions.

In a recent statement the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan without explicitly mentioning India by name stated as to why Tehran dropped New Delhi from the rail project. "When some foreign governments [are] found reluctant in their relations with Iran and need other's permission for their even normal interactions, for sure they won't be capable of planning and implementing such long-term cooperation contracts," he said days after Iran decided to build a rail track from its own resources.

What does this development mean for Pakistan? With India being kicked out of the Chabahar Port project and China stepping in, Islamabad clearly has an

advantage. Despite being neighbours, relations between Pakistan and Iran have never been smooth. Part of the reason is that both have had divergent interests. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan were in different camps. Also, Pakistan's close strategic ties with the Arab world particularly with Saudi Arabia made ties with Iran a complicated affair. The two countries have a long list of grievances against each other. Both suspect that they allow elements to use their respective soils against the other.

But with China now investing big-time both in Iran and Pakistan, the two will have convergence on many key strategic and economic issues. Iran will now have interests in Gwadar Port as well as CPEC and hence it will never let elements targeting the Chinese investment operate from its oil. Similarly, with Indian influence receding in Iran, Pakistan would also view Tehran differently. There is definitely going to be a paradigm shift.

However, there are challenges too! Pakistan, no doubt, considers China a strategic partner but at the same time never wants to antagonise the US. Can it maintain that balance in a world increasingly becoming polarised? Not just that the Arab friends of Pakistan may not be happy either seeing close proximity between Iran and Pakistan. This situation requires statecraft and decisions keeping in view long-term strategic benefits for Pakistan. Can the current setup that is fighting for its own survival take such difficult decisions?

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2255659/india-out-china-in>

US-China Spat and a Changing South Asia |

Editorial

The US-China Cold War is building up just as the South Asian region is undergoing phenomenal changes. One direct impact has been ejection of India from Iran's major strategic projects, especially in and around the Chahbahar Port – which, let's not forget, was meant to rival Gawadar in the long run – at a time when Tehran and Beijing have inked a \$400 billion pact. This provides Pakistan with a rare opportunity to reassert its regional influence but for that it would have to play its cards very carefully.

Washington has no doubt made it a top policy priority to confront China in the last days of President Trump's first term. The closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, which the Chinese called outrageous, is a decisive thrust and it is no surprise that such a move came after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, while in the UK recently, called for a global coalition to confront China. The Chinese, to their credit, realise full well that it is regional groupings that matter most in the present context, since they allow countries to tap into each other's strengths and resources. That is why its deal with Iran, which is also pretty unfairly sidelined by America, makes so much sense. With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and now this pact, the Chinese are at the centre of the biggest projects in the region and all parts of the alliances they build in the process will benefit from them. Beijing is also good friends with Moscow, so its partnerships in the region are already creating a large crescent though should be able to meet its own needs and protect its own interests when it matters.

Pakistan, though as close to China as possible, is still not in any such meaningful regional grouping. One reason is that over the years the government of the day always saw it fit to sit in a camp far, far away simply because it took care of our most basic need – money. But now that the world is changing and India is clearly America's best friend in the region, Pakistan needs to finally settle the question of its own long-term position. And while there is no reason to move away from Washington at all, especially since both still need each other for various reasons, there is now a need to make more reliable regional alliances as well.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/644943/us-china-spat-and-a-changing-south-asia/>