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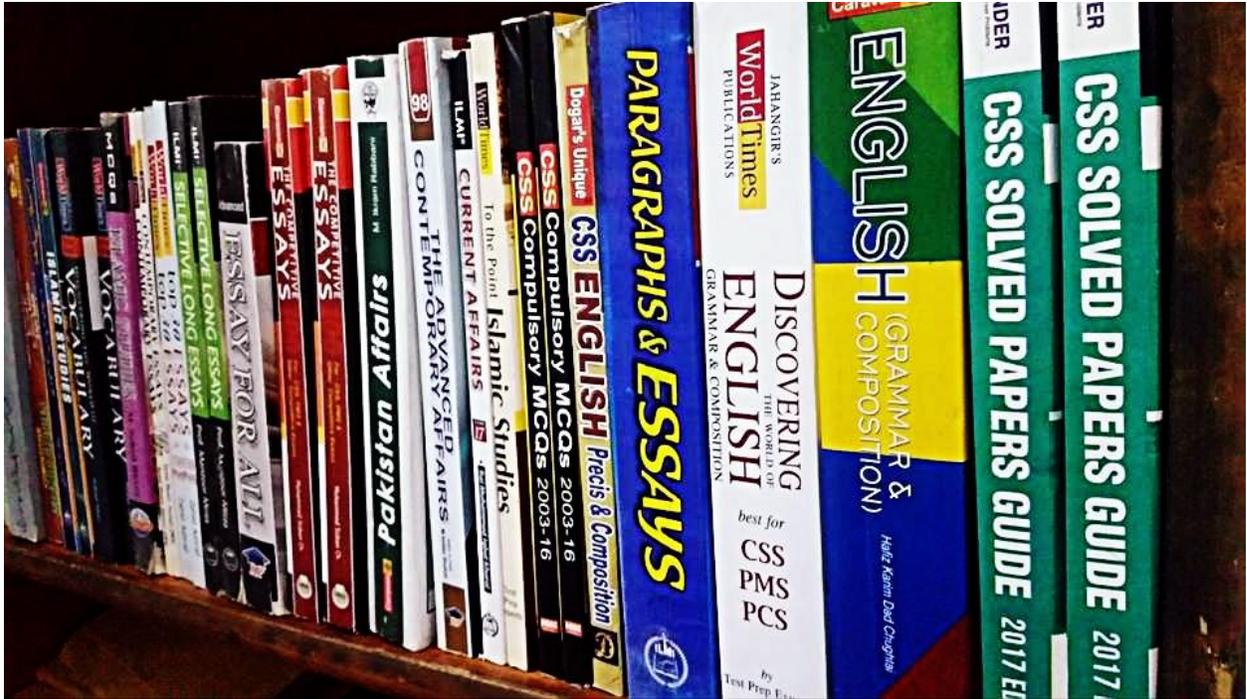
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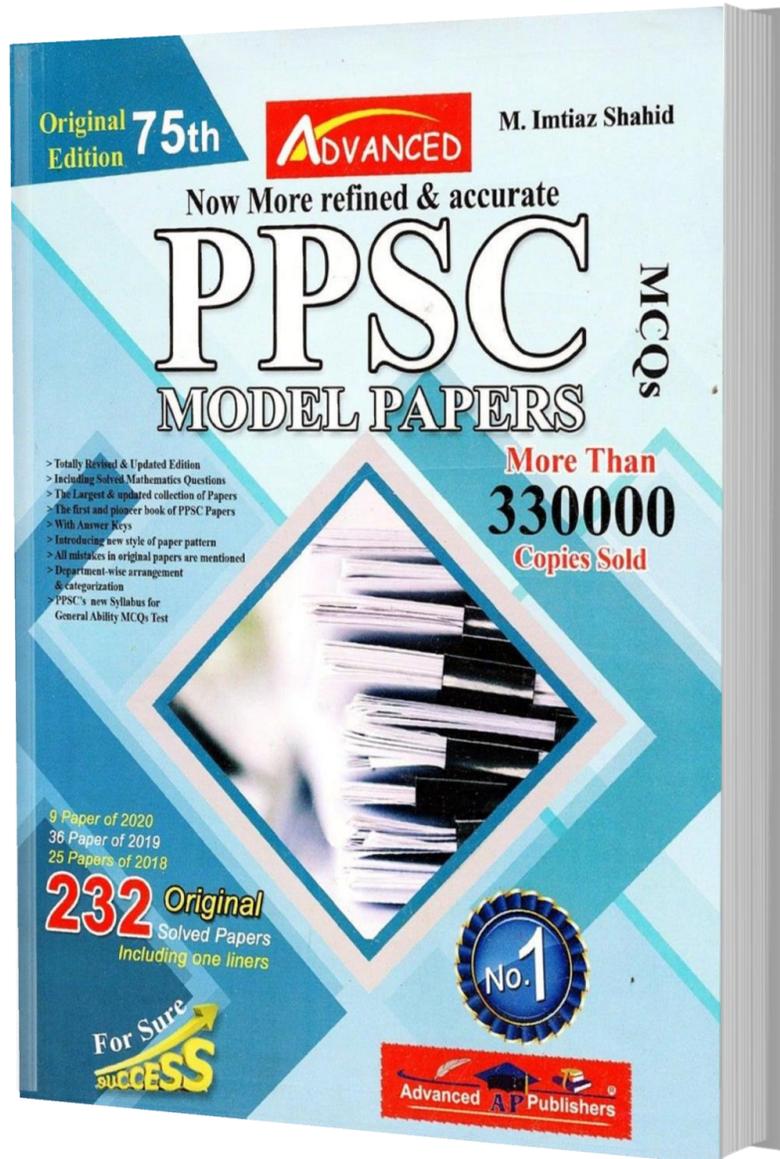
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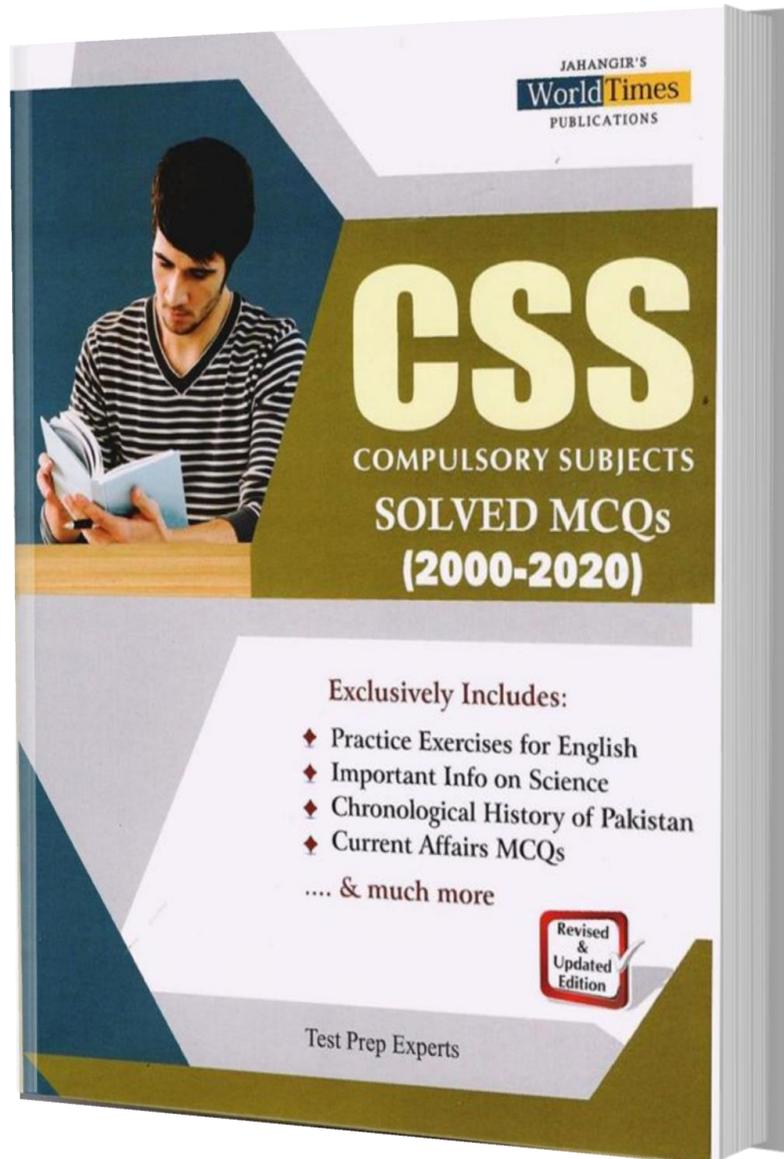
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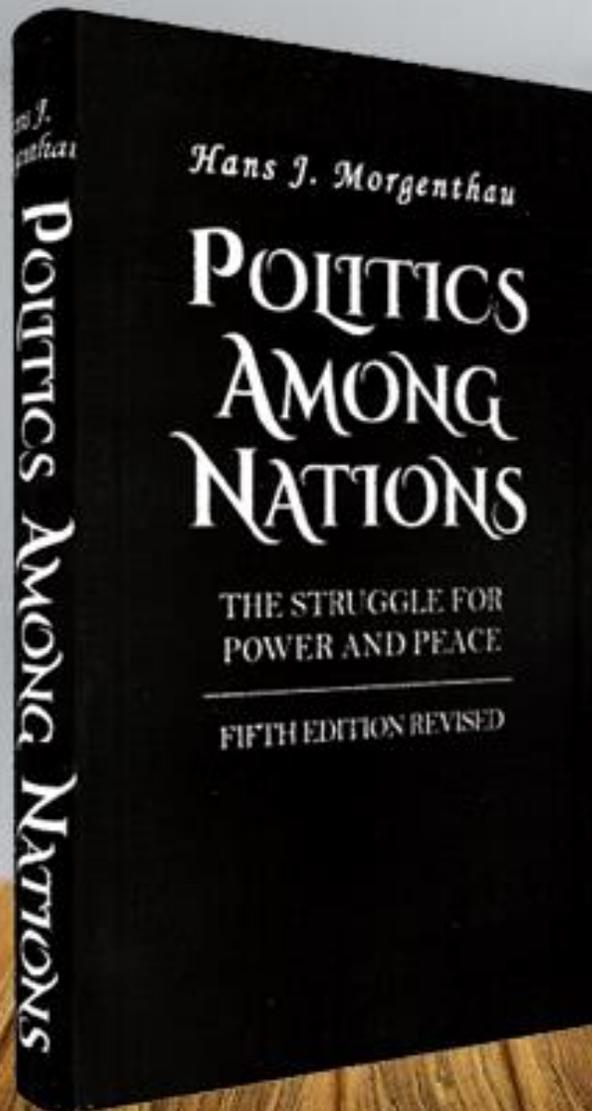
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PAKISTAN

FATF Bills | Editorial

THE government has decided to hold fresh sessions of the National Assembly and Senate on Sept 14 to get the Financial Action Task Force bills passed. The sessions were scheduled for Monday but were postponed for a later date because, as stated by Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan, many legislators were busy in relief works after the heavy spell of rains.

The adviser said the government would not allow any delay in the passage of these bills. A few days earlier he had said if the opposition obstructed the passage of the two FATF bills, the government would call a joint session of parliament in order to get them passed. The opposition had blocked these two bills in the Senate because it had certain reservations and wanted the government to clarify them.

Prime Minister Imran Khan used harsh words against the opposition for blocking these two bills. In a meeting of party spokespeople, the prime minister was reported to have said that the opposition and India were on the same page on FATF because India was trying to put Pakistan on the blacklist. He said by blocking the passage of the bills, the opposition was trying to blackmail the government.

This was an unfortunate choice of words. There is no doubt that bills relating to the requirements of FATF are critically important and it is in the interest of Pakistan to legislate them, but the opposition is fully within its rights to raise questions about the provisions of these bills wherever required. This is what a parliamentary debate is meant for.

If the opposition feels that certain provisions of the bills could be misused for political purposes then the government must provide an explanation instead of hurling accusations. The rigid and confrontational attitude displayed by the government makes it difficult for parliamentarians to have a healthy discourse. It also creates unnecessary acrimony and makes the political atmosphere toxic. Questioning someone's patriotism is condemnable and no one should resort to such rhetoric for political one-upmanship.

The government should therefore utilise the upcoming sessions of the National Assembly and Senate to not only table the FATF bills but answer all questions and allay fears voiced by the opposition. If need be, the provisions under question can always be amended to build a consensus on the text of the bills.

All agree that the requirements of FATF should be met not only to avoid the blacklisting but also to strengthen our laws in order to curtail crimes such as terror funding that have financed violence in Pakistan. Good legislation should not be made controversial on political grounds. The government should dial down its inflammatory rhetoric and get down to the business of negotiating with the opposition on the floor of the two houses. The need of the hour is to make these laws with consensus.

Published in Dawn, September 9th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1578698/fatf-bills>

FM in Moscow | Editorial

One of the more fruitful outcomes of Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's visit to Moscow to attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers is that he'll get to sit down with a number of regional counterparts on the sidelines. And since these are unquestionably unprecedented and changing times, one can bet that what will be discussed now will also be very different from the usual exchanges after working hours when these meetings are held. US-China friction, their trade wars, all the tariffs and threats of sanctions, etc, have all combined to push Beijing further into Moscow's embrace over the last four years, to put it very mildly.

Quite significantly, organisations like the United Nations (UN) have also lost their teeth when it comes to getting pressing international matters settled. One reason is the completely out-of-date composition of the security council, which still gives overwhelming weightage not to mention right to veto to a group of allies that won a world war more than seven decades ago. And there is literally no chance of UN reform since the organisation's charter requires not just two-third majority in favour of any change but also legislation within member countries. Then, if any of that is at all possible, there is the matter of getting the states whose powers others are looking to curtail to play along as well.

In such circumstances organisations like the SCO gain even more importance. The time is not far when the US gets the UN to sanction one of the states it doesn't like but others, some of whom are members of outfits like SCO, have important diplomatic and commercial relations with. Then, considering that they would have the backing of other partners within their own grouping, some countries could simply choose to ignore UN's directives and do as they wish. Would the US commit its military to every such act of defiance?

Of late, Pakistan has been gaining importance and respect within the SCO. Its bilateral relations with China are perhaps better than with any other country and at least since the last half of the last PML-N government, ties with Russia have also been slowly improving even though the lead was taken by the two countries' militaries. A point also came, very recently, when Russia, China, Pakistan and India were to conduct military exercises but New Delhi pulled out at the last moment because of all the friction with Beijing and the matter at the Line of Actual

Control. The other countries, meanwhile, have been improving their relations and the foreign minister's trip to Moscow should take things further.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/664748/fm-in-moscow/>

Towards a United Pakistan | Editorial

While the pandemic and the economic situation in the country may have dimmed the supposedly bright light at the end of a dark tunnel, sometimes a glimmer of hope is all we need to keep on pushing forward; a hope that is attached to the possibility of unity, not only amongst governments but also with regard to fractured systems. At present, such possibility has emerged after a collective decision was made to reopen educational institutions across the country.

In a rare occurrence, both federal and Sindh education ministers have come together to take measures aimed at improving the quality of education in the country after Prime Minister Imran Khan recently declared that a uniform education system will be implemented by 2021 in order to get rid of the current “apartheid education system” and promote equal educational opportunities for all. However, we must be careful as to not conflate uniformity with equality. Apart from the division between educational mediums, the concerned officials must be aware of social divide. While both the rich and the poor may be given equal opportunity to participate in the same race, one cannot simply ignore the fact that the starting line for both is drastically different.

However, putting these drawbacks aside, citizens should remain hopeful that the government has finally realised that such sanguine expectations cannot be reached without collective support and will therefore consult all other provinces on the matter before moving forward. But even after a joint decision is reached, the formal implementation would be up to the provinces themselves, owing to the 18th Amendment that allows autonomy to the federating units in a number of sectors, including education. Only if provinces are able to overcome their difference and bury their egos will such reforms help in cultivating a future generation that is more united, since education is the only effective tool that can blur the multiple lines that divide our citizens.

In the end, we all should aim and hope for more united and tolerant Pakistan.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 14th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263843/towards-a-united-pakistan>

Kashmir In UNGA | Editorial

As the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)'s 75th scheduled session draws closer, the need to highlight Indian atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on the UN stage becomes ever more apparent. Civil liberties, human rights and local politics have been encroached upon from the Kashmiri people in IIOJK for over a year now, with no end in sight. The coronavirus pandemic has given the government further cause to deprive the Kashmiri people of their right to assembly and movement, yet the pandemic has not convinced the government to provide the basic liberty of internet and phone connections. The internet is available only sporadically and in many parts of Kashmir only via a flimsy 2G service. This has upended educational life, since disruption to the internet proves an insurmountable barrier to online classes. Totalitarian laws on censorship are enforced, which the Indian government uses to round up Kashmiri teenagers who post resistance on the internet.

Instead of getting better, Modi's India is getting worse. He does nothing to allay the fears of the Kashmiris or of the world that his actions are part of a plan for ethnic cleansing- he has just enacted new criteria to make many more Indians eligible for "domicile certificates", intending to bring in an influx of migrants to replace the Kashmiri population.

With the upcoming United Nations General Assembly session, it is important that the Pakistani team makes sure that all these facts are placed front and centre in front of the international community. Every passing day in lockdown is a day lost for Kashmiris. This past year has seen many neutral observers to notice this as well. The government must continue to stress this until the UN has no choice but to bring this issue back to the table.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/15-Sep-2020/kashmir-in-unga>

India's Embarrassment | Editorial

There was a time when India used to bully and pressurise its way out of its international obligations. Unfortunately for India, its atrocities have grown so large in scale that it is now realising that these tactics will not work anymore, as it continues to fumble on the international stage.

The latest embarrassment occurred at an online meeting of national security advisers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Pakistan had unveiled a new political map underlining the disputed status of the Kashmir region, which was displayed in the background of NSA's meeting. Expecting that Russia, which was hosting the meeting, could be pressurised into removing the map, India conveyed its objections to the map to Moscow, demanding that it be taken out. According to Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Moeed Yusuf, Russia refused to cave in to this unnecessary and divisive demand of India and overruled the objection. This resulted in Indian NSA Ajit Doval unceremoniously walking out in protest during a speech at the dialogue. The map remained on display.

This shows a collective international tiring of India's pushy tactics and domineering narrative. The issue of the map was inconsequential and could have been easily ignored by India—the new map only recognises the disputed status of the region. There was no legitimate contention any party could have had to the map—except for the fact that it was displayed by Pakistan and India does not miss any opportunity to one-up us for no reason.

Yet these tactics are getting old, especially now that international objectives are focused on regional alliances. The SCO is such a forum focused on social development and security of its member countries—this mindless protest by India over a trifling issue was surely not appreciated.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/17-Sep-2020/india-s-embarrassment>

US Acknowledgement | Editorial

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad on Monday told Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa that the success achieved in the Afghan peace process would not have been possible without the sincere and unconditional support of Pakistan. During their meeting on Monday, the COAS credited Prime Minister Imran Khan for Pakistan's role in starting of intra-Afghan dialogue.

The US acknowledgement is not without genuine reasons as Pakistan facilitated the US-Taliban agreement signed in February, got the warring sides to observe ceasefire on Eid, and helped break the stalemate over the prisoners' release that had been delaying the start of the intra-Afghan dialogue for about six months. In fact, Pakistan risked frictions in its relations with the United States by adopting a clear-cut line that there was no military solution to the 17-year old conflict in Afghanistan and only a political settlement would ensure durable peace in the war-torn country. Though the maiden talks in Doha could not produce anything substantial but no breakthrough was expected as the issues involved are sensitive and complicated and would require in-depth and lengthy discussions to sort them out. The very fact that Taliban and the Afghan Government having views poles apart came to direct contact with each other is an achievement itself and ice could melt in future face to face talks. But this would require steadfast support from all stakeholders and facilitating role especially by all regional countries. There are already indications that some countries are bent upon spoiling the atmosphere for success of the dialogue process and recent surge in violent incidents confirm this belief. As Afghans have an historic opportunity to restore peace in their country, it is hoped that both the Afghan Government and Taliban would not allow enemies of peace to succeed in their designs.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/us-acknowledgement/>

Pakistan Clears FATF Legal Hurdles |

Editorial

THE country's parliament on Wednesday wrapped up the legislation needed to steer the country out of global money-laundering and terrorism financing watchdog Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list by passing three bills at a joint sitting of the two Houses. Between February and September, Parliament amended 10 Acts through 13 Bills as part of Pakistan's efforts to exit the Paris-based financial watchdog's grey list in line with its 27-point Action Plan.

Federal Law Minister Farogh Naseem also confirmed that Pakistan has completed all FATF-related legislation before the deadline. He said there were no more amendments required for now adding that Pakistan would pass new laws or further amend the existing ones if required in future. The FATF had placed Pakistan on its grey list in June 2018 and had asked Islamabad to implement the action plan by the end of 2019 but later extended the deadline because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact of the matter is that Pakistan has now met most of the conditions of the FATF by taking both kinetic and non kinetic measures including the legislation and taking firm action against the proscribed organizations. Though these measures were in the country's own interest but such an ambitious action plan has not been handed over to any country by the FATF before. It is important that the FATF like forums are not politicized and they perform their functions fairly and transparently without playing into the hands of countries such as India which harbours evil designs against Pakistan and lobbied hard to push the country into the blacklist. Anyway time has come that Pakistan is removed from the grey list in recognition of its efforts. Addressing the joint sitting of Parliament, Prime Minister Imran Khan also expressed the government's commitment to soon introduce a three-tier legislation providing for registration of sex offenders, exemplary punishment for rape and child abuse and effective policing. Given recent increase in child abuse and rape incidents including the most recent happened on the motorway, such a piece of legislation has become need of the hour. The legislation should envisage such a punishment for the sex offenders and abusers so that nobody in future could dare to resort to such ghastly acts.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/pakistan-clears-fatf-legal-hurdles/>

GB as a Province? | Editorial

IN a major development, all political parties have agreed to accord Gilgit-Baltistan the status of a province. According to this understanding, the parties have decided they will take this significant step after the elections in GB that are due shortly. The opposition had demanded that integrating GB into the federation should not be treated as a partisan issue and therefore should wait so electioneering does not impact the debate adversely. It will require a constitutional amendment which will pass smoothly once the parties have agreed on the exact parameters of this step. This has been a long-standing demand of the people of GB because they have been in a constitutional limbo for decades. This has led to deep grievances and political unrest that have continued to fester in the absence of any serious attempt by Islamabad to address them. In this sense, the decision to make GB a province is a welcome step. However, there are caveats. The final status of GB is connected to the ultimate resolution of the Kashmir dispute. The main reason that Pakistan had not integrated GB into the federation was to ensure that such a step should not impact the disputed status of Kashmir as per the resolutions of the United Nations. In August last year, the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi annexed India-held Kashmir by revoking its special status. There is concern that by integrating GB as a province, Pakistan may weaken its case in the way that India has. However, the problem may be addressed if Pakistan can say GB's status as a province will be a provisional one and the final status will depend on the resolution of the Kashmir issue. It could keep our legal position on Kashmir intact while providing the people of GB the full constitutional status they have always deserved.

The political leadership should tackle this issue with maturity and adopt an approach that is non-partisan. There should be a full debate in parliament and all legal and international aspects of the matter should be discussed in detail. The final amendment should have a watertight text that is vetted by experts of international law keeping in mind the requirements of the UN resolutions on Kashmir. Once done, the amendment should enjoy unanimous support to announce to the world that Pakistan stands firmly behind this decision. This is a momentous step and should be accorded the attention it deserves.

Published in Dawn, September 23rd, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1581166/gb-as-a-province>

Looming Energy Crisis | Editorial

Warnings from both the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) about confirmed gas shortages for Punjab and Sindh respectively, means that residential consumers and businesses are in for a tough winter. Federal Energy Minister Omar Ayub had, as early as the start of August, informed a Senate standing committee that the problem of gas loadshedding would continue this winter as countrywide demand for gas had risen to 7.5 billion cubic feet per day while supply would fall short by 3.5 billion cubic feet per day. Sindh was a complete disaster this monsoon season with rains flooding almost all of Karachi and electricity cut off in many areas for days on end. The crisis forced the Army to be called in to help by the Federal government, thereby escalating an already intense war of words between the centre and the PPP-led Sindh government. According to reports some localities of Karachi are already facing unannounced gas loadshedding well ahead of winter, indicating a more widespread problem in the coming weeks. For Lahore, the SNGPL has committed to providing gas for cooking only and announced that supply to industries will remain suspended. While it has ensured sufficient and timely import of LNG to plug the gap, if the PTI government's recent handling of the recent wheat and sugar supply crises is anything to go by, SNGPL's promises must be taken with a pinch of salt. Clearly the PTI has little to show for its two years in office in terms of solving the gas crisis.

Meanwhile, a separate crisis is brewing, as K-Electric (KE), Karachi's sole power supply company, remains at loggerheads with the PTI government, the primary issue being the former's exclusive rights to distribute electricity to Karachi. A chaotic public hearing to discuss issues related to the company held by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) had to be cut short due to disruption caused by chants and sloganeering by various participants against KE. Last month, Planning and Development minister Asad Umar had threatened to 'take over' KE if its 'performance' was not improved. It must be mentioned here that KE's majority ownership is private and as such is a more efficiently run company than government-owned/run power distribution companies, which is why such typical browbeating by PTI ministers only makes matters worse. The government should strive to resolve issues rather than exacerbating them.

Source: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/09/22/looming-energy-crisis-2/>

Turkey Supports Kashmir | Editorial

India's systematic oppression of the Kashmiri people and its attempts to demographically replace them have become so egregious that they can no longer be ignored by the rest of the world. Despite a trend from international organisations and leaders of different countries to brush off India's atrocities, the situation has gotten so bad that more and more international leaders have spoken up against India's illegal occupation of Kashmir, and the cruel apartheid and human rights violations it is committing in the illegally occupied region. Most recent to speak up is Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who in his address to the United Nations General Assembly via video-link on Tuesday, called the Kashmir conflict, which he emphasised was key to the stability and peace of South Asia, "a burning issue".

The statement of course has caused outrage among Indian officials, who have been used to getting away with bullying and pressuring other countries into silence or compliance. India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations T S Tirumurti called Erdogan's remarks "gross interference" in the country's internal affairs. What is ironic is that Erdogan espoused the same sentiment that the UN has with regards to Kashmir, which is to solve this issue through dialogue within the framework of the UN resolutions and in line with the expectations of the people of Kashmir. Somehow abiding by international law has now become controversial for India—which had through its illegal tactics, attempted to make the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir into a purely internal matter.

Internal matter it is no longer, if it ever was. Pakistan is not the only country bringing this up on the largest of stages on the international front. Thanks to good diplomatic efforts, other countries are also now joining the cause for Kashmir, and this will be a poignant issue in the UNGA session, no matter how much India objects to it.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/24-Sep-2020/turkey-supports-kashmir>

India's Losing Battle | Editorial

IN a major interview after his release from house arrest, former chief minister of India-held Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, has bitterly criticised the Indian government's scrapping of the special status of the occupied territory and said that Kashmiris would rather accept Chinese rule than Indian.

The pro-India Kashmiri leader who is seen by most Kashmiris as a betrayer to their cause, acknowledged that Kashmiris felt like "slaves" and would rise up in protest once the draconian curfew was lifted. He was very clear that the abrogation of Kashmir's special status as a semi-autonomous region was unacceptable to every Kashmiri and he would struggle to have the status restored.

Farooq Abdullah also said that the differences between his family and that of Mehbooba Mufti — another pro-India former chief minister of occupied Kashmir currently under house arrest — had been settled and that they would work together.

It is clear that India's move last August to scrap Articles 370 and 35A of its constitution and deprive IJK of its special status has had disastrous results. The step by the BJP government has confirmed beyond a shadow of doubt what the people of Kashmir had feared all along, ie New Delhi wants to forcefully take control of their land by changing its demography and diluting its Muslim and Kashmiri identity. In the year since then, the BJP government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has legislated a new domicile law that enables Hindus to settle and buy property in IJK.

The intent is unambiguous: convert IJK into a Hindu-majority area and deprive Kashmiris of the political and administrative strength that comes with being a majority in their own land. In the process, however, India has alienated every Kashmiri including its puppets like Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti. By converting IJK into an open-air jail, India has forced Kashmiris — even those previously aligned with it — to resist this occupation by whatever means possible. The price of this occupation is getting higher for India with each passing day.

This situation cannot be sustained. A growing number of voices within India are also calling out the BJP government for depriving IJK of its special status.

Internationally also India is finding it hard to justify its actions. The resistance from the people is certain to increase with time. Now that compromised politicians such as Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti also stand alienated and ready to offer political resistance, India will face a tough time in the coming days.

Countries that can influence India should persuade Mr Modi to return to the path of sanity. In this context, sanity and rationality demand that India restore the special status of occupied Kashmir. The UN resolutions recognise the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir as disputed territory and the dispute's final resolution lies in the implementation of these resolutions.

Published in Dawn, September 25th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1581514/indias-losing-battle>

Foreign Diplomats at LoC | Editorial

Pakistan has done the right thing by taking a team of visiting diplomats to the Line of Control (LoC) to show them first hand just what damage unwarranted Indian shelling is doing to the lives of civilians in the area. This is the kind of thing that the Indian government would never do simply because it would expose all the harsh measures it employs on the side of the valley that it has occupied with force. Now each one of the ambassadors, defence attaches, and representatives of various international organisations will go back to their countries and speak of what they have seen for themselves. It was also a very good idea to make the visitors interact with the residents of affected areas. Pakistan's claim, that the Indian side deliberately targets civilians while the Pakistani army only targets military sites, will no longer be dismissed as propaganda.

This, quite really, is the best Pakistan can do in the present setting. As the 75th anniversary session of the United Nations (UN) is going on, there is an increased need to sound the alarm about all that has been going on in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOC), especially since 5 August 2019. The anniversary is also a stark reminder of just how the UN has singularly failed to get the Kashmiris their rights. Clearly the lure of India's significant market is too much for the world's major powers to ignore, and they have no qualms about sidelining anything that would upset the sensitivities of New Delhi.

It is important to understand that no matter how different governments sabotage any UN-mandated efforts aimed at the right of self-determination for Kashmiris, making the rest of the world see the reality of the occupation in the valley is very important to build the critical mass needed for this issue to truly explode on the world consciousness. Sections of the international press will now be forced to notice that while Pakistan regularly invites foreign dignitaries to see the on ground reality with their own eyes, India never even contemplates such steps. And, with time, people will begin to ask questions that New Delhi will no doubt find awkward. Already India can no longer justify its extreme steps as necessary to control militancy in the region, because the present generation of Kashmiris that the Indian government has blinded with pellet guns and kept locked up in their homes for more than a year has nothing to do with militants or militancy. Islamabad must now follow this step with more of the same.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/670450/foreign-diplomats-at-loc/>

Hosting SAARC | Editorial

The need for greater regional cooperation in South Asia was never so crucial as it has become today. Today the region is faced with a myriad of challenges—economic, social and political. In these testing times when every country is looking inwards, Pakistan rightly believes that the way out against these problems is practising regionalism. While addressing the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Pakistan's Foreign Minister (FM) Shah Mahmood Qureshi informed the participants of Islamabad's willingness to host the SAARC summit.

The member countries in the region must welcome the call of FM Qureshi. Hosting the summit would be an excellent opportunity for Pakistan to promote regional peace and harmony by encouraging the dealing of issues that are undermining the stability of the region. Today, the bloc is struggling hard to deal with rising food insecurity, COVID-19, climate change, economic stagnation, locust attacks. And many member states are at loggerheads with each other over territorial disputes. These issues make it a challenge for the bloc to cash its worth. Hence, the member states must overcome the artificial hurdles and think beyond the limitations of nation-states.

Nevertheless, Islamabad being the host must ensure that intra-Afghan negotiations and India's ever-increasing belligerent occupation and aggression in Kashmir take precedence. While Pakistan must highlight violations of international law in Kashmir, as Indian forces target the civilian population along the Line of Control (LoC), the member states need to pressurise India to stop being a rogue state. The conflict zones mentioned earlier can destabilise the entire region. So, finding solutions becomes essential for regional stability through cooperation. And the countries must find quick but sustainable solutions. India's past behaviour indicates that it will not attend the summit. But boycotting the gathering will be India's loss, as regional cooperation will take place with or without India's participation.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/26-Sep-2020/hosting-saarc>

Water Crisis, A Bigger Threat Than Terrorism By Prof Abdul Shakoor Shah

WATER is the driving force for all nature; it is fittingly called the Blue Gold of the world. The wars of the future will be fought over water. The lack of water or its poor quality kills 10 times more people than all the wars combined. Water crisis is a global phenomena and it is anticipated that Lucifer is going to burn South Asia with global warming and water crisis. Pakistan is the world's fourth-highest water consuming country with its water intensity, amount and cubic meters used. The fact makes it crystal clear that our economy is enormously water dependent. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) measures the pressure on national water resources by calculating water withdrawal as a percentage of total renewable water resources (TRWR). Stresses are considered high if the TRWR value is above 25%. Pakistan's water pressure amounts to a staggering 74 %. The pressure is excessive even compared with neighbouring high-pressured countries, including India at 34 % and Afghanistan 31%. The country is anticipated to become water scant less than five hundred cubic meters per capita annually by 2035. About 80 % of cultivated land in Pakistan is irrigated, of which about 33 % is affected by water logging and soil salinity, leading to significant declines of 25 % in crop yields, chiefly downstream which are the outcome of water pollution. Pakistan despite its geo-political and socio-economical vitality in the Asian region is a water stressed country.

A few years back, the IMF issued a report positioning Pakistan third in the world among countries facing water scarcity. The researchers have anticipated that Pakistan is sliding to water stressed countries by 2040 and according to some researchers the country could run dry by 2025-30 as water level is touching the distressing echelon. Another dilemma is that we waste an unimaginable quantity of water annually due to unavailability of dams to store water. We have butchered forests. In 1947, the forests covered 5% of the nation's area which has now dropped to 2%. Many dams which could prove a fort to fight and win water wars have been slaughtered in the name of water politics. While comparing our reservoirs with neighboring India, we have the capacity to save water only for 30 days and India can do it for 190. The US can do it for 900 days. Pakistan receives around 145 million acre feet of water annually but it is saddening to say that we can save only 13.7 million acre feet. We need 40 million acre feet water but 29

million acre feet of our flood water is wasted because of unavailability of dam and water politics.

India has also raised the water wastage issue on international level reprimanding us for water wastage and leading for water control of western rivers. We must bear the fact in mind our eternal enemy India is preparing to wage a water war against Pakistan. Water crisis is not as simple as the machinery is dreaming about, it is triggering security conflicts. We are wasting 100 liters for washing a car with running tap water. We should follow the motto "Save water, Save Pakistan". Although national water crisis policy has been announced nothing has been practically done yet. Political parties prioritize their coming elections, not the coming generations. The Government and policy makers have not turned a deaf ear to the looming future calamity. The reports by UNDP and the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) have also cautioned about utter water dearth in the near future.

Nail Buhne, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan has vividly emphasized that the water catastrophe will impinge on everyone either from glacier regions or from desert zones. The development and research organizations have alerted the government machinery earlier many times about the impending calamity by calling it a bigger threat than terrorism. PCRWR cautioned in 2016 about crossing the water scarcity line but no solid step has yet been taken in this regard. 2017 caused to bring Lucifer heat wave sweeping across the globe resulting droughts, wildfires, temperature augmentation and death. According to the IMF, Pakistan's per capita annual water availability is 1,017 cubic meters which is dangerously close to the insufficiency doorsill of 1,000 cubic meters. Back in 2009, Pakistan's water accessibility was about 1,500 cubic meters. The bulk of Pakistan's agricultural lands are hosed down via canal system, but the IMF report depicts that the canal system is enormously insufficient due to negligence toward their maintenance. Agriculture, which consumes almost the whole annual obtainable surface water, is largely untaxed. Population escalation and urbanization are the key factors behind the crisis which is further escalated by climatic change, mismanagement and a lack of political will to get rid of Damocles' Sword.

The water resources of the country are depleting rapidly, despite Michael Kuglman, the South Asian expert at Washington-based Woodrow Wilson Centre cautioned the Secretary at the Ministry of Water about the creepy water situation for Pakistan, the Ministry has not awakened yet. Water depletion has caused climatic changes

in the country. The Lucifer Heat wave in Karachi resulted in the demise of 65 people due to heat stroke in 2015 and at least 1,200 during a spat of extremely hot weather. The death toll is mounting annually. The recent drastic rain spell in Karachi and country-wide flood devastation is also the outcome of climatic changes. The sea level is increasing alarmingly along with the temperature level of oceans. The melting glacier ratio has amounted to 4% as compared to the past. The monsoons have turned from boom to doom and the winter season has shrivelled from 4 to 2 months. These issues will remain persistent until more sustainable irrigation practices are put in place. Karachi has been in the clutches of the Water Mafia a few years back which should be considered as a harbinger of the coming future water crisis. We should not sit waiting for God but we must move ahead with zeal and zest to cope with the future sinister water crisis before it is too late.

—The writer is Prof in English and Freelance Columnist, based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/water-crisis-a-bigger-threat-than-terrorism/>

Renewable Energy | Editorial

THE World Bank has shown Pakistan the way forward in the energy sector by approving \$450m to support the country's transition from expensive fossil fuels to affordable, renewable energy resources so that it can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Pakistan must use this opportunity as a policy impetus to encourage renewable, alternative energy schemes, and not just limit it to a few projects. The World Bank financing has been approved for hydropower and solar energy generation schemes in KP, which will shift the national energy mix to clean domestic resources. As stated by the bank's country director, the project will support Pakistan's goal to become a low-carbon, renewable energy-reliant economy by 2030 and target reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change. This is in line with the international shift towards environment-friendly energy sources. The focus on indigenous resources would also contribute to the economic development of communities living near hydropower and solar projects by revitalising infrastructure, creating jobs and supporting the development of tourism in those areas. Now it is for the government to use the bank's financing to scale up clean energy schemes in the rest of the country.

Sadly, the country's energy policymakers do not seem to have the capacity to plan beyond conventional dirty energy sources — coal, oil and gas. They seem to be out of touch with ongoing power technology developments and the availability of cheap renewable energy storage solutions, which are expected to change the scenario globally in the next several years. The Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan, 2047, prepared by the NTDC, for example, focuses on costly generation-based coal and RLNG, while ignoring power technology that is set to dominate beyond 2030. The plan includes additions of renewables to meet the targets of the alternative energy policy, 2030, but neglects renewable resources in the overall energy mix beyond that. The overall contribution of renewables to the country's power capacity drops from 31pc in 2030 to 23pc in 2047, according to the IGCEP. A critique of the plan by an Australian organisation points to the "lack of renewable energy focus ... despite the fact that Pakistan has excellent renewable energy resources and ... wind and solar — which are already the cheapest source of new power generation in Pakistan — will be even cheaper throughout the 2030s and 2040s". Unless we cut our reliance on expensive fossil fuels and move towards renewable energy, the goals of sustainability and affordability cannot be met.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1582051/renewable-energy>

The UNGA Speech | Editorial

The effectiveness of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the United Nations General Assembly session can be gauged by the reaction of the Indian delegation. At first, the walkout in protest when the PM began highlighting the atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir and then the ridiculous and delusional response; all signs indicate that we have struck a nerve.

It is amusing that the Indian delegation felt that PM Khan had "no reasonable suggestion to offer the world". If they were paying more attention, they might have learnt a thing or two about managing to keep people from starving during a pandemic, climate sustainable policies such as the billion-tree tsunami and the need to take collective action against illegal and untraceable outflows of money to tax havens. All of these are pressing policy problems that we are confronting, and a united approach from the international community is sorely needed.

Quite naturally, the Indian government is feeling the heat from Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to bring the Kashmir issue and its Islamophobic policies centre stage. Beyond this, delegates from all over the world, including the European Union, Australia, Iran, United Kingdom, Azerbaijan and many others are allowed to come and see Azad Kashmir for themselves, to talk to its people without any restrictions and even visit the Line of Control to assess the situation. They are free to take what they will from these visits. Conversely, the Indian government is deploying all of its state machinations to brutally repress the indigenous Kashmiris just a few kilometres on the other side.

This does not go unnoticed by the neutrals. The Prime Minister did well to highlight all of this, and no longer can India obfuscate the truth, try as it might. The world now knows that India may attempt a false-flag operation. The international community has recognised that Kashmiris are being marginalised by the military siege across the border, and no amount of fuming or angry replies is going to change any of that.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/27-Sep-2020/the-unga-speech>

Covid-19 Precautions | Editorial

DURING the past couple of weeks, there has been an uptick in Covid-19 cases in the country. According to news reports, 74 new cases surfaced only in Islamabad on Sunday. This is the highest increase in the number of cases for this month and is more than twice the total number of cases reported in KP for the same day. A few days after the reopening of schools, 34 children in three towns of central Punjab also tested positive for Covid-19. Moreover, the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences put off reopening its private wards after five doctors contracted the infection since the hospital's out-patient department started functioning again last month. Meanwhile, in Sindh, the provincial government's spokesperson held a news conference on Monday to share his concern over the rising incidence of Covid-19. He said that in the past two weeks alone, the ratio of coronavirus-positive patients had risen from 1pc to 2.6pc, and lamented that the public had mostly stopped taking all precautions. Balochistan has also seen a sharp increase with Covid-19 cases tripling between August and September to reach May levels, while in KP, seven teachers tested positive for the infection earlier last week.

This resurgence in cases can indeed be attributed to the public's complacent attitude after lockdowns were lifted. It appears that with the easing of restrictions and resumption of educational and business activities, people are under the impression that the pandemic is now a thing of the past, when in fact the global death toll from Covid-19 has crossed the million mark. Some government officials believe that the increase in the number of cases is a reflection of ramped-up testing. This can only mean that earlier figures were hugely undercounted as a result of less testing. The authorities need to be just as proactive in the implementation of SOPs now as they were about enforcing lockdowns when initial cases were reported — that is, if they want to prevent a second wave of Covid-19 in the country.

Published in Dawn, September 29th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1582207/covid-19-precautions>

Winds of Change: Dr Abdullah's Visit to Pakistan By Reema Shaukat

HISTORIC intra-Afghan dialogue unfolded on the 12th of September 2020 in Doha, Qatar with high hopes among all stakeholders. After all these talks are crucial for restoration of peace in Afghanistan and the US leaving Afghan soil by mid next year. Certainly, Afghan people are hopeful of new change once the USA and its allied forces vacate their homeland and they will be able to run their country with their own choices. So far Afghan peace talks are moving with slow pace but yet it is a great achievement in the sense that it brought all stakeholders: Afghans, Taliban and USA representatives altogether to the dialogue table. War-torn Afghanistan is looking forward to the best options by parties who have to decide the future state of affairs where all stakeholders' only agenda is to restore peace forever. So there are high expectations and hopes from peace talks and inclusion of women in these talks shows that they will be given desired representation in all walks of life in future and their apprehensions will be addressed. Pakistan's role in restoring armistice and amity in Afghanistan has always remained active and prominent as peace in Afghanistan means peace in Pakistan. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR) of Afghanistan is on visit to Pakistan on 28-30 September 2020, accompanied by high-level delegates and members from HCNR. In his first visit to Pakistan as Chairman HCNR, Dr. Abdullah will meet President, PM, Army Chief and other dignitaries for exchanging views on Afghan peace process and strengthening of Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations and enhancing people-to-people contact.

Pakistan welcomes the visit by senior Afghan officials as "Winds of Change." Last year when President Ashraf Ghani visited Pakistan it was considered an ice-breaking and a new beginning of Pak-Afghan bilateral ties. Both Afghan President and PM Imran Khan "agreed to open a new chapter of friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, based on mutual trust and harmony for the benefit of the two peoples and countries and for advancing the cause of peace, stability and prosperity in the region" and it is still continuing on positive notes from both sides. Pakistan has always sustained Afghanistan in difficult times and has supported that an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process was and is the only viable option to end decades-long conflict in Afghanistan. That is the reason, we now see that all Afghan ethnicities' representatives are part of the peace

process, as they are the ones who have to decide their future, not dictated upon them by force.

For peace in the South Asian region, Pakistan has played a leading role in maintaining stability and restoring peace whether it was needed on its own soil and now in Afghanistan. But unfortunately, India which claims itself being the largest democracy is seen as a spoiler in Afghanistan case. Though India claims that it has facilitated Afghanistan's rebuilding but certain elements from India can act as spoiler again for these peace talks. So stakeholders have to be careful for those elements who can try to sabotage peace initiatives. Recently Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, while talking about Afghan Peace Process, also warned against "spoilers from within and without", adding that they will pose formidable challenges for peace to prevail in the region and "constant vigilance will be required to guard against their machinations". FM further said that Pakistan is happy that it has played a role in facilitating peace talks between the Taliban and the US in Doha earlier this year also and stressed on all parties and stakeholders in the Afghanistan peace process to seize this "historic opportunity" for peace in the country.

For regional peace and stability, China and Russia have assured their due cooperation and facilitation. While supporting the war-free Afghanistan's cause, China's special envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Liu Jian called on Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood where Pakistan reaffirmed its steadfast support for Afghan peace process and commitment to forge closer bilateral relationship and resolve to enhance China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral cooperation. In his powerful message, PM Imran Khan on the platform of UNGA raised voice for peaceful Afghanistan and said that Pakistan's desire for peace in our region is also manifest in our efforts to promote a political solution in Afghanistan and all stakeholders must work together to secure an inclusive and comprehensive political agreement.

Pakistan apart from peace restoration efforts for Afghanistan has facilitated health, education, infrastructure and other social development programmes for the people's welfare. That's why it is more important for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to enhance people to people and business opportunities aside with government to government and political efforts. In this regard, youth exchange programs, arts and cultural delegates' visits, business consortiums, media workshops and trainings, visa free access, re-producing historic literature in languages of both sides,

culinary festivals on special occasions/national days and utilizing shared Islamic and historical values can surely help in exploring new avenues of cooperation by sending-off past misperception and moving forward with confidence to build peaceful Afghanistan. Pak-Afghan Youth Forum (PAYF), in the form of an independent think tank, is an initiative by civil society to bridge the gap between people from both sides and work more on public diplomacy. These track-II diplomatic efforts are more forthcoming by people as being a reachable and easily accessible platform. Likewise with the visit of Dr. Abdullah Abdullah to Pakistan, winds of change have started moving as a sign of zephyr in South Asia.

— The writer works for Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, a think-tank based in Islamabad.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/winds-of-change-dr-abdullahs-visit-to-pakistan/>

A Warming Russia | Editorial

Developments over the weekend on foreign policy indicate that Pakistan's relations are consistently improving with Russia. On a two-day official visit to Russia, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza attended the Defence and Security Cooperation Conference at the SCO forum, where he met Chief of General Staff of the Russian Federation, Gen Valery V. Gerasimov. The discussions were fruitful, as the representatives discussed bilateral defence ties and regional security situation.

This is one of many indications that there is a move towards a developing cordial relationship between Pakistan and Russia. Pakistan should not lose the opportunity and extend friendly relations to Russia. It is no secret that correspondences between the two countries have not always been warm and friendly—Pakistan's relations with Russia have largely been viewed in context of India. Frosty relations have their roots to the cold war-era, because of Pakistan's alliance with the United States, and Russia's close relationship with India.

Shibli asks Nawaz to answer about foreign assests

Yet history or awkward alliances should not be a barrier for better relations, especially when it is so strategically beneficial for both countries to do so. The narrative for a regional economic bloc or improved ties at least with China, Pakistan and Russia has been debated at length, and most signs point to mutual positive outcomes. While India has tried to sabotage the situation any time that Russia and Pakistan appeared to become closer, it seems that if handled diplomatically, the countries can exchange good relations, even if Russia is close to India.

A cordial friendship between Russia and Pakistan is mutually beneficial for both countries. With the US departure from Afghanistan looking inevitable, Moscow's stakes on the rise of terrorism and its involvement in brokering peace in Afghanistan is bound to increase. Better relations with Pakistan make negotiations much easier. For Pakistan, warmer relations with Russia takes away one less manipulative tactic for India to use to bully its neighbours.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/07-Sep-2020/a-warming-russia>

ECONOMY

Yet Another Milestone Under CPEC | **Editorial**

IN another landmark development under multibillion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, Pakistan and China inked an agreement on Monday for the development of long awaited Rashakai Special Economic Zone. Prime Minister Imran Khan who was also present at the signing ceremony expressed the confidence that Rashakai Economic Zone will play an important role in the economic development of not only Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa but of the entire country.

This special economic zone is located near M-1 Nowshera and it is expected to cover about 1000 acre land. The potential industries to be set up in the zone are those of mechanical development, domestic appliances, food processing and textile and construction material. Over the last many decades Pakistan has lagged far behind in industrialization and resultantly the country could not be able to push up its exports to its true potential. Under the CPEC, a golden opportunity is knocking at our doors to take the country towards rapid industrialization keeping in view the modern trends. In this backdrop, it is important that Rashakai and other economic zones under the CPEC are completed in the given time lines. Infrastructure such as approach roads and basic amenities such as electricity and gas must be ensured in the SEZs to attract investment from China and other parts of the world. Making these SEZs a success story will provide hundreds of thousands of job opportunities to our youth and bolster our exports, which is the key to address most of the economic woes of the country. We, therefore, urge Prime Minister Imran Khan to personally monitor progress on the development of SEZs. At the same time, our training institutes should fine tune their courses in such a manner that meet the need of the industries to be set up in the SEZs. The CPEC Authority under its Chairman Asim Saleem Bajwa is doing an excellent work as it has put the corridor project in high gears and one expects further broadening of cooperation between Pakistan and China in areas such as the agriculture. This

multi-dimensional cooperation will take the already strong Sino-Pak relations to new heights.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/yet-another-milestone-under-cpec/>

Pakistan's Economic Performance By Dr Khadija Bari

A snapshot of Pakistan's performance in the 73 years since its independence reveals that the country has made significant progress on various socio-economic indicators.

It has shown considerable improvement in life expectancy, reduced infant mortality, boosted exports and enhanced income levels. However, when we compare Pakistan's performance with other countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, we realise that Pakistan has not only lagged behind other Asian economies but has also trailed in terms of the rate of progress on these indicators, presenting a gloomy picture vis-a-vis its regional competitors.

GDP per capita

GDP (gross domestic product) per capita is a useful statistic to measure a country's standard of living. It is calculated by dividing the country's economic output by its total population.

The GDP per capita of Pakistan and India was nearly the same in 1960 with Pakistan being slightly (1.4%) higher. However, the gap has now increased to 39% with India quite ahead.

Pakistan's GDP per capita increased 15 times from 1960 to 2019 whereas that of India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka increased 26, 49 and 27 times respectively.

The gap in GDP per capita of Pakistan and Bangladesh was 34% in 1971 with Pakistan clearly enjoying a much higher standard of living. However, now the tables are completely turned with Bangladesh being ahead of Pakistan with a gap of 31%.

Exports

Exports not only improve balance of payments but are an important source of foreign exchange earnings. Although Pakistan's exports have increased 105 times

since 1960, it lags behind India and Malaysia whose exports increased 325 and 234 times respectively.

Bangladesh's total exports increased by 84 times since 1971. Sri Lanka is the only country that remained behind Pakistan with an increase in exports of 46%.

The percentage of exports in terms of GDP is an insightful measure to look at international competitiveness.

A country may be able to sell its products domestically even if they are of poor quality because of the favourable treatment or excessive protection. But to sell internationally, its products must be of high quality for the world to purchase from it.

Pakistan's weak position in terms of international competitiveness is clear from the fact that its exports comprised 10% of GDP as compared to 19%, 15%, 65% and 23% for India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Sri Lanka in 2019.

India and Bangladesh surpass Pakistan even in terms of the rate of increase in exports-to-GDP ratio, which portrays further deterioration in terms of international competitiveness vis-a-vis these two countries.

Pakistan managed to increase its exports as a percentage of GDP by 1.44% since 1960 while India's increase was calculated at 4.18% during the same time period. Bangladesh's increase since 1971 has been 2.44%.

Infant mortality, life expectancy

The benefit of economic growth is a higher standard of living, leading to more resources for areas like health. Healthy populations then live longer, are more productive and save more.

Two important health indicators generally looked at by development economists are life expectancy at birth and infant mortality rates. Pakistan has shown considerable progress in terms of both these indicators, however, its rate of improvement has been much slower than other countries.

For example, Pakistan's life expectancy was higher than that in both India and Bangladesh in 1971, however, Pakistan now lags behind these countries.

Pakistan's life expectancy at birth in 2019 stood at 67.5 years as compared to 68.7, 72.4, 76.1 and 76.9 years for India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Sri Lanka respectively.

Pakistan managed to reduce its infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) by one-third from 186 (per 1,000 live births) in 1960 to 60 (per 1,000 live births) in 2019.

Bangladesh and India have infant mortality rate of 26 (per 1,000 live births) and 31 (per 1,000 live births) respectively. Malaysia and Sri Lanka are way ahead with infant mortality rates of 6 and 7 (per 1,000 live births) respectively.

The above comparison of socio-economic indicators raises serious concern over Pakistan's model of growth.

The economic policy debate has mostly been geared towards short-term perspectives of boosting exports through devaluation/ exchange rates and subsidies rather than focusing on the chronic issue of slow productivity growth.

Expanding exports through such a model may have brought some relief in the trade deficit but it has definitely eroded Pakistan's international socio-economic position when compared with other Asian economies.

Way forward

In Pakistan, the term international competitiveness has often been wrongly understood as price competitiveness. It is this view that policymakers and politicians have in mind when making economic and trade policies and boasting of increased exports.

REER (real effective exchange rate) and ULC (unit labour cost) are the most commonly used measures for analysing price competitiveness.

If this was to be considered a justified definition of international competitiveness, then a rise in ULC or stronger currency should lead to a decline in international

competitiveness. However, empirical studies show that over long term, the market share of exports and relative unit costs or prices tend to move together.

Pakistan needs a fresh industrial policy that would take the focus away from short-term economic relief measures and push its ailing industrial base towards higher productivity and value addition.

Seeking to enhance exports through devaluation, exchange rate and protection is dangerous as it makes industries sluggish and inefficient and reinforces their focus on cost rather than producing better-quality products.

A classic example is Pakistan's textile industry which, in spite of a long history of incentives and relief packages, still concentrates on low-priced commodity products. It has failed to come out of low skills and low competence trap.

To date, Pakistan hardly has any institute of even national repute that is producing relevant human resources for this industry that constitutes 60% of total exports. If Pakistan wants to remain competitive in its region, it must enhance its productivity growth by improving the quality of its industry-specific workforce.

Secondary education should be accompanied by the expansion of vocational training to improve specialised skills for export-oriented industries. Curricula should be developed with input from appropriate industry associations to ensure that relevant skills are developed.

This will not only enhance Pakistan's productivity growth but will also provide a good alternative for its bulging youth that cannot acquire academic education for their working careers.

There is an urgent need for a linking mechanism that would closely work with ministries of education, labour and science and technology and coordinate the education and training requirements of its industrial development strategy.

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Published in The Express Tribune, September 14th, 2020

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263837/pakistans-economic-performance>

Economic Prospects | Editorial

THE Asian Development Bank says Pakistan's economy is moving out of the coronavirus-induced sluggishness and beginning to crawl forward. A new report released by the Manila-based bank on Tuesday forecast a modest but broad-based recovery, projecting the economy's expansion by 2pc in the present fiscal year. This is in line with the government's GDP target of 2.1pc and a significant improvement over the negative growth of 0.4pc last year. Indeed, short-term economic trends show that the economy is returning to the path of recovery. Yet the ADB forecast in the Asian Development Outlook Update report should not be taken as gospel because it assumes that the impact of the Covid-19 health crisis will subside by end-December this year and the implementation of structural reform under the IMF Extended Fund Facility to address macroeconomic imbalances will resume.

This means that while so far the trends show that the economy is getting back on its feet, in spite of earlier fears of further contraction, the future remains uncertain. Pakistan's success in controlling the virus and reopening its economy has been tempered with fears over a possible escalation in infection rates, even if business activity is picking up momentum. Still, the ADB projections about growth, a stable balance-of-payments situation in spite of a bigger current account gap of 2.4pc owing to an expected fall in remittances compared with 1.1pc last year, recovery in the industrial and agriculture sectors, and domestic demand growth, provide us with a reason for cautious optimism though it is too early for celebrations.

Improved GDP growth prospects aside, the report has also pointed out that Pakistan's economic expansion will remain significantly lower than that of other economies in the South Asian region. The economy of the Maldives, which was the most affected by the virus in the region, is likely to grow by 10.5pc. India, the second worst-affected country economically, is forecast to make a comeback with an 8pc GDP growth rate. Similarly, Bangladesh's economy is expected to expand by 6.8pc and Sri Lanka's by 4.1pc. The only countries to grow at a slower pace than Pakistan are Bhutan, Afghanistan and Nepal. The comparison is important because it underscores the structural issues plaguing the economy — the weaknesses that we have been long aware of but done little to tackle — which take us back to the IMF for a financial bailout every few years. Pakistan is not the only country to have experienced 'boom-and-bust' cycles. But it is certainly among

those economies that have ignored deep-rooted structural issues for too long at the peril of the well-being of the citizenry. The Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria and Afghanistan are the only countries that occupy a lower place than Pakistan among 153 nations on the Global Wellness Index. That says a lot about how our economy is faring.

Published in Dawn, September 18th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1580305/economic-prospects>

Regional Trade | Editorial

THE decision to establish markets along Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan and Iran to boost trade underscores our weak economic relationship with our neighbours, apart from China. This is in spite of Pakistan's strategic location in the region and its links through surface routes with India in the east, and Afghanistan and Iran in the west. Moreover, across Afghanistan are the Central Asian Republics. And we continue to have a significantly large untapped market beyond India. Unfortunately, the share of Pakistan's intra-regional trade has declined in the last 10 years with exports to neighbouring countries falling from 12.2pc of its total overseas shipments in 2011 to 7.4pc in 2018. Similarly, Pakistan's regional imports have dropped from 7.4pc of its total global purchases to 4.7pc during the same period.

Numerous historical factors, political disputes, security issues and trade barriers have hampered regional trade integration. In the east, the Kashmir dispute has prevented Islamabad and New Delhi from establishing deeper trade ties. In effect, Pakistan doesn't enjoy comfortable trade relations with any South Asian nation with the exception of Sri Lanka. In India's case it is no different. The adversarial relations between India and Pakistan have effectively buried the dream of a free-trade area in South Asia. In the west, Afghanistan has been an important trade partner. Yet bilateral trade remains much below its actual potential because of Afghanistan's internal security conditions as well as a huge trust gap between the two states. Islamabad's refusal to extend transit trade rights to India and Afghanistan owing to security and other reasons is reciprocated by Kabul's refusal to allow us access to Central Asia through its territory, sealing the fate of an east-west trade corridor connecting South Asia with the Central Asian Republics. The only way for Pakistan to trade with Central Asia is through China, a route that remains closed five months of the year because of harsh weather. With Iran under US-sponsored sanctions, it has become impossible to develop strong, formal trade ties with Tehran.

Intra-regional trade plays a key role in the economic development and competitiveness of countries and is directly linked with their GDP growth rates. Take the example of EU and the Southeast Asian and East Asian economies. EU regional trade constitutes 65pc of the bloc's international trade. In East Asia this ratio is 35pc and in Southeast Asia 25pc, compared to 5pc in South Asia.

According to World Bank data, intra-regional trade accounts for about 1pc of South Asia's GDP compared to almost 11pc for East Asia and the Pacific. It is absurd to expect that Pakistan alone can dismantle the trade barriers that limit regional economic growth. All stakeholders should work towards regional cooperation and learn from the experiences of other trading blocs. The increase in regional economic integration will lead to greater interdependence and faster growth, and ultimately create a strong constituency for peace across the region.

Published in Dawn, September 19th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1580481/regional-trade>

Good News | Editorial

There is good news coming from Pakistan's foreign investment front—Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) jumped 23.5 percent to \$112.3 million in August, an increase of 24pc, and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) has granted Pakistan a stay on the enforcement of a penalty awarded against Pakistan in the Reko Diq mining lease dispute.

The stay order is a blessing—had Pakistan not applied for annulment of the Award, it would have had to pay an extraordinary amount of \$5.97 billion to the Australian company Tethyan Copper Company (TCC); this is one of the largest amounts for a penalty ever enforced by ICSID. It is nearly the same amount as the bailout package for Pakistan from the International Monetary Fund. Accepting the Award would have reversed any relief Pakistan received from the IMF, would have starved the economy, and would surely have had a detrimental effect on Pakistan's future foreign investment.

An ICSID Award is infamously difficult to reverse—it cannot be appealed in any domestic court or jurisdiction, as the ICSID convention stipulates that every ICSID jurisdiction must without deliberation enforce any ICSID Award. Annulment is an exceptional recourse to safeguard against the violation of fundamental legal principles relating to the process, and there are five very limited grounds for annulment. With the context, this stay is indeed a victory as it gives Pakistan more time to consider its legal case for annulment and to explore more diplomatic channels to mitigate the damages of the Award.

Yet this is just a temporary relief—the bigger challenge currently constitutes of proving that corruption in the promise of a lease to mine copper and gold deposits at the Reko Diq mine takes this case out of the jurisdiction of investment arbitration, and in domestic law, while at the same time maintaining our credibility to other foreign investors. For its quick action to seek annulment, the Pakistani legal team must be praised, and it is hoped they employ the same tact in pursuing the bigger case that now lies ahead.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/19-Sep-2020/good-news>

Monetary Policy and the Economy | Editorial

Tomorrow the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will announce its new monetary policy and all eyes, especially in business circles, will be on Karachi and rightly so. So far, in order to ward off the worst effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the Bank has already slashed the policy rate by 625 basis points since this March. And, slowly but surely, this dovish stance has begun impacting the economy to the upside. Demand for credit is much improved, businesses are much happier than they were at the same time last year even though there was no coronavirus at that time, and significant sectors of the economy have started picking up.

Going forward, it is only natural for the business community to salivate at the prospect of yet another cut. And it's not just expansion they are eyeing; for that would be a far off thing even though the economy has improved. One of the prime reasons is the losses some of them have suffered because of the virus and the lockdown. That has left many of them in need of cheap money. And if they can have some of that at a lower interest rate than at present they why not? At least that is how they would or should be thinking. Plus it's not as if they are asking the central bank to do what monetary authorities in other countries aren't already doing. The focus everywhere, for economic as well as political reasons, is on keeping businesses and jobs from collapsing any further, and every country's central bank seems determined to do whatever is necessary to keep the damage to a minimum.

Then there is the other side of the picture; which represents that part of the market that is pricing in a rate hike. Their argument is that since the economy has picked up and things are better than before, why risk any further inflation especially after what everybody was made to go through before the pandemic and considering the way food inflation is hurting the middle and lower classes right now. But the food price hike owes to factors, as per the government's own admission, to non-market factors like mafias that influence the end prices of commodities. So with overall inflation still looking to go down and the external position being stable for the time being, there should really be no reason to jack up the rate just yet.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/668580/monetary-policy-and-the-economy/>

Circular Debt Worries | Editorial

PAKISTAN'S circular debt challenge is getting bigger by the day and the government is struggling hard to get a firm handle on the problem, which is threatening the very stability of the power sector. Notwithstanding the claims by ministers and other government officials of having controlled the pace of increase in the power-sector debt stock, the latter has almost doubled over the last couple of years to reach Rs2.1tr. The government has time and again declared that the pace of monthly growth in the quasi-fiscal debt size had been arrested and brought down to Rs10bn-12bn from Rs38bn during the last PML-N government. But in effect, the debt rose by almost Rs45bn a month during the previous financial year. A recent study by a private power company has predicted the size of the circular debt — or the amount of cash shortfall within the Central Power Purchasing Agency system that the agency is unable to pay to its power suppliers — to double in the next five years if it is not brought under control. That would be quite a scary situation given that the country is still being run on borrowed money and its economy is groping in the dark.

The growing power-sector debt is generally considered one of the biggest threats to the stability of the sector, as well as the government's budget. There are numerous reasons for the appearance of circular debt in the mid-2000s and its increase, ranging from expensive power purchasing agreements with private producers and exorbitantly high system losses to unrecovered bills, corruption and mismanagement of state-owned distribution companies. However, it is surprising to see a federal government minister simplify the problem by putting the entire blame on the previous rulers. Indeed, the present government has inherited the issue from its predecessor. Yet the people have a right to ask as to what it has done in the last two years to manage it and why it has been pursuing the same power policies followed by the previous administration. After all, it is the people that have to bear the brunt of wrong power policies and gross mismanagement of the sector in the form of electricity rates that are higher than the regional average. With the PTI into its third year in power, the public expects it to come up with a tangible short- to long-term power-sector reform programme to fix matters instead of constantly looking back.

Published in Dawn, September 24th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1581343/circular-debt-worries>

Foreign Policy as a Tool For Economic Development By Nasir Khan

The emerging powers, whose primary objective, both nationally and globally, has been to assist their growth and augment their protrusion has greatly, influenced current international political dynamics. However, as most work on this partnership, little has been written on how the foreign policy of these countries will support their development goals.

The foreign policy of a state is directly associated with its national interest and national power. The national power of a state is based on the quality of government's policies and strategies. The national interest is an indispensable component of foreign policy but it also based on the vested interests of state with diplomatic strategy to develop the relationship with the foreign world. So, if the national interest and national power are not parallel to each other, the foreign policy will never be good.

The role of the state in growth promotion strategies is the theme of many works on the political economy. There is a clear line of thought that recognises when it comes to addressing that divides developing countries like Pakistan from developed countries.

One has to consider the importance of the state in this phase when evaluating the role of foreign policy in promoting growth in Pakistan. With this in mind, Pakistan's foreign policy can be divided into two broad fields, namely economics and politics, by which it affects the development of the country. These can be further broken down into lines of action directly linked to boosting the economic development of a nation and reducing the degree of inequality, which is typically not a priority for most policymakers.

In order to safeguard and develop its trade flows, to preserve its sovereignty in relation to more powerful states, the circumstances of a country's standing in the international arena is of utmost significance

There are three main lines of action that can openly affect the country's development strategy and it can be differentiated when dealing with the economic

field of foreign policy. The following are lines of action: (a) promotion of trade and commerce; (b) investment and venture policy; and (c) agreements on diplomatic, strategic, financial and commercial matters. In the context of politics, the lines of action are more implicitly related to the promotion of growth and development, as their practical and realistic consequences do not enter the economic and social arenas so easily, but contribute to maintaining a favorable atmosphere for the progress of the other lines of action. In this context, it is possible to list three other lines of action: privileges to explore resources, international cooperation; and international projection.

Promoting trade requires not only quantitatively growing domestic exports, but also qualitatively upgrading them. This is what Pakistan needs to do. This action involves measures to promote exports with more value addition of the components, taking into account the aforementioned principle of growth. To do so, foreign policymakers typically aim to enter new markets and encourage high-value – added products in their trade with conventional partners, formerly little involved in national products. This action relies greatly on a national policy of raising the productivity and efficiency of domestic goods that is propped up by increases in the skill levels of personnel. Pakistan has been lacking to implement such measures and policies to enhance the value addition of products.

The investment strategy of a country involves two positions: magnetizing FDI classically presented as of paramount importance in the initial stages of diversification of output, and extending national investment abroad. FDI is known to be potentially advantageous for investors as well beneficiaries. However, the weaker side, the beneficiary needs to be anxious about ensuring the transfer of technology, that is essential for growth and development. On the investment side, expanding the outreach of a nation to other regions unlock new potential and possibilities for international investment by domestic businesspeople. Pakistan's policymaker must consider it while making the foreign policies.

The third line of action, which is a historically recent feature, seeks to create structural conditions for a national development strategy. In this line of action, the policy intends to demand satisfactory development environment, the exclusion of unjust trade practises in developed countries, fairer intellectual property administration and the panorama of developing unfair intellectual property rules for the development of unconventional programs.

A few other lines of action have a more meandering way on a country's economic growth and development, but can make a mammoth contribution to all facets of expansion, growth and development. In order to safeguard and develop its trade flows, to preserve its sovereignty in relation to more powerful states, the circumstances of a country's standing in the international arena is of utmost significance, meeting support for their functions in multilateral and joint forums, gaining access to cutting edge technology and generating the indispensable and requisite climate for their companies to step up the domestic and international activities. Consequently, the political bubble has a constructive influence on the overall achievement of the economic sphere and the lines and measurements of the operations. In Pakistan's foreign policy context, there is a need of hour to develop such foreign policies which are purely based on the economic growth and development. This is only way to create a positive and soft image in the world through the appropriate foreign policy mechanism.

Here, I would like to discuss the two models of foreign policy and economic development; the Turkish and Brazil model of foreign policy.

It has been quite illuminating of how foreign policy functions as an apparatus and mechanism to make easy the growth of these countries to apply the aforementioned model to cases. Given their disparities, when handling with the globalisation of domestic business operations, one of the key priority areas of state intervention abroad, the foreign actions of the two countries have a lot in common. The trend assumed by their policies often has a lot to do with their economic models, which are responsible for the discrepancies in terms of their involvement in multilateral forums and how they contribute to the economic sector of foreign policy.

There are significant similarities between the two countries' trade and investment policies, as both have continued to extend their areas of operation into untraditional territories, exploring new opportunities for political and economic benefits. While this approach has faced some opposition, it has found support from companies interested in exporting and/or investing abroad. Meanwhile, FDI continues to be pursued by the two nations to broaden domestic economic activities. This duality is an inherent feature of semi-peripheral actors, where growth is of utmost importance to both inward and outward investment flows, although the latter is still a recent phenomenon. This dual relationship is also expressed in their co-operation policy, in which the two countries are presenting a recent step towards

providing co-operation to other countries, with inward co-operation flows from central countries having been drastically reduced.

Foreign relations of Pakistan have been in melancholy in this democratic term due to many reasons.

The external component of national policy is foreign policy. It is the first line of defence of a nation and the primary advocate of its interests abroad. It aims to mitigate risks and threats to the country's stability and economic well-being, while at the same time enhancing its options and opportunities for action. The difference between national capabilities and national goals is bridged. It is not planned to market home-made, ill-conceived plans overseas. It is unable to project a positive picture of a poor state of affairs. It is the need of hour to develop Pakistan's foreign policy in the favor of economic development to benchmark the Brazil and Turkish foreign policies.

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Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/672274/foreign-policy-as-a-tool-for-economic-development/>

Decline In Exports | Editorial

Pakistan's export share for August is incredibly distressing. Exports in international markets have seen a 20 percent drop. While business has already resumed, the decrease in Pakistan's exports is not what we should witness. Our exports industry should have seen a boom. But quite the opposite of the assumption happened; this, perhaps, is not only a failure of the industry. The shrinking of our export products is the state's failure as well.

It is not just manufactured goods that can increase our export share. Our agricultural produce can also earn us significant amounts in revenue. International supermarkets' shelves are brimming with inferior quality fruits and vegetables. This offers our growers a perfect opportunity. If the government helps our farmers a little, we can fill our national kitty with extra cash. This is also true for rice and other products. It does not matter whether our economy is industrialised or not; the reality is that we are not exporting the quantities we should be.

Prince William refused to meet Harry before Sandringham summit over Megxit Fury

Unfortunately, the government says now and then that it is taking measures to boost our exports. But the stats for August suggests otherwise. In the review meeting at the Ministry of Commerce, the monsoon season was blamed for the fall. Undoubtedly, heavy rain spells did cause a lot of obstruction. But just blaming rain means that our policymakers think that had it not been for the rain, our exports would have increased. This is not the case, however.

The Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Mr Abdul Razak Dawood wants the manufacturers to pursue "export-led growth", and he has already directed his ministry to facilitate exporters. Unless we enhance the volume of our products in foreign markets, the government must not show any surprise when the downward slide of rupee continues. Increasing Pakistan's export capabilities must become a greater focus for our economic policymakers.

Source: <https://nation.com.pk/05-Sep-2020/decline-in-exports>

PSX Becomes Asia's Best Again | Editorial

It turns out that a season of unexpectedly high earnings that defied Covid-19's effective takeover of the world economy has pushed the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) to the number-one position in Asia and fourth in the world in terms of performance. Pakistan has, of course, been able to handle the pandemic better than almost all other countries in the world and it is little surprise that the upbeat sentiment is expressed in the equity market as well. It is also no surprise, considering the overall trend, that foreign investors who were net sellers for most of the past couple of years turned into net buyers in August 2020. This is the undeniable nod of approval from Big Money, mostly investment banks and high net worth individuals, for Pakistan's reforms program and how proactive fiscal and monetary policies have been able to guide a fragile economy through the worst of the pandemic and the lockdown.

But let's not forget that Pakistan's is not the only stock market that is setting enviable trends. Markets in much of the west, especially the United States, have surprisingly decoupled from the real economy and have been rising and setting records even as the global economy has slipped into what seems like a very steep recession. The reason is all the stimulus packages and orders of quantitative easing, or simply printing more money to meet emerging needs, that are periodically announced from capitals in North America and Western Europe. Businesses and investors are now convinced that governments will do whatever is necessary to keep capital markets from going dry, even if it means running the printing presses overtime regardless of the effect such things might have on inflation, etc. But Pakistan's story has been somewhat different in that the stock market is a reflection of the real economy and not divorced from it.

Also, welcome as the news of becoming number-one in Asia and four in the world is, let us not forget that we have been here before. The last time we were the best in the region was in 2016, but then the following year our market also became the worst performing in the world. So, while we are doing good, it's not as if all our troubles are over because our equity market is attracting more investors than any other place on the continent. The government must therefore be congratulated for this success but also cautioned against taking its eye off the ball.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/662159/psx-becomes-asias-best-again/>

EDUCATION

Back to School | Editorial

With concerns persisting over the safety of students, teachers and staff as well as their families and associates, educational activities across the country have resumed. The first ones to get back to school from today, i.e. September 15, are the students studying in higher educational institutions — including universities, professional colleges and vocational institutes — as well as in class 9th to 12th. And in the second phase, from September 23, students in classes six, seven and eight will be allowed to return to schools following a review, while primary schools will be reopened on September 30, in the third and final phase.

The reopening of schools in three phases comes in line with a unanimous decision taken at a meeting of the inter-provincial education ministers held last week in the wake of a research carried out by the National Command and Operation Centre — the Covid nerve centre — and a “wide consultative process” involving experts and think-tanks, according to an official statement. Earlier though, Sindh was a little skeptical about sending primary students, in particular, back to school, with provincial health minister Azra Fazal Pechuho, herself a doctor, insisting that children should be taught at home until the country is rid of the coronavirus, “especially the younger ones who are not mature and cannot maintain social distancing”.

To the contrary, many infectious disease specialists and other experts have, of late, sided with the government in their decision to reopen schools, saying that since the coronavirus infection in Pakistani children has been relatively mild, as compared to adult patients, they are not believed to be major drivers of the spread of the virus. Experts are thus supporting the reopening of educational institutions in the country with strict adherence to the prescribed SOPs. But this is where the problem actually lies. There is a big question mark on the capacity of the authorities to enforce the coronavirus SOPs.

While schools in the public sector — which are devoid of basic facilities like drinking water and toilets — are highly unlikely to follow the SOPs even for the sake of it, a

large number of more than two hundred thousand private schools in the country — those not belonging to reputable groups — will find it difficult to abide by them because of limited space and resources. Maintaining physical distance in schools vans is the most difficult of the do's. For the SOPs to be followed in their true sense, schools need to be equipped with adequate number of classrooms or ample outdoor space to ensure physical distancing. Besides, running water, soap and sanitiser is also needed in the required quantity. Disinfection is also to be carried out regularly.

So the enforcement of SOPs is going to come at a cost, and this is where the government will have to play a role. While in the case of public schools, the government will have to bear the full financial responsibility, it will also have to lend a helping hand to smaller schools in the private sector. In contrast though, Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood has been quoted as saying that headmasters and teachers in public schools should ensure availability of water through their personal resources — something that would add to their financial and administrative burden. Besides, teachers are also supposed to ensure implementation of SOPs which is only possible to some extent as they cannot keep a strict watch on students for the entirety of the school day.

So in order to ensure a safe return to schools of our students, the government will have to play the lead role.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 15th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263970/back-to-school>

Declining Standards of Education By Malik

M Aslam Awan

THE declining standards of education have caused a torrential sense of discontent amongst the sane circles of civil society. One of the main reasons of increasing fall of educational standards is the futile use of internet on mobile phones. Every second and third person especially the youth are always busy in superfluous activities which would never enhance their vision or intellect to counter the challenges of life coming ahead. Every developed or developing nation will have to set code of criteria to act upon to counter coming challenges of future life. Students have now left to delve deep in their studies because they are now of the confirm opinion that they cannot join honourable service until and unless they possess formidable bureaucratic, feudal or political background. Their aversion from curriculum have made them paralyzed to confront the challenges of future life. Top brains and big wigs of a sensitive nation often plan for the next half century, how would they move forward and confront the problems, issues cropping up in the life of that nation in near future.

It is very shocking that the youth are always busy on cell phones in playing games or superfluous activities. Even the youth keep themselves busy in obscene movies or pictures, which spoil their immature minds and some of them develop obnoxious habits of womanizers and get indulged themselves in criminal activities, Facebook, Net, TikTok crimes. Immature minds imbibe these in such a severity that their comeback becomes impossible and consequently their criminal habits lead them to commit serious cyber, internet crimes and their ultimate abode is none but incarceration in jail. Jails of Pakistan are nurseries of criminals where they grow and groom their habits to be veteran criminals. Most of the habitual criminal gangsters were groomed by criminals already in jails after having committed serious crimes. Jails are universities of crimes wherefrom immature, Juvenile minds inculcated criminal mindset and after getting released formed criminal gangs and played havoc in society, even shocked their parents to lead paralyzed life, ending in their sorrowful death. Parents have great incumbency to have a vigilant check on their children and state educational institutions, also, have a cumbersome responsibility to initiate a campaign for character building of their pupils, whose parents sought their admission in these institutions with the intention that they would be taught how to lead a responsible, immaculate, impeccable

unblemished life but unfortunately state as well as higher Educational Department is not interested in character building of their pupils. Higher education department must have a department of character building and every university, college, even matriculation stage institution have a special wing of character building and the results of that department are required to have a strict surveillance by a watchdog, having members and its chairman of distinguished characters throughout their life and professional itinerary. A nation without character building is not a nation but hoard of persons having the habits of animals. Savage societies are nurseries of criminals who would not be conducive to peaceful existence but a turbulent demeanor causing decadence in societal norms and making peaceful existence of law abiding citizens at hazards, resultantly the peaceful citizens would prefer migrating to other peaceful countries of the world, where the grip of law is more stringent and provision of speedy and free justice is the motto of the State.

To execute a hallmark change in society more rapidly towards peaceful life and atmosphere where Justice is the cardinal feature, the State will have to initiate drastic policies and courses to be taught to the youth and make them realize that their future is not to skeep themselves busy in nude and obnoxious net scenes but to pay fullest attention in curriculum activities and physical training. Womanizing trends be strictly discouraged and persons found involved in womanizing be immediately rusticated from government services or in educational institutions. Womanizers in educational institutions are more dangerous, as they are in immediate contact with their colleague women and the women of educational institutions become easy victim of womanizers. It has been frequently observed and experienced that womanizers find themselves surreptitiously inculcated in important government services i.e. DMG, Police, Education where they make abuse of powers and make harassment to women. It is a normal practice in eastern societies especially in Pakistan that women do not disclose molestation attempts to their families due to the fear that they and their families would be a constant victim of public rancour. They try to save their honour but it encourages the abuse of power and frequent rape assaults become the routine matters and these heinous crimes end in severe mishaps or tragedies, often in suicidal attempts from the victim. An alarming situation develops, which put the state functionaries in awkward and defensive position. The only and one solution of the declining standards of education is the hard-hit endeavours of government to initiate character building campaign, and recruitment system in all services be based on character judgment and womanizers in all departments be immediately rusticated, punished and kept in jails. Exemplary punishments would surely be a

harbinger of drastic change in demeanour and peace in society, otherwise we should be ready to lead a life of jungle. Can we afford this situation for our posterity?

—The writer is a freelance columnist and independent analyst based in Lahore.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/declining-standards-of-education/>

WORLD

G-20, or G-2? By F.S. Aijazuddin

GLOBAL politics is being diminished gradually to a numbers game, reducing slowly from G-20 to G-7 until it reaches the power of G-2: United States and China.

The foreign policy of the United States is dependent crucially on the forthcoming presidential election. Should Donald Trump win a second term, the world and China can expect more of the same, perhaps even worse, for his knee-jerk style of diplomacy is unlikely to settle into the more conventional rhythms of inter-state relations.

If Trump had his way, he would pitch for a constitutional amendment that would give him a third term. (The only other president to serve three full terms — and 23 days into a fourth — was Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945). Trump's second term would parallel that of Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, already Israel's longest-serving prime minister.

Netanyahu's present term will expire in 2024. He is currently 70 years old — younger even than the state of Israel. Trump's re-election would ensure their partnership (and Jared Kushner's pseudo statesmanship) will continue for four more years, with serious consequences for this region.

Pakistan is still a semi-state.

On the opposite side of the globe, China's premier Xi Jinping has been voted to hold office for life. He is 67 years old, and in a country where the average life expectancy of a male is 75 years, he has, like the Queen of England, a job for life. Interestingly, 70 years was the life expectancy of UK women in the 1940s when the Queen, on her 21st birthday in 1947, pledged her "whole life whether it be long or short" to serve her country and the Commonwealth. She is now 94 years old.

Since attaining statehood in 1949, the Chinese leadership has achieved unprecedented social betterment for its people. By comparison, it took the United

States 200 years to bring its largely immigrant population (“the wretched refuse of your teeming shore”, including Trump’s Bavarian grandfather) out of poverty and squalor.

China’s increasing economic might and its commercial tendrils will continue to spread (despite the prayers of China’s detractors) well until the end of this century. China has nothing to fear (as Franklin Roosevelt once told his fellow Americans) other than fear itself. Certainly the Chinese are not afraid of Trump. He is dismissed by them as a hood with presidential powers, in contrast to their favourite Richard Nixon, a president with the habits of a hood.

China knows it will have to share the stage with other countries that, through sheer force of presence, are emerging as regional powers. Some states already have revealed a significant measure of territorial influence — in South America: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela; in Africa: Nigeria and South Africa (if it can resolve its lingering racial divide); in the Middle East: Zionist Israel, leaderless Egypt, Wahabi Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran (each jostling for primary influence); and in Asia: Indonesia, Australia, South Korea, and Japan. Moving ahead of this pack, at different speeds, are Russia, India and the European Union (if it can find the right adhesive to keep itself together).

Some analysts have suggested that Pakistan’s geography, its human and agricultural potential could make it a power to reckon with, but in the future. If only it would stop behaving like a dyslexic democracy born of a gun barrel-shaped ballot box.

Pakistan is still a semi-state. It does not fulfil all the qualifying properties of a complete state. Certainly, it has a permanent population (give or take three million Afghan refugees). It has an effective government (albeit splintered into provincial satrapies). It has the sovereign capacity to enter into relations with other states, yet dodges the decisions of international courts. And it would have a ‘defined territory’ of undisputed borders, if only India and Afghanistan were not so intransigent.

‘Time-tested’ is a phrase often used to describe Pakistan’s friendship with China. That time has passed. China’s strategic outreach through commercial initiatives in Africa, South America, and Asia has pushed us down the list of China’s priorities.

China's expansionist intentions are clear. It has a military hard power that is second only to the United States. As a country with the second largest economy in the world, it now wants to wield that soft-power. To smaller countries which experienced the ravages of colonialism, the long-term impact of China's strategically significant — if financially unviable — forays are yet unproven. Historians in the year 2100 will be better informed. Today we can only surmise.

Meanwhile, elected and self-appointed leaders of any age should heed the timeless wisdom of the sage Confucius who, like China's economy, stands rehabilitated: "In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."

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Published in Dawn, September 10th, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1578908/g-20-or-g-2>

Impacts of Climate Change | Editorial

Climate change has threatened both developing and developed worlds. They say: don't drink water when in developing countries, and don't breathe air when in developed countries. An international think tank has called upon developing countries to control population because the rapidly rising numbers would make it difficult to provide food for all. The reduction in food availability and increasing exposure to natural disasters are expected to cause displacement of one billion people by 2050.

The Ecological Threat Register of the Institute for Economics and Peace bases its prediction about which countries and regions are more at risk using data from the UN and other sources. It has also assessed ecological threats, namely: food insecurity; water shortage; population growth; and natural disasters, including floods, droughts, cyclones, rising sea level and rising temperature. With the world population forecast to rise to 10 billion by 2050, it might intensify the scramble for resources and fuel conflict. Nearly 1.2 billion people living in sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East could be forced to migrate in the next 30 years. Ecological factors related to climate change and conflict led to the displacement of around 30 million people in 2019. Some experts believe a drought in Syria caused by global warming led to the outbreak of the civil war, which forced many to migrate.

The problems emanating from population explosion will have social and political impacts for both developing and developed worlds as large-scale displacement will lead to larger refugee flows to developed countries. The analysis of the data says India and China will be more threatened by increasing water shortage in the coming decades while Pakistan, Iran, Mozambique, Kenya and Madagascar face a dangerous combination of threats with a diminishing ability to deal with them. The think tank says its efforts are aimed at convincing countries of the need to allocate more funds to combat the impacts of climate change.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 11th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263434/impacts-of-climate-change>

Managing Implication of US-China Rivalry

By Syed Mohammad Ali

Given China's rampant growth over the past few decades, it was only natural for China to begin offering strategic competition to the United States, which had emerged as the most powerful country in the world following the Soviet collapse. For the past few years however, the strategic rivalry between China and the US has become increasingly intense. The implications of this growing rivalry are now also being evidently felt in our part of the world which has become one of the major arenas for the tussle between these two global powers.

The US has recently taken punitive measures aimed at not only containing Chinese strategic ambitions, but actively confronting China. The emerging US-China rivalry has taken on various forms ranging from contentions concerning human rights to trade issues in addition to military posturing. The US has stepped up attempts to bolster cooperation with allies on China's western and eastern flanks, including with strategic quad partners (Australia, Japan and India).

On the other hand, China has begun exhibiting an increasingly muscular approach not only in asserting territorial claims, but also in its conduct of foreign policy more generally. China proactively rebuts accusations of its growing strategic ambitions and rights violations with whataboutist arguments pointing to the tarnished record of the US on similar issues. Meanwhile, China has also pressed ahead with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) overseeing massive investments across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, significantly expanding its sphere of influence.

While the US is trying to work closely with India to counter-balance China, Pakistan's close collaboration with China is being seen with growing suspicion by US policymakers, especially as US tensions with China continue to escalate. Initially, the US had cautiously welcomed Chinese investments in Pakistan as the means for helping stabilise Pakistan's economy (without the US needing to foot the bill). More recently, however, senior American policymakers have warned Pakistan to be wary of Chinese debt diplomacy, and they fear that Pakistan handing Gwadar over to Chinese management is the first step in the commercial port becoming a dual-use facility.

Pakistan in the past may have been compelled to tighten its strategic embrace of China given the lack of broader international interest in investing in Pakistan's urgent infrastructure and energy needs. However, Pakistani policymakers need to avoid placing all their eggs in one basket. Trying to craft a balanced approach which can resist pressures of choosing sides is not going to be easy, even in this post-Cold War era.

While Pakistan being able to play the role of a go-between to enable rapprochement between China and the US may seem like a tall order at present, Pakistan must still try to work with both countries so that it does not become overly dependent on China at the cost of losing its longstanding relationship with the US.

Pakistani policymakers must realise that there is little political will in the US to provide more aid to Pakistan, especially as the US is now about to implement a military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Yet, a mutually beneficial agreement to expand trade relations with the US could still work. Both countries have previously acknowledged this as a possibility but have not been able to address some of the internal impediments which have impeded this possibility from being realised. Pakistan can also encourage American and other international firms to invest in green energy projects to help lessen its reliance on fossil fuels. Pakistan's decision to boost transit trade routes to Afghanistan via Gwadar is also encouraging, which should help temper US resistance to CPEC, given its demonstrable potential to help Afghanistan's economy.

While India seems to have picked a clear-cut side in the new big power competition of the 21st century, it would be no small feat if Pakistan can continue collaborating with both China and the US, which would enable it to become a more self-assured country in the long run.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 11th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263429/managing-implication-of-us-china-rivalry>

China Leads the Way | Editorial

While US President Donald Trump, in his frustration still calls the coronavirus the China virus because it originated there, China is pressing ahead not only with regaining its pre-coronavirus status as the workshop of the world and has ramped up its exports, but it is also leading the race for developing a vaccine for Covid-19. It turns out that vaccines developed by China, of which at least four are in the final stage of clinical trial, might be ready for public use as early as November. Now we are likely to experience yet another phenomenon that will drive the White House to frustration.

So far international financial markets have defied all the gloom and doom that has descended upon the real global economy, which has already slipped into recession, because of two things. One, the willingness of central banks, particularly in bigger and richer countries, to keep coming up with relief and stimulus packages as long as needed. And two, the prospect of developing a vaccine, which is why whenever even fake news about a possible cure for the virus hits the news waves financial markets make for the sky as if just powered by extremely positive financial results, which is of course not the case.

Of late, because of the deadlock between the Republicans and Democrats in Congress, it seemed that the world's biggest economy would not be able to come out with a new package in time to keep financial markets from running out of steam. And indeed some markets had been turning since at least the last half of last week. But now that China has given hope of another vaccine, it could well be that investors of the world, whose only loyalty lies with successful investments, might pour yet more money into markets and keep them rising. How that would frustrate the Trump White House is not difficult to guess at all. It seems all Beijing has to do to win this emerging cold war with Washington is keep doing the right thing and letting the other party make all the mistakes.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/667045/china-leads-the-way/>

The Myth and Reality of Afghan-Owned Peace Process By Dr Moonis Ahmar

The so-called Afghan peace process has reached an interesting phase with the opening of the Doha talks between warring Afghan factions. Participated by the concerned stakeholders including the United States, Pakistan, China as well as representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government, Doha talks focused on issues which, for decades, have been a cause of war, violence, terrorism and political polarisation in Afghanistan.

What is the Afghan-owned peace process and to what extent is it a myth or reality? How can the four-point peace proposal presented by Pakistan's Foreign Minister help the process of peace and stability in Afghanistan? Why do the Taliban still insist on introducing their version of sharia and how is their non-compliance with democracy and political pluralism a non-starter of the peace process? These are questions which are raised in the context of the prevailing peace talks on Afghanistan.

The four-point peace plan presented by Pakistan addresses the core of conflicts in that unfortunate country which has been mired in violence, terrorism and political and socio-economic predicament since 1973. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has suggested that one should learn lessons from the bitterness of the past faced by Afghanistan. His last three points focused on economic engagement, reconstruction and a time-bound return of refugees. Taliban political office director Mullah Baradar called for an Islamic system in Afghanistan and assured the world of a peaceful and prosperous life for the Afghans while Abdullah Abdullah, the Afghan Peace Council chief, called for adhering to democracy, the Constitution, freedom of speech, rights of women and minorities, rule of law, and civil and political rights. He asserted, "We call for a humanitarian ceasefire. The declaration of humanitarian ceasefire will enable humanitarian aid and development programmes to reach all parts of Afghanistan and benefit our people."

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, whose country has a key role in the Afghan peace process, is confident that following the February 29 agreement with the Taliban, the US will scale down its forces to 4,500 by October this year. Such a reduction will be in sharp contrast with the surge of American forces in Afghanistan

which had totalled 100,000 in 2011. Yet, the US intends to maintain its strategic presence in Afghanistan despite considerable withdrawal of its forces unlike abandoning the country after the signing of the Geneva Accords on April 14, 1988.

The Doha talks on Afghanistan which were to commence in March were derailed because of a deadlock between the Afghan government and the Taliban on the release of thousands of Taliban prisoners. It was only after a breakthrough between the Taliban and the Kabul regime on that contentious issue that the intra-Afghan talks began on September 12. Since the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in February 1989, and the outbreak of civil war leading to the seizure of power by the Taliban in September 1996, the absence of an Afghan-owned peace process galvanised violence and bloodshed in the country.

The occupation of Afghanistan by US-led coalition forces in October 2001 and the transformation of the Afghan conflict reflected the failure of Afghan stakeholders to start the process of dialogue. Given the complicated geographical location of Afghanistan and the lack of ownership by Afghans, violence and terrorism continued which not only deepened conflict fatigue but also compelled the Taliban and the Afghan regime to unleash the process of dialogue.

There are three major requirements to bridge the gap in myth and reality of the Afghan-owned peace process.

First, despite assurances by the Afghan government and the Taliban about establishing peace in Afghanistan through dialogue, there still exists a huge trust deficit between the two major stakeholders. It is for the first time that there are direct talks engaging the Taliban and Afghan government representatives in Doha as since the induction of Hamid Karzai as Afghan president in December 2001 and the formation of the Kabul regime with the support of US-led coalition forces, the Taliban had refused to accept the Afghan regime's legitimacy and had demanded its dismantling as a precondition for peace talks. Now, the Taliban have, after reaching a deal with the US in February, agreed to initiate dialogue with what they called the illegitimate Afghan regime. Unless the trust deficit is bridged between the Taliban and their Afghan counterparts, including the Afghan government, there cannot be any breakthrough in the Afghan peace process.

Second, the Afghan-owned peace process is still a myth because local stakeholders lack political will, determination, commitment and clarity to pull their

country out of decades of civil war, violence and terrorism. Unless, those engaged in the intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha and elsewhere are professional in their approach in terms of reaching a durable ceasefire, demilitarisation, dewatering, rule of law, good governance and upholding democratic process, one cannot expect peace in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Taliban are unable to understand that their country cannot revert to the past, and governance based on a ruthless and suppressive order in which women and minorities live as sub-human creatures cannot work. The Taliban's interpretation of sharia is a major problem in pulling Afghanistan from the web of social and economic backwardness.

Post-Taliban Afghanistan cannot impose a political order based on an orthodox and ultra-conservative way of life. A major requirement in the Afghan-owned peace process is tolerance, adherence to political pluralism, rule of law, good governance and justice. If the Taliban reject democracy as a mode of governance, it would prolong stagnation in the so-called peace process. Furthermore, if the Taliban want peace, stability and well-being of their people, they should cease violence and attacks on Afghan forces. There cannot be meaningful dialogue in Doha unless the Taliban agree to a permanent ceasefire and the Afghan government accept the Taliban as a major stakeholder for peace in their country.

Third, unless civil society groups, political parties and vulnerable segments of Afghan society are included in the peace process, one cannot expect any smooth sailing of Doha talks. An inclusive approach, instead of an exclusive one, needs to be pursued for accomplishing the goal of a comprehensive peace in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, like other conflict zones, is at crossroads. In this scenario, Pakistan's stakes are obvious because unless violence ceases in Afghanistan and the Afghan-owned peace process reaches its logical conclusion, refugees will not go back to their country and the security of Pakistan's western border would remain an issue. Yet, Pakistan has, unlike three decades ago, marginal influence over the Taliban who are still a cause of violence and terrorism in Afghanistan.

Unless, the Afghan majority who resent the Taliban's use of violence as a weapon for seeking power are united and isolate them, the situation in Afghanistan would remain chaotic. Ownership of the peace process by the Taliban and other Afghan stakeholders is the only way to give the people of Afghanistan a break from decades of bloodshed in their war-torn country.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 18th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2264454/the-myth-and-reality-of-afghan-owned-peace-process>

Global Covid-19 Cases | Editorial

AS countries continued with the unhappy dance of locking down and then reopening, the total number of Covid-19 cases worldwide crossed the 30m mark last week. Daily global cases are averaging close to 300,000. This figure is a sharp increase from July when worldwide cases diagnosed each day averaged about 200,000. The new cases are accelerating at a rate which shows that it took merely five weeks to cross the latest milestone of 10m; the first 10m were reached after six months. According to data compiled by a team of infectious disease experts at Johns Hopkins University, the US remains the worst-hit country with more than 6.6m confirmed infections, and nearly 200,000 deaths even though the number of new infections per day has been dropping after a spike in July. In Asia, India is driving the numbers with confirmed infections surpassing 5m — the world's second highest after the US. While the death rate in India is relatively lower as compared to the size of its population, the virus is spreading faster there than in any other country as it clocks 100,000 cases per day. This spread is largely attributed to the lifting of restrictions to boost economic activity, but is also a reflection of increased testing. After India, Brazil has the third-highest number of cases at over 4m but sadly, the most number of deaths at 140,000. The global total for coronavirus-related deaths is fast approaching a staggering 1m.

It is clear that Covid-19 is not going away anytime soon, with some fearing that even with a vaccine the threat will persist. Just last week, the WHO warned Europe of a Covid-19 surge and said the data from September should serve as a “wake-up call”. As several countries brace for a serious surge and second wave, it is important to remember that science and the research on Covid-19 today have evolved from when the virus first hit earlier in the year. Then, hospitals lacked equipment, and staff had to work on Covid-19 patients without adequate PPE. But today, many countries are better equipped to tackle the infection. Still, having more information does not mean that recklessness should be permitted. Countries must strategise their next steps by thinking of the most vulnerable among the population as well as those working in healthcare and delivering essential services. As has been demonstrated, with compassion and a data-driven approach to restrictions, loss can be minimised.

Published in Dawn, September 22nd, 2020

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1580994/global-covid-19-cases>

Iran Sanctions | Editorial

The Trump administration continues to embarrass the once-great nation, leaving it standing alone as it tries to reapply sanctions on Iran. There was some irony in the fact that some of the countries 'siding' with Iran were considered hawkish towards the country before the boorishness of the Trump era. Indeed, the turn of events allowed Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to take credit for isolating the US, calling the moment "a memorable day in the history of our country's diplomacy". With concern, Rouhani also claimed the US was trying to force Iran to act out and give Washington an excuse to take more aggressive action against Tehran.

Instead, in Rouhani's words, "Today we can say the 'maximum pressure' of US against the Iranian nation, politically and legally, has turned to 'maximum isolation' for the US." We can expect that isolation to be increased on Tuesday when Trump is scheduled to speak at the UN. There was a time when the American president's UN address was mostly seen and heard with respect and interest. In contrast, Trump's speeches have been comparable to those by legions of tinpot dictators who used the pulpit to lend themselves a shred of credibility. Let us not forget that Trump is one of the few world leaders who was literally laughed at during a previous UN speech. And while many foresee an end to the incumbent's time in the White House, there is still no guarantee that Joe Biden will make it past the finish line. Biden has already said he will bring the US back into the nuclear deal so long as Iran agrees to return to compliance with the original terms of the agreement. We believe he will stick to his word. After all, as former president Barack Obama's vice president, Biden already has his own stake in the deal.

Iran has repeatedly said it is walking back on parts of the deal because the Trump administration violated it. We hope that they would see Biden as a return to trustworthiness. Conversely, if Trump is re-elected, we worry that he will try to go it alone, even at the risk of war.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 22nd, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2265024/iran-sanctions>

Sino-US friction and Necessity of Maritime Cooperation By Baber Ali Bhatti

THE United States has been preserving and enjoying the maritime superiority since World War II. The United States' overwhelming military presence and powerful trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific alliance system in the region form this maritime superiority. On the other hand, China has not had substantial position in maritime realm for a long time. In fact, issues of South China Sea, Taiwan and Diaoyu Islands are prominently attributed with China's fragile air and naval forces in the past. After Cold War, the US was considered to be the sole great maritime power. With the shifting focus of China from land to naval development, the dynamics of naval superiority in the Pacific are changing. China's strength and military modernization is changing the strategic pattern of the Pacific. It can, undoubtedly, be seen that the United States' efforts toward maintaining and reinforcing Indo-Pacific maritime hegemony is likely to collide with China's endeavouring to safeguard maritime rights and building capacity in future.

In this decade, maritime conflicts have consistently been the centre of Sino-US relations. Despite facing daily sea and air encounters and greater risk of military conflict, two countries are being more provocative at tactical level and hostile at strategic level. Though interdependence of interests and nuclear deterrence are optimistic factors, yet it will take a long time to form a new equilibrium meanwhile uncertainty and trouble will be guiding the relations between both countries before equilibrium replaces them. During that time, there are many possibilities of small scale armed conflict between US and China. China's military force cannot challenge that of the United States worldwide in terms of capacity and strength of armed forces. However, in the sea area of the Asia-Pacific, the unipolar structure dominated by Washington is being replaced with a more balanced power distribution between the United States and China. This power transition has been mentioned by the security policy making and strategic community in various academic publications and conferences. Change in local power structure in Asia-Pacific is likely to occur with the rise of China. China's primary focus to safeguard its interest is on western Pacific and therefore most of its national defence resources will be catering this area.

On the other hand, United States has to focus on worldwide to maintain its status as sole world power and can only use part of its national defence spending in the region regardless of the fact how much importance the US gives to 'Indo-Pacific Strategy'. Therefore, China is likely to match the US in terms of defence capacity in the western Pacific. Undeniably, there is a large gap between the US and China in military capabilities and quality. However, in East Asia, Chinese navy will most probably gain superiority given the power projection asymmetries between the US and China. This way, such superiority on the part of China is likely to compensate the quality disparity against the US. Moreover, the United States has a wider security network of alliance in the Asia-Pacific. The US has maintained alliance with many maritime nations in Asia-Pacific such as South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. Under the umbrella of the US, these countries are given more and more security commitments by the US regarding South China Sea, Diaoyu Islands and other maritime issues which involve China. To support this alliance network and endorse its commitment, the US has stationed heavy naval presence in the Pacific. China's growing naval strength and strong naval presence in the region imply its response capacity. Any kind of conflict with China by any allied state can bring the US and China eyeball to eyeball. These circumstances make regional environment more vulnerable to any small scale maritime conflict which can be turned into war given the heavy naval military presence of both countries.

Therefore, the US and China despite their trade and power frictions, are needed to acknowledge the possibilities of military mishap and initiate some serious negotiations to coexist at sea. Both compromise and competition are strategically unavoidable. Crisis management and competition control can only be secured when two states are able to reach an understanding or make compromises. It can be stated that both the US and China have veto power over any Asia Pacific maritime security order. China would not necessarily obey the Pacific maritime rules and order advocates by the US. Similarly, the US would not be forced to follow any rule in western Pacific by any regional naval power. Therefore, both countries should chalk out some mechanism for coordination and new avenues must be explored for maritime cooperation. Given their heavy presence in western Pacific and potential of crises intensification, both countries should negotiate set of rules and codes that can govern naval military operations. The US and China are both needed to include strategic conscience in their policy designs for Indo-Pacific. Two countries must focus on maritime cooperation to avoid any unfortunate incident in foreseeable future. Dialogues on western Pacific must be commenced as soon as possible. Both countries are needed to establish the

regimes on arms control and maritime armament development. They should carry substantial negotiations to reach necessary agreement on power balance and power distribution for peaceful maritime regional order.

—The writer is Research Fellow at Maritime Study Forum and an Advocate of Islamabad High Court.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/sino-us-friction-and-necessity-of-maritime-cooperation/>

Xi vs Trump | Editorial

SPEECH delivered by American President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the UN General Assembly are reflective of stark differences of perceptions and strategies being followed by the two great powers of the world as the latter laid emphasis on amity and cooperation while the former adopted an aggressive tone. Trump repeated the old mantra by calling upon the world to hold China accountable for its actions over Covid-19 pandemic while Xi categorically stated that Beijing has “no intention to fight either a Cold War or a hot one with any country” adding that his country will continue to narrow differences and resolve disputes with others through dialogue and negotiation.

It is regrettable that despite goodwill gestures and restraint shown by Beijing, the United States persists with its strategy of containing China, which has no aggressive designs against any nation of the globe and is instead firmly pursuing the policy of mutual respect and coexistence. History bears testimony to the fact that the US believes in ‘might is right’ and prefers settling scores through military and economic aggression and the latest example is bypassing the UN in re-imposition of sanctions against Iran on the nuclear issue. It also initiated an uncalled for trade war with China just as part of the efforts to curb its rise as a global economic power. It is only the United States that has imposed wars on small and weak countries, has a declared policy of regime change and resorts frequently to imposition of sanctions to advance its strategic objectives for different countries and regions of the globe. As against this, Chinese leadership, as per its vision of shared prosperity, has initiated historic projects like One Belt, One Road (OBOR) to link dozens of the countries of the world in a chain of progress and development. Pakistan is already receiving dividends of its participation in the flagship project of OBOR (CPEC) while many countries are eager to join China in making the world a global village in the true sense of the word. As for Trump’s rhetoric about the spread of the virus, no one is ready to buy his argument as China not only worked with a commitment to eliminate the virus not just domestically but also is extending all sorts of cooperation to other countries in tackling the situation.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/xi-vs-trump/>

The Endless Fantasy of American Power By

Andrew Bacevich

In this year's presidential election campaign, candidates have largely sidestepped the role of armed force as an instrument of U.S. policy. The United States remains the world's preeminent and most active military power, but Republicans and Democrats find other things to talk about.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, successive administrations have enthusiastically put U.S. military might to work. In the last three decades, the flag of the United States Army has accumulated 34 additional streamers—each for a discrete campaign conducted by U.S. troops. The air force and navy have also done their share, conducting more than 100,000 airstrikes in just the past two decades.

Unfortunately, this frenetic pace of military activity has seldom produced positive outcomes. As measured against their stated aims, the “long wars” in Afghanistan and Iraq have clearly failed, as have the lesser campaigns intended to impart some approximation of peace and stability to Libya, Somalia, and Syria. An equally unfavorable judgment applies to the nebulous enterprise once grandly referred to as the “global war on terrorism,” which continues with no end in sight.

And yet there seems to be little curiosity in U.S. politics today about why recent military exertions, undertaken at great cost in blood and treasure, have yielded so little in the way of durable success. It is widely conceded that “mistakes were made”—preeminent among them the Iraq war initiated in 2003. Yet within establishment circles, the larger implications of such catastrophic missteps remain unexplored. Indeed, the country's interventionist foreign policy is largely taken for granted and the public pays scant attention. The police killing of Black people provokes outrage—and rightly so. Unsuccessful wars induce only shrugs.

THE CHIMERA OF “AMERICAN LEADERSHIP”

With something approaching unanimity, Americans “support the troops.” Yet they refrain from inquiring too deeply into what putting the troops in harm's way has achieved in recent decades. Deference to the military has become a rote piety of American life. In accepting the Democratic Party's nomination for the presidency,

for example, Joe Biden closed his remarks with an appeal to the Divine on behalf of the nation's soldiers: "And may God protect our troops." Yet nowhere in his 24-minute address did Biden make any reference to what U.S. troops were currently doing or why in particular they needed God's protection. Nor did he offer any thoughts on how a Biden administration might do things differently.

Americans don't particularly want to hear about war or the possibility of war in the present season of overlapping and mutually reinforcing crises. And Biden obliged them in the most important speech of his career. The famously garrulous politician mentioned recent U.S. wars only in passing, briefly referring to his late son, who served in Iraq, and excoriating U.S. President Donald Trump for not responding more aggressively to revelations that Russia put bounties on U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

This aversion to taking stock of recent U.S. wars is by no means unique to Biden or confined to the Democratic Party. It is a bipartisan tendency. It also inhibits a long overdue reexamination of basic national security policy.

Protracted wars are not making Americans freer or more prosperous. Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 2016 presidential election, leaders of both political parties collaborated in trying to demonstrate the efficacy and necessity of what they habitually referred to as "American global leadership." Embedded in that seemingly benign phrase was a grand strategy of militarized primacy. Unfortunately, the results achieved by this assertion of global leadership proved to be anything but benign, as turmoil in Afghanistan and Iraq attest. Although the defense industry and its allies have profited from American wars, the American people have done less well. Protracted wars are not making Americans freer or more prosperous. They have instead saddled the nation with enormous debt and diverted attention and resources from neglected domestic priorities.

In 2020, further occasions for bristling, militarized U.S. leadership beckon. China offers the most obvious example for hawks, with demands that the United States confront the People's Republic growing more insistent by the day. Many in Washington appear to welcome the prospect of a Sino-American cold war. Other prospective venues for demonstrating assertive U.S. leadership include in operations against Iran, Russia, and even poor benighted Venezuela, with prominent figures in the Beltway eager to have a go at regime change in Caracas.

To cling to this paradigm of U.S. global leadership is to perpetuate the assumptions and habits defining post–Cold War U.S. national security policy—and above all the emphasis on amassing and employing military might. The United States grants itself prerogatives allowed to no other country to remain, in its own estimation, history’s “indispensable nation.” To judge by the results achieved in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other recent theaters of war, this imperative will only continue to wreak havoc in the name of freedom, democracy, and humane values.

THE GLOBAL OVER THE GEOPOLITICAL

An alternative path exists. Proponents of this path, most of them anti-interventionist progressives, propose to reframe politics as global rather than merely international. That is an important distinction. A global political ethos highlights problems affecting all nations, whether strong or weak, rich or poor, as opposed to emphasizing geopolitical competition, which sees the United States preoccupied with fending off any and all challengers to its preeminence. Those shared problems are not difficult to identify. They include communicable diseases such as COVID-19, the danger of nuclear conflict, the deterioration of the global commons, and, perhaps above all, climate change.

A second Trump administration will never acknowledge the existence of this alternative path. And regrettably, a Biden administration will probably pay little more than lip service to it. Despite the Biden campaign’s nod toward climate change—a crisis but also, in Biden’s words, “an enormous opportunity”—his own record and his choice of advisers suggest an administration less interested in real change than in restoring the status quo ante Trump.

Trump won the presidency in 2016 in no small part because a considerable number of Americans had lost confidence in establishment policies that left the United States mired in what he and other critics of a militarized U.S. policy called “endless wars.” He offered himself as the fixer who would put “America first.” But he has fixed nothing—and broken a great deal more. With monumental ineptitude, Trump has inflicted massive damage on U.S. credibility while the wars he inherited continue.

Take at face value Biden’s acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination and it suggests that he is intent on pursuing what is in effect an “America first” agenda without resorting to that radioactive phrase. Biden presents himself as an agent of

domestic renewal, promising to save “the soul of America.” He is not promising to redeem the world.

But saving the United States’ soul will require an honest reckoning with post–Cold War U.S. foreign policy and, above all, with the reckless misuse of military power that forms its abiding theme. Biden proposes as president to build a United States that is “generous and strong, selfless and humble.” Achieving this lofty goal will require more than simply repudiating Trump and all his works. It will demand an approach to statecraft that is itself generous and strong, selfless and humble, qualities that recent administrations have displayed only intermittently.

What should this kind of statecraft look like? It would emphasize multilateral collaboration rather than unilateral action. It would use force only as a last resort. It would honor treaty commitments. It would adhere to respected norms—for example, the prohibition on preventive war. It would encourage allies capable of defending themselves to do so. It would work to strengthen, rather than undermine, international institutions. It would cease to define the size of the Pentagon’s budget as the ultimate measure of national security.

Washington should cease to define the size of the Pentagon’s budget as the ultimate measure of national security.

Given his priorities, Biden’s reluctance to talk about foreign wars is understandable. Yet if his administration reverts to the militarized definition of American global leadership that for decades has been the establishment’s default position, he will find the subject difficult to avoid. That path will lead to more war, inevitably clouding Biden’s rhetorical vision of light overcoming darkness.

If Biden is serious about transforming U.S. foreign policy, he will prioritize matters that pose an immediate threat to the safety and well-being of the American people. Terrorism still poses a nagging problem and always will. Aggressive actions by adversaries such as China, Russia, and Iran serve to remind Americans of the permanence of geopolitics. But in terms of proximate danger, all of these supposed threats pale in comparison with the death toll caused by the coronavirus pandemic or the havoc caused annually by climate-enhanced storms and wildfires. None of these actual threats will yield to a military solution.

War is the nemesis that will prevent Biden from achieving what he promises to do. A first step toward building the virtuous United States he desires is to avoid

needless and futile armed conflicts. That will require a radical reorienting of U.S. national security policies to prioritize the safety and well-being of the American people at home, not the pursuit of phantasmagoric foes abroad.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-18/endless-fantasy-american-power>

The United States Can't Quit on the UN By

Kristine Lee

This week, the United Nations General Assembly is holding its first-ever virtual gathering of world leaders. The event has been a complicated one for Washington. In his recorded speech before the General Assembly on Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump excoriated China for its failure to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus around the world. But the inadequacies of his own administration's response overshadowed his message. The Trump administration has turned the United States inward and retreated from the UN, most recently by precipitously withdrawing from the World Health Organization (WHO) during the pandemic.

In June, National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien explained that the United States terminated its relationship with the WHO because the agency's "response to the pandemic showed that it is beholden to China." The administration claims to face a binary choice between withdrawing from or cooperating with UN agencies that are cowed by authoritarian interests. But the dichotomy is a false one.

U.S. retrenchment empowers only China. Beijing is eager to expand its influence on the world stage to serve its narrow interests, and U.S. withdrawal has pushed beleaguered UN agencies further into China's orbit, ultimately making the world less hospitable to U.S. interests. Instead of withdrawing, the United States should use carefully calibrated economic incentives to promote reform toward an agenda more in line with its interests and values. Such an approach would allow Washington to blunt China's growing influence where necessary and to shape the trajectory of UN agencies, beginning with the WHO.

DIVIDED WE FALL

The American public has a broadly favorable view of the UN, opinion polls suggest, and a 2020 study even showed that more than 70 percent of Americans support rejoining the WHO. But some policymakers have cast doubt on the utility of U.S. engagement. Even before the pandemic—and especially since the 2016 U.S. presidential election—scholars, including Stewart Patrick in these pages, have spilled barrels of ink debating the precise definitions, future direction, and coming dissolution of the liberal international order that the UN embodies.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump memorably denounced the “false song of globalism,” vowing to reject the “international unions that . . . bring America down.” In keeping with this view, the Trump administration drafted an executive order at its very outset to slash U.S. payments to the UN by as much as 40 percent, claiming that such investments did not serve the interests of American taxpayers.

U.S. retrenchment empowers only China.

The president’s supporters in the Senate echoed this view. According to Rob Portman, the Republican senator from Ohio, “When all of our taxpayers are paying roughly 22 percent of the UN budget, I think they do expect to see a more efficient organization that’s more objective and more in keeping with our values.” In 2016, Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, similarly argued, “If you can’t show the American people that international organizations can be more responsible, there is going to be a break.”

The Trump administration has set about translating this impulse into policy. But if the United States withdraws from UN agencies without clear alternatives in place, the world will ultimately grow more hostile to U.S. values and interests. That eventuality has unfolded in real time, perhaps nowhere more alarmingly than at the WHO.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Compared with the United States, Beijing has made much smaller financial contributions to the United Nations and has far less diplomatic wherewithal. But China has shown that it knows how to use the leverage it possesses much more strategically and often more unscrupulously than the United States is willing to do.

Consider the WHO. The United States has historically been the WHO’s largest patron, underwriting about 15.0 percent of the agency’s budget, in contrast with China’s mere 0.2 percent. But in 2017, Beijing-backed candidate Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was elected Director-General of the WHO. Upon assuming the position, Tedros parroted Beijing’s call for a “Health Silk Road,” which would bring Chinese-backed health care to developing countries. This past spring, the United States backed Taiwan’s bid for inclusion in the WHO’s World Health Assembly on the grounds that the island had mounted one of the world’s most successful responses to the COVID-19 pandemic—but the WHO bent to Chinese pressure to exclude Taipei from the meeting.

The United States has historically been the WHO's largest patron.

The United States formally announced its withdrawal from the WHO in July 2020 and, by doing so, further empowered China and bolstered its authoritarian influence. China promptly announced that it would donate \$2 billion to the UN to fight COVID-19, touting its role as a “defender of the international order.” Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry, gloated that China had contributed to “global public health cooperation as a responsible major country” while the United States is “shirking its own responsibilities and undermining global solidarity in combating the virus.”

Holding the organization's purse strings and uncontested by U.S. leadership, China is now poised to exert undue influence over purportedly independent, WHO-led investigations into the origins of the virus. WHO experts conducting the probe have yet to travel to Wuhan, widely considered to be the original epicenter of the pandemic, fueling concerns about the investigation's rigor and its possible deference to Chinese interests.

As Beijing seizes this opportunity to lead multilateral health governance, it can also use the WHO to coerce UN member states into supporting its interests. In September, the WHO unveiled a global vaccine development and distribution plan—which neither China nor the United States has endorsed. Beijing could best the United States and its allies in the race to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. With disproportionate sway at the WHO, China could then use preferential access to its vaccine as a bargaining chip to win member countries' support for its positions, such as isolating Taiwan or forestalling criticism of its policies in Hong Kong, Tibet, or Xinjiang.

The WHO is far from the only UN agency that has bent toward Beijing.

The WHO is far from the only UN agency that has bent toward Beijing—and the United States' retreat has accelerated the trend. In 2017, Washington exited UNESCO. Beijing later used its newfound clout to gain the organization's endorsement of its Belt and Road Initiative and to try to double the number of Chinese staff in the agency. In 2018, the United States withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council. China has since effectively silenced the council's criticism of its rampant human rights abuses, including the mass detention of Muslims in Xinjiang.

As Beijing swallows up the UN, the United States' approach to the organization has been fitful and reactive at best. Washington has dangled U.S. funding—and the threat of turning off the tap—over UN agencies that defy its interests. In October 2018, Washington threatened to sever ties with the Universal Postal Union, a UN body charged with regulating international mail service, for its practice of granting China lower shipping rates than the United States. The move, which was narrowly averted, would have set off a global postal crisis. The jarring turn of events at the WHO suggests that such tactics are growing increasingly counterproductive. The United States needs to find a way to engage with the UN that can advance its interests.

STILL IN THE GAME

In May, Trump gave the WHO 30 days to commit to “major substantive improvements” before the United States would withdraw its funding and walk away. But the United States did not define those improvements, let alone provide leadership or support to the cash-strapped agency tasked with implementing them.

The United States needs to offer UN agencies a compelling alternative to authoritarian values and leadership if it wishes for them to be more effective and better aligned with its agenda. Positive financial incentives are likelier to encourage reform than are harsh ultimatums, especially given that Beijing stands ready to fill the coffers that the United States leaves empty.

Washington could start by restoring a portion of its past funding to the WHO. Then the United States could commit to annually increasing this amount if the agency complies with certain conditions: restoring Taiwan's observer status at the World Health Assembly, for instance, or hiring more Americans to fill the agency's management positions. As the WHO meets these benchmarks, Washington should strengthen the United States' clout at the UN by encouraging private-sector partnerships between the WHO and U.S. tech companies that pursue projects related to global public health.

The United States needs to offer UN agencies a compelling alternative to authoritarian values.

Washington could transparently negotiate such incentive structures with UN agencies and, in doing so, draw a sharp contrast to Beijing's style of backroom deals and coercion. China doles out rewards and threatens retaliation to pressure

governments to support its policies and its candidates for leadership posts. In contrast, the United States should work with like-minded countries and UN leaders to conduct specialized agency elections more openly and to codify standards of transparency in their operations. Notably, only after Australia, the EU, and other democracies publicly lobbied the WHO and mobilized broad-based support did the agency commit to conducting an independent investigation into the origins of the novel coronavirus.

The United States should make sure to fill the vacant positions within its own government that work with the UN, and it must continue to send high-profile officials and talented working-level diplomats to represent U.S. interests there. It should further collaborate with allies early on to promote U.S.-backed candidates to lead important specialized agencies.

Such measures would not supply a silver bullet, but they would show that the United States is still in the game and can still lead. In so doing, they would give Washington a better shot at shaping outcomes than if it simply threw in the towel

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-24/united-states-cant-quit-un>

Vladimir Putin's UN Speech: Will Russia Head A New Nonaligned Movement? By Nikolas K. Gvosdev

Russian president Vladimir Putin did not quite deliver the address he expected he would at the September United Nations General Assembly meeting—in fact, he wasn't even physically present at Turtle Bay! This is a far cry from his stated plans, whereby 2020 would serve as a triumphant milestone for Russia, celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Moscow's role in defeating the Nazi menace and in creating the postwar international system—and where Putin, arriving in New York, would bring the other four permanent members of the Security Council to hold a global summit. The coronavirus pandemic upended those plans—but echoes of these aspirations remained in the text Putin delivered from the Kremlin. Nevertheless, the speech remains important for understanding Putin's state of mind as he considers the global system and the role he expects Russia to play in the 2020s—as well as the implicit warnings to the United States.

Putin has always stressed the desirability of a “concert of great powers” system to manage world affairs, and he reiterated his vision of the United Nations and especially its Security Council as such a forum. Properly utilized, “it helps prevent unilateral actions that may result in a direct military confrontation between major states, and provides an opportunity to seek compromise or at least avoid solutions that would be completely unacceptable to others ...” Beyond the United Nations and its “G5” (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), Putin also gave a “shout-out” to the G20, whose presidency is currently held by his sometime partner in international energy price regulation, Saudi Arabia, and its crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. What is interesting, of course, is that these are the two bodies Putin feels should take the lead in managing international affairs—both of which include Russia and in which the United States cannot dominate the agenda or the solutions.

What is more striking, however, is Putin’s implicit proposal—to the Europeans and to the major powers of the global South—to avoid becoming involved in any emerging U.S.-China cold war. His proposals for secure, sanctions-free trade corridors, his resurrection of the idea of a greater Eurasian partnership, and for placing limits on cyberwar and other disruptive actions which could upset international trade and prosperity (including the U.S. use of sanctions), are all designed to create a role for Russia as the de facto head of a new non-aligned bloc of states that do not want to be forced to either choose between Washington or Beijing—or to have to accept American or Chinese agendas. This speech follows the pattern that has been observed in how Russia has been diplomatically using its supposed Sputnik-V coronavirus vaccine (which Putin specifically mentioned) to reach out to a group of middle powers balancing between East and West.

Putin seems to be hoping that the growing ascendancy of China hawks in both parties in the United States will create concerns—even among U.S. allies—about being drawn into a Washington-Beijing Cold War, and that they, in turn, will buy into Russian proposals—and be incentivized to keep Russian economic power intact rather than accede to U.S. sanctions pressures. And if a second-term Trump or first-term Biden administration is less inclined to bargain and compromise with Russia—including the all-important proviso to accept Russia’s own self-definitions of “sovereign democracy”—then Russia can take steps to raise costs for the United States, or be less inclined to do things that serve American interests.

Of course, Putin has made these statements before and has never found enthusiastic takers. Neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden, but also Xi Jinping as well, seem that interested in transitioning to a true “concert of powers” system, while European leaders, dismayed both by Chinese and Russian actions over the last year, seem interested in strengthening the bonds of the “democratic community” rather than joining with Russia to balance both Washington and Beijing. We’ll see if any of these proposals have any legs when Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit in November.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/vladimir-putins-un-speech-will-russia-head-new-nonaligned-movement-169441>

How to Do More With Less in the Middle East

By Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes

It has been clear for some time that the United States should do less in the Middle East, despite the attendant risks and costs—a case that we made in these pages last year (“America’s Middle East Purgatory,” January/February 2019). At the time, some welcomed this argument; others balked at it. Yet the dramatic developments of recent months have underscored the need for the United States to focus less on the region, highlighting both the opportunity costs of remaining entangled and the unique dangers of President Donald Trump’s approach.

Even before the twin crises of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent collapse in oil prices brought a wave of political and economic instability to the Middle East, a new American approach was long overdue. In a region where the United States has long reigned as hegemon, the reality of diminished interests and the resulting diminished influence is painful for many U.S. policymakers and analysts to accept. But as the tide of the pandemic recedes, the region will look rather different—and in this changed landscape, there will be opportunities for the United States as well as dangers.

The challenge for the United States is to protect its remaining and still important interests in an era of austerity and competition, without simply doubling down on the failed approaches of the past. The United States still enjoys opportunities for progress toward a more stable region that do not require expensive or long-term commitments. A focus on constraining geopolitical competition within the region, confronting Iranian behavior more effectively, and resolving proxy conflicts where possible should enable Washington to maintain preponderant influence, doing less in the Middle East without giving up on it altogether.

DETECTING IRAN

The pandemic and the crash in oil prices have left the Gulf Arab states facing a substantial decline in wealth, with insufficient cash to bolster their own grim economies, much less to advance ambitious reform programs or massive development projects. This relative poverty will also impede their ability to wield

influence in the rest of the Middle East. The Gulf Arab states' main tool in regional geopolitical competition has always been money. The effectiveness of that tool could be seen, for instance, in the \$30 billion that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) spent to prop up the government of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt. Now, as their economies spiral, the Gulf states face tough financial tradeoffs. They will have to decide how much they can invest in struggling allies, such as Egypt and Jordan; how much they can spend to push back against Iranian influence in Iraq and Lebanon; and how they can protect their core interests while suing for peace in Yemen. Dreams of decimating ideological adversaries and remaking the region in their own image will have to be shelved.

Although Gulf financing has sometimes worked against U.S. interests, Washington has often relied on it to support weaker U.S. partners and grease the wheels of U.S. diplomacy. Losing this Gulf ballast will thus impede any U.S.-led efforts to stabilize the region. Indeed, the aftermath of the pandemic may even favor Iran at the expense of the Gulf Arab states. Although devastated by COVID-19 and by crushing sanctions, the Islamic Republic learned long ago to live without significant oil income, and it is well practiced at wielding regional influence on the cheap. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the main liaison to Iran's regional proxies, makes its own money from smuggling under sanctions and from being involved in the country's key economic sectors, such as construction, oil, and gas. Accordingly, after the crisis passes, Iran's relative influence in places such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria will likely grow as the Gulf Arab states' influence declines.

Dreams of decimating ideological adversaries and remaking the region in their own image will have to be shelved.

This shift makes it even more necessary to revise the Trump administration's fruitless approach to Iran. Trump escalated military and economic pressure to punishing levels (in part by withdrawing from the nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor), but he has never articulated realistic demands or made clear which of them he prioritizes. He has swung between attempting to meet with Iran's supreme leader and escalating confrontation. The United States' assassination of Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, rid the world of a murderer. But it did not eliminate the instruments of murder Soleimani wielded or reestablish deterrence, as the Trump administration claimed. Rather, the assassination brought the United States to the brink of war. In mid-January, dozens of U.S. forces were injured by Iranian retaliation, and U.S. and allied forces

in Iraq continue to face attacks from the Iranian-linked Kataib Hezbollah militia. The main results of Trump's pressure campaign have been the international isolation of the United States when confronting Iran's nuclear ambition, new pressures within the Iraqi government to expel U.S. troops amid an ongoing campaign to counter the Islamic State (also known as ISIS), and constant challenges to maritime security and energy infrastructure in the Gulf.

The United States has succeeded in deterring the Iranians over the past two decades less through a beefy military posture and more through a mix of sanctions, intelligence to interrupt bad behavior, multilateral pressure, and the targeted use of force when necessary. This effective policy package for containing Iranian threats to both regional stability and U.S. interests offers a path to induce Iran to temper and ultimately abandon such behaviors in favor of international engagement, without relying on the military as the United States' preeminent tool. Implementing this approach requires a tight interagency process and close collaboration with allies, two features notably absent from the current policy framework of the United States.

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

The United States also needs to tamp down other regional conflicts that give troublemakers, such as Iran and Russia, opportunities to expand their influence in the Middle East. In that regard, today's crises may have a silver lining: the Gulf states' financial pinch might also reduce their recent tendency toward regional adventurism.

Since 2011, Gulf governments have provided financial, material, and political support to armed actors in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The Gulf states have seen these civil conflicts as proxy wars with their rivals for the future regional order. In Libya, despite violating a UN arms embargo, Egypt, Russia, and the UAE provided military support to Libyan General Khalifa Haftar's bloody assault on Tripoli. Qatar and Turkey, also violating the embargo, backed the other side. Most Gulf aid to Syrian insurgents trailed off years ago, but its impact is still manifest in the fragmented opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In Yemen, three Gulf states have been direct combatants in an ongoing civil war.

The Gulf states' financial pinch might also reduce their recent tendency toward regional adventurism.

The Trump administration's policies on all three devastating civil conflicts have allowed regional actors (as well as Russia and Turkey) to pursue their goals unconstrained by any American redlines. Now, however, circumstances may push the Gulf states to give peace a chance. The decline both in resources and in the commitment of some fairly hardheaded actors to these conflicts may provide the United States additional leverage to push for de-escalation without requiring an expensive or risky new commitment of U.S. resources.

The Yemen conflict offers the best opportunity for the United States to encourage a path toward conflict resolution. Both the Emirati and the Saudi leaderships have begun to recognize that the price of their involvement in the conflict has grown unsustainable. They have not only failed to achieve their goal of reinstating the government of Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi but have also profoundly undermined Yemeni and regional stability, benefiting Iran and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Of course, it takes two to tango, and the Houthis, well entrenched on the ground and feeling secure about the support of their Iranian backers, are resisting negotiation efforts. But the United States can increase pressure on the Houthis by strengthening the maritime coalition that includes Australia, France, and others to interdict arms shipments to the Houthis. It is possible the Houthis will not just keep fighting but overstep by attempting to capture Saudi territory or conducting an attack that results in significant damage. But barring that outcome, the United States can helpfully expend some diplomatic energy by encouraging external actors to reduce their involvement in the war and by supporting the negotiations process under the auspices of the United Nations.

TIME FOR A REVIEW

The United States' military priorities in the region should be driven by its strategic objectives. Senior Pentagon official James Anderson outlined those objectives to Congress earlier this year: to "ensure the region is not a safe haven for terrorists, is not dominated by any power hostile to the United States, and contributes to a stable global energy market." The dilemma, however, is how to achieve these objectives effectively. An aggressive diplomatic push to bring local actors into a regional security dialogue—as Daniel Benaim and Jake Sullivan recommended in Foreign Affairs earlier this year—could help realize these objectives. (It is worth remembering that over most of its history in the region, the United States has made its greatest positive impact through diplomacy.) But it can also be helpful to launch a zero-based review of U.S. military posture and personnel in the region.

Pressure for budget cuts to defense will likely intensify as the federal deficit closes in on \$1.5 trillion. Keeping two carrier strike groups in the Middle East is unsustainable (as the debacle of the COVID-19 outbreak on the USS Roosevelt and the resulting gap in the U.S. presence in Asia underscored), and the region already has a good deal of U.S. sea and air capabilities. If the ongoing Department of Defense global review does not result in a smaller and different mix of military capabilities, personnel, and military headquarters in the Middle East, it will have failed to meaningfully align the U.S. military with U.S. priorities.

The United States has made its greatest positive impact through diplomacy. The Pentagon also needs a more formal way to measure the impact of its regional posture on deterrence. Washington should not make decisions about its military posture in the region as an ad hoc reaction to crises or as a way to mollify insecure partners. Rather, the U.S. military should regularize a rigorous process for making force allocations match its strategic objectives and for reassessing when they do not. A systematic process would reassure regional partners in a more lasting way and clarify the potential and the limits of the U.S. military's role in achieving U.S. goals in the region.

FRIEND OR FOE

The United States should also reassess its partnerships in the Middle East. The diplomatic opening between the UAE and Israel suggests that the United States' friends in the region are ready to work more closely together against the Iranian threat. As the United States builds on this foundation, it must also ensure that its regional allies are not working together in ways that violate U.S. interests or values by, for instance, enhancing the capabilities of autocratic governments to surveil their citizens or repress dissent. Washington must also take care that the new weapons it shares with its friends do not enable them to indulge in adventures that could destabilize the region.

A first priority will be transforming the United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia. Washington should begin by toughening its stance toward Saudi Arabia's transgressive behavior at home and abroad. It should impose consequences on Saudi Arabia for violating international norms by, for instance, egregiously murdering journalist Jamal Khashoggi, planting spies in American companies, attempting to kidnap Saudis in the United States, and helping Saudis flee U.S. courts. None of these are the actions of a partner, much less a friend. A new U.S.

administration should make clear that high-level visits, arms sales, and other benefits will mirror changes in Saudi behavior and policy.

The United States should also reassess its partnerships in the Middle East. Washington should focus the relationship on responding to shared security threats from Iran and violent nonstate actors and prioritize military professionalism over arms sales—that is, training Saudi forces to be effective over cashing in on the Saudis' hunger for the latest military hardware. The United States can and should press on domestic human rights abuses and encourage greater social freedoms where possible. Nevertheless, Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler and crown prince of Saudi Arabia, has already made clear that his reign will be a brutal one. There is good reason for the United States to keep Riyadh at arm's length and prepare for the likelihood, seen elsewhere in the region, that repression will no longer be a sure recipe for long-term stability. This means ensuring that U.S. regional policy does not overly depend on Saudi cooperation.

A PATH FORWARD

As the United States focuses its more modest regional engagement on areas it can influence, it must also avoid triggering crises that will upend regional stability and demand U.S. engagement to mitigate. Even if Israel has set aside plans to annex territory in the West Bank for now, Israeli-Palestinian relations are degrading. The United States must work to avoid a conflagration and restart the painstaking work of setting conditions for negotiations. Trump has set back any hope for conflict resolution by greenlighting Israeli annexation plans, alienating the Palestinian leadership, and slashing aid crucial for Palestinian health, welfare, and stability. The United States should reopen relations with the Palestinians and stand strong against any Israeli annexation of territory in the West Bank.

Washington should not walk away from Syria and Lebanon. Although both are profoundly dysfunctional—the horrific Syrian civil war is entering its second decade, and Lebanon's political and economic crises are at their worst—U.S. involvement can still have a limited impact. Maintaining the small presence of U.S. forces on the Syrian-Iraqi border and sustaining sanctions on both Syria and Iran may, in the months to come, offer more leverage to shape security and political outcomes. Assad has begun to more earnestly seek resources for reconstruction, Russia and Iran are struggling for dominance over Assad's weakened regime, and both states feel increasingly constrained in the resources they are willing to invest in the game. The United States may be able to exploit these tensions. In Lebanon,

the devastating Beirut blast precipitated a crisis that Washington should not waste. Working with France and others, the United States should mobilize economic support conditioned on meaningful political and economic reform, support Lebanon's civil society, and continue investing in the Lebanese military's work against shared threats, such as ISIS.

FEATURED TOPIC

Coronavirus

Washington should not walk away from Syria and Lebanon.

Washington should avoid viewing its role in the Middle East solely through the lens of its geopolitical competition with China and Russia. There is no reason to think that regional governments should have to choose sides; China and Russia still have largely transactional relationships with regional actors, and in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, they, too, will face harder domestic constraints that may limit their involvement in the region. Washington can keep a wary eye on Chinese and Russian activities in the region—for example, Chinese Belt and Road initiatives and technology cooperation with Israel and the Gulf states and Russian military bases that enable Russia to project power—without treating them as part of a zero-sum game. Russian engagement remains opportunistic, and China is keen on fostering economic ties in Israel and across the Arab world but has shown no desire to dirty its hands in regional disputes.

In short, the United States still enjoys opportunities to shape a more stable region that do not require expensive or long-term commitments. A focus on constraining geopolitical competition within the region, confronting Iranian behavior more effectively, and resolving proxy conflicts where possible should enable Washington to do less without threatening its regional dominance. Risks to U.S. interests remain; the pandemic and the related economic crisis offer a reminder of how fragile governance and social services remain in too many parts of this region, posing a long-term challenge to stability and security. Even if the United States succeeds in finding a path out of purgatory, it is not yet clear where that path will end.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-09-15/how-do-more-less-middle-east>

Bumpy Road to Afghan Peace | Editorial

Afghan peace negotiations have begun in Doha, but the participants seem to have run into stumbling blocks quite early on. And while disagreements between warring factions so staunchly opposed to each other are not entirely surprising, they do tend to take the initiative away from those parties that are pushing desperately for the war to end. The main enablers of the talks – countries like the US and Pakistan – are also finding out that their leverage has greatly diminished if not completely run out at this stage. For now is the time when the Afghans are going to decide on a governance system for their own country, and while they are or should be grateful to everybody who helped put together these peace talks, they would rather work it out among themselves from here.

Yet that does not change the fact that the Americans are perhaps the most desperate party when it comes to ending the war. And that is because of the US presidential election due in just over a month. In fact, if it weren't for this compulsion, there is nothing to suggest that Washington would have broken with almost two decades of war policy and begun sudden talks with the Taliban. But the limiting thing about American influence is that it has little say beyond the formal Afghan government, and that too because it finances everything that Kabul does or builds. So everybody is still a little confused, to put it very mildly, when it comes to making the Taliban bend to some of the demands that they don't particularly like.

Hopefully any early disagreements will be overcome sooner rather than later. One can be sure that much tougher issues will have to be ironed out as time goes on. And if talks can break down just at the start over what are, according to press reports, very minor issues, one can only imagine what is likely to happen when the more controversial topics are addressed. Both negotiating parties must therefore keep the doors to outside counsel open. Nobody would want to be pushed into a corner because of lack of flexibility so soon in the process. No doubt the negotiators realise that a majority of Afghans have never really seen peace, and it is their responsibility now to deliver it.

Source: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/670020/bumpy-road-to-afghan-peace/>

The Future of China-US Face-off By Dr Talat Shabbir

The warning was loud and clear when the Chinese envoy at the UN said “enough is enough” while responding to President Trump who accused China of spreading Covid-19 during his annual address in the ongoing General Assembly session. In the heated exchange, Chinese Ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, referred to the spread of Covid-19 across the US and called for serious introspection by the Trump administration. Over seven million Covid-19 cases and 200,000 deaths have raised serious questions over the US claims about having the most sophisticated and advanced medical technologies in the world. The highest number of cases and fatalities in the US speak of the failure of the administration’s healthcare system. The US must look inward and conduct an honest appraisal of the state of affairs. The Chinese envoy’s advice does make sense and it appears China — which is known for exercising restraint — has either run out patience or has decided to resort to befitting gesturing.

China happened to be the continuing focus of Trump’s politics at home and across the world since the beginning of his term in office. It has, however, picked up pace during his current electioneering blitzkrieg. The run-up to the presidential polls in November, Trump has gone tough on China. He seems to play up the “China factor” the way PM Modi created hype and played up the “Pakistan factor” in BJP’s electioneering campaign in India. So, for China factor, the contending parties find themselves mobilising public opinion against China as a country that is a problem and a competitor for the US. That gives credence to the fact that China has become a considerable threat to deal with and it began to claim the global political space that the US had dominated for decades.

The usually impulsive leader of the free world, Trump would invariably find a “China connection” in everything that goes wrong in the US or around the world. Though China’s rise mantra has been going on for quite some time, the Trump administration has acted against Chinese interests since early 2018. Initiating trade war by imposing sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports, labeling China a currency manipulator, passing a bill supporting Hong Kong protesters, soaring tensions on Covid-19 and starting diplomatic escalation by closing consulates were measures reflective of Trump’s anti-China drive. On top, Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo declared that “the era of engagement with the Chinese Communist Party is over”, and condemned China’s unfair trade practices, human rights abuses, and its aggressive moves in the South China Sea.

The heated exchanges have become usual in the US-China context particularly since Trump began to live at the White House. It is not Covid-19 alone that is contentious but issues such as One-China policy, Hong Kong, trade and technologies, multilateral institutions, human rights, climate change, China’s expanding influence in Asia and beyond, Indo-Pacific strategy that is a bid to contain China’s rising stature and politico-strategic world view of both countries are causing bitterness in the US-China ties.

Though it appears that both China and the US are reaching a boiling point, in most assessments both countries would make efforts to push for normalcy and reconciliation. It’s not expected of a prevailing superpower or an aspiring superpower to go crazy and endanger its interests that have been worked out and attained in decades of efforts. In today’s polarised macroclimate of international politics, it would be in the interest of both to find ways to cooperate under intense competition. There is no likelihood of the fierce US-China competition escalating to a dangerous threshold. Both need to exercise strategic patience. Avoiding violent confrontation would be a litmus test of their diplomacy.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 27th, 2020.

Source: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2265784/the-future-of-china-us-face-off>

New WHO Warning | Editorial

THE threat of Covid-19 is far from over. While several countries are moving towards easing restrictions and lockdowns, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued a fresh warning saying global death toll from Corona Virus could more than double to two million before a successful vaccine is widely used and could be even higher without concerted action to curb the pandemic.

The number of confirmed deaths some nine months since the new coronavirus was detected has almost reached one million while overall more than 32.5 million infections have been registered. And as the warning of the World Body cannot be overlooked, it really suggests the world is not out of woods yet. The situation really warrants concerted efforts to put a stop to rising number of deaths and infections from the virus as well as accelerate efforts for development of vaccine. There is no need to be complacent at all. Until and unless the vaccine is developed, efforts must be focused towards ensuring compliance of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) including social distancing at markets, educational institutions and places of work to avoid terrible figure of deaths predicted by the WHO.

Mike Ryan, head of the UN agency's emergencies programme, told a briefing the other day that indoor gatherings of people of all ages are driving the rise in cases. Certainly without cooperation of the people, this battle cannot be won and they need to act with maturity and responsibility for their own safety as well as those of others. The WHO has been at the heart of the battle against Corona virus since the first reported outbreak, timely guiding the countries how to effectively respond to the challenge and it continues to fulfil its responsibility. It is unfortunate that some elements chose to target the world body for their ulterior motives. Anyway, it is for all countries of the world to fully cooperate with each other to guarantee fast and equitable access globally to Covid-19 vaccines.

Responsibility also rests with developed world and financial institutions to extend maximum support to developing countries to withstand the economic impact of the pandemic. As suggested by Prime Minister Imran Khan in his address to the UN General Assembly, the G-20 countries must extend and expand debt relief for developing countries like Pakistan plus create a special fund to help them revive their economies and improve their health infrastructures so that they could better deal with such a situation in future.

Source: <https://pakobserver.net/new-who-warning/>

The United States Is Not Entitled to Lead the World By James Goldgeier and Bruce W. Jentleson

That the United States should lead the world is often taken for granted, at least in Washington, D.C. The country played that role for more than seven decades after World War II, and most Americans don't want China to assume it. So it would be easy to think that if the American people vote Donald Trump out of office and bring in committed internationalist Joe Biden, the United States can just go back to "the head of the table," as Biden's recent Foreign Affairs article claimed. But global leadership is not an American entitlement.

Trump has broken with traditions of U.S. global leadership in a long and familiar list of ways. But while most of Washington's allies (with a few notable exceptions, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia) are of the "Anybody but Trump" inclination, restoring a constructive U.S. role in the world will require much more than proclaiming that the United States is back and reverting to a pre-Trump playbook. The country must come to terms with fundamental shifts in its global position. Seen in historical perspective, the country has gone from being apart to atop and, now, to amid the world, and the transition requires some adjustments.

A TARNISHED MODEL

The self-proclaimed "greatest democracy in the world" has been an erratic one since the late 1990s: in just more than two decades, the country has seen two presidents impeached, an election ultimately decided by the Supreme Court, an internationally controversial war in Iraq, and a financial crisis that sent shock waves around the world. In 2008, the country elected a globally popular Black senator to the presidency—only to lurch in a very different direction eight years later by electing a racist reality TV host who blames American allies for the country's ills.

If we think of politics as we do monetary currencies—measuring stability by fluctuations within an equilibrium zone—why should the United States' friends trust that even if Trump loses the 2020 election, American politics will stay within that political equilibrium zone for long? Instead, even close allies will have to hedge

their bets, in case the United States shifts yet again in the following presidential election or even after the 2022 midterms.

The self-proclaimed “greatest democracy in the world” has been an erratic one since the late 1990s.

The country’s domestic policy performance has hardly made the United States a paragon of effective governance. The country ranks 27th of 31 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries for social justice, reflecting policies that go back much further than Trump. Economic equality has been declining for more than 40 years, while “deaths of despair” are rapidly rising. Systemic racism tarnishes the country’s image abroad as a champion of democracy, justice, and the rule of law.

Such are the “pre-existing conditions of our body politic,” in the words of the Pulitzer Prize–winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen, and the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic has reflected them. No country has been perfect on COVID-19 (even New Zealand saw some community transmission after going more than three months without), but nowhere else is the government fighting so much within itself, with lockdown protesters flaunting guns inside legislative assemblies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, once considered the gold standard for global disease detection and control, has been demeaned and weakened.

Systemic racism tarnishes the country’s image abroad as a champion of democracy.

By mid-July, more Americans had died from COVID-19 than in the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq wars combined; by late September, COVID-19 deaths had increased another 43 percent. Despite a continuing economic downturn, the country still struggles to move past political gamesmanship. Why would anyone in the world think that the United States could provide serious global leadership? Even Hans Morgenthau, the intellectual godfather of power politics, stressed the need to “concentrate . . . efforts upon creating a society at home which can . . . serve as a model for other nations to emulate.”

Think about it: if only 17 percent of Americans trust the government, why should others trust the United States?

APART, ATOP, AMID

For much of its first century and a half, the United States took advantage of its geographic distance from Europe and Asia to stay generally apart from the world. The country did not strictly isolate itself, but it selectively chose when and where to engage. After 1945, the United States sat mostly atop the world, as the dominant power in military, economic, ideological, and diplomatic terms—all the more so after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Today the United States finds itself not apart or atop but rather amid the world, both shaping and being shaped by global events and forces.

Today's world is no longer one in which any nation—whether the United States or China—can sit atop the others. Shifts in the relationships between states have made such domination less likely.

Great powers can most easily dominate when a single security threat unites a group of states, superseding other, possibly divergent interests. Take, for instance, the early nineteenth century, when the Concert of Europe emerged after the havoc of the Napoleonic period, or the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union viewed each other as existential threats and countries sought protection from one or the other superpower. The twenty-first century has yet to furnish an overarching, shared security threat. The administration of President George W. Bush did not succeed in creating one with its post-9/11 global “war on terror.” China has become more aggressive and will likely remain the United States’ major competitor for decades, but the U.S. effort to stir up a “new China scare” has limited appeal to countries that want to maintain relations with both nations.

Today's world is no longer one in which any nation can sit atop the others.

In today's world of comparatively diffuse threats and interests, few states feel best served by a largely exclusive relationship with just one major power. During the Cold War, U.S. allies in Europe and Asia genuinely feared that the Soviet Union would either invade or try to undermine their political systems. Few harbor comparable fears today, and correspondingly few feel the need to choose sides. India and Australia have significant tensions with China but still cooperate with Beijing on matters of mutual interest. Even with all the support the Trump administration has given Israel, China is now that country's largest Asian trading partner and an increasingly prominent investor in its economy. Saudi Arabia, another Trump favorite, may be turning to China for a nuclear weapons program.

During the Cold War and immediately after, the United States was an attractive protector because of its military preponderance and centrality to the international economy. Neither, though, provides comparable leverage today. While American military power remains crucial for extended deterrence through NATO and Indo-Pacific partnerships, close to 20 years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, at a cost of more than \$6 trillion, demonstrates the limited utility of military superiority for achieving strategic objectives. The U.S. share of global GDP—51 percent in 1951 and 25 percent in 1991—has declined to around 15 percent. And the sanctions the United States has imposed against Iran, Venezuela, and North Korea have inflicted heavy economic costs, but without producing compliance with U.S. demands.

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During the Cold War, the United States was able to lead in part by dividing the world into democracies and autocracies. But such ideological bifurcation has its limits. Democratic allies are the United States' natural partners, and the strongest foreign policy to counter China, Russia, and other autocratic states remains a collective one. But the United States has always been inconsistent, if not hypocritical, in counting certain nondemocracies as allies or partners. Both during the Cold War and today, issues such as arms control, nuclear nonproliferation, climate change, and, as we now know, pandemics require the United States to cooperate with authoritarian regimes in order to achieve American objectives.

Indeed, the combination of COVID-19 and the ever-worsening climate crisis has driven home that we live amid rather than atop the world. Even if the United States had first-rate domestic policies on pandemic and climate change prevention, it would still be vulnerable to what others in the world do and don't do. Climate change causes 400,000 deaths globally each year, compared with fewer than 16,000 from terrorism in 2018, and this rate is projected to increase by 50 percent by 2030. Building resilience against threats such as these has to be a globally shared enterprise.

LEADERSHIP, BUT CHASTENED

The United States remains enormously powerful, but being more amid than atop requires a chastened rather than restorationist approach to internationalism. Washington needs to recognize the global leadership roles others can and must play. In the future, there will be very few issues on which the United States plays

a solo leadership role and some on which others are better suited to take the lead. Public opinion within the United States supports such an approach, with 68 percent preferring that the United States share leadership rather than dominate.

A Biden administration cannot just return to multilateral agreements that Trump has abandoned, such as the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear deal. It needs to push them further. Even if Trump had not reneged on the Paris agreement and all countries were on track to meet their pledges (which few are), greenhouse gas emissions would still be close to double what they should be. A Biden administration should therefore not only rejoin but push for a Paris-plus, which would make signatories' commitments more binding and enforceable. Biden can build on the energy and enthusiasm of his party's progressive wing in order to go big in dealing with climate change. The recent Pew Research Center polls suggest that he would have the support of close to two-thirds of the American public in doing so.

As for the Iran nuclear deal, its original intent was both to address nuclear proliferation and to establish a basis for working out other tensions in the Iranian-U.S. relationship over time. Now the deal's sunset provisions are closer to expiration, and geopolitical tensions have intensified. Rejoining the deal won't be enough to solve these problems: the participants will need new agreements that are stronger and up to date. But Tehran is understandably wary about the durability of any American commitment, the Europeans are furious about the secondary sanctions Trump has imposed on them, and Russia and China are exploiting the situation despite the fundamental interest they share in a non-nuclear Iran. These circumstances will require an even greater collaborative effort from the P5+1 than before.

In the future, there will be very few issues on which the United States plays a solo leadership role.

A chastened internationalism would require reassessing the state of U.S. alliances. The United States should neither automatically maintain nor precipitously end its longtime commitments, but it does need to recalibrate them based on current national interests. The transatlantic relationship is the perfect place to start. At the end of the Cold War, Europe still seemed to need the United States to remain in charge of its security: Germany's neighbors feared the country's unification, and violence convulsed the former Yugoslavia. But the time has come for the United

States to actively support European Union efforts to deliver on the promise of a European defense capability. Such efforts should not be seen as a threat to NATO. In fact, cooperation between NATO and the EU, along with a strengthening of U.S.-EU ties, will be critical to their success.

The United States should view NATO as an instrument for coordinating security policies with Canada and Europe, not as a means of dominating its allies. A true rebalancing of U.S. foreign policy toward Asia depends on a stronger Europe, able to do more in its own backyard. The United States should play more of a supporting role over time, rather than having to take charge, as it did, for example, in the Western Balkans in the 1990s.

Within the Indo-Pacific, regional allies need reassurance of American presence and commitment, but they have their own interests in relations with China and are resistant to being pressured into with-us-or-with-them alignments. Japan, for its part, conducts bilateral summits with China. Intraregional agreements—between Australia and India, with Australia and Japan, and within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, for example—play an ever larger part in regional security. U.S. policy needs to work with, not against, these currents, reinforcing other countries' interests in restraining China rather than pressuring for bipolarization of the region.

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In keeping a more realistic vision of its leadership, the United States can and should recalibrate its role in the Middle East, including relations with Saudi Arabia, and more generally adjust to a reduced expectation of shaping the region's future. And in Afghanistan, it should commit to a high-level, regional, diplomatic initiative, engaging Pakistan, India, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, all of whom have their own favored groups but also a lot at risk once the United States gets off the frontlines. Success is never guaranteed, but such strategic diplomacy has a better chance of working than making the United States' longest war in history that much longer.

The United States can play a global leadership role on COVID-19 that is comparable to its twentieth-century one but appropriate to the twenty-first by collaborating with others and allowing others to take the lead as their ideas and

capacity warrant. The World Health Organization needs reform, but rather than taking a punitive approach, the United States should follow the German and French lead in increasing funding, building broad support for stronger and more independent WHO authority, and pushing constructively for change. Moreover, after years telling others to learn from it, the United States would do well to learn from others. A liberal government in New Zealand, a conservative government in Australia, a centrist government in Germany, a congenitally weak government in Italy, and any number of others, such as in South Korea and Taiwan, have done far better than the United States. While policies can't be surgically transplanted from one country to another, lessons can be learned. When this pandemic abates, U.S. officials should immediately make fact-finding missions to those more successful countries, so that the United States will be better prepared for the next global health crisis.

While the United States won't always be—and shouldn't always be—at the head of the table, the pandemic has shown what happens when Washington isn't even at the table. But other nations are not just waiting for Godot. The United States needs to abandon any sense of entitlement—and do what it takes at home and abroad to be a leader amid this twenty-first-century world.

Source: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-09-25/united-states-not-entitled-lead-world>

How Will Russia Respond to the U.S.-China Cold War? By Jeffrey Mankoff

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's July 23 speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library confirmed that the Trump administration is pivoting to a policy of open confrontation toward China. Describing a struggle for freedom with China's ruling Communist Party as "the mission of our time," Pompeo called for the United States and like-minded countries to push back against Chinese influence in international institutions, curb Chinese economic growth, and "induce China to change in more creative and assertive ways," which some observers have suggested implies pursuing regime change in Beijing.

In part, the speech was in keeping with the Trump administration's focus on great power competition as the overarching framework for U.S. foreign policy. In one important aspect though, Pompeo's call to arms against China represented a departure from the vision of great power competition laid out in the Trump administration's 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS): it had almost nothing to say about the United States' other great power rival, Russia.

The pivot to confronting China seems to rely on an assumption that Russia will be, if not a partner in pushing back against Chinese influence, at least a disinterested observer. Indeed, Pompeo, and Trump himself, have indicated that they foresee opportunities to work with Russia against China, in part because, they suggest, Russia too is threatened by a China intent on building up its military capabilities, extending its economic reach into Russia's post-Soviet neighborhood, and imposing one-sided trade and investment agreements. The assumption that Russia will be benevolently neutral in a U.S.-China confrontation, however, is likely too optimistic, despite a growing list of frustrations in Sino-Russian relations.

While the NSS identifies both Russia and China as great power rivals, in practice, the Trump administration has dealt differently with the two countries from the beginning. In part, the difference has to do with the deep polarization around the issue of Russian interference, which the administration has been reluctant to acknowledge.

It also stems from a belief in many quarters that the current Sino-Russian alignment is anomalous. Several officials and advisors close to the White House have suggested that the United States should work to decouple Moscow from Beijing, on the model of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's outreach to China at the height of the Cold War (among those making this case is Kissinger himself). As Pompeo indicated "there are places where we need to work with Russia," notably on arms control and non-proliferation, as part of a containment strategy against China.

As an example of this approach, during the run-up to U.S.-Russian arms control talks in Vienna in July, U.S. officials urged their Russian counterparts to lean on Beijing to participate. Moscow nonetheless stuck to its position that the choice to participate (or not) in the Vienna arms control talks was Beijing's alone. Similarly, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Pompeo's speech as "another naïve attempt to complicate the Russo-Chinese partnership," which remains "the most important factor for stability in the world."

Choose Your Friends Wisely

By many measures, the Sino-Russian relationship is one-sided. China is Russia's leading trade partner and source of foreign investment, with Russia's commodity-dependent economy running a sizeable trade deficit. Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, Chinese firms have acquired equity stakes in some of Russia's largest companies and natural resource developments. Russia is just one link in China's Belt and Road Initiative, and not even the most important. Even as the United States urges allies to reject Chinese telecommunication technology, Chinese companies are building Russia's 5G network. If anything, the demand shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating this dependence, as Russia looks to China to jump-start its economy.

Meanwhile, China has surpassed Russia as the world's second-largest arms' exporter and pushed into traditional Russian markets, sometimes by reverse engineering Russian technology. Concerns about industrial espionage may be responsible for Russia's recent decision to delay the delivery of S-400 air defense systems to China.

Nevertheless, Russian officials and analysts emphasize that they do not see China as a threat. However one-sided the relationship, Moscow appreciates that

Beijing—in contrast to Washington and its European allies— regards Vladimir Putin as a legitimate partner and does not pose a threat to regime security. Moscow and Beijing have compatible, though not identical, visions of global order. Both would like to see a more “democratic” international system in which they have a larger say and where concepts like rule of law and human rights lack universal applicability.

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U.S. sanctions policy only reinforces the perception in both Moscow and Beijing that Washington’s ultimate goal is regime change. While the initial sanctions on Russia were a tailored response to the annexation of Crimea and invasion of

eastern Ukraine from which Moscow could, theoretically, escape by implementing the terms of the Minsk-II ceasefire agreement, subsequent rounds have become more ambitious.

Designed less to change Russian behavior (e.g. withdraw its forces from Ukraine) than impose costs for past transgressions such as electoral interference, such sanctions will be difficult to unravel— particularly those that are Congressionally mandated. The proliferation of sanctions, coupled with official statements about creating fissures within the Russian elite, reinforces the Kremlin's perception that the United States seeks to bring down the regime.

Washington is now embarking on a similar course toward China. In addition to new tariffs imposed in an attempt to address what it considers unfair Chinese trade practices, the Trump administration has announced sanctions targeting Beijing's inhumane crackdown in Xinjiang and imposition of a new national security law in Hong Kong. Whatever the moral justification for these steps, in practical terms, sanctions related to Xinjiang and Hong Kong are likely to be perceived in Beijing as an assault on China's territorial integrity, reinforcing support for Russia's longstanding contention that sanctions are a national security threat.

Be Careful What You Wish For

For Russia, the prospect of an escalating U.S.-China confrontation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it makes Moscow's friendship a more valuable commodity, giving Russia greater leverage in its bilateral relationship with China. It also raises the likelihood that Beijing will move closer to Moscow's more openly revisionist posture vis-à-vis the international order, in place of its longstanding preference for achieving greater influence within that order. Beijing may also be prepared to offer Moscow some carrots, for instance over energy tariffs or protection of intellectual property.

Yet, Russia too will pay a price if the Chinese economy suffers further damage as a result of U.S. sanctions and other punitive measures, or if the U.S.-China confrontation deepens the global recession sparked by coronavirus. Russian analysts also note that, as the weakest of the three major powers, Russia will be unable to do much on its own to shape U.S.-China relations, and could find itself dragged into disputes and possibly even conflicts that it would prefer to avoid.

It is hard nevertheless to envision a scenario in which Russia backs U.S. efforts against China, or even adopts a posture of benevolent neutrality. Even if, as the U.S. intelligence community recently concluded, Russia would like to see Trump re-elected in November, Moscow has learned over the past three-plus years that the fundamental tenor of U.S. policy toward Russia is unlikely to change regardless of who sits in the White House. Under the circumstances, there is little of substance the United States is in a position to offer to cause Russia to re-think its strategic entente with China.

Moscow will no doubt try to use any U.S.-China confrontation to advance its own interests. It will try to extract concessions from both sides, while accelerating efforts to build ties with third parties, including Chinese rivals like India and Japan, and European countries alienated by the Trump administration (above all a post-Angela Merkel Germany) to hedge against the consequences, even while remaining open to working with the United States on specific areas of common interest, such as negotiating a follow-on to the expiring New START agreement.

Yet on the most basic level, the interests of Putin's Russia are more aligned with those of China than with those of the United States, and the prospect of a deeper and more enduring U.S.-China confrontation will enhance the importance of that entente in both Beijing and Moscow.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and are not an official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

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Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-will-russia-respond-us-china-cold-war-169810>