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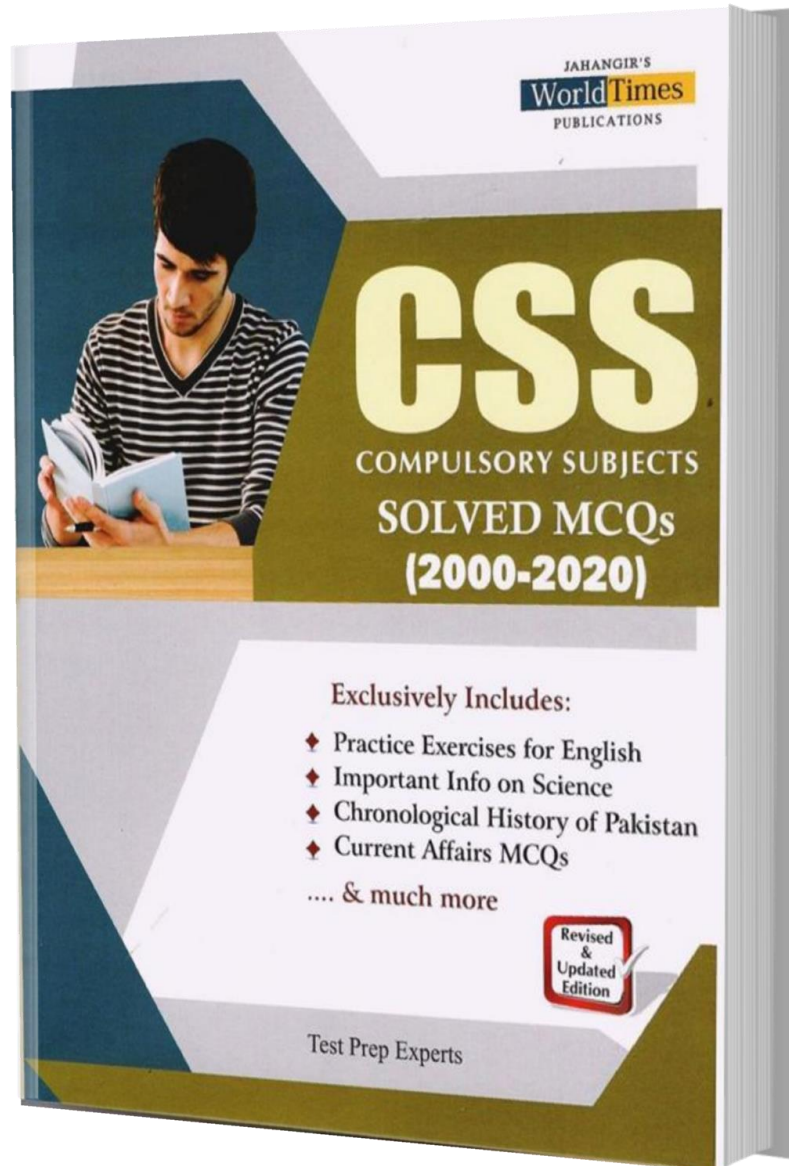
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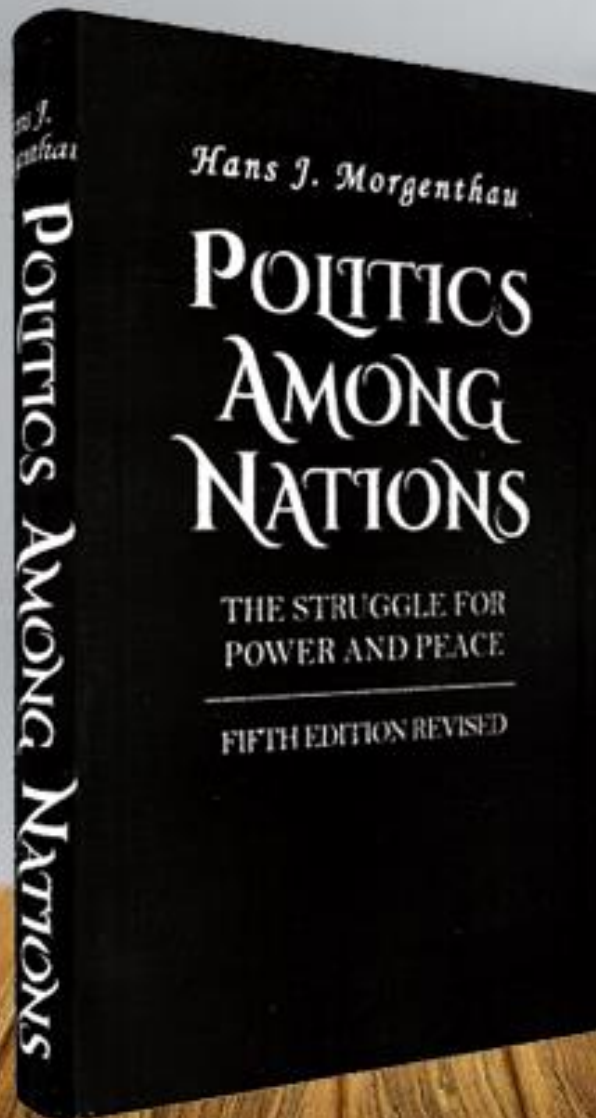
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PAKISTAN

Russian Partnership | Editorial

The arrival of Russian troops in Pakistan on Thursday marks the beginning of the preparations of Druzhba 5, a joint Russian-Pakistani military exercise aimed at sharing expertise on counterterrorism. The two-week long exercise, due to commence on November 8, comes at a time when the US and India seem to enjoy stronger ties—especially after the Basic Exchange Cooperation Agreement (BECA). While a potential message sent out to the international community, Pakistan must utilise this opportunity to its benefit as an alliance with Russia could strengthen its position in the region.

The military exercise includes 70 soldiers from both sides and is being hosted at Tarbela. Not only would it allow for valuable information and tactics to be shared between both the countries but it would also strengthen military cooperation if the need ever arises. Furthermore, given the dire circumstances that the world is being subjected to, the responsibility with which the exercise is being carried out is appreciated—all the participants have been tested for the virus before the official commencement of the event.

Surely, such a partnership will only bolster the position of Pakistan in the region, as well as internationally. It is imperative that we make the most out of this opportunity of friendship, especially after being assigned unwarranted blame by the US and India during the BECA talks. With the backing of China and Russia, we would be in an improved position to fight for our ground and demand justice against Indian aggression.

The better acquainted we are with all the governments around us, the more the opportunities to promote peace and harmony within the region present themselves. Collective effort can ensure that the region prospers and is void of internal conflict in the future.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/07-Nov-2020/russian-partnership>

New realities in IIOJK By Dr Moonis Ahmar

Since August 5, 2019, when India unilaterally ended the special status of Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, opposition parties in Pakistan, particularly the PML-N termed that event equivalent to the “Fall of Kashmir”. Is it true that Pakistan has lost Jammu & Kashmir? How did India manage to absorb J&K particularly its Muslim-majority valley? To what extent is the offensive launched by former supporters of India, namely Mehbooba Mufti and Farooq Abdullah, against ending the special status of occupied J&K a major test case for India? These are the questions which are frequently raised by those who consider the “Fall of Kashmir” an unfortunate and a bitter reality.

Back-to-back steps taken by the Indian government following the August 5 act will give credence to the notion that New Delhi is in no mood to reconsider the step. By October 31, 2019, not only were the rights of permanent residents of J&K abolished but the flag of J&K in the government secretariat building in Srinagar was replaced with the Indian flag. The new domicile laws introduced by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs through an executive order “reserves government jobs in J&K for its ‘domiciles’, which also includes non-locals living in the UT for 15 years and children of central government employees serving here for 10 years. Before the reorganisation of J&K, non-locals were not eligible for jobs in the erstwhile state due to special constitutional safeguards incorporated in the Constitution of India through a presidential order of 1954.”

India’s drive to transform the demography of the Muslim-majority valley of Kashmir got an impetus after August 5 when New Delhi, following the Israeli model of annexing Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank, ventured on establishing settlements under the cover of promoting tourism and investments. Grabbing more than 15,000 acres of land for establishing tourist resorts in the occupied valley is the first step to unleash the process of colonising its lands. The next step will be to identify land to establish Indian settlements composed of Kashmiri pundits who fled the valley following the outbreak of violence in 1990 and were accommodated in refugee camps in Delhi and Jammu. On October 31, there was a complete strike in the valley of Kashmir to protest against the Indian policy to allow non-locals to buy land which was not the case before August 5, 2019. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference in a statement lamented: “A policy of

permanent demographic change is being pushed to snatch our land, destroy our identity and turn us into a minority in our own land.”

India is embarking on a well-calculated plan to turn its age-old dream to ‘Indianise’ J&K, particularly the valley, into a reality. For this purpose, India had been waiting since October 27, 1947 when its forces had occupied Srinagar, and after establishing its control over the majority parts of J&K, staged the drama of giving it special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. It was on August 5, 2019, when the Modi regime — while implementing BJP’s manifesto which pledged to end the special status of J&K — got the bill titled “Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act” passed from the Indian parliament. The real intentions of India got exposed but nothing much was done to prevent New Delhi from crossing the red line and annexing J&K in the Indian Union. The manner in which two union territories composed of Ladakh on the one hand and J&K on the other were put directly under the control of New Delhi, reflected confidence and clarity on the part of the Modi regime to snatch Kashmir once and for all. The “Fall of Kashmir” is now a bitter reality because of India’s short- and long-term plans to fully absorb J&K.

New conditions in J&K after August 5, 2019, reflect two major ground realities. First, almost all Muslim Kashmiris are now against India and want its occupation forces to leave J&K. When Farooq Abdullah, a former chief minister of J&K, expressed his bitterness that J&K shall be willing to join China rather than remain a part of India, he expressed a fundamental reality reflecting hatred against New Delhi. Same is the case with another former chief minister, Mehbooba Mufti, whose Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had formed a government with BJP a couple of years ago. At a press conference in Srinagar a couple of days back, she bluntly stated that she “has no respect for the Indian flag” and unless the special status of J&K was restored by the Indian government, there would be no question of holding a dialogue with the Modi regime and giving respect to the Indian flag. Both Abdullah and Mufti were recently released after their house detention since August 5, 2019, and both leaders despite their past tilt in favour of India demanded that efforts to change the demographic complexion of occupied J&K particularly, the Muslim-majority valley by introducing a new domicile law and settlement plans of non-Muslims must be immediately stopped. But, it is too late for the former pro-Indian Kashmiri leaders to condemn New Delhi for its absorption of J&K and unleashing the reign of terror particularly in the valley since August 5 by enforcing a lockdown, curfew, extrajudicial killings,

arrests and detention of Kashmiri Muslims, particularly the youths. India has managed to neutralise international condemnation and pressure on the repressive measures in J&K. It doesn't care if Kashmiri Muslims hate its occupation because it knows that at the moment there is no threat against its unilateral repeal of J&K's special status.

Second, the reality of Pakistan's failure to prevent India's absorbing of J&K and providing Kashmiri resistance active support tends to further augment New Delhi's confidence in strengthening its control over occupied areas. Last year in October, when the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (J&KLF) announced crossing the Line of Control to express solidarity with their suppressed counterparts in the occupied valley, they were stopped by Prime Minister Imran Khan fearing an Indian retaliation. Since then, there is no indication of any attempt made by J&KLF and other Kashmiri nationalist groups to cross the LoC. Pakistan's drive to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as Pakistan's fifth province is also termed a violation of the UN Security Council resolutions calling for the holding of a plebiscite in the whole of the disputed region, including Gilgit-Baltistan. Absorbing the two northern territories controlled by Pakistan would weaken its age-old stance on J&K and justify India's unilateral abrogation of Article 370. Such a step would also be a violation of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

The weakening of the cause of Kashmiris is also visible because of the domestic political and economic crises in Pakistan. Augmenting the civil-military strife and Imran Khan's single-point agenda of marginalising his political opponents by terming them 'traitors' and 'corrupt' tends to give a wrong message to the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K).

Source:<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2271188/new-realities-in-iiojk>

Interpreting Iqbal's Vision For Pakistan By **Dr Muhammad Khan**

THE most critical thinking Allama Dr Muhammad Iqbal developed during his studies in Europe was the western imperialism in South Asia and elsewhere in Asia and African continents. In his visualization, Iqbal established that, imperialists first destroy the uniqueness of their subservient countries and regions. India was a classic example before Iqbal, where he found the British imperialism working well against the local's culture, religion and identity. Iqbal opines that, in the next phase, the imperialist powers demolish the identity of those countries and then ruled them persistently without any resistance. Besides, Iqbal clearly conceived that, after subjugation of these countries and regions, the imperial powers 'robbed them of their religion, literature, and cultural traditions'. Indeed, Iqbal had the feelings of this type of British imperialism and subjugation of India; therefore he started thinking towards a workable way forward. Since the British imperialism turned into colonialism had totally reversed the pre-1857 order of Sub-continent, thus it was not possible to restore the old order. Under the prevailing hostile British colonial order, Iqbal started thinking on new opportunities and options to come out from the existing British colonialism. Since British East India Company had snatched the power from Muslims therefore, they were the worst exploited class in Subcontinent. Moreover from 1857 to the first quarter of 20th century, the British colonialism had sufficiently promoted and empowered the Hindus community in Subcontinent, who further suppressed the Muslims. For the Muslims of subcontinent the situation was very grim and unfavourable. Besides, the western form of the rule was supportive to majority population therefore, Iqbal could envisioned yet another subjugation of Muslim at the hands of Hindu, if at Britain decides to end its colonialism at some stage.

These ground realities and emerging order in the Indian Subcontinent compelled Iqbal to reconcile his composite Indian nationalism. In fact, along with other senior Muslim leaders of that time, Iqbal was the greatest advocate of united India, free from British colonialism. Upon his return from Europe Iqbal abandoned the "concept of composite Indian nationalism and adopted Muslim Nationalism. He also carved out his views on Islamic universalism. He believed that European concept of nationalism cannot be applied to India." He also believed that, there will be no end to Muslim exploitation under Hindu rule too. After establishment of

All India Muslim League in 1906, there have been many efforts for the reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims at the level of their political forums and even political leadership. Since the Hindu leadership was not ready for any reconciliation and recognition of Muslims of India as a separate nation despite decade of efforts, therefore, Allama Dr Muhammad Iqbal gave the idea of a separate Muslim state. In his Presidential address at 25th Annual Session of All India Muslim League at Allahabad in December 1930 Dr Muhammad Iqbal, envisioned a separate state for the Muslims of India. Thereafter, till 1947 nobody thought of such a breakthrough (Pakistan becoming a reality) in a short span of time. It was the dedication and consistent struggle of our forefather, which gave us a country with immense potentials and excellent human beings.

Unfortunately, we lost half of our motherland in the first twenty-five years of our history. It was result of a deviation from the basic concept of ideology, integration and cohesion, forgetting the golden principle of; unity, faith and discipline. Today, after seven decades of our independence, we still need a national integration and cohesion among the larger Pakistani society for a better and secure future of over 210 million Pakistanis. National integration is the process of achieving harmony, devising a common identity and a national consciousness among the masses and constituent units of a state. It is a psychological and educational process for the development of common feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion. To achieve national integration, the factors like; religion, language, culture, tribes, casts and ethnicity though play significant role, yet need harnessing under a single factor; the nationalism. The creation of Pakistan, though propelled by ideological factor, yet Pakistan has people from other religions, who lived in harmony with the Muslim for decades now. Indeed, people from all religions, casts, creeds, different ethnic backgrounds have worked together for a cohesive society and a harmonious state. Indeed, after its independence in 1947, there has never been a crisis, based on religions or ideologies. The ethnicity at times and indeed misuse of religion by non-state actors did create problems for the state and society of Pakistan. While interpreting the vision of Iqbal for Pakistan, we need lot of foresight and prudence. Iqbal's idea of Pakistan was not limited to achieve a state only, but a state where Golden ideologies of Islam could be experienced. Promotion of national harmony and integration through good governance should be the essence of his vision. The issues like timely provision of justice, education facilities and health facilities are most important to be addressed on priority. Through good governance, these crucial aspects can be tackled, to end the social unrest prevailing in Pakistani society. There is a strong

need to adopt the people's centric approach and a merit based system achieved through competence and justice. Pakistan is the blessing of Allah Almighty therefore, let's respect this blessing. Besides, let's pay homage to our forefathers who conceived the idea of Pakistan and made it a reality for us.

— The writer is Professor of Politics and IR at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/interpreting-iqbals-vision-for-pakistan/>

Five takeaways for Pakistan under Biden's presidency **By Kamran Yousaf**

Former US vice-president and Democrat candidate Joe Biden is on course to win the hotly contested presidential election as these lines are being written. He has broken all records of bagging votes in the US election history. Biden is no novice to US politics. He has been around since 1972. He has served the US Senate for many decades and remained chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Biden served as deputy to president Barack Obama for eight long years. He also has connections with Pakistan. In 2008, when the Obama administration tabled a Kerry-Lugar Bill that sought to triple non-military aid to Pakistan, Biden was co-author of the legislation. There are at least five major takeaways for Pakistan under the Biden's presidency.

1. As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has visited the region quite often, knowing Pakistan and geostrategic complexities quite well. This can work both as an advantage and disadvantage to Pakistan. Democrats traditionally have been strong advocates of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression. Under Biden, there will certainly be more emphasis on these issues. The other factor that can play a major role in shaping Biden's policy towards Pakistan and South Asia is that he is well versed with the region and has even known Pakistani politicians. Unlike Trump, Biden's presidency would certainly bring the State Department and other institutions into the limelight when it comes to policy on South Asia.

2. President Trump and Biden may not have much difference in terms of their policy on Afghanistan. But if we go into details, Biden will — unlike Trump — seek an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan. He will not hasten the troop pullout, something Pakistan and other regional players have advised against. Any hasty withdrawal may potentially trigger another wave of civil war in Afghanistan. Biden in all probability will resist such a scenario.

3. Since his deputy Kamala Harris has already spoken against Modi government's anti-Muslim policies and human rights violations in Kashmir, the US under Biden will be more critical of Indian policies on Kashmir. However, it will not go to the extent of antagonising New Delhi as it will need Indian support

to contain China. Biden, knowing the dynamics of Indo-Pak ties well, may encourage both sides from behind the scenes to re-engage.

4. There is a bipartisan consensus in the US on China. However, Biden may lower the rhetoric and be more predictable. He will rally around the US allies against China. Pakistan is a strategic partner of China and hence has to deal with the fallout of Biden's China policy. But any lowering of tensions between the superpower and the emerging global power will positively impact Pakistan.

5. Biden is keen to revive the Iranian nuclear deal, which Trump scrapped after coming into power. The revival of the deal makes matters easier for Pakistan as increased tensions between Iran and the US only compounded Pakistan's regional problems. Similarly, Biden will likely reset ties with Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia. Observers believe that Saudi rulers won't enjoy the same freedom as they did during Trump's tenure. This may also impact Pakistan.

But before Biden gets down to scramble through all these intricate foreign policy issues, his first job surely is to put things in order at home. Dealing with Covid-19 and avoiding a potential fallout of Trump not conceding defeat will be his top priority. The relationship between Pakistan and the US, nevertheless, remains transactional. Afghanistan will remain the centre stage of their engagement. The challenge for Pakistan is to create other avenues that allow the US to see its relationship beyond the security prism.

Source:<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2271539/five-takeaways-for-pakistan-under-bidens-presidency>

Towards a Constitutional Provincial Status

For G-B By Mehdi Hassan Khan

Gilgit-Baltistan is all set to go to polls on November 15, 2020, to elect the candidates of the 24-member Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) for the next five years. The unprecedented attention that G-B's upcoming election has been receiving from the leadership of the mainstream political parties of the country has tremendously added to the election frenzy in the region. Unsurprisingly though, all political parties going to the ballot in G-B are predominantly resorting to the prospective provisional provincial status for the G-B province, for gaining political mileage in the election. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, during his visit to Gilgit on November 1, 2020, to celebrate the 73rd Independence Day of G-B, also reassured unveiling the details of the provisional provincial status that is to be granted to G-B after the elections.

While it remains to be known as to what exactly the provisional provincial status for G-B may entail, the response of the residents of G-B with respect to the overture is divided where a fairly vast segment of the populace tends to believe that the overture may be more of a political stratagem around elections rather than something that would satiate the longstanding demands for constitutional and political rights of the people of G-B. But what is known for sure is that this trust deficit amongst the residents of G-B stems from a deep sense of political deprivation entrenched in the region over the years. Contrary to the aspirations of the people of G-B — who have been demanding, for decades, a constitutionally backed provincial status for the region that commits to bringing the politically deprived province on a par with the rest of Pakistan in all spheres, including social, political and economic — the area has been administered largely through ad hoc based presidential orders, the latest being the Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018.

Having said that, the Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018 proved, in many ways, to be very consequential for G-B's struggle to find its place in the Constitution of the pure land. First, this order caused the G-B's constitutional conundrum to be pitched to the highest level of Pakistan's judicature as it was challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan when it was annulled by the Supreme Appellate Court, the apex court of G-B. The Supreme Court of Pakistan, in its landmark

decision dated January 17, 2019, in the case, restored the Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018 and directed the federal government to treat the residents of the region the same way as the citizens of any other part of the country. This verdict from the Supreme Court of Pakistan serves as a strong legal base for any prospective act of parliament including constitutional amendments aimed at granting political and constitutional rights to G-B.

Secondly, by maintaining the case, the apex court ruled for the first time in the judicial history of Pakistan that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Pakistan extends to G-B as well. The Supreme Court of Pakistan, in its verdict, further observed that it was strongly committed to serving the rights and liberties of all the people, and those of the people of G-B made no exception for the court.

Thirdly, the Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018, also empowered the GBLA by transferring several important subjects of legislation including tourism, hydropower and minerals from the G-B Council which is represented by non-elected members.

It is high time for the federal government to mull over pragmatically addressing G-B's constitutional enigma, through an act of parliament or constitutional amendment, so that the decades-old disenfranchisement of the people of G-B comes to an end. The deep sense of political deprivation that prevails amongst the residents of G-B can be fairly gauged from the phrase "Sar Zameen e Bai Aayeen (the land without a constitution)" which the people of G-B usually use to refer to the constitutional enigma the region faces. G-B represents the area of Pakistan which liberated itself from the Dogra rule in 1947 through an armed struggle and acceded unconditionally to Pakistan with aspirations to become an integral part of the country. Yet it still continues to struggle in the constitutional quagmire even after more than 73 years of its independence.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 10th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2271667/towards-a-constitutional-provincial-status-for-g-b>

The Future of the Pakistan-US Relationship **is as Much in Pakistan's Hands as in** **America's By Touqir Hussain**

WHAT would a Biden presidency mean for US-Pakistan relations? That would depend on several factors, unknown and known. The main unknown would be the US foreign policy to emerge from the wreck left behind by Donald Trump.

Of particular concern to Pakistan would be Washington's China policy. To anticipate this policy, we need to set aside the hype of a new 'Cold War' and the so-called 'Thucydides Trap', referring to the tendency of an emerging power and an existing power to go to war as highlighted by an ancient Greek historian. Historical analogies are always half true, and often we end up looking at the wrong half.

The reality is the US and China relationship is complex and multidimensional. The two countries are geopolitical rivals. And China has become a domestic political issue in the US. It is seen as taking away jobs and factories from working-class Americans and posing a challenge to US technological superiority and economic pre-eminence. Yet the economies of the two countries are uniquely intertwined and interdependent, and their cooperation is essential to solving transnational issues.

Geopolitics, politics and economic nationalism were thus in conflict with geoeconomics and global governance. Trump found it expedient to define China solely in terms of politics casting it as an adversary. That must change. Those who are worried that Washington will push Pakistan to be either with China or the US should think again.

The US knows that engagement with Pakistan is necessary.

Biden will define China not as an enemy but a rival with whom the US has to find a way of competing without confrontation. Recently on CBS, he said he did not see China as a threat. At the same time, Biden will be tough on Russia. Being a foreign policy traditionalist, he cannot have hostile relations with both Russia and

China. With debt, deficits and job losses caused by the Covid-19 crisis, the need for US economic cooperation with China, a major engine of global growth, will remain. Biden's focus will be domestic and that will determine foreign policy priorities.

Asking Pakistan to choose between China and the US would only tighten the Pakistan-China embrace. Even Washington's closest allies have not been presented with this stark choice. It is not just America; China too is pivoting to Asia, and to the Middle East, and Pakistan is where the two pivots face off. Pakistan cannot be left entirely dependent on China. The truth is that US-India relations alone can neither define US-Pakistan relations nor address all of America's challenges in the region. Washington may want Pakistan to be a weak ally of China but capable enough of serving American purposes.

Here, a reference to the history of US-Pakistan relations is relevant. Historically, US-Pakistan relations were a factor of one or two issues. Washington would reward Pakistan for help on what they agreed on, and punish it over what they disagreed on once Pakistan had served its purpose. The flaws of this relationship were fully exposed in the post-9/11 engagement.

Given the multiplicity of issues, the extended duration of the engagement, and the fact that the points of agreement and disagreement could not be disentangled, neither could the reward be held back nor the punishment postponed. The relationship became both conflicted and cooperative as Pakistan was both a facilitator and an obstacle to US objectives, and a scapegoat for the failure of American policies especially in Afghanistan.

Neither that unique bleak moment in the history of the relationship nor its old failed model will likely be repeated. There are new realities now — post-US withdrawal Afghanistan, developments within India, India's provocations vis-à-vis China and its aggressiveness to-wards Pakistan, and many regional and global transitions.

Washington needs Pakistan's help in the unresolved crisis of Afghanistan. The US is also concerned about the safety of Pakistan's nuclear assets, and would like Islamabad to take stronger action against jihadists. The US is interested in the Kashmir dispute but will not help solve it. It is not the dispute Washington has

been always concerned about, but the crisis it might generate. Biden may be concerned about human rights too.

Biden, the original architect of the Kerry-Lugar bill, knows that all this calls for engagement with Pakistan within a framework of cooperation where convergence and divergence of policies are reconciled and the two countries' core interests safeguarded to support a sustainable long-term relationship.

The period when relationships were defined by aid is over. However, an enhanced economic partnership is possible depending on Pakistan's economy. The future of the bilateral relationship is thus as much in Pakistan's hands as in America's.

The writer, a former ambassador, is adjunct professor at Georgetown University and Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the National University of Singapore.

Published in Dawn, November 10th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1589600/post-trump-ties>

Shifting Foreign Policy By Riaz Khokhar

Pakistan has long been exploring ways to spotlight its geostrategic significance for the US and other Western powers for cooperation in areas beyond Afghanistan.

For about at least two decades, Pakistan has also tried hard to secure its western frontiers for enhancing economic interconnectivity with Central Asia. But the outcome has been less sanguine. And Central Asian Republics (CARs) also don't rely on Pakistani ports for their trade with the Indo-Pacific countries.

While Pakistan keeps working on addressing those challenges, why doesn't it act differently and reorient its foreign policy toward the Indo-Pacific region?

Pakistan tried doing that in 2003, when it announced the Vision East Asia and a year later joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF). It had already been the sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN since 1993. Pakistani governments of the early 2000s kept pushing on to become a full dialogue partner, but progress on that front has marked time since the change of government in 2008-09.

Now, Pakistani officials refer to Vision East Asia only when they meet ASEAN diplomats and heads of states or commemorate any of the ASEAN national days in Islamabad. Besides, Pakistan's engagement with the Indo-Pacific countries has remained incoherent, country-specific, and limited to personalities – as in the case of Malaysia's former premier.

Pakistan needs perforce to act east so as to, more than anything else, enhance its strategic, military, economic, and diplomatic stature in world politics. Discourse and perception matter as much in the digitalized world politics as does reality.

This doesn't mean Pakistani officials go to ASEAN countries and start demanding for a full dialogue partner status or a membership in the ASEAN Regional Cooperation for Economic Partnership (RCEP). These should be the goalposts on the journey ahead not the means. The means to reach the destination of exalted global stature is promoting Pakistan's niche, or the

universal selling propositions (USPs), in terms of its counterterrorism operational success, globally recognized Pakistan Navy's exceptional maritime role and Pakistani Army's contribution to the UN Peacekeeping force, the par-excellence military training and discipline, and high-quality defence hardware.

Like they say in cricket, just do the basics right. Stay on the crease, take your time, and you will attain the ultimate objective.

The first thing the government needs to do is organize diplomatic visits of the prime minister, the foreign minister, and the army and naval chiefs to the Indo-Pacific countries: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Maldives, Brunei, Bhutan, Nepal, and Laos. These visits should be done in a coordinated and coherent fashion, with a certain global media coverage.

The second is institutional links and agreements. If Britain, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia, and the US can sign defence logistics exchange agreements with India, why not with Pakistan? China is not the only factor in everyone's calculus. Nor should Pakistan consider India as a focus of these engagements. There are innumerable maritime issues that Pakistan has got strategic convergence with these countries.

For instance, Pakistan advocates the values of freedom and openness of navigation, maritime security, anti-piracy, humanitarian and disaster-relief operations, and counterterrorism in the Indo-Pacific. Pakistan Navy already performs these activities as part of the multilateral coalition, called the Combined Maritime Task Force, and an independent Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP).

Reconstructing its defence and maritime discourse on these lines may help it acquire the coveted advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance technologies and access to the geospatial data. Pakistan's army and navy need to accelerate their defence and maritime diplomacy and invest in the promotion of their activities and achievements in local and global media. The pith and substance of the argument is that the political optics of Pakistan's defence and naval logistics exchange agreements with countries like Japan and Australia

would carry an enormous diplomatic impact. Discourse and perception matter as much in digital geopolitics as does reality.

Third comes economic diplomacy. In 2019, the World Bank rated Pakistan among the top ten business climate improvers, as the country progressed 28 points upwards in rank to 108 out of 190 economies. The Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO) Survey Report in 2019 forecast the largest operating profit of over 68 percent for Japanese companies working in Pakistan, compared with 54 percent in India and 44 percent in Bangladesh. Over 60 percent of the Japanese companies expected business expansion over the next couple of years in India, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Myanmar, respectively.

Pakistan needs to build on the business confidence of the existing Japanese companies and attract investments not only from Japan but other Indo-Pacific countries also.

Japan has a program of Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (PQI). Pakistan needs to facilitate the Japanese investments under the PQI for improvement of the distribution and logistics network, especially one that upgrades the productive efficiency of the roads connecting Pakistani ports to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Enabling a less costly and less time-consuming transit route for the CARs and the Indo-Pacific countries would be a gigantic achievement.

Moreover, orchestrate efforts toward mitigating the burgeoning demographic pressure within and potentially the returning labour force from the Middle East, by investing in their skill development and exporting them to Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, and other Indo-Pacific countries, exploiting the existing labour export agreements or forging new ones with them. These agreements will also help earn foreign exchange reserves and reduce the account deficit.

Pakistani embassies, the Foreign Office, and the commerce ministry need to increase inter-departmental coordination and focus on internationalization of the local industries to make them export-oriented, and foster productivity and international competitiveness.

All told, Pakistan needs to act fast and reorient the country's foreign policy toward the Indo-Pacific and enhance not just economic development and inter-regional connectivity, but also its diplomatic and military heft globally.

The writer is a research associate at the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad.

Twitter: @Riaz1Khokhar

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/738157-shifting-foreign-policy>

Pakistan Wins International Support By

Maleeha Hashmey

The longstanding Pak-India conflict is not new to the world, nor is the fact that India has been making full use of proxy warriors and miscreants for decades, to destabilize Pakistan. What is new is that Pakistan finally decided to come out with a loud and clear declaration of calculated and precise evidence-based factual details on how, when, where and what exactly India has been cooking to not only puncture the peace and stability in Pakistan, but also hurt the country economically.

In a joint press conference, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Official Spokesperson of Pakistan's Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar presented a comprehensive dossier underlining the wicked role of India in establishing consortium of banned terrorist outfits, using its own land and partially Afghanistan, to target Pakistan.

The dossier contained irrefutable evidence of direct Indian involvement in the terrorist activities that took place in Pakistan over the last two decades, involving the celebratory event in Indian Consulate, Jalalabad, after APS Peshawar attack left every citizen of Pakistan and abroad mourning.

An anti-CPEC terror cell being operated by RAW – India's premier intelligence agency since 2015, with funding worth \$500 Million (PKR 80 Billion), was also mentioned. The fact that the anti-CPEC terror cell has been functioning under the direct supervision of Indian PM – Modi, and is tasked to disrupt CPEC projects, turned many heads.

The international media picked up Pakistan's bombshell presser and fairly voiced Pakistan's concerns against unjustified Indian aggression against innocent citizens of Pakistan, using terror financing and Afghan soil.

"Reuters sent India's foreign ministry a statement from the media wing of Pakistan's military detailing the allegations but it did not respond to request for comment. Qureshi said Pakistan is sending its evidence to the United Nations demanding India be censured, warning that "without international intervention it is

difficult to guarantee peace in nuclear South Asia,” a region where both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons” – writes Bloomberg on the subject.

The Indian diplomatic missions in Afghanistan have been traced organizing, directing, funding, equipping and planning to execute nefarious terror activities in Pakistan. The dossier shared by the Pakistani officials comprised of the audio messages revealing the conversation between the Indian officers and the miscreants.

This well-timed move by Pakistan not only blew away decades old Indian propaganda regarding Balochistan, aimed at equating the Indian atrocities in Kashmir with the situation (led by Indian terror financing) in Balochistan, but also greatly revived Pakistan’s credibility worldwide.

Pakistan has finally come out of the “tried, tested and failed” policy of appeasement. PTI-led Imran Khan Govt. has been prioritizing the Foreign policy sphere like it should have been from the very beginning. Had it been the case since 2001, Pakistan would not have had \$126 Billion economic loss, countless lost economic opportunities and a death toll of over 32000, involving 23000 civilian casualties and 9000 lives lost out of our law enforcement spectrum.

But thankfully, the world is successfully connecting the dots now, penning down a spade a spade.

“Pakistan’s Foreign Minister and Army said they had obtained documents that showed New Delhi had met with and funded members of the Pakistani Taliban, as well as Baloch insurgent groups from the southern province of Balochistan who have claimed responsibility for attacks on Chinese interests as part of an effort to sabotage China’s \$65 billion Belt and Road investment plan in Pakistan.” – writes Arab News on the matter.

I believe that this pace should be kept up by Pakistan, if not accelerated and the case must be put up with the United Nations sooner than soon, to put an end to Indian aggression against Pakistan using banned terror outfits, like Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Allah Nazar’s Baloch Liberation Army (a famous Baloch Insurgent Separatist group).

It is “now or never” sort of situation that we have at hand now. The whole world is now seeing through the filthy Indian propoganda peddled against China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The magnanimous potential that CPEC carries for the economic uplift of Pakistan, beginning with Balochistan is a nightmare for our rival neighbour. It pains them to imagine how promptly they will run out of the gullible young Baloch population, once the province gets economically empowered.

This is the time for all socio-political segments of Pakistan to unite and turn into a force to be reckoned with. The Opposition parties undermining the significance of this master stroke by the civilian and military leadership in the “super over” as they say in Cricket, will only please the enemy, who stands fully exposed in front of the whole world. Never too late to unite for a purpose that our future generations will thank us for. Here is to better times ahead, Insha Allah. Pakistan Zindabad!

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/16-Nov-2020/pakistan-wins-international-support>

Rebranding Pakistan's Image By Ibn Abdul Razzaq

PAKISTAN has sustained and survived the brunt of various challenging governments whether democracy or an army rule; direct or indirect. We are in the seventy third year of independence but woefully failed to flourish the state and society. Each passing year brings a fresh experience of grief filled with lamented episodes of spite. Governments in the past had dragged this state in the vicious circle of debts and deficits by practising their flawed policies. As a result, the country was on the brink of political and constitutional crisis for long. The incumbent federal government under the command and supervision of the respected Prime Minister Imran Khan is experiencing this heat of piled up insolvency. Enough with the fantasy of words as it is high time to mould the status quo into benevolence. Without a doubt, it is a call of action by all the institutions and stakeholders involved with the present government to pay serious heed in understanding the severity of responsibility.

Pakistan is having no space for further tests and experiments or else it will label herself as a rogue state. Starting with the essence of democracy, a system of governance which is based on the will of the governed must ensure all fundamental rights and liberties for the people. It shouldn't be the "art of possible" alone but imbued with certain mechanism which fosters the most universal ruling passion of mankind of guaranteeing people's weal and welfare. Undoubtedly, democracy forever teases us with contrast between its ideas and reality and between its heroic possibilities and sorry achievements. The present scenario of the government is fabulous in its theory but invariably miserable in practicality. Although his majesty Imran Khan and his cabinet ministers are striving from the scratch in surfacing the filth of the previous governments but the governance must be seen by every individual which is real crux of democracy. The federal government has to work hard in grappling the menace of below mentioned domains by exploring such heroic possibilities.

The politicians sitting in Parliament have to understand their foremost responsibility of charting down pro-poor policies in order to provide certain aggregate of relief to the most oppressed ones in the society. The role of opposition is to criticize the mindless policies of the government by addressing

the agenda. Political parties in the opposition have to adopt constructive discourse of critique by curtailing the blame game of barbing words. Constitutional supremacy is the only remedy of prevailing polarized politics in the country. It is essential for the state to be run by mutual cooperation over the bills and drafts of policies in Parliament than by an ordinance or edict. Political will of working as a public servant must be restored in both the houses and it can only be done by practising a promising atmosphere of confabulation. The political workers have to transform themselves into statesmen as it is rightly said by James Freeman “A politician thinks of the next election, a statesman of the next generation”. The incumbent government must set this trend by leaving a watermark of leadership upon which the future generations can move ahead raising the green flag high. A nation can do wonders in all walks of life if ruled with good governance and provided an economic security. One cannot vanquish other and declare victory as both traits are part and parcel of the state and the relationship must be viewed as not a zero-sum game. Pakistan has been crippling and crawling in the economic sphere since its inception.

The government has played its part effectively in this domain by overcoming the current account deficit. Although Pakistan is still having an inflated budget but the efforts done by the federal government is applaudable. The country’s exports are now gradually improving along with the halt of irrelevant imports. Despite shattered economy, Pakistan has aggressively countered the recent hit of novel Covid-19. In this regard, Imran Khan’s vision of stabilizing the all ready prevailed economic distress has been appreciated internationally. Despite less productive mechanism, the country’s accountability bureau has been successful in diminishing the grand corruption. However, the government has to toil incessantly when it comes to economic security. The most essential among all is the proper implementation of workable economic policy armored with rigorous accountability mechanisms.

Standing and functioning institutions are the symbol of economic prosperity of any nation. Unfortunately, Pakistan is encompassed by defunct and loss making firms due to politicization of institutions. It is essential for a country to grow domestically strong in order to achieve economic relief by retooling state enterprises. It is high time to launch key performance indicators in the industrial milieu by gauging the parameters of regulation and growth. Public-Private Partnership should be promoted in the country’s national fabric as it will assist the government to achieve its economic aims. In a nutshell, Pakistan has to

launch the Quaid's Vision in order to attain a glorified standing in the comity of nations. The incumbent leadership needs to adopt a comprehensive approach to employ the above mentioned measures i.e. retooling institutions, revitalizing political maturity to fortify remarkable governance and economic wellbeing of the state and society. Long Live Pakistan!!

—The writer is a concerned citizen who is an engineer by profession, having a research-based knowledge and interest in the polity of Pakistan.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/rebranding-pakistans-image/>

Fighting With Diplomacy | Editorial

If India thought that it could once again skirt away the recent allegations of state-sponsored terrorism alleged against it, with evidence attached, it thought wrong. Pakistan has decided to take the fight against India diplomatically—two days after Pakistan presented incriminating proof of Indian involvement in terrorism in its territory, Pakistan’s foreign secretary briefed the envoys of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) about “the dossier”.

The dossier contains some damning information for India. The dossier showed that the Indian intelligence agencies were aiding banned outfits that are against Pakistan, showing that India planned to “upscale terrorist activities in Pakistan” in the coming months, with there being at least four meetings between Indian intelligence officials and these banned terrorist outfits in which they had decided to target big cities. There are a number of eye-raising allegations in the dossier, naming certain attacks that occurred in Pakistan with alleged Indian backing, and stating that India was supplying weapons, ammunition and IEDs to terrorists as well.

It is good for Pakistan to act quickly—the Western media had not picked up the news of the dossier yet, and taking the issue to the UNSC will ensure that more attention will be drawn to it. Pakistan seems sure of the assertions it has made in the dossier—what is needed of the world is the right spotlight on this issue, which can best highlight the transgressions.

Will the world take action? The allegations in the dossier violate several UNSC resolutions, particularly Resolution 1373 which combats the financing of terrorism. The world has seen a sudden upscale in terrorist activities—in Afghanistan, Pakistan and near the region. The evidence shows that India has had some part or at least interest behind these terrorist attacks. A rise in terrorism anywhere is a rise in terrorism everywhere—these are delicate times for the region, with the UN and the US having an interest in there being less volatility near the Afghanistan region. As long as Pakistan keeps stressing on the evidence it has, the UN will have to take action against the international laws India has been freely violating.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/18-Nov-2020/fighting-with-diplomacy>

Pak-Afghan at cusp of New Era By Reema Shaukat

PM Imran Khan on 20 November 2020 paid a visit to Kabul, Afghanistan on the invitation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Since the Afghan peace process is on, we have seen how windows of opportunities are opening for Afghanistan rehabilitation and future prospects. This was the first official visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Afghanistan since his assumption of office in August 2018. Definitely this visit is made at a crucial juncture when recently US elections were held and the US selected its new President for coming years. Surely it is before time to say what will be the policy of Joe Biden (President-elect) but considering the situation of past decades of US troops in Afghanistan and announcement of withdrawal of US and allied forces from Afghanistan shows US want to leave Afghanistan, which it made battleground in order to find conclusion to its announced war against terrorism. Not only Afghanistan but Pakistan paid an equal price for being victim of this terrorism. Pakistan with its brave and valiant defence forces particularly Pakistan Army fought this war against terrorism in an exemplary manner and world today acknowledges its efforts for restoration of peace. Pakistan has always supported efforts for peace in Afghanistan and this visit is pertinent at the moment when the intra-Afghan dialogue hosted by Qatar is on though with slow pace but positive momentum engaging all stakeholders. Pakistan has played a key part in brokering the ongoing peace process that helped in starting a formal dialogue between Afghan Taliban and the government in Doha on the 12th of September this year.

During his one-day visit to Afghanistan, PM Imran Khan reiterated Pakistan's all-out support for peace and stability in Afghanistan. PM said he had chosen this moment to visit Kabul to assure the Afghan government that "Pakistan will do every-thing, whatever is possible, we will do to help reduce this violence and in fact move towards a ceasefire". Afghan President Ashraf Ghani after the meeting commented that we have come to an understanding that a shared vision regarding cooperation is not only essential for relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but a harbinger of regional cooperation and connectivity. Both the leaders discussed ways to further deepening the fraternal bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Afghan peace process and regional economic development and connectivity. President Ghani and PM Imran Khan

also agreed to strengthen bilateral relations as the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan were linked through immutable bonds of history, faith, culture, kinship, values and traditions. The Pakistani Premier expressed confidence that his visit would help foster a stronger and multi-dimensional relationship between the two brotherly countries.

Earlier Pakistan-Afghanistan relations that were often marked by trust-deficit and hostility have seen remarkable improvement in Ashraf Ghani's era. In order to boost ties, one must not forget that both countries share strong ideological and cultural affinities that can be explored for better future ties. Whatever is happening on the political front, one channel which can and should always remain active is the domain of public diplomacy. People-to-people contact is a way to keep moving things forward in a positive direction beyond political happenings. Though sometimes certain initiatives appear as stalemate due to political reasons or foreign policy goals between any of the country, yet effective lobbying is a tool to bridge such gap. Social Sciences defined "public diplomacy as the conduct of international relations by governments through public communications media and through dealings with a wide range of non-governmental entities (political parties, corporations, trade associations, labour unions, educational institutions, religious organizations, ethnic groups and so on including influential individuals) for the purpose of influencing the political opinions". Public diplomacy seeks to promote national interest by using different channels of communication between masses. In case of enhancing public diplomacy between Pakistan and Afghanistan, many ventures are already in progress particularly in trade and commerce, education and health sectors. Pakistan is providing scholarships to a large number of young students from Afghanistan for higher education. Likewise a number of patients from Afghanistan are provided with health facilities often free of cost. Pakistan PM in his recent visit to Afghanistan expressed his interest in exploring sports ventures and activities between Pakistan and Afghanistan and particularly cricket diplomacy can be another reason to foster thriving ties in the playgrounds. Similarly mutual media ventures, production of films and dramas, joint web TV, media exchange programs can play a pivotal role in promoting better relations through art and culture. Culinary and food festivals on the food specialties of different provinces from both sides can enrich people's taste and another reason to promote the tourism industry.

In this regard, Pak-Afghan Youth Forum (PAYF) is a civil society initiative in the realm of public diplomacy which from time to time is taking different steps to fortify relations between the two countries. One such goodwill cause was a three-day media workshop which was held a few weeks back in Islamabad and journalists from both sides participated in it. It gave the audience and participants both a clear picture as to where they need to work hard and bridge the gap while addressing loop-holes. Students and youths, being the future of any country, can play positive and concrete role in mending Pak-Afghan relations as they are the generation which has grown amid war against terrorism and knows the high value of peace. So in the domain of public policy engaging asset of youth and addressing issues can help to have more fruitful relations in future and forums like PAYF can play a role of facilitator among common people. Overall, in the past few months one can observe optimistic impetus from both Pakistan and Afghanistan for better relations that are deeper than known history, higher than known heavens and closer than known relatives.

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

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pak-afghan-at-cusp-of-new-era/>

Pak-US Relations and the Indian Factor By

Durdana Najam

The relations between Pakistan and the US have remained enigmatic with the result that people call it a relationship of convenience. Pakistan accuses the US of changing sides after having used it for its objectives. The underlying reason for the lack of understanding and trust between the two countries in spite of having come closer on different occasions through different alliances and security agreements has been the absence of a shared vision in any issue both the countries joined hands to pursue. There was a relative congruence during the war against the Soviets from 1979-1989, but looking deeper, even that appears to have been used by each party to accelerate its own security agenda rather than a united common cause. As the political scientist, GW Choudhry put it, "The United States and Pakistan were moving in the same direction for different reasons. The US was guided by its global policy of containing international communism, and Pakistan was motivated by problem of national security and defence." This 'asymmetrical diplomacy' remained at the heart of both the nation's negotiating pattern giving rise to mistrust at different points in time.

Pakistan has always accused the US of not understanding its regional interests and demanding policies that would rather make things difficult for Pakistan. It has been this gap that led Pakistan to fork into a different path while ostensibly keeping to the common cause with the US. The problem had been the absence of a sense of value to remain engaged. Experts believe that Pakistan had been used as a pawn by the US to achieve its external goals, and for Pakistan, it was India that it needed the US for.

Pakistan inherited a large army with meagre resources on the partition with India. It needed US support to modernise and equip its army and arsenals that could be used to fight with the Indians when needed. Pakistan chose an anti-communist narrative to forge a common interest with the US. Ayub Khan had assumed that the military support Pakistan received from the US could be used against India without causing a major breach. In his memoir, he acknowledged: "The objectives that the Western powers wanted the Baghdad Pact to serve were quite different from the objectives we had in mind. Pakistan had never made any

secret of [its] intentions or [its] interests and the US knew that Pakistan would use its new arms against its eastern neighbour.”

According to Vali Nasr, the Iranian-American academic and author, “Many observers think that Pakistan’s regional interest from the US are so far removed from those of the United States that no degree of aid and friendship can bridge the gap, making a collapse in the relationship inevitable all along.” American ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson wrote in one of her cables that money alone would not solve the problem of Taliban and Al Qaeda operating in Pakistan. Pakistan’s Afghan policies stem from its deep-seated fear about her regional standing vis-à-vis India and Iran, the two main contenders among many in Afghanistan. She further wrote: “The Pakistan establishment, as we saw in 1998, with the nuclear test, does not view assistance — even sizable assistance to their own entities — as a trade-off for national security.”

Pakistan’s inability to trust the US emanates from the larger insecurity Pakistan has suffered from since its birth in 1947. India’s ‘plot’ to undo Pakistan or make it a vassal state has been Pakistan’s greatest fear so far. This fear originates from the role India had played in the secession of East Pakistan. It was precisely India that prompted Pakistan to seek a large outside ‘balancer’. According to Ayub Khan, “The crux of the problem from the very beginning was the Indian attitude of hostility towards us: we had to look for allies to secure our position.”

Since the US has been unable to comprehend Pakistan’s geopolitical situation and the problems emanating from having a much larger and hostile India, Pakistan induced a sense of obligation in the minds of the Americans to do away with the power disparity with India. The US did assist Pakistan in this regard, but not when it was needed the most — in the 1971 war. Interpreted as a betrayal, Pakistan learned the lesson that it could never trust or depend on the US. It was a turning point for Pakistan and the beginning of its relations with China.

The 1971 war with India and the resultant breakup of Pakistan affected South Asia’s political dynamics in three ways: 1) India emerged as the leading or dominant power of the region; 2) Pakistan’s insecurity towards India intensified leading to the idea of ‘Strategic Depth’, and 3) ‘fear of Hindu India’ drifted Pakistan towards the policy of Islamisation. The idea behind the so-called Strategic Depth had been: 1) to offset India’s influence in Afghanistan by installing there a Pakistan-friendly government; 2) by replacing Pashtun

nationalist and separatist sentiment with Islamism; 3) by training and preserving the ideological non-state actors for Pakistan's regional policy objective and 4) by keeping the Durand Line contested.

To reinforce Pakistan's security perception, the US-India relations came full circle with the return of the Republican government of George W Bush in 2001. The US took a 'less absolutist' view of New Delhi's nuclear aspirations. The Republicans described India as "one of the largest democracies of the twenty-first century", and proclaimed that the Bush administration would be "more sensitive to Indian security concerns, and more willing to accommodate India's own aspirations to be a great power".

As the war on terrorism broke out, India found a golden opportunity to heighten its security concerns against Pakistan and flaunt it as a 'rogue' country sponsoring terrorism in Indian occupied Kashmir. It had almost become a custom with many countries to link their militants with Al Qaeda and become recipients of the many benefits it brings. Burma did it with the Rohingya, persecuted and crushed them as the "Taliban". India was no exception. It was quick to link Kashmir, the flashpoint of Pakistan-India rivalry, with the War on Terror and achieved several important military, political, economic and nuclear agreements with the US. It also helped India put the Kashmir issue into the deep freezer.

The war against terror had made Kabul the 'new Kashmir' — a battleground for India-Pakistan rivalry; but choosing to ignore this strategic change, the US obsessed with capturing Osama bin Laden, made a major mistake. By 2005-06, Musharraf was accusing Karzai of giving access to Indian agents of Pakistan's western borders and blamed India's RAW for funding the Baloch tribes in Balochistan. Many senior Pakistani military officials noted that the aim was to "de-nuclearise", "de-radicalise" and de-Islamise" Pakistan. To achieve this purpose, they had joined hands. The difference between the two is: "The Americans act out of 'stupidity', as its actions have been counterproductive to its interests. Indians, on the other hand, have promoted their interests 'cunningly'. Knowing exactly what they are doing."

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Pakistan, China, Iran Geostrategic Cooperation By Prof Abdul Shakoor Shah

THE three regional giants, Pakistan, China and Iran with the three regional zones, South Asia, East Asia and the Middle East, have a pivotal role to play for trilateral cooperation. Iran, with its strategic and security sway in the Middle East duo with copious natural resources and ancient historic and cultural ties with Central Asian States makes it a superb regional power. China's economic boost, its veto power, global influence and connectivity inventiveness makes it the next world power. Pakistan the first Islamic nuclear power with its extensive experience of tackling uneven situations, emerging regional hub both in terms of economics and defence, its intimate history of relations and its geopolitical regional vitality makes it centre for trio cooperation. The trio is geographically, geopolitically and eco-strategically located in three extremely paramount global regions. Their cultural assortment, natural reserves, aqua routes, geography and conflicts affect global affairs worldwide. The overlapping strategic and security issues of Pak-China-Iran can easily be settled down through their trilateral cooperation. Afghan issue is the utmost one for all regional and international stakeholders.

A peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of both regional states and intruders. Pakistan has suffered a lot due to the turbulent Afghan affair. Chinese and Iranian security and economic concerns are also tied to Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran had earlier not been on the same page for Afghan solution as Pakistan was pro-Taliban and Iran was pro-Northern Alliance. China has high stakes in Afghanistan as it aspires to connect it to its grand initiative of Belt and Road (BRI). China is desirous of peace and stability in Afghanistan as it is looking for its smooth access to Central Asian States. For China, Afghanistan's instability and turmoil may spill over Xinjiang from South to Central Asia. Hence the trio has to play their significant role for stable and peaceful Afghanistan oblivious of the past strategies. The US presence in Afghanistan is not in the interest of three of them and China and Iran have always been opposing external intruders in Afghanistan.

The US stay in Afghanistan and ties with India have disturbed peace and balance of power in Asia. So, Pakistan, China and Iran are bound to get ahead on

trilateral cooperation for their mutual interests. Pakistan has played its pivotal role for the US-Taliban peace agreement. Pak-Russian military exercises have paved the way for Russian involvement in regional cooperation as Trump's South Asian policy has flocked the regional countries together. India is trying its utmost to instigate terrorist activities in Afghanistan for the US prolonged stay in the region for her own vested defensive interests. Trump's Indian inclination and announcement of Indian enhanced role in Afghanistan has cautioned Pakistan, China and Iran about future regional strategy. The second problem is Indian factor which always has hegemonic designs. The Indian imperialistic dreams have pushed it in several regional disputes and intense relations with its neighbouring States. The historic and long Indian rivalry with Pak-China is actually the tussle for regional supremacy. India-China disputes are being poked by external factors and same is the case with Pak-India Kashmir issue. The US wants to get more than expected advantage out of the possible war between the two rivals Pak-India or China-India. In both cases the US will be able to weaken China. The US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2005 and some latest advancements are the clear indications for China-Iran-Pakistan to move forward collectively to avert the scenario. The US is tapping India against Pakistan and China by equipping it with the latest defence technology.

The US-India ties are threatening CPEC, therefore the trio-cooperation has become a need of the hour. Although India-Iran ties are not as much tense compared to Pakistan and China, yet the US might use India and Israel against Iran for her interests. Many of Iran-Indian agreements are still nothing more than paperwork, however, the US compelled India to drop out of the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project. Pakistan, China-Iran easily comprehends that the US South Asia policy has always been favouring India which is threatening their interests and regional balance of power as well as regional peace and security. It is essential for Pak-China-Iran to align themselves with one another to stop the US yolk of influence favouring India and the Indian dreams of sole regional supremacy. The rest of the Asian states are neither economically stalwart nor from a defence point of view. They can easily be munched by the US-Indian pressure of supporting them. Pakistan-China-Iran trio is the sole resistance to the US involvement in South Asia for energizing Indian as one state show. India has always been bullying the smaller South Asia States which are now aligning with China on Indian expense. In view of the US-Iran tense relations, India will prefer the US instead of Iran, so it is time for Iran to realign itself with Pakistan and China.

—The writer is Prof in English and freelance columnist, based in Lahore, Pakistan.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-china-iran-geostrategic-cooperation/>

Pakistan's Peaceful Uses Of Nuclear Energy

– OpEd By Sher Bano

The development of Pakistan's nuclear program in the early '50s was primarily meant for peaceful purposes. Since then, Pakistan has been using nuclear technology for the socio-economic development and betterment of society. In this regard, over the years, sufficient human resources and infrastructure have been developed in compliance with the international practices of nuclear safety and security and regulatory control. This is further evident from the fact that Pakistan has achieved significant success in utilizing nuclear technology in public spheres ranging from; energy, agriculture, health, and industry. However, unfortunately, the international community, specifically the West is quite reluctant to acknowledge Pakistan's success in peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Furthermore, Pakistan has been facing discrimination from the international community at various international forums related to the use of nuclear technology. Despite this, Pakistan's successful journey of utilizing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes would likely continue in the years to come.

Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), established in 1956 is the pioneer government agency to oversee the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in the country. It was established to contribute to Pakistan's overall economic development through the utilization of nuclear energy in various public fields. These include; medical diagnosis/therapy, agricultural production, nuclear energy for power generation, and some other functions that involve peaceful uses of nuclear technology. In the early '70s, PAEC constructed the first-ever 135 Megawatts (MWs) nuclear power plant at Karachi KANUPP. This was also the first-ever nuclear power generation plant in the developing or underdeveloped world. The successful launch of this power plant later led to the development of four more nuclear plants at Chashma, the CHASNUPP-1, CHASNUPP-2, CHASHNUPP-3, and CHASHNUPP-4. Furthermore, Pakistan also intends to build two nuclear power plants known as K-2 and K-3 at Karachi, one at Chashma, and two at Muzaffargarh. This is part of Pakistan's long-term plan to produce 40,000 Megawatts MWs of electricity by using nuclear energy by the year 2050. Here it is quite noteworthy to specify that nuclear power generation is believed to be one of the economical and reliable sources of electricity generation. Such credentials have included Pakistan among the list of 30

countries that have fully operational nuclear plants. Along with this, Pakistan is also among the only ten countries in the world that have completed the nuclear fuel cycle.

Likewise, in the field of agriculture, nuclear technology has contributed to various landmark achievements for Pakistan. In this regard, the PAEC has developed multiple facilities for the advancements in the field of agriculture and food in collaboration with the IAEA. It has also launched various programs to increase the nutritional value of staple foods so that it can meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eliminate malnutrition and hunger. Furthermore, various irradiation techniques have been used in the agriculture sector to enhance the quality of food and to extend the shelf life of products at the farms. Also, PAEC is working on various food fortification initiatives to enhance the vitamin and mineral content in the food and to eradicate malnutrition. This is further evident from the fact that nearly 98 new high-yielding and stress-tolerant crops have been created by using nuclear technology. For the availability of clean water in the country, PAEC for years has been collaborating with IAEA to analyze and detect pollutants in water by using isotopic and nuclear techniques. Pakistan has also built laboratories by collaborating with IAEA for mass breeding of insects that fight pests attacking the crops and thus the use of pesticides is decreased.

In Pakistan, nuclear technology has significant use in the field of medical science especially for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer disease. In this regard, over the years, 18 cancer treatment centers have been developed by PAEC where nearly 0.7 million cancer patients have been treated to date. This counts for almost 80% of the total cancer patients from all over the country. Radiation and various other nuclear techniques are used for treating cancer. Likewise, various cancer awareness campaigns are being run by the PAEC so that cancer gets diagnosed at the early stages. Other than these, PAEC has been collaborating with international organizations like the WHO, IRC, IAEA, and UICC, etc. This has facilitated the access of Pakistani scientists and doctors to the relevant international institutions and provides opportunities for training in the field of nuclear medicines. Taking part in various seminars and workshops also keeps the nuclear medical professionals updated about the latest developments in this field.

Moreover, in the field of technical industry, the Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC) Taxila is one of the leading organizations in Pakistan's engineering sector. It works with an aim of indigenization, self-reliance, and import substitution and to give technical support to the country's industrial sector. It also focuses on enhancing manufacturing, design, testing, and inspection capabilities to produce high-tech parts, components, and equipment for the thermal, hydel, and nuclear power plants and alternate energy projects. It is a state-of-the-art facility for forging, fabrication, machining, welding, and heat treatment. It is Pakistan's first engineering establishment that is certified by PNRA (Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority) to develop Nuclear Safety Class 1, 2, and 3 components and equipment in the country.

Hence it is quite comprehensible that Pakistan has successfully demonstrated its commitment towards using nuclear energy for the socio-economic development of the country. This implies that there is another side of the nuclear coin of Pakistan's nuclear program and that is the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Based on this, the international community needs to admit Pakistan's continuous efforts of compliance with the international practices of nuclear safety and security and regulatory control. The international arrangements like the NSG and other such cartels, which are supposed to facilitate and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, need to acknowledge Pakistan's achievements in this regard. The grant of NSG waiver to India while ignoring Pakistan's outstanding track record in peaceful uses of nuclear technology has raised questions on the credibility of international arrangements. There is a dire need for openness to new contenders with a non-discriminatory approach. Last but not the least, there should be discrimination between proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear technology at the international level.

*The writer is working as a Research Affiliate at the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), a non-partisan think-tank based out of Islamabad, Pakistan.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/27112020-pakistans-peaceful-uses-of-nuclear-energy-oped/>

US-India Strategic Deal & Policy Options

For Pakistan By Dr Mehmood-ul-Hassan

Khan

DURING the US presidential election 2020, the US and India have signed a key defence deal which considered a foreign policy success by both the countries. The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geospatial Cooperation, (BECA) is among the few deals that the US signs with close partners. It allows India access to a range of sensitive geospatial and aeronautical (sensitive satellite data) that may be used for defence purposes. The BECA deal is significant for India as it will strengthen its conventional offensive and defensive capacity. It provides India access to detailed, sensitive intelligence that can enable to be more accurate in targeting terrorists or rival militaries, and to better monitor the location of the enemy either just across the border or in faraway seas. India has now become US “de-facto” military ally in the region against China and Pakistan.

It may be vital for hitting missiles, drones and other targets with precision. One of the main aims of the BECA is to counter China’s influence in the region. But it has spillover repercussions for national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan too. While visiting to India US Defence Secretary Mark Esper held talks with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh and Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and terming the BECA important for strategic partnership engaging much more intensively on matters of national security. Both highlighted its strategic importance and labelling it terminal for regional and global challenges, whether it is in respecting territorial integrity, promoting maritime domain awareness, countering terrorism or ensuring prosperity.

BECA was signed in October 2020 between the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defence and India’s Ministry of Defence. It entails both countries to share all kinds of military information, aero-space, geo-magnetic and gravity data, maps, nautical and aeronautical charts, commercial and other unclassified imagery, etc. Classified information like sensitive satellite and sensor data can also be shared with proper safeguards. Collaboration in the cyber, space and electro-magnetic spectrums is apparently pending. It will

definitely further enhance Indian cyber security apparatus in the days to come. Moreover, provision of real time targeting and navigation data from the US systems will enhance the accuracy of Indian missiles, PGMs, armed drones and even facilitate aircraft navigation.

The US and India also signed other deals in the fields of nuclear energy, earth sciences and alternative medicine. But BECA is the most significant deal among them which will allow the US to provide advanced navigational aids and avionics on US-supplied aircraft to India. It also means the US can fit high-end navigational equipment in the aircraft it supplies to India. India has been prey of its own “hegemonic” “obsession” since its inception. It has been locked in one of its most hostile standoff with China in the Himalayan region. On the other hand, its military misadventure is still going on against Pakistan on LOCs. Many other regional countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh do not share diplomatic ease with India. Moreover, increasing influence of China in terms of One Belt & One Road Initiative (BRI) in South East Asia region and the CPEC have produced dints in Indian foreign policy and military options.

India has now become new strategic partner of the US in its fight against China and precisely “containment policy”. President Donald Trump’s diplomatic offensive against China over trade, the coronavirus pandemic and the South China Sea issue, the US Secretary of State also called on to “thwart threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party encouraged both the countries to get connected in terms of enhanced military deal. Role of Australia being former closest ally of the US has now been shifted to India. On the green “signalling” of the US some important countries of the GCC and Middle East are now diverting their investment and national priorities towards Delhi, by badly ignoring Islamabad.

The most recent visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Kabul, Afghanistan showed rapidly changing geopolitical and geostrategic orientations of the regional as well as international power politics. In this context the “reactive” “posturing” of our Foreign Ministry must be immediately converted into “preemptive” mode to safeguard the vested interest of Pakistan in the days to come. The BECA deal is another step forward in deepening India-US military ties. India is one of the world’s biggest defence equipment buyers, but ironically, around 60-70 per cent of its inventory (SU 30 MKI, MIG 29s) is supplied by Russia which may be changed in the days to come. Russia wisely re-approaching to Beijing, China to

establish collective regional defence shield against the heavy military presence of the USA in the region.

After distrust of more than half century, Islamabad and Moscow are now landed on the same page and inching/crawling on the road of further strengthening of bilateral relations in terms of trade and commerce, oil & gas cooperation and exploration, steel development and last but not the least military cooperation shows systematic response to US-India nexus in the region. It seems that India's military standoff in June 2020 on its western border with China have forced New Delhi towards the US which has been trying to bolster allies against an increasingly assertive China. However, it will not be easy for India to easily operate diversified military technologies/systems/models and installations in the future because it has different and divergent national and international military systems i.e. Russian SU 30 MKI, MIG 29s, local Indian systems. Adaptability mechanism of the Indian armed forces will be doubtful in terms of BRAHMOS missile or the S 400 ABM system.

The IAF operational and tactical debacle at Balakot proved Indian pilots flying French aircraft to launch Israeli PGMs and ultimately they hit nothing in the end. Multiple independent systems operate within the Indian military in parallel, ie US, Russian, Israeli, British, French and indigenous platforms with their own technologies and compatible data would not be easily fixed, operationalized and channelized. Resultantly, Indian operational strategies will be disjointed, difficult to execute and self-defeating. Being a prominent regional expert of China, I uphold that the BECA deal will have serious geopolitical, political and military implications in the entire region for which Islamabad, Beijing and Moscow must chalk a comprehensive policy to deter the ill designs of the US-India partnership.

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

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/us-india-strategic-deal-policy-options-for-pakistan/>

Foreign Policy & Middle East By Dr Muhammad Khan

THE foreign policy of Pakistan has been dynamic and farsighted right from its emergence as an independent state in 1947. The Muslim countries and Middle Eastern region have been the primary focus of Pakistan's foreign policy. Having a cordial relationship with all Muslim countries has been the most salient feature of Pakistan's foreign policy. Keeping in view, the ideological nature of Pakistani origin, friendly relationship with Muslim world was included in the constitution of Pakistan. For the past seven decades, Pakistan religiously practiced this aspect in its foreign policy pursuits. It continued practicing an exceptional and symphonic relationship with all Muslim states. Since bulks of the Muslim states are situated in Middle Eastern region therefore, this area remained the primary focus of Pakistan's external relations. Over the years, involvement of major powers and rival states of Pakistan in the regional politics of Middle East has greatly influenced the foreign policies of the regional countries of the Middle East. Unfortunately, the huge diplomatic corps of Pakistan could not correctly appreciate the impact of external involvement in the domestic politics of Middle Eastern regional states. While the rival states of Pakistan were making inroads into the region, the Pakistani diplomatic and political elites remained mysteriously silence. This secretive quietness of decision makers in Pakistan allowed the rival states of Pakistan like India to establish itself in broader Muslim states of Middle East.

While establishing the Indian clout in Middle East, the Indian policy makers adopted three pronged approach. One; India chose to enter the region through its well-trained Muslim population. This strategy was adopted to deceive the traditional conservative character of the Middle Eastern society and ruling elites, who preferred Muslims as the work forces in their countries. After finding broader acceptability for Indians, the large Hindu population started pouring into the region with larger and ulterior motives. Two; India attracted the wealthy countries of the Middle East for heavy investment in India, promising larger incentives. Through this strategy, India created jobs market for its huge unemployed class at home, besides sending its huge manpower in Middle East. Three; Indian Diaspora focused on the business and trade sector of the Middle Eastern states. Today, bulk of the hoteling, industry, tourism, oil companies and even the local

markets are run by Indian Diaspora in entire Middle East. In UAE, Indian Diaspora constitutes 25% of its total population. Over 70% financial activities of UAE are being control by Indians. Situation in other countries of the Middle East is almost the same. Slowly and gradually, the Indian Diaspora is entering into the educational system and state functionaries of the Middle Eastern states. Besides, the engineering and construction sectors of the regional states are also being controlled by Indian expatriates.

Before sending its expatriates in Middle East, India trained its masses on three aspects; expertise in relevant skills, promotion of Indian nationalism and ingress to influence for attainment of long-term national objectives of India. The Indian Government takes full sponsorship and responsibility of their expatriates with a tight monitoring system through its spying network. They are under strict social security and insurance system. This well organized and increasing India influence in the Middle East has rapidly constrained the space for Pakistani Diaspora, who have been working in the region since 1960s without Government patronage. Most of the Pakistani expatriates in Middle East are low level labourer class, who are untrained, unskilled and fit to under-take the menial and humiliating jobs. Then there is no social security for Pakistani labourer class, nor do they fall under the sponsorship of the Government of Pakistan. Thousands of Pakistanis are languishing in the jails of Middle Eastern countries for decades now and no one is there to rescue them. The international political system is driven by power politics. The countries whose leadership has the foresight, vision, long-term strategies and above all, the better understanding of international politics work in advance. They trained their Diaspora to make inroads, create acceptability, influence the local authorities and reach to the driving seats of key areas in the first phase. Subsequently, they substantiate their initial gains through diplomatic and political engagements. Since the Diaspora had already made a positive image, therefore the later doorway through diplomatic corps and political engagements is peaceful to be materialized.

The traditionally strong bonds in the foreign policy of Pakistan and the Middle Eastern states, seems eroding with each passing day. This is a damaging trend and needs serious reconsiderations at the level of Pakistani state, society and institutions. After all, there must have been inattention and susceptibilities which were exploited by the rival forces to the disadvantage of traditional partners (Pakistan and Middle Eastern region). Besides, abovementioned factors, the Middle Eastern countries might have reoriented their foreign policies with fresh

objectives and transformed priorities. This seems obvious from the recent developments, taking place in the regional politics of Middle Eastern states. Nevertheless, the geopolitics of Pakistan, its traditional connections with the countries of the region and social acquaintances between the masses still makes Pakistan a very relevant and needed state for Middle Eastern region. The Government must initiate re-engagement policies with the countries of Middle East with pride, dignity and respect. Apart from Pakistan, such an initiative will benefit the Middle Eastern states on long-term basis. In this regards, there is a need for major foreign policy review while considering the new ground realities in the regional politics of Middle East. As a nuclear Muslim state with highly professional military and strategically location, Pakistan cannot remain aloof from the developments, taking place in its immediate neighbourhood and traditionally compassionate Muslim countries.

— The writer is Professor of Politics and IR at International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/foreign-policy-middle-east/>

OIC Kashmir Resolution | Editorial

OIC Council of Foreign Ministers at its 47th session in Niamey, Niger adopted a resolution reaffirming its strong support for Kashmir cause. Strongly denouncing India's illegal steps and blatant human rights violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the OIC stressed for resolution of the lingering dispute by giving right of self-determination to oppressed people.

It was a comprehensive and strongly worded resolution that sent a loud and lucid message that 57-member countries really feel the pain and agony of oppressed Kashmiri people. It also proved false and baseless the assertions made by India that Kashmir is not part of Niamey meeting agenda. The people of Pakistan and Kashmir are grateful to all Muslim countries for supporting their stance but time has come to take a step further as mere resolutions will not bring any relief in lives of Kashmiri people as such written resolutions fall on deaf ears. The OIC resolution this time around has made a very specific point urging the international community to review its engagements with India, the occupying power, for violating and disregarding international laws in occupied territory. Before suggesting others, the OIC countries themselves should take a lead in this regard. The Indian atrocities are not only confined to occupied Jammu and Kashmir as Muslim citizens of India are also being victimised on daily basis under different pretexts with the support of state machinery.

The enmity of BJP government towards Muslims is no longer a secret. We, therefore, will ask the OIC especially those who have strengthened their relations with New Delhi over the last few years to review their level of cooperation with this extremist government. If the OIC really wants to do something serious for oppressed Kashmiri people, it must enbloc cut off all diplomatic, trade and economic ties with India until it moves towards resolution of outstanding dispute as per the UN Security Council resolutions.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/oic-kashmir-resolution/>

ECONOMY

Global Sovereign Debt Crisis Under COVID-19 Pandemic – Analysis By Chan Kung and Wei Hongxu*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the global economy and financial markets. At present, there are signs of a second wave of the pandemic, with the number of cases in Europe, the United States, and other places rising again as control measures are relaxed and the weather changes. More market participants are beginning to focus on whether the global economy will be able to pick up quickly in the future. Long-term factors affecting the economy as a result of countries' unconventional policies to deal with the pandemic are still accumulating and worsening, especially debt problems caused by the expansion of fiscal spending, which will have a profound impact on global economic development. This means that after a brief liquidity crisis, the road to economic recovery is still long and distant.

In response to the impact of the pandemic, major economies such as China and the United States adopted loose monetary policies and expansionary fiscal policies to strengthen the prevention and control of the pandemic, and rescue their economies from the downturn. According to the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the global debt-to-GDP ratio rose to an all-time high in the first quarter of this year, with all debt in the non-financial sector now accounting for 252% of global GDP. This figure stood at 240% at the end of 2019, a record quarterly increase. At the same time, global sovereign debt has soared, rising by 10 percentage points to 89% of GDP, the biggest quarterly increase on record. In fact, it was only in the second quarter that most developed countries stepped up their macroeconomic policy support, so the situation in the second quarter is likely to be more severe. The IMF estimates that countries around the world have collectively spent nearly USD 11 trillion in response to the pandemic, which will take global public debt to an all-time high this year. According to the data, the global public debt-to-GDP ratio has exceeded 100% this year, the average public

debt-to-GDP ratio in advanced economies will exceed 120%, and the average public debt-to-GDP ratio in G7 countries is approaching 140%.

The immediate concern is whether the surge in leverage will worsen and if sovereign debt can be sustained as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread. From the perspective of the financial crisis in 2008, the public debt ratio of some European countries involved in the European debt crisis at that time was around 150%. COVID-19 once again brought the public debt ratio of these European countries back to or even more than the previous high. Although the EU has decided on a EUR 750 billion recovery plan, it remains to be seen whether it will be effective in dealing with the prolonged pandemic.

As far as the sustainability of sovereign debt is concerned, there are no precise indicators that can be measured yet. For example, Japan's public debt ratio is set to exceed 250% under Abenomics and Japan's public debt has been rising steadily over the past three decades. However, Japan's debt problem has not been a worry, and the Japanese yen is even favored as a safe haven currency. The logic behind may be that Japan's economy has been able to maintain low growth for a long period of time, allowing the public debt to continue. Yet, the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic growth is already apparent; in a downturn, as was the case after 2008, sovereign debt problems are likely to spread rapidly as the economy worsens.

In the short term, the debt problem does not appear to be pressing. A research of China Merchants Bank analyzed the government debt interest expenditure in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, as well as five countries that experienced European debt crisis, and found that the proportion of both interest expenditure as a share of nominal GDP and fiscal expenditure showed a downward trend. Thus, it seems that a debt crisis is still some way off. Another evidence is that the prices at which CDS on sovereign debt is traded also suggest that financial markets do not expect an imminent sovereign debt crisis. This is due to the current zero/negative monetary environment under the ultra-loose monetary policy, which has reduced government funding costs.

However, the low-interest rates and the decline in the level of inflation go hand in hand, indicating insufficient effective demand and a lack of economic growth. Governments' macro policies would be caught in a paradox, i.e., either accepting a long-term co-existence of low-interest rates, low growth, and high debt level; or

continuing the monetary easing and picking up the inflation, thereby to boost the nominal growth and “offset” the debt. But rising interest rates are more likely to cause huge public debts to explode, and whether the level of inflation can be controlled will test the central banks’ policy capacity. If inflation gets out of control, higher interest rates are more likely to overwhelm the economy and financial markets, and the global economy will return to the “stagflationary” period of the 1970s.

The sharp increase of public debt may bring about structural changes in the economy as a whole, affecting not only economic development, but also social development. Whether it is buying corporate debt directly or “handing out of candy” to the households to cope with personal financial spending, soaring public debt means the government’s role in economic activity is becoming increasingly important. This is bound to affect the overall pattern and direction of global economic development. Ding Anhua, the chief economist at China Merchants Bank, also said recently that public debt is not just an economic issue but could turn into a complex political issue. This means the return of the government intervention in the economy, history will enter a phase dominated by strong governments, and the market mechanism will lose its former role. This is a great change that does not subject to the will of man.

It seems that the government’s fiscal deficit will be hard to restrain as the pandemic continues. The simultaneous fiscal and monetary expansion will result in the accumulation of monetary value and sovereign credit risk. International organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF have begun to warn that some emerging markets with fragile economies and finances could be the first to face a crisis, as is already happening in Argentina, Brazil, India, and other countries.

Fundamentally, the solution to the public debt problem and to the sovereign debt crisis still depends on the economy’s endogenous growth to increase fiscal revenues and reduce deficits. However, the multiple blows bring about by the pandemic are posing challenges to long-term economic growth. In this light, control of the pandemic is the most urgent of all the problems facing countries today. As IMF economists noted, with the novel coronavirus bringing “great uncertainty”, the top priority is to address public health issues. “Only by bringing the pandemic under control can we reduce uncertainty and create the conditions

to reinvigorate investment, sustain economic recovery and transition to the sustainable and inclusive growth model,” as stated by an IMF economist.

Final analysis conclusion:

With the resurgence of COVID-19, countries are accumulating huge debt risks to cope with the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic. Such pressures will change the trends and patterns of international economic development and could be one of the long-term effects of the pandemic on the global economy.

Founder of Anbound Think Tank in 1993, Chan Kung is now ANBOUND Chief Researcher. Chan Kung is one of China’s renowned experts in information analysis. Most of Chan Kung’s outstanding academic research activities are in economic information analysis, particularly in the area of public policy.

Wei Hongxu, graduated from the School of Mathematics of Peking University with a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Birmingham, UK in 2010 and is a researcher at Anbound Consulting, an independent think tank with headquarters in Beijing.

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/07112020-global-sovereign-debt-crisis-under-covid-19-pandemic-analysis/>

Enhancing Exports | Editorial

Pakistan wants to increase its exports worth \$5 billion to Afghanistan in the next three years. The target is not an ambitious one at all. But given the complexities involved in bilateral ties, the security situation in Afghanistan and the lack of inadequate infrastructure, the true potential of bilateral trade between the two sides never materialised. Many traders expected that the bilateral exchange between Pakistan and Afghanistan would rise to \$5 billion in 2015. But for several reasons, mainly the tense relationship between the two countries, the overall volume of trade declined in subsequent years.

However, the prospects for increasing the volume of bilateral trade and Pakistan's exports have increased manifold after the two-day Pak-Afghan Trade and Investment Forum that took place last month. The trade forum in Islamabad was a rare development in which the two sides adopted more than 140 recommendations for enhancing commercial activities. The overall environment is conducive for increasing business.

Therefore, the government must decide and outline which commodities will be sold and in what amounts. Identifying the high demand products should not be a problem. A few meetings with Pakistani traders can provide the officials with the required information. What is essential for the authorities is to engage the Pakistani traders and seek their recommendations. All such information about products' demand and hurdles that our businessmen confront in accessing the Afghan markets will provide our policymakers with a better picture of the Afghan economy and bes selling practices.

The government must devise a thorough and target-oriented strategy to achieve the set goals, and the officials need to focus on bilateral trade the most. Bringing in policies that can guarantee ease of doing business will prove instrumental in growing the bilateral trade. Moreover, the authorities need to work on the informal exchange of goods and bring such commodities in the mainstream for greater state revenue generation.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/10-Nov-2020/enhancing-exports>

Economic Trends | Editorial

THE recent macroeconomic trends confirm Prime Minister Imran Khan's words that a broad-based recovery appears to be underway. The evidence of this turnaround can be seen in the recent rebound in manufacturing as indicated by record cement sales, increased demand for cars, motorbikes and white goods, revival of the construction industry, etc. In short, the resurgence of domestic consumption is pushing the current growth momentum. It is a positive sign that the ongoing spurt in consumption is not driven by imports — at least not at the moment. That is why we have seen large-scale manufacturing revive and the current account post a surplus during the first quarter of the financial year. Other economic indicators such as fiscal deficit and exports — barring food inflation — are also moving in the right direction, according to finance ministry data. The stock market has outperformed other Asian markets and the rupee has strengthened of late. Thus, it can safely be assumed that the country is crawling out of the Covid-induced economic sluggishness that dominated the last quarter of the previous fiscal, even if it is not racing towards growth.

Does this mean that the economy is back on the right track as the prime minister claimed at the launch of the Naya Pakistan Certificates on Thursday? Not really. The resurgence of another 'economic boom' doesn't necessarily mean that the country is once again treading the path of sustainable growth. Challenges remain. For starters, coronavirus infections are again rising, and rapidly, threatening to reverse economic gains. More important, the present economic rebound largely owes to the extensive fiscal stimulus and generous monetary support given by the State Bank to businesses in order to protect them from the adverse impact of the health crisis. Any premature withdrawal of these measures would slow down or delay recovery. More worrying is the fact that the structural issues responsible for dragging down the economy in the past remain unaddressed. For example, little has been done to fix state-owned enterprises and the collapsing energy sector, which have been a major drag on growth. Similarly, tax reforms have been postponed and the issues facing the agriculture sector remain unresolved. With the revival of the IMF programme pushed back further, work on economic and governance reforms will remain suspended for the moment. Only the naïve will expect the current turnaround to last long without implementation of politically tough reforms.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1590272/economic-trends>

IMF Program on Hold | Editorial

As feared, the government is struggling to get the IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) back on track and has, for the first time, indicated that it might not be revived till the end of the year at the very least. While it is understandable that the government does not want to increase the electricity tariff or taxes right now, keeping in view the prevailing weak economic situation, the ruling party is still wrong to lay all the blame on the recession caused by the pandemic. No doubt the lockdown took a lot out of the economy, and has made it that much more difficult to implement contractionary policies that the Fund requires, but let's not forget that prices were high and growth was low since well before the coronavirus stood everything on its head. And the program was taken off track, for precisely these reasons, before March, which is when the pandemic came to Pakistan.

There are also rumours that the government wishes to extend its support package for construction well beyond December till the middle of next year considering how it is stimulating activity across a broad range of industries. That's another area where the ruling party's own weak planning is to blame. Experts and analysts up and down the country had warned at the time of the announcement of the construction package that December was not a viable timeline for it to attract the kind of money that was needed but nobody paid much attention back then. And now they want to upset their own planning and do precisely what they ruled out just months ago.

It is also very important to note that sooner or later the government would have to revive the IMF program because it will find survival impossible without it for long. Clearly it is counting on some friends in the Gulf and China to agree to roll over some of our multi-billion dollar loans to provide some sort of cushion, but even if they get the answer they are looking for it will only buy them very limited time. There was a reason for the country to rush to the Fund in the first place, and that was a lurking Balance of Payments (BoP) disaster. The news just the other day that Pakistan's external debt has now reached historic levels ought to be enough to tell everybody just what position our reserves are in. The government should do what it can to get the Fund to dilute some of its harsher conditions so the program can get back on track.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/688902/imf-program-on-hold/>

CPEC: India's New Nightmare By Hasaan Khawar

The recent press conference by Pakistan's Foreign Minister and the DG ISPR brought to light India's subversive activities to destabilise the country as well as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). They claimed that not only is India promoting sub-nationalism in Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Azad Kashmir but it has also established a dedicated cell and a militia to disrupt CPEC projects and has set aside \$60 million for this purpose.

India's stance on CPEC has been no secret but it's the first time that Pakistan has come out with the specifics. It shows intensifying covert operations against CPEC, India's growing discomfort with the cozying Pak-China relations, and the rising geopolitical tensions in the region.

What is India's problem with CPEC? Firstly, it's the decades-old India-Pakistan rivalry that is in play here. But more than that it's the consolidation of long-term Chinese interests in Pakistan that is the real source of India's discomfort. CPEC means unhindered Chinese access to and continued presence in Gwadar, which when looked at in the light of 'all-weather Pak-China friendship' means that India will have to think twice before engaging Pakistan in conventional warfare. Then comes the issue of G-B. The CPEC arteries connecting Xinjiang to Gwadar crisscross through this mountainous territory that India has long claimed to be hers. The Chinese-financed CPEC strengthens Islamabad's claim on G-B, something that has not been received well in New Delhi. China's stake in G-B also significantly restricts India's options to resist Pakistan's decision to grant G-B the status of a province.

Lastly, it is hard to ignore the changing international and regional political landscape. Regional conflicts, hostility and acrimonious politics has traditionally impeded economic co-operation within South Asia, which remains one of the least integrated and co-operative regions in the world with minimal movement of goods, individuals and investments across countries. This however could have changed with the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), building on China's strong economic and trade relationships with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. But India, under the baggage of bitter Sino-Indian history and blinded by

animosity with Pakistan, decided to stay away from BRI and hence forego this historic opportunity to create a new economic bloc in South Asia. This Indian stance was at least partially influenced by an aggressive anti-China US policy under the Trump administration and its ambition for a free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. Then the recent border skirmishes between China and India added fuel to the fire. These covert operations in Pakistan are therefore a way for India to indirectly settle its score with China, which could not be settled in the battleground of Ladakh.

How should Pakistan respond?

For starters, we need to get our house in order. The institutional apparatus for CPEC implementation remains in limbo, with the CPEC Authority Ordinance expired. Even before its expiry, it wasn't entirely clear how the CPEC Authority worked with the ministries and provinces. Any further lapse on this front would mean more fodder for CPEC's opponents.

Then comes the narrative-building part. International media is rife with anti-CPEC stories, floated by Indian propaganda machine, spewing venom. Our side of the story is missing from the international scene and that's what needs to be told, backed by figures and facts.

Lastly, we must realise that the future of Balochistan is inseparable from the future of CPEC. A prosperous Balochistan would strengthen CPEC's foundation, whereas an impoverished province with rampant unemployment would create a permanent threat. Therefore, it's time to put in place a Balochistan strategy for CPEC, laying out a clear plan of action on how the Baloch people can reap the dividends of this multi-billion dollar investment that has the potential to change Pakistan's destiny.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2272488/cpec-indias-new-nightmare>

FATF a Political Tool: Impact & Strategic Implications By Tariq Khalil

THE Sword of FATF has been hanging on Pakistan for the last many years. It is a strategic tool to straighten the countries that try to defy the strategic balance. For the last three decades the mantra of 'do more' was used. It was ensured the country remains at the mercy of crumbs offered in return, pliant leadership continued to bleed the country's resources to stack money abroad and buy properties. During the Cold War era, later Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, US war, the vary powers that are yielding FATF stick used strategic location of Pakistan to further their strategic interests.

The FATF concept was created by G-7 countries in 1989, the initial membership was 9, it was extended to 19 and then 31. Currently it has 39 members. Over 200 countries committed themselves to judicial jurisdiction. Beside the Interpol, score of banking organizations and watch-dog, including UN monetary oversight unit is also associated. With the passage of time it is tuned to be an effective tool in the hands of big powers. The membership criterion is through majority of votes and consent of founding members. Entry of countries as members also reflects the big powers' preferences.

Pakistan became its victim for three basic reasons, Pakistan being blamed for exporting terrorism. Second, money laundering which facilitated terrorists. Third, massive money laundering by politicians, businesses and even people from all strata. Support to terrorism accusation firstly came from India which was perpetuating atrocities on Kashmiris and even Sikhs. It is in 1993 IPGO Annual meeting India first time raised boggy of terrorism to suppress the Sikh Movement. There are almost 22 pro- independence and seventeen active pro-independence movements in India. The blame, that Pakistan is supporting them was dumped on it as a strategy first by India and that the money laundered is being siphoned to terrorists. Afghanistan is other area where the US blamed Pakistan for its failure. Ironical it is US itself which lost the battles world over.

Whereas it is India, which has been siphoning money to terrorists through Afghanistan and other countries against Pakistan. Latest UN report link Indian connection with DAES and involvement in terrorist attacks at Karachi Stock

Exchange, Chinese Consulate at Karachi, Jalalabad and even in Stockholm. Foreign Policy Magazine in Aug 9 issue has also indicated in this direction. Indian banks carried out 3200 suspected transactions over US \$ 1.3 Billion Also massive purchase of properties by Pakistanis was visible world over and even western media highlighted this: a fact which can't be denied. A large number of politicians and businessmen from all over the world are involved in money laundering. Panama was a watershed which catapulted not only leading Pakistani politicians on the world stage but also smeared the name of Pakistan in the world arena.

FATF is now a geo-political tool; more than a check on financial laundering it is used for strategic arm twisting. Previous Pakistani regimes failed to curb money laundering mostly due to vested interests. This created a critical turning point, giving India and some other powers to lash at and accuse Pakistan of money laundering, through FATF, to hide their own failings in the brutal oppression of Kashmir, supply of funds to nationalist elements in Baluchistan, funding for 5th generation war imposed on Pakistan, and money laundering from the very states. Reportedly the flight of capital from India to England is to the tune of US \$ 15000.

If Pakistan has failed, the very states that sit as judge are heaven for money laundered, England, off shore islands, France, Switzerland. In ME Gulf states (to say safe heavens). Billions of dollars are stacked in these countries and money launderers enjoy luxurious life. These countries have enacted laws which give protection to these runaways. Yet, it is for the benefit of Pakistan to curb money laundering. Money laundering thus is not only means but also cause and incentive for the corrupt.

Ironically these heaven countries are the founder watch-dogs of FATF. It is time Pakistan should be following two-pronged approach, one complete fulfilling the conditionalities of FATF to get out of grey-list, which is also to the benefit of Pakistan. But, State Bank must ensure banks do not stifle to genuine clients, reportedly banks staff now indulging in these practices not only pressurizing clients but also impeding businesses. Major sufferers are SMEs. Second, Pakistan must be adopting aggressive diplomacy. Fool proof cases be built up against India and other countries that are major players in money laundering, and no doubt India is a major financier in terrain and subversion. Invoke friends to push the case in FATF.

Reportedly, after UN Money Laundering Watchdog reports and the US banks reporting, in the next FATF meeting Indian may be played on with list. Pakistan must exploit this opportunity to expose India. Also the countries that are the destination of money launderers be brought in FATF's jurisdiction and laws be made to return looted money. Present excuse of political persecution be made conditional to courts judgments.

—The writer, a retired Brigadier, a veteran of 1965, 1971 wars with SJ, SI, and IS Bar Gallantry. A senior Defence and Industry analyst.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/fatf-a-political-tool-impact-strategic-implications/>

Lessons From the Asia-Pacific FTA |

Editorial

There are important lessons for Pakistan to learn from the formation of the world's largest free trade bloc in the Asia-Pacific region. A total of 15 countries (10 Asean nations plus five more) have got together and signed a landmark free trade agreement (FTA) in a decisive win for multilateralism, especially in this region, at a time when the world's sole superpower is doing what it can to kill multinational deals in favour of aggressive bilateral arrangements. It is even more telling that the Chinese are at the centre of this deal, called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), while the Americans have no part in it.

Perhaps there could have been no better farewell gift from President Xi Jinping to President Donald Trump. The latter's four years in office were typified by hostility towards China, which came to the fore in the form of the reckless tariff war that not just harmed both the American and Chinese economies, but also disturbed supply chains across the world since China, the world's workshop, was cut out of international markets because of American pressure. And the more the White House spewed venom on the Chinese and their way of doing business in the world the more President Xi was encouraged to just keep his head down, rather than indulge in needless dialogue, and look for ways to strengthen the Chinese economy as the whole world struggled with the financial impact of Covid-19.

Now China is at the centre of the biggest FTA the world has ever seen despite Washington's efforts to take the shine off such deals permanently and the fact that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo only recently visited the entire region and warned everybody against entering into any partnerships with Beijing. Clearly the world has decided to pretty much ignore what comes out of Washington till there is a more balanced government in the White House. Whether or not that break will come with the Biden administration will become apparent very soon. While there is an urgent need to get back to business as usual with the Chinese so the whole world can begin to get back to normal, the new president will face a lot of domestic pressure regarding outsourcing jobs once again. So much rather than wait for America to figure things out the Chinese have very wisely decided to carve out their own niche in in the Asian

region. Even American allies are part of the China-centric deal. Pakistan must realise the potential of trade-driven earnings from all this and get its export industry back in shape as soon as possible.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/690437/lessons-from-the-asia-pacific-fta/>

Restructuring Taxation | Editorial

A new report by the IMF, given to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), highlights the drawbacks and inefficiencies of the Pakistani tax system and proposes changes in policy to counter the problem. Focusing on tax exemptions and a regressive sales tax, the report brings to attention the fact that our taxation system not only goes against international standards but is also highly inequitable—advantaging a certain class at the expense of the others.

The FBR itself admitted that the degree of tax exemptions given to industries, businesses and groups have increased throughout the course of the year, but only for the purpose of enhancing productivity. What needs to be understood is the fact that this productivity is one that the debilitating status quo desperately needs. A spurt in production would alleviate the burdened economic system of Pakistan. However, if we continue with policies that aim to provide relief through the readjustment of the next fiscal year, it may as well be too late.

Secondly, not only do these tax concessions play to the benefit of a privileged class but matters are made worse when we get an understanding of the sales tax policies in Pakistan. Traditionally, a sales tax should make up for a small portion of the government's revenue. However, this kind of taxation accounts for the majority of the government's revenue—going against established global standards. Furthermore, it is also debilitating in nature for the masses that seem to have to pay a higher portion of taxes, when taking into consideration their income amounts, than the well-off minority. This inherently prejudiced tax system is one that needs to either be abolished or minimised substantially to cater to the interest of the people.

The IMF report proposes many changes to existing policy that will help organise the system of taxation in Pakistan so long as officials are willing to, and open-minded enough to, incur drastic but needed changes.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2020/restructuring-taxation>

EDUCATION

Uniform Education | Editorial

If only all it took to reform the education sector, even introduce a uniform system of instruction all over the country, was a mere stroke of the pen by the country's chief executive, we would surely have overcome this problem as far back as the middle of the previous century. Yet sadly as noble as such intentions are, those expressing them, especially if they are at the top of the government structure in Pakistan, have always been ultimately disappointed. That is why the ruling party is also advised caution as it goes full steam ahead with its plans to provide the same quality education across the country.

The first of the many, many problems it is going to face will be about curriculum. With such ethnic, political, cultural and indeed religious diversity in the country, how do you get everybody to agree on a particular set of content for school books? And how is the government going to ensure availability of trained teachers, well versed in all the new syllabi to be introduced, in all parts of Pakistan? Also, just what is going to become of the madrassas? Hopefully the government understands that they are usually filled to the brim simply because they are more affordable and attract the big bulk of the people whose monetary positions prevent them from enrolling their children in regular children. As a result society has been predominantly pushed to the far right over the years.

Changing these trends is not just desirable but very urgently needed. Yet the government must understand that no change is going to come, at least not a positive one, if all it is going to do is just make some desperate noise. So far it doesn't look like it has done its own homework. Why, otherwise, would it plan to launch the uniform education program as early as next year and not even share the changes it has made or intends to make to the present curricula taught in various types of schools? Before it can confidently go ahead with reforming the education system, it seems the government is itself in need of a bit of schooling.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/686865/uniform-education-2/>

Covid-19 and Education | Editorial

We are now at that stage in facing the coronavirus pandemic that states have begun to understand just what types of lasting damage it will leave behind even once a vaccine is developed and the disease is brought under control. And though the most obvious victim of all the uncertainty that has gripped the world right now is the global economy, governments are also realising that while economies will eventually get back on their feet, the damage done to students because of a sudden cut-off in their schooling might never be completely remedied. It turns out that the pandemic has put about 1.6 billion students out of schools across the world, and in Pakistan the education of approximately 40 million students is being affected.

This threatens to become a long-term problem. How, for example, are children going to make up for all the time lost, especially if the second wave forces another closure of schools around the world and the development of a vaccine takes a long time? A number of schools have successfully shifted to online learning, which is admirable, but that still leaves the vast majority of students without education because in most cases neither schools nor students can afford such luxuries. This, therefore, is already threatening to become a problem that could affect a whole generation.

These concerns have no doubt pushed the education ministry to delay any decision about closing schools once again, even as restrictions come into force pretty much across the board. It seems the government has decided to keep schools open for as long as possible, and only go for a shut down in an extreme emergency. It realises all the risks associated with keeping them open of course but this is a risk that needs to be taken in the larger national interest. It is more important than ever to enforce very strict implementation of all SOPs. If schools are unable to comply with this extremely important directive then the government might just be forced to pull the plug on the whole thing. Needless to say that the next few days and weeks will be very crucial and hopefully everybody concerned with keeping children in schools, especially teachers and parents, will ensure that all students follow all safety rules religiously.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/689287/covid-19-and-education/>

University Reforms in Pakistan By Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi

Everyone talks about change in education system but no one is ready to lead from the front. Higher education is the backbone of any country. More and more funds are directed towards higher education institutions for quality teaching and pragmatic research. In fact this becomes the identity of a country's scientific and progressive culture. In case of Pakistan, situation is just otherwise. State run universities are barred of adequate funding. Teachers are lesser than needed and research support is almost non-existent. This has affected quality of PhD scholars in Pakistan who are ready to teach and research with their extremely limited academic skills.

In order to 'break the wheel', making momentous changes in the education system, particularly the university system, is the need of the time. Plagued by afflictions of plagiarism, nepotism, ethnic strife, mismanagement, and financial corruption, Pakistani universities are a breeding ground for these ailments. They are not only afflicted by these issues but are also perpetuating this condition by not treating it and producing generations of teachers and students with the same plight. To free the Pakistani education system of the constraints that hold it back from development, it is necessary to cut off the weeds by the roots. Although, steps have been taken to curtail corruption, they are not effective due to their superficial nature. The roots of the problem(s) lay in 'centralization'. There are limitations placed on the liberty of policymaking by the university administration itself, for the university. These limitations are a result of the overindulgence of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The HEC has had a drive to increase university rankings by enhancing research output numerically. This invites a predicament of compromise on quality research published by Pakistani universities. Decentralization of power, therefore, is indispensable for enhancing research output both qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The goals of research have also been compromised as the HEC has followed a linear pathway from research to commercialization, innovation and economic development. In this context they have focused more on what works for a specific ecosystem and overlooked the 'why' behind what works. Each Pakistani university, possessing exposure to on-ground realities is well equipped to cater to the demands of research in its own ecosystem. Therefore, professors could be the one drafting

the policies instead of a board of HEC members making decisions based on analytical and quantitative tools of analysis rather than quality and on ground realities. The aforementioned systemic reform is proposed for redrafting the blueprints of academia in Pakistani universities in the future. However, there is a need to escape the trap of mediocrity that the current system of education has fallen into. This can be accomplished by introducing complementary training programs in universities across the country. For short term recovery and to sustain the economic futures of graduates, universities must complement degrees with skills-based short courses. These courses must employ state-of-the-art software and teaching methods in close coordination with local and multinational bodies for optimal results.

Research in Pakistani universities is assigned a miniscule budget that disincentivizes the whole process. Where research is financed by governments of those countries, in Pakistan it is in the hands of private organizations and on individuals themselves

On stratification basis, public versus private universities' funding provide a vacuum that can be filled with another reform. That stratification harbors the reality that public sector universities are not run by students' fees. Conversely, private sector universities are run by students' fees. It is, in fact, the government funding that sustains public universities, and that too, a major chunk of it. This renders public universities to adapt the image and perform the functions of, the 'Centers of Excellence' for research work as well as teaching standards. This ideal fate of public sector universities is tarnished by fund cuts. These fund cuts are directly proportional to teaching quality viz. the lower the funds, the poorer the teaching quality. Finance is a key motivator for an employee. Teachers in public sector universities remain demotivated. Those teachers then opt for private sector universities solely for surety of finance, leaving a dent in teaching quality that is very difficult to reverse.

In the West (European and American models), state universities are rendered the 'Centers of Excellence' in terms of efficacy of research. Extensive and successful research had been carried out on development of vaccines for polio, chicken pox etc. Dolly the sheep, the first mammal cloned from an adult somatic cell, using the process of nuclear transfer in Edinburgh University, Scotland. The development of a vaccine for COVID-19 is underway in those 'centers'. The situation in Pakistan in comparison, is grim. One of the top Universities of

Pakistan was so proud of producing sanitizer which could have been produced by any child watching YouTube lesson in this regard (what a joke). Research in Pakistani universities is assigned a miniscule budget that disincentivizes the whole process. Where research is financed by governments of those countries, in Pakistan it is in the hands of private organizations and on individuals themselves.

To build a standard and to maintain it, it is imperative to maintain the factors that reinforce said standard. In universities, those factors are held to be teachers. In order to maintain the level of teaching, maintaining a permanent faculty is indispensable. One major drawback of Pakistani public universities is the vacancy of budget-allocated seats (against the posts; lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor and professor). This, coupled with the influx of BS and evening shifts' students in hundreds per department, has created a disadvantageous proportion. Only a handful of teachers are employed and accounted for the handling, grooming and maintaining of hundreds of students. This disequilibrium results in disincentivized teachers as well as demotivated students. Therefore, it is pertinent to the functioning of the university as a "seat of knowledge" to fill the vacancies and avoid ad hoc-ism. The ad hoc/visiting staff employed, take their work for granted due to lack of ownership and belonging. Permanent faculty is in a stronger position to enjoy both powers. Ad hoc-ism is therefore, detrimental to these institutions.

For the universities to be able to propose reform and to implement it, they need to be independent in their decision-making. Public sector universities in Pakistan have assumed the role of semi-autonomous/autonomous institutions. There are two components of autonomy that underlie pushing forth of these reforms: administrative autonomy and financial autonomy. Both intrinsically entwined, provide the base for reforms, growth and development of educational institutions. Administrative autonomy is further comprised of organizational, policy, academic, staffing and interventional autonomies. Hitherto, public sector universities in Pakistan are pressurized to mold into the administrative and financial outline chalked out for them by the HEC, the provincial and the federal governments. Along with those pressures, there are numerous pressure groups operating within the universities that act as constraints. Despite the oppressive forces, the universities must have the semi-autonomous status preserved and the forces against, deterred.

(Author is the Chairman of the Department of International Relations at the University of Peshawar. He may be reached at Shaheed@uop.edu.pk)

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/689642/university-reforms-in-pakistan/>

University Rankings and Education |

Editorial

Whenever international bodies release higher education institutions' rankings, one has to struggle to find the names of Pakistani universities among the top 100 or 500 varsities. A few known universities of the country, however, have been appearing on the lists every year, giving a breath of sigh to those who are concerned with the quality of education. The recently released list of top 650 QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) Asia University ranking for 2021 has 40 universities on it, and of them the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has secured a spot among the top 100 one. The 100-300 list, however, has the Quaid-i-Azam University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, COMSAT University of Islamabad, University of Engineering and Technology of Lahore, Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences, University of the Punjab, University of Peshawar, Aga Khan University, University of Agriculture Faisalabad and University of Karachi. Overall, 40 Pakistani universities have made it to the list. Yes, only 40. Is it really hard for universities to make it to the top rankings? Not at all. The only thing the universities have to ensure is to meet certain indicators. In the QS ranking, the indicators include academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, international research network, citations per paper and papers per faculty, staff with a PhD, proportion of international faculty and proportion of international students, proportion of inbound exchange students and proportion of outbound exchange students.

Earlier, not a single Pakistani university could be ranked among the first 500 universities in the World University Rankings 2021 released by the Times Higher Education. There were, however, 17 Pakistani varsities in the list of top 2,000 higher education institutions, and of them, the little known Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, beat the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, to grab the first university position in Pakistan, and 510th all over the world, whereas the QAU stood at 575th position. Vice-chancellors are to lead their respective institutions towards top ranks, and in this regard we see consistency in NUST, the PU and the QAU. PU and QAU VCs Prof Nazeer Akhtar and Dr Muhammad Ali Shah have steered their varsities to the top positions using their matchless leadership skills. Though all varsities have badly been hit by the shortage of funds, these varsities did not let paucity of funds impeach their path. All Pakistani universities

need to collaborate with each other and international varsities discovering the way forward for higher education in the country and academic excellence and professional integrity of faculty to generate critical mass for society. *

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/694720/university-rankings-and-education/>

WORLD

Coming Storms The Return of Great-Power War

Since the closing days of the Cold War, U.S. policymakers, pundits, international relations scholars, and policy analysts have argued that great-power war is a relic of a bygone age. In 1986, the historian John Lewis Gaddis termed the post–World War II era a “Long Peace” because the Soviet Union and the United States had not come to blows. A few years later, the political scientist John Mueller suggested that changing norms had made great-power conflict obsolete. By 2011, the psychologist Steven Pinker was arguing that the Long Peace had morphed into a “New Peace,” marked by a generalized decrease of violence in human affairs.

Of course, as evidenced by ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen, to name a few, there is currently no shortage of organized armed violence involving smaller countries. Still, given the blood-drenched course of politics since the start of the modern international system in the sixteenth century, the absence of war among great powers since 1945 is striking. That does not mean, however, that these kinds of conflicts are off the table. In fact, despite attempts by academics and politicians to write off great-power war as a real threat, the conditions that make it possible still exist. Tensions persist among today’s great powers—above all the United States and China—and any number of flash points could trigger a conflict between them. These two countries are on a collision course fueled by the dynamics of a power transition and their competition for status and prestige, and without a change in direction, war between them in the coming decades is not only possible but probable.

MISPLACED OPTIMISM

Even as geopolitical competition between the United States and China intensifies, most Americans who think seriously about foreign policy and grand strategy refuse to believe that war is likely. This optimism is primarily rooted in

several prominent theories of state behavior. The first is that a high level of economic interdependence between two countries reduces the risk of violent conflict. But history provides many examples to counter this hypothesis. The countries of Europe were never more interdependent—both economically and culturally—than they were just before the outbreak of World War I, and the economies of two of that conflict’s main belligerents, the United Kingdom and Germany, were closely linked. And even if the interdependence of the United States and China might theoretically reduce the risk of war between them, their economic ties have begun to unravel in recent years, as each begins to decouple from the other’s economy.

Skepticism about the prospect of a great-power war also stems from faith in the strength of nuclear deterrence. The risk of mutual assured destruction from a nuclear war surely played a role in preventing the Cold War from turning hot. In recent decades, however, technological advances have weakened this deterrent. The combination of miniaturized, low-yield nuclear warheads and highly accurate delivery systems has made thinkable what once was unthinkable: a “limited” nuclear war, which would not result in apocalyptic destruction.

Finally, other scholars have argued that the so-called liberal international order will preserve peace. In this view, U.S. leadership—through multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund—and the spread of the principles of peaceful cooperation now provide regularity and predictability in international conduct. Some, such as the political scientist G. John Ikenberry, optimistically forecast that this order can survive for many decades into the future, notwithstanding China’s rise and the eventual end of U.S. predominance. This assumption, however, is problematic. The order is being challenged not only by changing international dynamics but also by political developments in the countries that have traditionally defended it. In the United States and Europe, the rise of populism and illiberal democracy is a backlash against the current order and the elites who champion and profit from it. As domestic support for the order decreases and the balance of power shifts toward other countries, the system will inevitably become less effective at mediating conflict. Rising powers may also see an opening to revise the structure entirely, raising the likelihood of war.

HISTORY LESSONS

Beyond theory, history also demonstrates that the constraints on great-power war are weaker than they often appear. In particular, the course of the British-German rivalry that culminated in war in 1914 shows how two great powers can be drawn inexorably toward a conflict that seemed highly unlikely—right up until the moment it began. And the parallels to today’s contest between the United States and China could hardly be clearer.

In the early years of the twentieth century, imperial Germany’s fast-growing economic, technological, and naval power began to pose a challenge to the existing British-led international order. Despite close trade ties between the two countries, British elites began to see Germany’s growing economic power as a menace. Moreover, they resented Germany’s economic success because it was the result of trade and industrial policies they deemed unfair: German prosperity, they felt, derived from state intervention rather than the liberal, laissez-faire approach that governed the United Kingdom’s political economy. British elites also harbored a deep antipathy toward Germany because they saw its political culture—which privileged the military and its values—as fundamentally antithetical to liberal values. Simply put, they believed Germany was an irredeemably bad actor. It is no wonder that once war began, the British quickly came to understand the conflict as an ideological crusade pitting liberalism against Prussian autocracy and militarism.

The British and the Germans were competing for prestige as well as power. Germany’s Weltpolitik strategy—building a big navy and seeking colonies—provoked the United Kingdom, which, as a trading nation with a sprawling overseas empire, could not ignore the emergence of a rival naval power just across the North Sea. In reality, however, Germany’s battleship-building program was driven less by economic or military considerations than by a hunger for status. Germany’s goal was not necessarily to challenge the United Kingdom but to be acknowledged as its great-power equal.

Despite these sources of potential conflict, the outbreak of war between the two states in August 1914 hardly was inevitable. As the historians Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson pointed out, “there was no direct clash over territory, thrones, or borders” between the two. In fact, there were important factors that might have fostered peace: trade, cultural bonds, and interconnected elites and royal families, to name a few.

So why did they go to war? The historian Margaret MacMillan's answer is that the conflict was "the result of the clash between a major global power feeling its advantage slip away and a rising challenger." As she writes:

Such transitions are rarely managed peacefully. The established power is too often arrogant, lecturing the rest of the world about how to manage its affairs, and too often insensitive to the fears and concerns of lesser powers. Such a power, as Britain was then, and the United States is today, inevitably resists its own intimations of mortality and the rising one is impatient to get its fair share of whatever is on offer, whether colonies, trade, resources or influence.

The parallels between the pre-1914 British-German antagonism and contemporary U.S.-Chinese relations are both striking and cautionary. The United States finds itself in the place of the United Kingdom, an incumbent hegemon whose relative power is gradually waning. Washington, like London before it, resents its adversary's rise, which it attributes to unfair trade and economic policies, and views its rival as a bad actor whose values are antithetical to liberalism. For its part, like Germany prior to World War I, today's fast-rising China wants to be acknowledged as an equal on the international stage and seeks hegemony in its own region. The United Kingdom's inability to adjust peacefully to Germany's rise helped lead to World War I. Whether the United States follows that British precedent will determine whether U.S.-Chinese competition ends in war.

A BATTLE OF IDEAS?

For Chinese leaders, their own country's history provides a cautionary tale about what happens to major countries that fail to make the jump to great-power status. As scholars have noted, China's defeat by the British and the French in the two Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century stemmed from its inability to adapt to the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Because of a weak response on the part of Chinese leaders, stronger imperialist powers were able to dominate the country's affairs; the Chinese refer to the subsequent era, in which Western powers and Japan kept China down, as "the century of humiliation."

China's current rise is driven by a desire to avenge the humiliation it suffered and to restore its pre-nineteenth-century status as East Asia's dominant power. Deng

Xiaoping's "reform and opening" program was the first step in this process. To spur its economic growth and modernization, China integrated into the U.S.-led world order. As Deng himself put it in 1992, "Those who are backward get beaten." Beijing's long-term goal was not simply to get rich. It aimed to become wealthy enough to acquire the military and technological capabilities needed to wrest regional hegemony in East Asia away from the United States. China joined the system not to help preserve it but to challenge it from within.

That strategy has succeeded. China is rapidly approaching the United States on every important measure of power. In 2014, the International Monetary Fund announced that, when measured in terms of purchasing power parity, China had passed the United States as the world's largest economy. Measured by market exchange rate, China's GDP is now nearly 70 percent of the United States'. And as China continues to recover rapidly from the pandemic-induced economic downturn, it will likely pass the United States as the world's number one economy by any measure before the end of this decade. In military terms, the story is similar. In 2015, a study by the RAND Corporation, The U.S.-China Military Scorecard, noted that the gap between U.S. and Chinese military power in East Asia was closing rapidly. The U.S. fleet and U.S. bases in the region were now under threat from improved Chinese capabilities. The study's authors themselves expressed surprise at this shift. "Even for many of the contributors to this report, who track developments in the Asian military situation on an ongoing basis, the speed of change . . . was striking," they noted.

U.S. policymakers increasingly see the U.S.-Chinese rivalry not as a traditional great-power competition but as a struggle pitting democracy against communism. In July, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered a speech whose main purpose was to cast U.S.-Chinese hostility in ideological terms. "We have to keep in mind that the [Chinese Communist Party] regime is a Marxist-Leninist regime," he said.

General Secretary Xi Jinping is a true believer in a bankrupt totalitarian ideology . . . that informs his decades-long desire for global hegemony of Chinese communism. America can no longer ignore the fundamental political and ideological differences between our countries, just as the CCP has never ignored them.

Such rhetoric aims to lay the groundwork for a more intense phase of U.S.-Chinese friction by echoing Cold War depictions of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire,” delegitimizing China’s government in the eyes of the American public, and portraying China as a bad actor in international politics.

It is not only hawks such as Pompeo who have come to view China through an ideological prism. A wide swath of establishment figures in Washington have come to believe that the real threat to the United States is not China’s growing military and economic power but Beijing’s challenge to the U.S. model of political and economic development. As Kurt Campbell and Jake Sullivan wrote in these pages in 2019, “China may ultimately present a stronger ideological challenge than the Soviet Union did”; its “rise to superpower status will exert a pull toward autocracy.”

This ideological turn in U.S. China policy is unwise. It creates a febrile mood in Washington and makes war more likely. The United States would be better advised to take ideology out of the equation and conduct its relationship with China as a traditional great-power rivalry, in which diplomacy aims to manage competition through compromise, conciliation, and the search for common ground. Ideological contests, on the other hand, are zero-sum in nature. If your rival is evil, compromise—indeed, negotiation itself—becomes appeasement.

DANGER AHEAD

Today, the U.S.-Chinese relationship is in free fall. Economic relations are on the rocks due to the Trump administration’s trade war, and U.S. technology policy aims to put Chinese firms such as Huawei out of business. It is easy to see how any number of flash points could trigger a war in the coming years. Events on the Korean Peninsula could draw in the United States and China, and both countries’ military maneuvers have raised tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Washington is also challenging long-established understandings about Taiwan’s status by edging closer to recognizing the island’s independence from China and openly acknowledging the United States’ military commitment to defend Taiwan. The United States has also reacted strongly to Beijing’s repression of China’s Uighur Muslim minority and to its imposition of a harsh new security law on Hong Kong. In both cases, a bipartisan array of U.S. officials have condemned China, and both Congress and the Trump administration have imposed retaliatory sanctions.

Despite such pushback, however, China is unlikely to abandon its goal of becoming a regional hegemon in East Asia. Beijing will also continue pressing the United States to accord it respect as a great-power equal. Avoiding war by accommodating China's desires would require the United States to retract its security guarantee to Taiwan and recognize Beijing's claims on the island. Washington would also need to accept the reality that its liberal values are not universal and thus stop interfering in China's internal affairs by condemning Beijing's policies in Hong Kong and Xinjiang and issuing thinly veiled calls for regime change.

There is little chance that the United States will take those steps. Doing so would mean acknowledging the end of U.S. primacy. This makes the prospect of a hot war ever more likely. Unlike during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union generally accepted each other's European spheres of influence, today, Washington and Beijing have starkly different views of who should enjoy preeminence in the East China and South China Seas and Taiwan.

If Washington does not cede its dominance in East Asia it is on the fast track to war. U.S. public opinion is also unlikely to act as a check on this potential march to war. Historically, the country's foreign policy establishment has not been particularly responsive to public opinion, and many American voters know little about U.S. overseas military commitments and their implications. In the event of a Chinese attack, especially on Taiwan, the "rally around the flag" effect and the U.S. government's ability to manipulate public opinion would likely neuter public opposition to war. U.S. leaders would condemn Beijing as a ruthless, aggressive, and expansionist communist dictatorship aiming to suppress the freedom-loving people of a democratic territory. The U.S. public would be told that war was necessary to uphold the United States' universal values. Of course, as was the case with World War I, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq war, public disillusionment would set in if the war went badly. By then, however, it would be too late.

Over the past few years, multiple observers—including leading China analysts in the United States, such as Robert Kagan and Evan Osnos—have suggested that the United States and China might be, like the United Kingdom and Germany in 1914, "sleepwalking" into war. Although the march toward conflict continues, everyone's eyes are now wide open. The trouble is that although supporters of increased confrontation are making their case loudly and clearly, opposition to

such policies has been surprisingly muted within the foreign policy establishment. One reason is that many who typically advocate policies of strategic self-discipline and restraint in U.S. foreign policy have, in recent years, become far more hawkish when it comes to China. Among scholars and analysts who generally agree that the United States should disengage from the Middle East (and, some say, even from Europe), few support similar strategic adjustments in East Asia. Instead, some in this camp—notably the distinguished realist scholar John Mearsheimer—now claim that the United States must oppose China’s drive for regional hegemony. But this argument is based on the geopolitical nightmare that obsessed the British strategic thinker Sir Halford Mackinder at the beginning of the twentieth century: if a single power dominated the Eurasian heartland, it could attain global hegemony. Mackinder’s argument has many weaknesses. It is the product of an era that equated military power with population size and coal and steel production. The Eurasian threat was overhyped in Mackinder’s day, and it still is. Chinese regional hegemony is not something worth going to war over.

Whether the United States can, or will, peacefully cede its dominance in East Asia and acknowledge China’s standing as its great-power equal is an open question. If Washington does not do so, however, it is on the fast track to war—one that might make the military disasters of Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq pale in comparison.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-10-13/coming-storms>

Afghanistan After Doha Deal By Shahid Javed Burki

The deal the Afghan Taliban and the Americans signed in Doha, the capital of Qatar, was supposed to move Afghanistan a step or two closer to evolving a system of governance that would meet the needs of its diverse population. The agreement was based on several assumptions. The Americans would pull out of the country and leave Afghan affairs to the Afghans. The Taliban would become a part of the system with the government in Kabul giving up the political structure under which the country has operated for almost two decades. The new system would not necessarily adopt western-style democratic governance. Instead, the country would be governed by a political order that was clearly Islamic. What was meant to be Islamic would be determined through negotiations among different segments of the Afghan society. The Taliban seemed to have accepted that women's rights would be protected.

This was a tall order but it was clear from the start that the two sides that signed the deal had only one objective: the Americans and the Taliban wanted foreign troops out of the country. The Taliban were persuaded that they had the local following and military strength to make Afghanistan an Islamic state. It is interesting that the Taliban signed the agreement as representatives of a political entity called the Islamic Emirate.

Which way Afghanistan will go matters a great deal for Pakistan. How would the emergence of an Islamic state with which it shared a long border affect Pakistan? How would Pakistan be impacted if Afghanistan's Pakhtun population succeeds in imposing its beliefs on other ethnic groups? There are twice as many Pakhtuns in Pakistan as in Afghanistan. How would an extremist Sunni state deal with the Shi'ite Iran, another Pakistani neighbour? I will try and find answers to these questions in the weeks and months ahead. For the moment, I will concern myself with the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

Negotiations are continuing between representatives of the Afghanistan government in Kabul and the Taliban in Doha. These discussions were supposed to follow the script written jointly by the Taliban and the United States that was signed on February 29, 2020. The Kabul government headed by President

Ashraf Ghani was excluded from the deliberations since the Taliban had refused to accept that those who governed from Kabul were representing the people. The Kabul government was considered by them to be the handmaiden of Washington and not representative of the people of the country. However, the Taliban agreed that they would talk to the Kabul authorities once some 5,000 prisoners held by the government were released. The release took time. Only when that was completed the Taliban sat down with the government in Kabul to work out a constitutional government in which they would be included. In the meantime, it was expected that the insurgency would not continue to mount attacks on the government. That has not happened.

What is especially worrying is the emergence of leaders in several parts of the troubled country who are enforcing on the local population their version of Islamic rule. Their focus is on the place of women in a Muslim society such as the one they would like to see develop in Afghanistan. An example of this line of thinking is the cleric Mawlawi Mujib Rehman Ansari, 36, who claims to be a descendant of a revered 11th century Muslim Sufi saint, Abdullah Ansari of Herat. The saint's tomb is near the cleric's mosque who has significant following in the area. According to one assessment, "in his slice of Herat, Mawlawi Ansari has resurrected perhaps the most despised relic of the Taliban rule during the late 1990s: the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice which brutally enforced Sharia law. In the mullah's neighbourhood of Gozargah, his enforcers wear white tunics adorned with crossed swords logo of his religious movement. They intercept couples in cars, on motorcycles and on the street, questioning them separately and sometimes demanding a marriage certificate."

Ansari blamed what he saw as laxity in the Afghan society that needed to be addressed. "If the government did its job properly, we would be its servants. But it doesn't, so we have the responsibility to stand on our feet. There is no justice in the Afghanistan system, so we must provide justice. People want Islamic government with Sharia law." When told that many women in the Herat area despise his harsh tactics, he told journalists that "only impure and immoral women felt threatened. Women of virtue and chastity obey his strictures and cover their bodies and hair."

Leaders such as Ansari were questioned by the members of the educated segment of the Afghan society. According to Tariq Nabi, a prominent Islamic scholar, Ansari and those like him have created a worrisome parallel government

based on the ultraconservative Wahabi interpretation of Islam. He said that other extremist scholars have imposed similar versions of Shariah law in other parts of the country. Abdul Majid Samim, another Islamic scholar, said many Afghans embraced Ansari and other extremist clerics because they condemned the government that was in power in Kabul and its American backers. Under pressure by hardline clerics, the government seemed to be accommodating their demands. Recently, the government-run Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs revived its dormant Office for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice though officials responsible for the move insisted that it was not meant to support Ansari's checkpoints.

There were other problems that needed to be dealt with in the post Doha-agreement period. One was the continuing assaults by the Taliban on government forces. One of the worst incidents occurred in the Helmand province that lasted for 10 days in October. The attack caused serious casualties and forced thousands of villagers to flee their homes and left scores hospitalised. The US responded by bombing areas where the Taliban held sway.

The Taliban responded aggressively to the US action. "All contents of the US-Islamic Emirate accord are unambiguous, but the other side has violated its commitments on numerous occasions, engaging in provocative actions and bombing non-combat zones," Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said in a statement issued on October 17. "All responsibility shall fall squarely on the American side." Earlier the Taliban had expressed satisfaction at the decision that seems to have been taken by US President Donald Trump that he would like to see all American troops leave Afghanistan. Only then American soldiers would be able to spend their Christmas holidays with their families. Zalmay Khalilzad, the US envoy to the Doha talks, tweeted on October 17 that both sides had agreed on a "reset" that would reduce violence. But the Afghan government delegation was troubled by these developments. "We still want to act responsibly and find a way to end the war through negotiations, but as the violence rises, public pressure is mounting and people are starting to question why we are even at the table," said delegate Nader Nadery. Afghanistan is not going the way it was supposed to travel when the Doha deal was done.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2270676/afghanistan-after-doha-deal>

Evolving Dynamics of Afghan Peace Process

By Iqbal Khan

SUCCESS and failure of the Afghan peace process depends on the trajectories that the US and Afghan government follow during ongoing intra-Afghan dialogue. Ostensibly, the US is trying to end Afghan war responsibly, deliberately, on such terms which may yield an assurance of safety of its core national interests in Afghanistan and the region. In this context, the US Joint Chiefs Chairman General Mark Milley has stated that pulling out of the residual 4,500 troops depends on the Taliban reducing attacks and making progress in peace talks with the Kabul government.

Peace process is moving ahead via formal as well as informal channels. Former Prime Minister of Afghanistan Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's three-day visit to Pakistan marked the revival of contact. As an erstwhile Mujahedeen leader, he has the reputation of an Afghan leader having friendly disposition towards Pakistan. This was the second high-level visit from Afghanistan in recent weeks. Earlier, Dr Abdullah Abdullah, the chief of Afghan High Peace Council, visited Pakistan in September. Hekmatyar belongs to the exclusive club of veteran Afghan resistance leadership who at the prime of their youth left their studies to struggle against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. He symbolizes the agony and pain of his generation, many of his 'Comrades at Arms' have left for their heavenly abode without seeing the end of turmoil in their country.

Landmark event of the visit was his Public Talk at premier think-tank of Pakistan, Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, where he outlined his vision of Afghanistan's future, charted the challenges and pointed towards a viable way forward. Former Premier of Afghanistan said, "The only durable solution for peace in the Afghanistan lies in withdrawal of US forces and establishment of a non-aligned, independent and sovereign government by the Afghan representatives". He also urged India to "settle the Kashmir dispute according to wishes of Kashmiri people". During the visit, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar held talks with Pakistani national leadership, including President, Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. He discussed several issues, including the peace push, Afghan refugees, bilateral trade and student scholarships, with the Pakistani leadership. He praised Pakistan by saying that getting the Taliban to the negotiating table

without Islamabad's backing was not possible. "I am happy that Pakistan has adopted a new policy, supporting the peace process and reducing tension between the two neighbours," he said. He announced starting separate negotiations with the Afghan Taliban to help bring peace to the war-torn country. "We have decided to start our own negotiations with the Taliban.

First, it would be between the Taliban and Hizb-e-Islami, and then all other political parties will join us," Hekmatyar announced. Hekmatyar said Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wants to remain in power, that constitutes "a big hurdle in [the progress of ongoing] intra-Afghan dialogue." He accused Ghani of not consulting with political leaders before starting talks with the insurgents. "We support the peace agreement signed between the US and the Taliban despite reservations," he said. However, "Peace in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without bringing all stakeholders on board," he added. Hekmatyar criticized India and Iran, saying these were the only two states supporting the Ghani Administration.

Lorne Cook reported for the Associated Press that: "NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on 21 October that the military alliance will not leave Afghanistan until security conditions allow, even as some US troops might be hoping to be back home in time for Christmas". On October 19, the US special envoy to Afghanistan warned that "distressingly high" levels of violence, notably in the Taliban stronghold of Helmand province threaten to derail peace talks. Reduction in violence is the latest American buzz word that implies Taliban should stop fighting while the Afghan National Security Forces and the US led occupation forces should keep brow beating Taliban, with impunity and in clear violation of February 29, 2020 US-Taliban Agreement. Hekmatyar said it was the requirement of justice that those who have sacrificed for Afghanistan for so many years should have the right to govern the country now. "We have lost one million people in the war. We have six million refugees and over three million internally-displaced people. We cannot tolerate foreign forces anymore on our land to kill our innocent people," he said. He said the US has been defeated in Afghanistan without achieving any goals and considers the corrupt and incompetent Kabul government the main reason for its failure. It will be a mistake if the US now adopts another policy other than leaving Afghanistan, he added.

He proposed that Afghan groups should have the opportunity to enter into negotiations with each other at a neutral venue. The discussion agenda would be

withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and an independent sovereign government. The other national issues such as constitution and type of government should be left for later talks after peace is restored. These are national issues and no external forces have the right to decide about these matters, he added. He hoped the Americans would not repeat the deadly mistake of the Soviets who established their puppet government in Kabul before leaving Afghanistan. While talking about the current situation in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, Hekmatyar said that India should learn from the defeat of the (former) Soviet Union and NATO in Afghanistan, which proves force alone cannot resolve any issue. “I condemn atrocities and barbarism against innocent people in Kashmir and other parts of the world,” he said. “The Kashmir issue cannot be resolved by force. India should resolve it as per the will of Kashmiri people.”

During his meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan on 20 October, Hekmatyar appreciated Pakistan’s positive role in facilitating the Afghan peace process. Prime Minister Imran underscored historic bonds of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Afghanistan; he also expressed concerns about the disruptive role of ‘spoilers’, within and outside Afghanistan. Journey to Afghan peace is up for a bumpy ride. All realistic assessments point towards bleak prospects of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan—at least in immediate timeframe. While Americans could soon become indifferent, Pakistan may have to confront a long-term problem at hand handle.

—The writer is a freelance columnist based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/evolving-dynamics-of-afghan-peace-process/>

The Global Impact of US Elections By Talat Masood

The world anxiously awaits the outcome of the US presidential elections. Although America does not enjoy the level of supremacy as it did until a few years ago, it is still very clearly the dominating centre of strategic, economic and technological power and commands considerable influence in majority of the countries of the world. The policies that it pursues and the strategic direction that it takes especially in respect to the regional countries has a strong bearing on others. And Pakistan is no stranger to this experience.

Whereas historically US presidents have been generally close to India, but President Trump in collaboration with Israel has raised the level of this relationship to new heights. In essence he considers India a convenient partner against China at the regional level and is assisting it in strengthening its military and economic capacity. But this policy has adverse consequences for Pakistan that are being overlooked by the Trump administration.

It is expected that the Democrat candidate, Joe Biden, whose chances of winning the presidential race are more favourable would be relatively more mature and balanced in dealing with foreign countries and faithfully adhere to international and regional commitments. More importantly, while keeping pressure on China to take measures to adhere to correct trade practices, the Biden administration is expected to be less raucous. And would promote globalisation.

He would strengthen US relations with NATO countries and Japan and South Korea and intensify pressure on North Korea. President Trump's contention that NATO and its Western and other global allies have exploited US largesse and it is time to end this benevolence, not realising that America benefited as much even more by this co-operation.

The US leadership's main challenge remains to heal the internal divisions that have reached a level not witnessed in the recent past. And pursue foreign policy that is defined by the demands of globalisation. Its military at land, sea, or air, however, still remains the most dominant and in space has made huge strides to stay in the front. Its soft power is unparalleled.

Despite that, America's lofty position is clearly under challenge. Whereas, its defence budget remains the highest in the world and China may not be close to that level of spending but is developing an effective deterrence and modernising its forces at a fast pace. Russian military power, defence technology and weapon systems also are cutting edge although its economy remains weak.

A major concern among European allies is that Washington is only interested in promoting its own interest and is least concerned about them. This has been repeatedly demonstrated during Trump's current term. Germany and France along with the other European Union countries now play a more prominent role at the UN and other international institutions aimed to constrain America's hard power.

The more significant outcome is that US influence worldwide has decreased along with its power. This was only natural as there was a lack of convergence in national interests between Washington and other major allies.

Moreover, Trump's presidency operated in a moral vacuum that has promoted a value-bereft global society. His contempt for culture and accepted norms of social behaviour has been equally damaging. It is very likely that in the event Joe Biden became president, he would make a serious effort at resorting to American influence globally in a constructive way and resetting moral values. And ensuring that American foreign and economic policies serve the best interest of the world at large.

In foreign policy, a major expectation from Joe Biden would be that he works toward reducing the tension with China and Russia and develop a sustainable working relationship with them. President Trump has literally promoted a cold war with China that has had serious consequences for the rest of the world and especially for countries like Pakistan. Whereas, Pakistan would like to have a balanced relationship with the US despite its strong and mutually beneficial strategic partnership with China in CPEC and other defence and economic projects.

On Kashmir, Biden and the vice-president nominee are expected to be more vocal on human rights issues and to take a constructive and balanced position on Palestine. Biden has expressed his opposition to Israel's annexation of the West

Bank land. But will he be able to prevent Israel from annexing West Bank is questionable.

On the economic front, President Trump has shown scant regard for IMF and the World Bank. Most worrisome has been his attitude toward the World Health Organization, at a time when the world caught in the Covid-19 pandemic desperately needs its services for guidance and support.

Even globalisation suffered during Trump's presidency. According to respected economists his inward-looking economic policies may have benefited the US in the short-term but would have long-term adverse consequences for America and the world.

President Trump has been truly contemptuous of international treaties and obligations. During his presidency, the US pulled out of the Paris Agreement, unilaterally left the Human Rights Council, and the United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organization, and also cancelled the nuclear deal with Iran. President Trump has shown little regard for NATO and has decided to withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty. Although both US and Russia have decided to extend it by one year, meanwhile they would try to negotiate a new treaty.

There was absence of any discussion on terrorism in presidential debates and for this the credit would go to President Trump as mentioned in one of the recent Op-eds in The New York Times. This is in sharp contrast to the situation that existed four years back.

Undoubtedly, President Trump showed no respect for human values that Americans and the world in general would like to adhere to. His re-election would reinforce this trend and erode the moral foundations of not only broad segments of society in the US but in other parts of the world as well. President Trump seemed more comfortable with despots and authoritarian rulers than with democrats. This only emboldened them to tighten their grip on the masses.

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Relationship Maintenance With Russia **Should Be the Next President's Priority By** **Daniel R. DePetris**

After years of mutual sanctions, diplomatic expulsions, and cyberattacks, it is difficult to imagine U.S.-Russia relations getting any worse than they are today. But if the next U.S. president doesn't change Washington's overall approach to Moscow and adopt a policy more realistic in its objectives, then the relationship between the countries will further deteriorate.

It is tempting to look at the last decade and conclude that Washington and Moscow are trapped in a permanent state of animosity. Russia's interference in the U.S. election process has turned Moscow into a pariah in the Beltway, souring even standard diplomatic conversations. Russian support to Syria's Bashar al-Assad, Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro and Aleksandr Lukashenko, Belarus's besieged president, has led many U.S. policymakers to write off Russia as a lost cause. The feeling is mutual in Moscow, where there is a sense that the bilateral relationship will remain bogged down regardless of who is in the White House.

The question going forward is less about whether the United States and Russia can become friends and more about how the two nations can come to a basic understanding of one another's core security interests. At the bottom, the relationship is suffering from a zero-sum outlook in both capitals, where an adversarial contest for power is viewed as the only acceptable path. The result has been a "dangerous dead-end" between two powers that possess roughly 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons.

As much as the U.S. foreign-policy establishment may not like it, there are certain issues Washington can't change. This is especially the case with events occurring near Russia's borders. Belarus is one example. While the United States and its European allies would love to see the autocratic Belarus turn into a pro-Western democracy, Moscow will not tolerate such a shift given the extensive interests it has at stake. The United States has little power to alter the status-quo in Minsk—and what power it does possess is dwarfed by the billions

of dollars in loans and fuel subsidies Russia provides to the Belarusian government. If anything, active U.S. involvement on behalf of the demonstrations in Minsk is more likely to elicit deeper Russian involvement in the country.

As Ukraine has shown, Moscow is willing and able to expend military resources and deal with the economic consequences of its decisions when intervention serves its own national interest. More than six years after the pro-Russia Viktor Yanukovich was deposed by a popular rebellion, Ukraine remains in a state of internal conflict due in large measure to Russia's military and financial support to separatist units in the east of the country. The enactment of numerous U.S. sanctions and the export of anti-tank weapons to Kyiv have done nothing to change the situation on the ground or persuade Moscow to soften its position. After all, Ukraine is far more important to Moscow than it is to Washington—and thus Russia is willing to invest more than the United States ever could.

The next U.S. administration should keep these examples in mind as it formulates its policy on Russia. Washington must separate what it really needs from Moscow and what it wants; it must be cognizant about how little influence it has in Russia's neighborhood; and it must understand how an activist U.S. stance in Russia's near-abroad very often makes the situation more dire. U.S. officials must also be crystal clear to their Russian counterparts about what Russian actions they won't tolerate—blatant interference in the U.S. system of government being at the top of the list.

U.S. policy should keep in mind that Russia is hardly the one-hundred-foot giant it is often made out to be. In fact, modern-day Russia remains a shell of its former Soviet glory. At \$21.3 trillion, the U.S. economy is more than twelve times the size of Russia's. The United States spends more on missile defense, maritime capabilities and munitions than Russia spends on its entire military. Moscow simply doesn't have the capacity or financial resources to sustain a large-scale military operation, let alone an occupation of a NATO member state.

While Russia can't compete with the United States, it can't be ignored either. The country remains the world's largest nuclear power with a proud history and a joint force capable of projecting military power. Whether it was Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014 or Syria in 2015, Russia will deploy military force if doing so is required to preserve its geopolitical position.

The next U.S. administration will likely be tempted to tighten the sanctions regime against and make diplomacy with the Russians conditional. This temptation, while popular in the U.S. foreign policy community, should be avoided in favor of selective engagement on issues Washington and Moscow can cooperate on—arms control, public health, military de-escalation, stable trade relations, and non-interference in one another's domestic affairs to name a few.

A substantive, cool-headed dialogue with Russia can be as tedious as pulling teeth. This, however, doesn't mean such a dialogue is any less necessary. America should engage with Russia when it can and confront the country when it must because that is the most effective way to stabilize one of the world's most important bilateral relationships.

Daniel R. DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a columnist at the Washington Examiner.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/relationship-maintenance-russia-should-be-next-president%E2%80%99s-priority-171882>

Globalization Needs Rebuilding, Not Just Repair

By Jean Pisani-Ferry

A second term for US President Donald Trump would complete the demolition of the post-war international economic system. Trump's aggressive unilateralism, chaotic trade initiatives, loathing of multilateral cooperation, and disregard for the very idea of a global commons would overpower the resilience of the web of rules and institutions that underpin globalization. But would a victory for Joe Biden lead to a repair of the global system — and, if so, of what kind? This is a much harder question to answer.

There will be no lack of eagerness to erase Trump's legacy, either in the United States or internationally. But an attempt merely to restore the pre-Trump status quo would fail to address major challenges, some of which contributed to Trump's election in 2016. As Adam Posen of the Peterson Institute has pointed out, the task ahead is one of rebuilding, rather than repair. It should start with a clear identification of the problems that the international system must tackle.

The first priority should be to move toward a commons-oriented system. The preservation of global public goods such as a stable climate or biodiversity was understandably ignored by the architects of the post-war international economic order, and (less understandably) was still a secondary priority in the system's post-Cold War partial renewal. Policymakers focused on visible linkages through trade and capital flows, rather than on the invisible ties that bind us to a common destiny, which helps to explain why the rules and institutions governing the latter are still much weaker.

Biden's intention to rejoin unconditionally the 2015 Paris climate agreement is to be welcomed, but it will not by itself turn the accord into an ambitious, enforceable programme. The large number of players and the strong temptation to let others shoulder the burden make preserving the global commons notoriously hard. Even in the area of health, solutions to date do not measure up to the challenge.

Climate action is critical. Absent an elusive global consensus, efforts will have to rely on a coalition whose members converge on hard targets and on border-

adjustment mechanisms applicable to trade with third countries. Implementation will be fraught with difficulties. Success will require agreeing on which trade measures are acceptable and which are just covert protectionism. That is a high bar to reach. Having already indicated its intention to introduce a border adjustment, the European Union is on the front line here. This is a major responsibility.

The second priority is to make the global economic system as rivalry-proof as possible. Regardless of who wins the US presidential election on November 3, great-power competition between the US and China will continue to dominate international relations. But the Cold War analogy is misleading because today's protagonists are major economic partners. Whereas the Soviet Union's share of US imports never exceeded a fraction of a percentage point, China currently accounts for 18 percent. Die-hard US advocates of decoupling wrongly view further Chinese development as a national security threat and want to end this interdependence in an attempt to halt China's economic rise. As the Peterson Institute's Nicholas Lardy has argued, however, a general decoupling from China would be a "high-cost, low-benefit policy."

The question, then, is how to recognize the reality of geopolitical tensions while containing their impact on global economic relations. The relevant comparison is not with the Cold War, but with the pre-1914 rivalry between Britain and Germany in the context of the first major period of globalization. Contemporary claims that economic ties made war unthinkable were proved wrong. But as long as states refrain from fighting a real war, a strong multilateral regime can help repress their temptation to wage it through other means.

Europe is the biggest of all bystanders. It risks suffering collateral damage from the fight between the two global giants, both of which have started bullying it. But the EU is not toothless. It should stand up for the rules-based international economic order and lead the fight against its weaponization. As the European Council on Foreign Relations argued in a recent report, the bloc should start by equipping itself against economic coercion.

The third priority is to strengthen safeguards for workers and citizens. Already prevailing doubts about globalization have grown as a result of the US-China trade conflict, rising inequality, and the realization that in a situation of acute stress such as the pandemic, advanced economies could struggle to procure

simple equipment. Citizens and workers want an economic system that better protects them. Governments have taken note, and want to show that they care. The question is how.

The primary response should be domestic: from education and training to place-based revitalization and redistribution, there is much that governments can do, but neglected in the heyday of free-market globalization. Now is the time for new policies.

But experience has shown that few national governments can carve out a complete response without a supportive global environment. Individual countries cannot curb global corporate tax avoidance and aggressive regulatory competition by themselves. Policymakers globally should acknowledge that the sustainability of economic openness depends on whether its benefits are distributed in fairway. And, as Harvard's Dani Rodrik has long argued, the global system should both promote openness and allow room for national adaptation.

Each of the three goals — taking care of global public goods, containing the weaponization of economic relations, and making the system fairer — is challenging. Combining all of them will be daunting. Never in history were rival power centers compelled to cooperate in addressing common threats of a comparable magnitude. It is not hard to imagine how policymakers might use the commendable goals of avoiding carbon leakage or buttressing what Europe now calls “strategic autonomy” as pretexts for outright protectionism. Moreover, how will the world avoid a global economic breakup if China is simultaneously seen as a national-security threat, a reckless polluter, and a destroyer of social rights? Such challenges will severely test leaders in the years ahead.

Source:<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/editorials-columns/globalisation-needs-rebuilding-not-just-repair>

US-China Ties: Readjustment Required Post-US Election By Cdre Baber Bilal Haider (R)

US-China relations have seen many ups and downs over the years. Right from the Chinese declaration of independence as the People's Republic of China under Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong, on 1st October 1949, the US and China, both have been following two different paths. Be it the issue of Chinese support to North Korea against UN and US during 1950-53, US military and nuclear threat in support of Taiwan in 1954 and US support to Tibetan uprising in 1959. Lately, China has shown a marvellous economic rise after the successful economic initiatives announced by Deng Xiaoping on 18th December 1978. Earlier, China developed formal relations with the USA in July 1971 when US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to China through the courtesy of Pakistan. During the same time, India, another heavyweight in Asian politics followed the non-aligned approach and kept getting benefits from all parties, including the US, {erstwhile}Soviet Union and China. However, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the US enjoyed a single global status without any meaningful challenge for the last 40 years. Lately, the Chinese economy has provided her the strength which allowed her to initiate a very ambitious plan to connect Asia, Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks along six corridors with an aim for improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth. Economic strength is also providing adequate military muscles to Chinese armed forces and facilitating global reach. This initiative has certainly recognized China as a global player, challenging US global interests.

On the other hand, the USA cannot afford to match Chinese economic initiatives globally. US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal, climate and economic arrangements with the EU and other allied countries has further shrunk her global influence. Primarily, the USA has been following policies of erecting walls and barriers, whereas Chinese initiatives appear to be focusing on cementing relations without barriers and walls. The USA, a status co power, is trying hard to cling to her global power status without economic investment, whereas, China, ably supported by Russia, is a rising global power. To address this worrisome situation, the USA has launched several diplomatic offensives against China. Recently, US Secretary of States Mike Pompeo visited India, Sri Lanka,

Maldives, Vietnam and Indonesia, making a case against China of encroachment on sovereign nations of South-East Asia, Asia and the Indo-Pacific regions. Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, India, and several Far-Eastern countries are already on board with the USA against Chinese moves in the South and East China Seas. US policy of appeasement of India and the US Indo-Pacific policy is also important steps in the same direction. India, a big player because of her size, geographical location, resources, economic, scientific and military power is now becoming a key player in US power games against China. US continuous support to India in economic, military and nuclear fields, ignoring her track record against minorities and treatment of Kashmiris, violation of human security, is tilting the regional balance of power. India, being an independent power, is trying her best to balance out the relations between US-India and India-China. Thus, India will continue to get benefit from the USA, portraying as her ally against China but is not likely to opt for any concrete steps. Indian ambition is only to attain a global power status and get a Security Council permanent seat with the help of the USA.

USA is not likely to get any material benefit from India (like India has opted purchase of Dassault Rafale aircraft against US offers and her nuclear supply group deal is also not yielding any meaningful benefit to US interest). Similarly, despite US best efforts to normalize the Afghanistan situation, India has played a spoiler role against US interest to keep the US entangled in Afghanistan. We know that India is a major player in the Indian Ocean (IO), but she cannot match Chinese economic power coupled with her military muscles in the IO. Moreover, both India and the USA understand the importance of global trade routes passing through the Indian Ocean which cannot be disrupted at any cost. There is another angle to the US-India cooperation. US blind support to India will certainly one day create another big power centre which may turn against US interest in the Indian Ocean. This has already happened when the US-supported China against the Soviet Union and was able to reward the UN Security Council seat to the Peoples Republic of China. Now, the US is trying to make India a regional and global competitor for the Chinese rise. Recent border clashes between India & China and subsequent actions from both sides is testimony to their wisdom. Moreover, hypothetically speaking, it is in the interest of both China and the USA to support Pakistan in her struggle against economic vows, the effort against terrorism, and the threat from India. It may be farfetched idea but in case India becomes a regional monster, because of US continuous military and economic

support and opts to follow an independent route, outside US influence, it is only Pakistan, which has the strength, experience and ability to deal with India.

The US needs to re-adjust policies towards “global good” instead of looking inward only. Otherwise, the writing is on the wall, where China with the help of like-minded states is going to re-adjust the global affairs, (like Asian Infrastructure Development Bank, challenging world economic institutions under US influence). Similarly, the US also needs to review its policies of economic sanctions, military threats and regime change against non-friendly countries. Chinese policies of winning both hearts and minds are yielding desired results at the global level. Future interstate relations will not be based on military and economic threats, but cooperation and inter-dependence will be the key to make the world safer and more peaceful.

—The writer is Executive Director at an Islamabad-based think-tank.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/us-china-ties-readjustment-required-post-us-election/>

When a President Sabotages His Own Country **By Nicholas Kristof**

In the end, the biggest interference in America's elections didn't come from Russia, or China, or Iran or North Korea. It came from the president of the United States.

As I write this, we still don't know for certain who won the election, although Joe Biden seems in a strong position to win the White House and Republicans to retain the Senate.

But we do know for certain that President Trump lied to the public early Wednesday morning when he claimed victory and sought a judicial rescue from voters. His brazenness undermines our election system and the very idea of a peaceful transition of power.

It's hard to imagine that the Supreme Court, however politicized it may have become, would go along with such a charade. I don't believe that Trump, if he loses in a clear-cut way, will be able to remain in office; if he tries to barricade himself in the Oval Office, he'll be escorted out on Jan. 20.

Yet what Trump has already done is what the Russians have always tried to do: cast doubt on American elections and destabilize the United States. The 2018 federal indictment of Russian election hackers alleged that they were engaged in "information warfare against the United States of America," by fostering confusion and distrust that impair the integrity of elections and damage the legitimacy of the government that emerges.

That's precisely what Trump is now doing. He may hug and kiss American flags and pretend to be a great patriot, but this is a betrayal of our country.

If Biden wins after this poisoning of the chalice, he will inherit a badly divided country after an election that many will deem illegitimate, and it will be harder to govern and more difficult for the United States to exert influence around the world. It's one thing for Russian hackers in St. Petersburg to sabotage our

government; it's far more tragic when the president does the same from the White House.

Vice President Mike Pence spoke right after Trump and did not repeat the president's claim of victory or his call for the courts to intervene. But Pence let his boss's lies stand, and most leading Republicans have also kept quiet.

Trump's latest attack on the integrity of America's electoral system and on the peaceful transfer of power — the litmus test for any democracy — comes after years of other lies and efforts to discredit the electoral system. And yes, it's true that it is an electoral system that has obvious undemocratic elements, but these aren't what Trump has been talking about.

Biden will easily win the popular vote by millions of ballots, and yet the outcome is in doubt only because of the Electoral College. Between 2000 and 2016, in two of the three times when Republicans won the presidency, it was while losing the popular vote. And if the Supreme Court does weigh in on this election, one-third of the justices were appointed by Trump after he lost the popular vote by 2.9 million votes.

The Senate has similar issues. The current Democratic senators represent 14 million more voters than the Republican senators, but it's the Democrats who are in the minority because of the outsize influence of low-population states.

Senator Mike Lee, a Republican from Utah, has bluntly said, "we're not a democracy" but a republic (actually, we're both). Lee, along with Senator Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, even recommended repealing the 17th Amendment, which provides for direct election of senators. If senators were again chosen by state legislatures, Republicans would gain a few seats.

More broadly, much of the Republican Party seems to fear voters and believes that its best path to victory is to suppress voting or even, in the case of Harris County, Texas, discard ballots. We no longer have poll taxes and grandfather clauses to disenfranchise Black voters, but G.O.P. officials modernized the barriers to voting by people of color. One careful study published in *Scientific American* last year found that voters in predominantly Black neighborhoods are 74 percent more likely to have to wait more than 30 minutes to vote than residents of white neighborhoods.

Trump himself said in March that he opposed efforts to encourage more voting because “if you agreed to it, you’d never have a Republican elected in this country again.”

Yet here’s another thought: Perhaps Republicans and Democrats alike have been too quick to assume that higher turnouts are inevitably bad for G.O.P. prospects.

This election appears to have had the highest turnout in 120 years, and Biden and Trump may end up as the No. 1 and No. 2 winners of the popular vote in American history. Trump had the support of millions more voters in this election than four years ago.

According to exit polls, Trump won votes from 18 percent of Black men and 36 percent of Latino men, along with those of 58 percent of white men.

The Democrats had a great deal going for them in this election: a nominee viewed as soothing and electable, streams of new outrages from Trump, frequent revelations of corruption or improprieties involving him, denunciations of him from family members and former aides, and, above all, a mismanaged pandemic that killed 230,000 Americans and devastated the economy.

Yet many voters saw all this and were unfazed. Dr. Irwin Redlener, an expert in managing health disasters, says that Trump won nine of the 10 states with the highest prevalence of the coronavirus.

So as I fret about Trump’s efforts to do Russia’s work and delegitimize this election, I also keep wrestling with this question: How is it that so many millions of Americans watched Trump for four years, suffered the pain of his bungling of Covid-19, listened to his stream of lies, observed his attacks on American institutions — and then voted for him in greater numbers than before?

Source:<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/04/opinion/donald-trump-election-2020.html>

What Can Russia Expect From a Biden Presidency? By Lincoln Pigman

Ask analysts in Russia about the U.S. presidential race, and you're unlikely to detect much love for either candidate or much hope for significant progress in Russian-American relations.

"I don't believe anybody expects any change regardless of who will win," Fyodor Lukyanov says. Andrey Kortunov concurs, ruling out "any significant impact on relations between Washington and Moscow."

That may surprise stateside readers, for whom the perceived difference between President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden on Russia might as well be that between night and day.

As Kortunov admits, it's not that "there is no difference at all between" the two candidates. Instead, the problem is that the popular perception of the two candidates — Trump as invariably deferential to Putin, be it out of sympathy for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, or because of a financial or other questionable relationship with Moscow, and Biden as the hawk "Putin doesn't want ... to be president" because "I know them [the Russians], and they know me" — belies some critical similarities and differences between the Trump administration's Russia policy and that of a Biden administration as I envision it.

Many U.S. debates on Russia come down to who or what appears tougher on it. In this respect, Moscow can expect essentially more of the same when it comes to punishment of its international behavior — materially, anyway, with Biden certain to condemn wrongdoing by Russia more loudly than Trump has.

Trump's time in office has seen Russia repeatedly hit with new penalties for its actions abroad, not only by Congress, with its passage of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in 2017, but also by the executive branch, where the Treasury and State Departments have used executive orders as well as sanctions laws like CAATSA and the Magnitsky Act to respond to Kremlin transgressions new and old.

The conventional wisdom that Congress has since January 2017 been alone in pushing for, and pushing through, new Russia sanctions is an oversimplification, and congressional pressure cannot explain all such measures taken by the executive branch in that time.

Still, under a Biden administration, getting out of the driver's seat on Russia would probably feel safe for hitherto vocal members of Congress. The bipartisan consensus in support of a tough-on-Russia policy — to which Biden broadly subscribes, as do progressive Democrats who have broken with Biden on the Middle East and other foreign policy matters — means that partisans aside, Biden would find in Congress a partner in making Russia policy, not the antagonist of Trump's presidency, especially his first two years in office.

Crucially, a Biden presidency promises a markedly harder line from Washington on Russia's internal conduct.

Biden's "belie[f] that morality must play a role in U.S. foreign policy, even when inconvenient," as described by Obama administration official and former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, bodes ill for Moscow.

What has effectively been a four-year break from high-level U.S. criticism of its human rights record, and to a lesser extent U.S. engagement in the former Soviet Union, would end with Biden's inauguration as president. On a 2011 visit to Russia as vice president, Biden famously met with opposition figures, "offer[ing] assurances that their plight would not be forgotten amid Washington's efforts to continue to improve relations with Moscow" and even broaching the sensitive subject of then-Prime Minister Putin's political future to caution against his return to the presidency.

Since leaving office, Biden has retained an interest in the struggle of Kremlin critics at home as well as Russia's subversive activities abroad, including in its neighborhood. His lofty rhetoric on developments in the post-Soviet space, from Ukraine's post-revolutionary difficulties to Belarus's post-election crisis, recalls President George W. Bush's 'freedom agenda' in its embrace of America's exceptionalism and responsibility to "champion liberty and democracy" around the world.

It speaks to a values-based perspective that Russia would find working with difficult given the hands-on U.S. role in the region to which it lends itself and relative to Trump's transparently transactional approach to foreign policy. The involvement of allies, with which Biden has signaled he would work extremely closely, would act as a force multiplier that further complicates life for Moscow, especially with Europe's patience with Russia fading as a result of the Alexey Navalny affair.

Russia, then, would seem to have something to lose from a Biden presidency.

Yet much evidence suggests that Biden's Russia policy would be measured. True, Biden and co. may wish to make Russia suffer after the events of 2016, which not only are seen to have contributed to their nominee's defeat but also occurred on their watch. Ben Rhodes's 2018 memoirs recall the unconcealed "incredulity" with which an "animated" Biden reacted to a January 2017 intelligence briefing on Russia's election interference — a far cry from the Biden who in 2010 "adamant[ly]" opposed taking down a U.S. network of Russian spies out of fear that it "would blow up" U.S.–Russia relations, according to the 2014 memoirs of fellow Obama administration official Robert Gates.

Even so, all signs point to a Biden administration pursuing a Russia policy that combines cooperation and confrontation.

In January 2020, Biden pledged to not only "impose real costs on Russia" for its transgressions at home and abroad but also "renew [the U.S.] commitment to arms control for a new era," such as by extending New START, notes he sounded in an August 2016 article endorsing "a [Russia] policy that combines the urgent need for deterrence ... with the prudent pursuit of tactical cooperation and strategic stability."

"[P]rogress in international affairs," he wrote at the time, "so often demands working with those with whom we do not see eye to eye," a philosophy reflected in a December 2017 piece insisting that Moscow and Washington "keep talking," whatever happens. Mike Carpenter, a former Pentagon official close to the former vice president, has said that "Biden's approach to Russia would involve supporting a dialogue" on select issues "from a position of strength," suggesting that four years later, Biden still favors "cooperation with Russia where our interests overlap," from arms control to the Middle East.

Biden's support for restoring and, in fact, reinforcing the U.S.–Russia arms control architecture promises Russia at least one shift for the better, for the simple reason that it is genuine. Trump, a supporter of nuclear modernization who has been surrounded and cheered on by ardent arms control skeptics, has presided over that architecture's erosion, pulling the U.S. out of the INF and Open Skies treaties and conducting bad-faith negotiations with Russia to run out the clock on New START, which Biden shepherded through the Senate as vice president and which expires in February 2021. A Biden presidency would bring Russia a serious negotiating partner in the area of arms control and ensure that the continued contraction of the two countries' shared agenda does not claim as a victim that historically reliable source of cooperation.

Biden may find striking this balance difficult, especially in the first months of his presidency. His administration would be expected to retaliate against three election cycles' worth of meddling by Russia if not also its alleged sponsorship of Taliban attacks on U.S. troops in Afghanistan, which Biden and co. have repeatedly referenced on the campaign trail and in debates, and to convey to Putin that he can no longer “get away with anything.”

The challenge would be to make Moscow acutely aware of the change in management at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue without inflicting so much pain or humiliation on Moscow that it precludes the two countries from enjoying a functioning relationship in the years that follow — quite a needle to thread.

Provided that Moscow officialdom means what it says about wanting a better relationship with Washington, Russia should want Biden to win.

The longer Trump remains in office, the more toxic a brand Russia will become in the U.S., the more traction Washington's more extreme proposals for countering Russia will gain, and the longer Moscow will have to wait for a U.S. administration willing and able to engage in more than limited cooperation with Russia to come along. If nothing else, Washington's behavior would be significantly more predictable under Biden, a change that even Moscow may welcome after four long years dealing with Trump.

Source:<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/11/02/what-can-russia-expect-from-a-biden-presidency-a71927>

Emerging World Order By Kanwar M Dilshad

THE focal point of US foreign policy has largely shifted away from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific. India and US Be BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) that will allow sharing of high-end military technology, classified satellite data and critical information between the two countries. These two “strategic partners” also boosted bilateral defence and military ties. Pompeo will also be visiting Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

China urged Mike Pompeo to “stop sowing discord” between Beijing and countries in the region, undermining the regional peace and stability. There is a massive US military presence all around China and in the Indo-Pacific region. Many US military bases are stationed mostly in Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Guam and Australia. US is bullying other countries to pick sides between the two powers i.e. China and the USA. Joe Biden also will not be soft on China. Now China has no other alternative but to match its “economic miracle” with a military one. On Oct.15, President XI told the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Marine Corps to focus their energy on “preparing for war”. This indicates that China is ready to protect its interests, even if it means an all-out war.

The Belt and Road Initiative is in full swing. When completed, the China-led infrastructure network will establish connectivity throughout Asia as well as the Middle East and Africa and China could become a world-leading hub of trade, technological renovation and, of course, political power. The world is changing. A new world is emerging in which Washington and its allies will no longer shape the world for their corporate capitalist objectives. China is well on its way to reclaim its new status.

The US may have its strategic reasons to block Chinese influence in the region, but it should be well aware of the complexities that are weaved into inter-state regional dynamics here. Cozying up to India is one way in which Washington wants to resist the domination of China but this has a direct impact on its relations with Islamabad. Within the larger domain of superpower rivalry, Pakistan has followed a well-calibrated policy to maintain constructive relations with both China and the US. This suits us and there is no reason why we would

want to weaken our ties with one power in favour of the other. With China, we have maintained a strategically close and well-aligned relationship since the 1970s, and both states have come even closer with the rolling out of CPEC. With the US, we continue to have a strong relationship which is currently paying dividends in many areas including Afghanistan.

It is a delicate balance that we have maintained but it can be adversely impacted if the US starts to enhance India's military capabilities that can constitute a clear and present danger to Pakistan. Washington knows well how India attempted a failed bombing inside Pakistan in early 2019 and nearly brought the two countries to war. It was Pakistan's strategic restraint despite thwarting Indian aggression which avoided an armed conflict.

However, the Narendra Modi government's threatening statements against Pakistan continue to keep the region under the threat of violence. The US should weigh these factors well and ensure its actions contribute to promoting peace instead of feeding into India's belligerence. This is a complex region and Washington should deal with it as such.

—The writer is former Federal Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan and currently Chairman National Democratic Foundation.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/emerging-world-order/>

Regional Conflicts Hampering Growth in Central & S E Asia By Rashid A Mughal

REGIONAL conflicts in Central & SE Asia continue to put brakes on economic development and growth. The ongoing territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia is creating uncertainty and preventing development in the region. The story of the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan agreement, leading to a rather unsuccessful campaign by Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for suppressing the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, is well known. Indeed it is a complex ongoing story, although both governments are straining hard to prevent the LTTE's war against Colombo being once again written into the bilateral agenda. The issue is nevertheless explosive, both in its domestic and international dimensions, in both countries. Events in Tamil Nadu, beginning with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and changes in the electoral fortunes of several Tamil Nadu parties among them, illustrate the point.

Bangladesh has fewer internal issues likely to figure on the bilateral agenda with India, except the hardy perennial of the Hindu — Muslim divide, common to all states in the Indo-Gangetic — Brahmaputra valleys and more recently the influx of Chakma refugees to India. There are territorial disputes between Bangladesh and India, though smaller in size: the disputes centre on a small piece of territory in the Berubari Union, a tiny new island thrown up by physical changes and the delimitation of economic zones in the Bay of Bengal. Fortunately these disputes have been treated by both governments with restraint and no great mistrust has sprung up over them so far. At least one of them, the Berubari Union, is reported to be on its way to being finally resolved to Bangladesh's satisfaction. But dividing the waters of the River Ganges between India and Bangladesh, following the completion of Farrakha barrage, remains disputed. Nepal and Bangladesh have agreed to the scientific principle of developing all eastern rivers as systems for the common benefit of the peoples of the entire valleys in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Here India has balked.

There was a time when some favoured a whole region-wide river training programme, such as was implied in an offer of technical and economic aid by the US President John Kennedy in the 1960s. But both India and Pakistan were then lukewarm about the idea. Bilateral issues and demographic compulsions within

each state, insofar as Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Nepal relations are concerned, criss-cross. It is a pattern that is conspicuous throughout the region. In theory this could be turned to advantage by adopting a regional approach. India's preferred bilateral methodology seems to emphasize divisions rather than unities. For the rest, old India's frontiers have moved in all directions. What is directly relevant is the interplay of two forces: a series of internal disunities among ethnic identities in each successor state of the British Indian Empire are getting mixed up in intra-regional disputes. This threatens both (inherited) modern state structures as well as regional harmony. Ensuring stable regional peace requires much hard work to resolve these polarities. The other element is the intellectual appreciation of the benefits of the regional amity and cooperation. The example of the EC has inspired so many regional cooperation experiments. But SAARC in South Asia remains a stunted growth, inhibited by strong emotions.

South Asian trends, the changes in the USSR, especially in its Asian Republics, tantamount to a veritable earthquake. Successor states in Central Asia are likely to do two things—re-establish cultural, political and economic links with South Asian states, as well as with others in the southern rim of Asia. Second, they would re-orient their economies as autonomous units, diversifying their sources of capital, technology and raw material as well as markets. These economies' demand and supply alike will be huge. As circumstances are now, a few South Asian economies can offer substantial partnership to them. The only notable surplus in South Asia is manpower, mostly unskilled and illiterate, which is unlikely to be needed. No doubt, India has certain capabilities for providing capital and machinery to new Central Asian states but the level of technology offered by India in terms of both cost and quality is unlikely to have an edge over what the major industrial countries can offer. Second, the new states may need longer-term loans and credits that may virtually exclude South Asians as possibly large trading partners.

Pakistan may also have some capability to provide a few of the needs of those states. But its export surpluses are puny and mostly earmarked for dollar-earning markets. Its capability, in contrast with major industrial powers to be a substantial trading partner of the new states, is much smaller. As markets for the new states, the capability of South Asian states is quite as small due largely to: (a) the poverty of the masses throughout South Asia; and (b) most of their markets being already dominated, if not cornered, by big industrial powers. Nevertheless, there is likely to be much talk about new possibilities of economic cooperation

and trade, inspired by memories of ancient trade links between Central Asia and parts of South Asia.

The immediate future is likely to see a political and cultural opening out of the Central Asian States. They will naturally seek to forge links with South Asian states, especially with those that are in the extended South Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. Cultural and political rhetoric of emphasizing the new links is sure to run smack into hard economic facts. Central Asia's more substantial economic links are sure to be with leading western powers — Japan, the EC, the USA, and other European powers and largely with China. A varying amount of competition among major industrial powers to secure a favourable position in these states, if not to corner their markets or raw material, would pose new political problems — both for the Central Asians and South Asians. International relations in Asia may not run a smooth course, since no one knows what political passions will dominate the new emerging powers in Central Asia. It seems likely that their current ethnic prejudices and emotions based on race, religion, sect, language and nationality would, in fact, define their politics: they would naturally want their own armies and air forces to assert their separate identities and conduct their own rivalries, if not wars. That would offer plums on a platter to established arms manufacturers, and roller coaster politics in the region will ensue. It will inevitably exert rather nasty pulls and pressures on South Asia — a region comprising states that are already internally strife-torn and embroiled in deep mistrust.

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

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/regional-conflicts-hampering-growth-in-central-s-e-asia/>

US-India Strategic Congruence By Imran Malik

The global geopolitical alignments are a changing. The world is inexorably moving towards a multipolar dispensation. The US is withdrawing from mainland Asia and is largely restricted to its peripheries only—the Arabian Peninsula in the West and the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) in the East. China is fast emerging as a behemoth to challenge the US' mantle as the uncontested global super power. The US needed a strategic ally/partner on mainland Asia to contain China's meteoric and multidimensional rise. India was chosen for this singular albeit dubious honour. It has been seduced and is being armed and readied for this onerous task.

Despite the fact that India is a mere strategic partner of the US and not an ally yet, the US has signed four foundational agreements with it. They define the current US-Indo strategic alignment and herald a formal defence arrangement in the future.

The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSMIA), was signed in 2002. It sought to lay the foundation for sustained US-Indo defence relations-strategic partnership. It proposed to protect all classified information/technology that they shared. Further, it aimed at promoting interoperability and formed the basis for future US arms sales to India.

The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement, (LEMOA) was signed in September 2016. This basically established an accounting mechanism which allows both countries broad based replenishments from each other's designated military facilities. The Indian Peninsula juts into the Indian Ocean dominating all East-West trade and other naval movements in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Furthermore, the Nicobar and Andaman Islands provide excellent oversight and access to the Malacca Straits—the strategically vital chokepoint on the international sea lines of communications. Thus, both provide tremendous strategic and logistics advantages to military forces foraying forth from them into the IPR.

The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in September 2018. It was essentially a follow up of the GSMIA. COMCASA ensures secure, encrypted military communication and improves interoperability with all other US allies, including QUAD. Data acquired through the COMCASA cannot be divulged by the US without Indian consent. How will India achieve interoperability/synergy with the US when the bulk of its military equipment is of Soviet-Russian origin, remains unsaid? What interoperability implies is critical—not in how the Indians perceive it but how the US ordains it. That will determine the future of joint operations by the two militaries/QUAD and the status of India's famed strategic autonomy.

The Basic Exchange and Coordination Agreement (BECA) was signed in October 2020 between the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defence and India's Ministry of Defence. It allows both countries to share all kinds of military information, aero-space, geo-magnetic and gravity data, maps, nautical and aeronautical charts, commercial and other unclassified imagery, etc. Classified information like sensitive satellite and sensor data can also be shared with proper safeguards. Collaboration in the cyber, space and electro-magnetic spectrums is apparently pending.

Provision of real time targeting and navigation data from the US systems will enhance the accuracy of Indian missiles, PGMs, armed drones and even facilitate aircraft navigation.

However, will US technology mesh with Soviet-Russian military platforms (SU 30 MKI, MIG 29s), or even indigenous Indian systems, seamlessly? For example, will US supplied targeting and navigational data enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of a BRAHMOS missile or the S 400 ABM system? The IAF fiasco at Balakot saw Indian pilots fly French aircraft to launch Israeli PGMs; they hit nothing in the end. Will multiple independent systems operate within the Indian military in parallel, simultaneously—US, Russian, Israeli, British, French and indigenous platforms with their own technologies and compatible data? Will synergetic, cohesive, mutually supporting military forces emerge from this maze of confusing and perhaps conflicting technologies and data? Resultantly, operational strategies will be disjointed, difficult to execute and self-defeating!

However, the US is slowly and steadily tightening its grip on India. Through the foundational agreements, the US has progressively marshalled it to its ranks.

Adroit diplomacy, the skilful exploitation of India's hubris and megalomania, its regional ambitions, the lure of modern weapon systems, technologies, the assured provision of critical data and the promise of recognition at the global level have helped consummate the coup. India is now firmly on the US bandwagon, senselessly willing to take on China, be it in the Himalayas, in the IPR or both.

Although India must have carried out a detailed assessment of its strategic partnership with the US yet it does not seem to have made any realistic deductions from it. Remarkably, except for the LEMOA, all agreements are a one-way transaction from the US to India. This gives the US controlling leverage over it. Furthermore, by synchronising its systems with those of the US, India will inevitably give it crucial ingress into its decision-making loop. By controlling and manipulating the flow of crucial data, imagery, satellite and sensor information the US will exercise a near veto on India's options at the operational strategy level.

FBI reportedly launches investigation into man threatening mass shooting if Biden wins election

The US will have enhanced India's military capability substantially however, it will need to exercise some sort of control on Indian intents as well. That might include specifics like where and against whom which weapon systems supplied by it can be used. Will they be only China specific or may be used against other South Asian states like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal etc, too? Either way, its implications are colossal.

Slowly and gradually the US' hold will start impacting India's freedom of thought and action as well. The more that India gets embroiled with the US the lesser will be its independent options. The US will manoeuvre it into a strategic cul de sac where it will either have to follow US diktat or lose all modern technologies, weapon systems and critical data that it is getting through the four foundational agreements and otherwise—perils of an uneven, unequal strategic partnership.

Indo-US strategic convergence is already polarising the IPR and the South-Central Asian Region. It is impacting China, Pakistan and the Sino-Pak relationship massively.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/07-Nov-2020/us-india-strategic-congruence>

Post-Trump US Foreign Policy By Maleeha Lodhi

NEVER have Americans seen an election in their recent history quite like the 2020 presidential contest. Never has the world watched with such concern the political tensions, bitter rhetoric and legal fights that marked the turbulent run-up to the election. The close race kept people on edge for days following the election as votes were counted in the crucial battlefield states.

The American people chose Joe Biden to lead their country in what has been described as ‘an election of a lifetime’ which will have “decade-defining consequences”. This has come as a relief to many people in America and beyond. For the international community the overarching question is how the new occupant of the White House will change American foreign policy in the post-Trump era.

To begin with, Biden will be preoccupied with managing domestic challenges with the pandemic still wreaking havoc across the country, polarisation undermining national cohesion and racial tensions waiting to be seriously addressed. Uniting a deeply divided country will undoubtedly be his first order of business. As he reiterated after the election: “I will govern as an American president. There will be no red states and blue states. Just the United States of America.”

The outcome of the Congressional election too will present a challenge as the Senate is likely to remain in Republican control. This will pose formidable problems of divided government and legislative gridlock. Biden will be obliged to deal with an unfriendly Senate which will make governance difficult while his pledge to heal a divided nation will require vigorous efforts. As an op-ed writer asserted in the New York Times, the election will not resolve “America’s deepest problems” — social crisis, breakdown of political culture, and feelings of exclusion. That Trump got more popular votes now than in 2016 indicates how widespread support remains for ‘Trumpism’. If Trump continues to play an active political role this could further complicate Biden’s task. Domestic troubles then will warrant his sustained attention.

Biden will depart in fundamental ways from Trump's erratic and unpredictable policies.

But as a course correction is also needed in America's relations with the world this will not wait for the domestic agenda to be tackled. Some argue that this is where Biden may have a less constrained hand. What then is a Biden presidency likely to do? The selection of his foreign policy team will be an early pointer to the foreign policy he will pursue.

As someone with rich experience in foreign policy — having long served as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee and as vice president — Biden is expected to follow a more traditional approach fundamentally different from Trump's unpredictable and whimsical policies pursued at great detriment to America's global standing. In contrast to Trump's intensely unilateral 'America First' policy, Biden, known as a liberal internationalist, would seek to restore his country's multilateralist credentials. During the campaign he declared that the 'America First' policy had resulted in 'America Alone' and he would seek to 'restore America's leadership'.

In broad brush terms a Biden administration is likely to see: the revival of a more stable foreign policy, renewal of commitment to multilateralism, reaffirmation of relations with allies, reversal of Trump's abandonment of the Iran nuclear deal, re-engagement with key international institutions, return to the Paris climate agreement and recommitment to alliances especially Nato.

A key priority for Biden will also be to mend America's damaged international reputation evidenced in several surveys. A recent Pew Research survey found that America's global image had plunged to an all-time low. It showed that several countries among Washington's allies have an unfavourable view of the US especially of Trump. Clearly four years of Trump's disruptive impact on the world and the blows delivered to an already fraying rules-based international order have dented America's standing, eroded its influence and diminished its soft power. Biden will try to reverse that.

On Afghanistan and the US commitment to withdraw its remaining forces, Biden's policy will not differ much from Trump's. He has long been a critic of America's prolonged military engagement and as vice president had opposed the military surge President Barack Obama ordered in 2009. Asked in an interview

earlier this year what he would do if the Taliban ended up in power he said: [I have] “zero responsibility. The responsibility I have is to protect America’s national interest and not put our women and men in harm’s way to try to solve every single problem in the world by use of force.”

A significant departure from Trump’s policy would be re-entering the Iran nuclear deal. Biden has repeatedly asserted he would re-commit to JCPOA if Iran complied and seek to strengthen it with partners. He believes this would help to re-establish US credibility. In the Middle East, it remains an open question how Biden’s frequent criticism of Saudi Arabia would translate into policy. His support for Israel will continue to be firm, in line with long-standing US policy.

The biggest foreign policy challenge will remain America’s relations with China — this century’s most consequential bilateral relationship with far-reaching global impact — which Trump pushed into a state of intense hostility by his confrontational approach. Given the anti-China mood and bipartisan consensus in the US, Biden will likely adopt a tough line. But while continuing to engage in strategic competition — and containment — Biden will be less combative and abrasive than Trump and look for areas of cooperation on global issues such as climate change. For its part, China will want to stabilise relations by reaching out to President-elect Biden. China’s vice foreign minister recently expressed the hope that the new administration would work with China and “meet it halfway to focus on cooperation and manage differences”.

Predictability and stability in US foreign policy would be the most important change from the Trump years. But it is the home front where bitter discord and divisions have made the country virtually ungovernable that will receive the greatest attention from the next president. A Financial Times editorial put it succinctly: “No postwar president has taken over a more beleaguered nation.”

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

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Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1589392/post-trump-us-foreign-policy>

Biden and Afghanistan | Editorial

The Taliban have called on US President-elect Joe Biden to stick to the terms of the peace deal the Trump administration signed with the militant group in February. Under the agreement, the US is supposed to withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by May 2021. Given Biden's comments before the elections however, that will not be happening. Although he backs an end to "forever wars", Biden says he also supports a sustained US military footprint of up to 2,000 troops on the ground — primarily for special operations against IS and other terror threats.

The good news is that this might not be a deal-breaker for the Taliban. Even though their official position is that they want all foreign troops out, the Taliban would quietly acknowledge that the US is a potent ally against their mutual enemy, IS. But there are other stickling points as well. Unlike Trump's policymaking-on-a-whim strategy, Biden is also expected to consider ground realities while reworking the US approach to Afghanistan. Among those are unacceptable reports of the Taliban maintaining ties with Al Qaeda. Then come the stalled inter-Afghan peace talks. The Taliban and Kabul both accuse the other of delaying the talks, while violence continues to consume the country. This is partly because Trump has shown little interest in following through on the talks.

Biden has, however, demonstrated a desire to ensure that the negotiations do bear fruit. He is likely to make active efforts to push both sides to the table. This gains renewed significance when we examine Kabul's excuses. Afghan Second Vice President Sarwar Danish claims his government has no legal responsibility to act on the US-Taliban deal's requirement for intra-Afghan peace talks. Biden could easily remind Danish and others that the only reason he has a job is because of US largesse. Without US aid, the government would collapse. The US-Afghan relationship is not one of equals. All Biden needs to do to get peace talks moving is to remind Kabul of the same.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2271943/biden-and-afghanistan>

What North Korea Wants From Joe Biden

By Denny Roy

With appropriate humility, we can make a few general, reasonable presumptions about how the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) regime thinks about its policy toward America in late 2020.

Pyongyang has several grievances it wants addressed by the United States. The most pressing of these is a demand that Washington lift economic sanctions against the DPRK. Months of North Korean diplomacy toward the United States during the Trump Administration culminated in Kim focusing on sanctions relief, even though Kim could have chosen to pursue other goals such as stopping U.S.-South Korea military exercises or getting U.S. troops off the Peninsula. Kim proposed broad sanctions relief in exchange for the closure of some of the facilities at the Yongbyon complex, which the Trump team rejected. Sanctions relief is presumably still the top priority in Pyongyang's relations with Washington. Although China and Russia have gone back to helping the DPRK evade sanctions, the North Korean economy has suffered badly during 2020 as the country shut its cross-border trade with leading economic partner China in an attempt to protect itself from the pandemic.

Pyongyang tends to carry out acts the U.S. government considers "provocations" within a few months of U.S. presidential and midterm elections, supporting the idea that the North Korean government is likely to demand attention from the incoming Biden Administration by raising tensions on the Peninsula. In cases where the North Korean government decides it needs to take an action for technical or practical reasons, and that action is likely to alarm Seoul and Washington, Pyongyang often times the action to achieve a greater political effect.

The Kim regime is surely disappointed that Biden is replacing Trump. The Biden campaign did not list de-nuclearizing North Korea as a priority issue. Furthermore, Biden has signaled that his approach toward North Korea will be different from Trump's in four major respects.

First, Biden said he will only agree to a summit meeting if Kim first agrees to reduce his nuclear weapons capability. Trump met with Kim three times without gaining any reduction in North Korea's inventories of missiles, nuclear bombs or fissile material.

Second, Biden calls Kim "a thug" and criticizes Trump for calling Kim "his good buddy." This indicates the apparent favorable personal relationship Kim had with Trump will not carry over into the Biden Administration.

Third, Biden acknowledges that North Korea has improved its missile capabilities since Kim's first meeting with Trump. This means Biden does not give Pyongyang a pass on its flight tests of short and medium-range missiles, as Trump did.

Fourth, Biden will insist that thorough staff work by officials on both sides achieve a detailed agreement prior to a summit meeting, denying Kim the possibility of a relatively easy win by negotiating directly with his U.S. counterpart.

Biden's comments about the DPRK leadership have already made a bad impression. North Korean state media have called Biden "reckless and senseless," "a fool of low IQ" and an "imbecile bereft of elementary quality as a human being," and a "rabid dog" in "the final stage of dementia" that "must be beaten to death with a stick."

The views of Biden's foreign policy advisors suggest a stalemate in US-DPRK relations will continue, with the North Koreans keeping their missiles and nuclear weapons while Washington maintains economic sanctions and refuses to officially recognize North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. Biden gives Kim and his brain trust every reason to believe they will need to press heavily and noisily to have a chance of getting satisfaction from the incoming US administration.

These observations support an expectation that the DPRK government will make a gesture to grab US attention near or shortly after Biden's inauguration, with the objective of restarting talks about dropping U.S. economic sanctions.

Another North Korean peace offensive, akin to the outreach that began in early 2018, is theoretically possible, but after that experience, Washington would be far more skeptical about Kim saying he wants peace.

More likely is a bellicose gesture. But which kind?

Another nuclear bomb test has significant drawbacks from the regime's standpoint. Patron China strongly disapproves of these tests. Moreover, the usual test site at Punggye-ri is heavily stressed from previous tests, and outside analysts warn there is a danger that additional explosions could cause the mountain above the testing tunnels to collapse, resulting in a large amount of radiation escaping into the atmosphere. Even if Kim could cope with the domestic impact of such a disaster, he would face a more difficult reckoning with Beijing. The border with China is only 50 miles from Punggye-ri, and the Chinese are already worried about radioactive fallout from North Korea.

Limited military actions against South Korea have also become problematic for the Kim regime. Larger attacks will invite disproportionate counter-attacks by the South Korean military, which are likely to embarrass Pyongyang. Smaller attacks, such as incidents in the disputed maritime territory in the West Sea (Yellow Sea), lack the weight to drive policy changes. In the last significant North Korean attempt to use military coercion against the South, Seoul ignored the threat and Pyongyang backed down.

That brings us to the possibility of the DPRK flight-testing a long-range missile. The DPRK has suspended intercontinental missile test launches since 2018. The Trump administration pointed to this moratorium as the main evidence of the success of its North Korea policy. North Korean technicians are likely hankering for more tests to provide data for upgrading their missiles. Kim's government already warned in early 2020 that the moratorium is over. When Pyongyang showed off what appeared to be a new and bigger long-range missile at a military parade in October 2020, an international discussion ensued about whether the missile was real or a dummy mock-up, no doubt to Pyongyang's dismay.

For these reasons, a practice ICBM launch is the most likely way Kim will greet the new president. This will mark the return of unfortunate normalcy to U.S.-North Korea relations, ending the fake rapprochement of the Trump years.

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/what-north-korea-wants-joe-biden-172409>

Brexit: Time To Reach A Trade Deal Is Running Out By Cornelia Meyer

As the saying goes, breaking up is hard to do. This also holds true for the divorce between the UK and the EU. If things were not complicated enough in ending a 45-year partnership, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and a recession not seen in a lifetime have certainly made matters worse.

In 2019, political and economic pundits were obsessed with Brexit. Not so in 2020, when the pandemic, global economic downturn, US-China trade frictions and tech wars have dominated the agenda.

Nevertheless, Brexit has not gone away. There are some 50 days left to reach a trade agreement between the UK and the EU or they will have to live without. By order of magnitude, the EU accounted for 51 percent of Britain's imports and 45 percent of its exports in 2019. Japan, with which the UK recently signed a free trade agreement, accounts for under 2 percent of the country's trade. The US, where the Boris Johnson government is eager to reach an agreement, constitutes 9.9 percent of imports and 15.5 percent of exports.

Self-imposed deadlines in the UK-EU trade negotiations have come and gone with the EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost alternatively sounding despondent and optimistic.

The issues remained the same: Access to the UK's rich fishing grounds, EU concerns over a level-playing field, and state aid as well as the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

While these negotiating points may seem minor in the scope of things, they are emotionally charged, especially the topic of fisheries. (Never mind that UK fishermen also need access to EU markets to sell their catch.)

State aid matters a great deal to the EU because they do not want to see on their doorstep a nation that subsidizes its industries beyond reason and ignores EU rules on labor and the environment.

There was optimism when the two parties signed the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, which had a provision for the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic to remain open. The government papered over the fact that this would in turn make necessary a hard border down the Irish Sea, between Ulster and Britain. The rationale of the arrangement was to maintain an open border on the Irish isle between the north and the south and, with it, to protect the Good Friday Agreement, which ended decades of sectarian strife and terrorism in 1998.

Come autumn of this year, the government backtracked on the Withdrawal Agreement with an Internal Market Bill, arguing that a border across the Irish Sea was not acceptable. The bill necessitates border checks on the Irish Ulster border, going against the agreement signed and valid under international law in 2019. A government minister conceded in the House of Commons that the bill would breach international law in a “specific and limited” way. He faced the wrath of former Prime Minister Theresa May, among others. Still, the bill passed, which resulted in European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen sending a letter of formal notice to London, marking the first step in legal action.

In the meantime, unlike Donald Trump, the incoming Joe Biden administration is no fan of Brexit. Biden is fiercely proud of his Irish roots.

In September, he voiced concerns over the Internal Market Bill’s disregard for international law. Since then he tweeted: “We can’t allow the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland to become a casualty of Brexit. Any trade deal between the U.S. and U.K. must be contingent upon respect for the Agreement and preventing the return of a hard border. Period.” This bodes further headwinds for London.

Biden’s words could hardly be any clearer, and all the niceties of shared values on climate change will not alter that. Johnson may have been the second leader the president-elect called, but Biden’s message on Brexit and the Irish border was no less firm.

On Monday night, the House of Lords turned down parts of the Internal Market Bill, voting by 407 to 148 to remove the contested clauses allowing ministers to redraw parts of the Withdrawal Agreement. The government vowed to put the initial bill again to the House of Commons for final approval.

Quite apart from what the breach of international law means for the UK's standing in the international community, time is running out as Dec. 31 approaches. If there is no agreement, neither Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs nor UK importers and exporters will be ready to deal with the increased paperwork a no-deal Brexit would necessitate — not to mention what it would mean for air traffic, financial services and the standing of the City of London as a financial center.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak showed farsightedness by a raft of unilateral decisions designed to ease EU firms' access to the UK's financial markets after 2020.

This may be useful, but it would really need to be followed up by the EU's granting equivalence to UK institutions and the City of London. Brussels so far has not made any move in that direction, and it is doubtful it will in the absence of a trade agreement. Switzerland, which faces its own set of challenges in its negotiations for a framework agreement with the EU, had equivalence suspended last year.

As Dec. 31 draws perilously close, the room for maneuvering becomes smaller by the day. A trade agreement between the UK and the EU matters to both sides. It is more important to the EU because of the large weight of EU-UK trade. In the EU, Britain is important for many countries, particularly Germany, France and The Netherlands. However, the UK is one of many countries for them — not a trading bloc of 27 nations. Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said on Wednesday that he felt the two sides were still too far apart to reach an agreement within this week.

Cornelia Meyer is a Ph.D.-level economist with 30 years of experience in investment banking and industry. She is chairperson and CEO of business consultancy Meyer Resources. Twitter: @MeyerResources

Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/12112020-brexit-time-to-reach-a-trade-deal-is-running-out/>

Joe Biden and the World — Foreign Policy

Outlook By Inam Ul Haque

Having introduced the Joe Biden-Kamala Devi Harris team, their domestic agenda and positions on some important issues in the previous weeks, this column discusses the new administration's international outlook.

As a United States senator, member of the influential Foreign Relations Committee, (and twice its chairman), and as two-term vice-president, Biden brings enormous foreign policy experience. Visiting conflict hotspots and disaster zones, he is said to have met nearly 150 foreign leaders from almost five dozen countries. If the Republican controlled Senate allows him elbow room domestically, he may impact the world.

Mr Biden remains committed to multilateralism and international engagement. Seeing the welcoming response from abroad, the world seems keen to revert to the pre-Trump stability in the international system. And Biden stands for repairing relationships with US allies especially with Europe and particularly with NATO.

However, shifting back to the internationalist approach of the post-World War II era, during a pandemic that fuels nationalist sentiment after Trump's 'disruptive' years, would be challenging. The world that he oversaw as vice-president is remarkably different, so some of his antidotes may be outdated.

Power vacuums created by a withdrawing America are filled by emerging powers like China. Democracies are subdued. The international economic order is under stress. Competition for the corona vaccine has created new rivalries. And Trump's "America First" mantra has made 'America alone'. In a campaign with negligible foreign policy debate, Mr Biden has not elaborated how his iteration of superpower competition would be different from his earlier career in government.

During the Cold War, Democrats were generally considered to appease Moscow. Not so with Mr Biden. He wants President Putin to pay an unspecific "price" for "assaulting the foundations of Western democracy", weakening NATO and dividing the EU besides interference in the 2016 US elections, etc. However, Russia still has 1,550 deployed nuclear weapons and holds an array of

deployable tactical nukes, even before President Trump left the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF 1987).

Sensing Russia's growing economic fragility, President-elect might seek a five-year extension for the New START Treaty (1994). He may encourage a split between Sino-Russian relations, given Putin's discomfort with Russia's growing dependence on China.

Mr Biden was an early adherent to China's inevitable but 'peaceful rise'. However, he is likely to rethink his China strategy. His advisers acknowledge that Biden as vice-president, underestimated President Xi Jinping — whom he now calls a "thug". He seems wary of China's deployment of 5G networks and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has chipped away at US influence worldwide.

He considers the Trump-era tariffs on Chinese goods, nullified by the US government subsidies to compensate American farmers and others who lose business with China. His aggressive pushback against China would not be without a cost to the US, given US dependence on imports from China.

So despite bipartisan consensus on China, Biden may lower the rhetoric and be more predictable towards China — now the largest global economy. He has vaguely called for an international coalition to deal with China along other democracies that China "can't afford to ignore". In his effort to enlist US allies against China, Pakistan would need to tread carefully.

In the Trump defeat, Israel, especially Bibi Netanyahu, seems to have lost a credible ally. Bibi took 12 hours to offer a perfunctory congratulations to Biden on Twitter, quickly adding effusive gratitude to President Trump. Though the future US-Israel ties are 'rock solid' to paraphrase Kamala Devi; any re-entering of the US in the Iran nuclear deal would cast a shadow.

Contrasting with Trump's significant pro-Israel tilt, Biden has vowed to adopt a more balanced approach. In return for recognising Israel, the Biden administration might encourage Morocco, Oman or Saudi Arabia, for example, to ask for Israeli concessions to the Palestinians. He might re-open the US consulate in Jerusalem (closed by Trump), a de facto US embassy for Palestinians; revive the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington; restore US funding for Palestine and preserve the viability of a future Palestinian state.

However, Mr Biden's decades-old pro-Israel/Zionist credentials are etched in Israeli official memory, like his meetings with Premier Golda Meir in the 1970s and Biden's father telling him that one need not be a Jew to be a Zionist. He calls Iran a "destabilising" force that must never be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. Vice-president Biden was dismayed when the US cyber weapon, Stuxnet, targeting the Iranian nuclear programme was prematurely disclosed in 2010. He believed such covert programmes brought Iran to the negotiating table, resulting in the Iranian nuclear deal (JCPOA).

Biden pledges to rejoin the agreement in return for Iran's full compliance. An agreement revival may significantly reduce tension in the region. However, convincing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to return to the 2015 production levels of fissile material without Iran exacting a higher price for Mr Trump's unilateral withdrawal won't be easy. Iran would like some key restrictions lifted. After the arms embargo expired in October, China and Russia may resume sales to Iran.

In the greater Middle East — the Saudi-UAE nexus is especially considered left out in the Biden-Kamala win as the nexus was too close to the Trump camp. Biden wanted a "reassessment" of US support for Saudi Arabia prompted by "endless" war in Yemen and murder of journalist Khashoggi, etc. He has vowed to stop arms sales to the kingdom and treat Riyadh like a "pariah".

Mohammed Bin Salman, the de facto Saudi ruler, might take time to replace his geniality with the Trump-Jared Kushner combine. This may also impact Pakistan as the UAE-Saudi interlocution was, at times, to our advantage. So the new administration besides towing a pragmatic line on the Iran issue might distance itself from deeper involvement with a Saudi-led Middle Eastern order, without remaining totally unconcerned. The enduring US establishment would not want a hands-off policy either, under the State Department-led institutional approach.

Biden opposed the 2007 surge in Iraq and proposed dividing Iraq into three self-governing regions. He has condemned Trump's withdrawal of US troops from northern Syria, calling it a betrayal of the Kurds but remains skeptical about committing US troops back to Syria.

Biden is concerned about America keeping nuclear weapons in Turkey. He detests Turkey's military incursions in Syrian Kurdish territory and supports domestic opposition to President Erdogan.

With this we now focus on South Asia and Pak-US relations next week.

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Can Biden Salvage the Iran Nuclear Deal?

By Fatima Raza

When President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the Iran nuclear deal on May 8, 2018, it initiated a series of unfortunate events plunging the Iran-US relations into a deep pit of despair. In these twilight months of his presidency, Trump resorted to imposing a series of harsh sanctions against Iranian banks and individuals. This will only add an unnecessary layer of bureaucratic rigmarole for president-elect Joe Biden's administration to unravel if it chooses to mend ties with Iran. In the event of doing so, the first order of business would be to reinstate the Iran nuclear deal. But would it be so easily done?

The incoming Biden administration would have to at first ascertain its expectations and pre-conditions prior to talks with the Iranian government with reference to the latter's violations of the JCPOA and its regional behaviour. It is an essential pre-requisite as Iranian officials have indicated frequently that re-negotiation of the 2015 agreement is unquestionable. Thus, managing expectations and careful utilisation of leverage that both sides hold is crucial for a possible return to the JCPOA.

The US would also have to take all its allies on board, especially the EU signatories, while reassuring them that it is a reliable signatory of multilateral agreements. Trump's unceremonious departure from the JCPOA had previously left its European allies in the lurch, scrambling to keep Iran compliant to the deal and prevent regional instability. Thus, gaining back the trust of its long-term allies would require the US to present a clear policy toward Iran. In case of a possible reinstatement of the deal, the US must also prepare to appease its Arab allies and Israel, who oppose the nuclear deal.

Iranian presidential elections are scheduled to be held in June 2021 and would prove a decisive factor in determining the trajectory of the US-Iran relations through the next four years. Trump's abortive campaign to maximise pressure on Iran facilitated the rise of right-wing conservative political wave of dissent against the US within Iran. The US drone strike on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander, General Qassem Soleimani, ordered by Trump

following which anti-US protests erupted within Iran, was the final nail in the coffin.

All these measures have prompted an increase in anti-US narrative in the Iranian political scenario making it harder to negotiate with the US or its Western allies regarding easing the crippling sanctions on Iran. This difficulty is likely to continue if the US fails to indicate its willingness to engage Iran in substantive talks leading to concrete steps that might address the latter's economic woes. Thus, for the new US president, the time to act will be during the initial months of his presidency so a multilateral agreement can be put in place preventing Iran from further uranium enrichment and violating the nuclear deal.

The overarching US policy approach toward Iran is unlikely to change under Biden as he has indicated during his campaign that he would seek to limit Iran's regional activities and take tough measures, if provoked by Iran's continued uranium enrichment steps. The new US administration will find its hands full undoing Trump administration's policies in this region. Trump's abandoning of the JCPOA was unilateral, abrupt and quite hasty, however, salvaging the deal would have to be a gradual and multilateral process in nature. Patience on both sides will be key and let us hope that sanity prevails all over for a better chance of long-term regional peace and stability.

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Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2273432/can-biden-salvage-the-iran-nuclear-deal>

Addressing The Sino-Russian Challenge – **Analysis By Richard Weitz and Hudson** **Institute**

The Trump administration has described the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation as the most significant great-power challengers to the United States and its allies, values, and interests. The 2017 US National Security Strategy identified China and Russia as ideological rivals “determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.”¹ The 2018 US National Defense Strategy described China as “a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors” while undertaking “a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future.”² The document further criticized Russia for seeking “veto power over the economic, diplomatic, and security decisions of its neighbors.”³

Concerns about China and Russia have earned bipartisan consensus among US national security leaders. Antony Blinken, past Deputy Secretary of State and current lead adviser to Joe Biden, described Beijing and Moscow as a common challenge to the US-backed global order, saying, “In both eastern Ukraine and the South China Sea, we’re witnessing efforts to unilaterally and coercively change the status quo—transgressions that the United States and our allies and partners stand united against.”⁴ Cooperative or competitive, relations among China, Russia, and the United States will have a major impact not just on one another, but also on the broader international system, so the Sino-Russian relationship will remain a US national security priority for years to come.

Sino-Russians are currently in a better position than they have been at any other time in recent history. Their economic, military, and diplomatic cooperation has expanded more rapidly in recent years than most analysts expected. The PRC has become Russia’s most important economic partner, the two governments have established many binational official exchanges, and both nations engage in robust binational security collaboration. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping,

PRC policies and rhetoric have moved much closer to those of the Russian government led by President Vladimir Putin. They see Washington thwarting their claims to regional primacy and assert that US leaders have sought to undermine governments, including their own, under the guise of promoting human rights and democracy. Chinese and Russian leaders, including Presidents Xi and Putin, repeatedly affirm mutual support. For example, during a telephone conversation in July 2020, Xi said his government will “always, firmly support Russia’s development path that fits its own national conditions.” Xi stressed that “the international situation is changing rapidly” and said, “it is very necessary for China and Russia, as comprehensive strategic partners of coordination, to strengthen strategic communication and cooperation... rejecting external sabotage and intervention, well preserving their respective sovereignty, security and development rights, and well safeguarding their shared interests.” In turn, Putin said, “Russia regards its relations with China as the top foreign policy priority.” He also affirmed that the country “firmly supports China’s efforts to safeguard national security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region [and] opposes all kinds of provocative actions that violate China’s sovereignty.”⁵

Assessing the Threat

While numerous factors account for the current strong China-Russia alignment, including converging economic incentives and mutual security concerns, one distinct driver is a shared opposition to US policies. Beijing and Moscow seek a world of multiple independent powers with constrained US influence. Both countries aim to develop new international institutions whose norms and procedures differ from the existing ones established by Western governments. They are also striving to subvert the pillars of the liberal democratic world order constructed by the United States after World War II. In Europe, Russia has been annexing new territories and supporting armed proxies in neighboring countries. In the Indo-Pacific region, China has been erecting military facilities in disputed territories and augmenting its power projection capabilities. In their home countries, both insist on strong state sovereignty and the exclusion of foreign interference in their internal affairs. Although they appeal to international law to defend traditional interpretations of state sovereignty, they share an opposition to the Western assertions that universal liberal values transcend national boundaries. This reflects a common desire to shield their human rights abuses and those of their client regimes.

The extent of Sino-Russian cooperation varies substantially by time, region, and topic, but the two countries work most closely on defense issues, including arms sales and exercises; international institutions, like the United Nations; global messaging or propaganda; arms control; energy market issues; and subjects that concern the regions of Central and Northeast Asia. Their cooperation in the Arctic and outer space is growing, but their coordination in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere; their humanitarian ties; and their collaboration in economic fields beyond energy remain weak. China and Russia have managed to agree to disagree on issues where they differ—and their compartmentalization helps the pair maintain cooperation in other areas.

Some Sino-Russian collaboration has minimal impact on US interests. There are even opportunities for trilateral collaboration on some areas of common interest, such as mitigating the impact of global climate change and promoting world health. Other Chinese-Russian collaboration threatens substantial harm to the United States and its allies. For example, the weaponry Russia has supplied China gives the People's Liberation Army more coercive options in Asia against the United States and its allies. This Sino-Russian defense cooperation will unfortunately continue for years due to their many institutional connections, mutual benefits from such collaboration, and lack of alternative security partners. Throughout the Syrian conflict, Chinese and Russian envoys have collaborated to block resolutions that would have condemned the authoritarian regimes in Syria and Belarus. In Asia, the PRC offers Russia ready capital and a ready customer in the energy domain. Geographic proximity between Russia's vast reserves of oil and gas and China's huge market creates a natural synergy. The two governments are aligning their Eurasian integration initiatives—Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative and Moscow's Eurasian Economic Union—to the detriment of US regional commercial interests.

Optimizing the US Response

Changing specific policies toward China or Russia in an effort to meet their objections is unlikely to pull them away from each other. Their opposition to the United States is comprehensive, not sectoral or tactical. It is also hard to see how their relations will soon degrade to any level near their Cold War-era animosity, allowing the United States to move between them. As their security and economic ties have grown, the likelihood that either will discard the other in a fit of self-interest has decreased—but the United States and other democracies are not powerless in the face of these challenges. One reason Beijing and Moscow

are aligning more is that they have antagonized most of their other important neighbors. Democracies in Europe and Asia have been rallying behind US leadership in resisting Chinese and Russian economic predations and military threats. The United States benefits immensely from its portfolio of alliances and partnerships.⁶ While the US can project power unlike any other nation in history, this is only possible because of its allied network.

Regarding arms sales, the United States should complement its sanctions designed to discourage its friends and allies from selling defense and dual-use technologies to China and Russia, which have proved unsuccessful in some cases, with more positive engagement efforts. Conversely, regarding non-military sanctions, US policy makers should explicitly weigh the balance between the value of these measures in weakening the Chinese and Russian economies with the impetus they provide for driving Beijing and Moscow together. Furthermore, the United States should maintain multinational research and development interoperability efforts in important emerging defense and dual-use technologies, such as stealth, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence, as well as expand allied collaboration in the cyber and space domains.

Enhanced public-private partnerships between Western governments and private-sector social media companies will help counter the increasingly sophisticated disinformation offensives of China and Russia. Since Chinese trade and investment has not assisted Russia in diversifying its economy away from predominately exporting natural resources, US influence operations should stoke Russian suspicions that China wants to keep Russia in an unbalanced commercial relationship. Furthermore, the United States should augment its efforts to provide alternative financing for countries that are understandably reluctant to accept PRC investment.

US planners must prepare for military contingencies involving both China and Russia. Even if the two countries do not combine their forces in a joint operation, one could exploit a conflict between the other country and the United States to opportunistically advance its own security interests. The United States will need capabilities to deal with simultaneous threats from Beijing and Moscow—maintaining sufficient resources to withstand military pressures from one party while the Pentagon responds to aggression by the other.

The next administration should continue to insist that China join Russia and the United States in accepting legally binding limits on strategic forces—both because an unconstrained PRC nuclear weapons buildup will destabilize international security and because this approach could provide a wedge between Russian leaders, who privately favor such limits, and PRC leadership, which prefers Russian and US military defenses be constrained while China's are not. In the space domain, the United States has considerably decreased its dependence on Russian technologies, companies, and supplies; the next administration should strive to make comparable progress concerning China.

Finally, the magnitude and multifarious nature of the Sino-Russian challenge underscores the need for more robust intelligence capabilities within the US government and analytical efforts within the think-tank community to assess the nature, extent, trajectory, and vulnerabilities of the Chinese-Russian partnership.

*About the author: Richard Weitz, Director, Center for Political-Military Analysis

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India, Under Modi's Leadership is a Threat to Regional Peace By Muhammad Hanif

SINCE Modi-led government came to power in India in 2014 and his BJP won its second-term in 2019, Modi has not only continuously pressurized the smaller South Asian states like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives to cooperate to fail the holding of the SAARC summit being held in Pakistan by declining to attend it, he has also started showing its muscles to Pakistan and even China. Whereas the leaders of a majority of the countries in the world are focusing on the geo-economics to serve the welfare of their people, the Modi government in India prefers geopolitics over geo-economics with a cold war mentality. By doing so the Modi regime is complicating India's bilateral disputes with the neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and China, resorting to even war mongering rather than resolving the disputes through a dialogue. For example, in 2015, when Pakistan and China signed an agreement to construct China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), to connect the Kashgar city of Western China to the Gwadar city/port in Balochistan, Pakistan to act as a connectivity project between China, South Asia and other regions for joint economic benefits, India's Modi-led regime started opposing the project. This was done under the pretext that it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan, falsely claiming that, being a part of Jammu and Kashmir, it is the Indian territory.

Whereas the fact is that as per the UNSC resolutions on Kashmir, the final decision of the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan or India is to be done by the people of the state by expressing their opinion through a UNSC supervised plebiscite, which India has denied to hold for the last 72 years. Actually, India wants to obstruct the CPEC to contain Pakistan's economic development. India is not only opposing the CPEC through its statements, the Modi regime has started destabilizing the project by sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan using its Embassy in Kabul and Consulates located in the cities close to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. For this purpose the Modi government has established an anti-CPEC terror cell in the RAW's Offices, and that cell works under the supervision of the Indian PM Modi. To disturb the CPEC project, India's RAW is also struggling to exploit the sectarian issue in Gilgit-Baltistan. In this context, the confessions of Kulbhushan Jadhav, Indian Naval Spy officer, that he was assigned to destabilize Balochistan by sponsoring terrorism, the

former US Defence Secretary Hegel and Gen. MC Crystal's earlier statements, that India was causing difficulties for Pakistan using the Afghan soil, and the dossier recently presented by the Pakistani representative in the UN to the UN Secretary General on India supported terrorism in Pakistan are a sufficient proof that India is sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan.

On 5 August 2019, the Modi regime violated the UNSC resolutions on Kashmir, and divided the state into two union territories, named as Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh by ending Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Moreover, to crush the Kashmiris' ongoing freedom struggle to get their right of self determination granted to them by the UNSC, and to kill the likely response of the Kashmiris for ending Kashmir's special status, the Modi government is using above 90,000 troops and carrying out the genocide of the Kashmiris. This India is doing in utter disregard to the fact that as per the UNSC resolutions, Pakistan is a party to the Kashmir dispute and India's illegal actions in Kashmir are tantamount to creating tension with Pakistan. Also, to pressure Pakistan to end the Kashmiris' political, moral and diplomatic support, the Modi government has carried out surgical strikes in Pakistan in bare places by dubbing those as the terrorist camps and got beaten by Pakistan. It also started the ceasefire violations across the LoC, causing civilian casualties. While doing all this, the Modi regime does not realize that it is flirting with nuclear Pakistan, and creating a dangerous situation, which will ultimately lead to a catastrophic war between two nuclear states.

For its visible displayed arrogance, India appears to be encouraged by it being a close defence partner of the US and getting high tech modern weapon systems from the US, France and Russia, and signing strategic agreements with the US like sharing of each other's military bases and being a lynchpin to the USA's Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China. Hence, apart from creating tension with Pakistan, India even tried to test China's muscles in June and August 2020, when its military troops tried to grab some military posts across the LAC and got beaten from the Chinese Army. Due to India's arrogance the situation across the LAC is still tense. In view of the above discussion, it is quite evident that, under Modi's leadership and his RSS-led BJP's ultra nationalist Hindutva guided government, India is a threat to regional peace. Therefore, it is advisable for the US, other P-5 countries, the UNSC, the OIC and important countries of the world to realize this fact and reign in India from destabilizing peace in the region. Also, these powers should try to avert a war between the two nuclear neighbours by

helping to resolve the Kashmir dispute in the light of the UNSC resolutions on Kashmir.

—The writer is an ex-Army Colonel and Senior Research Fellow, Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad.

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