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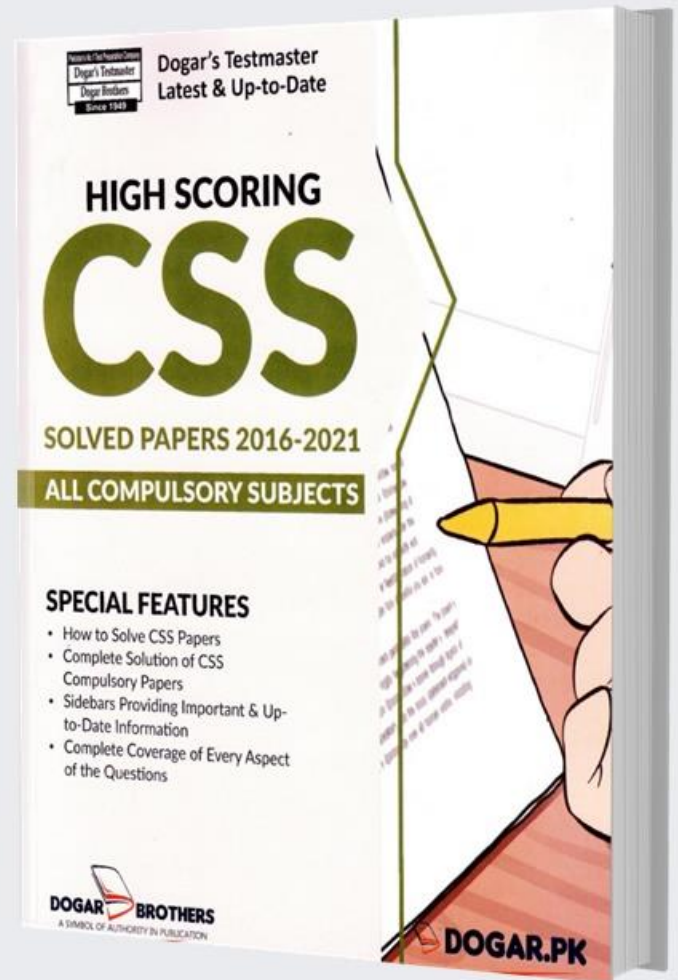
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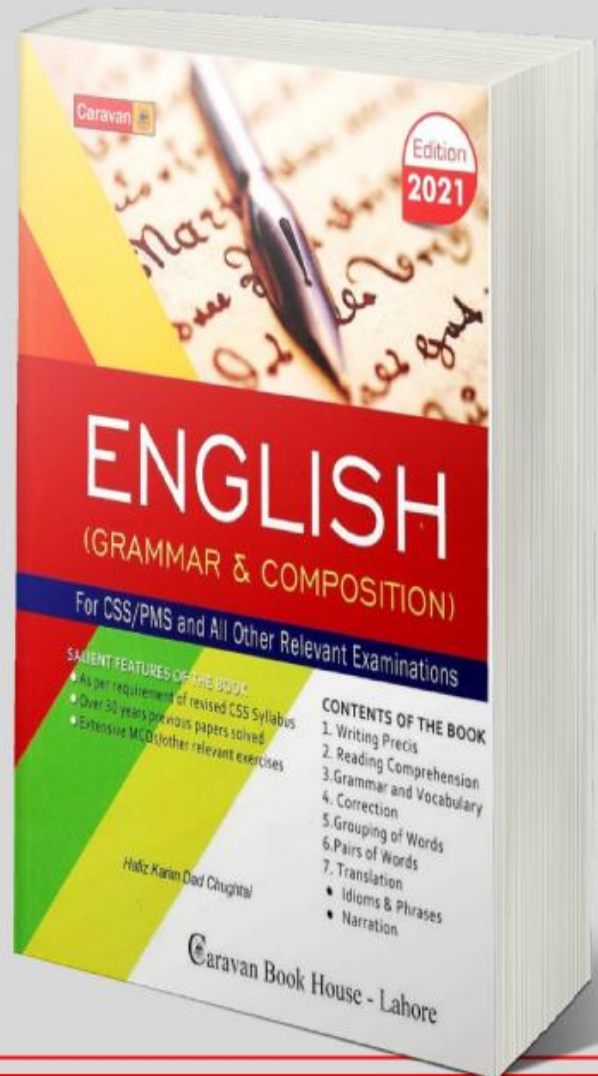
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PAKISTAN

Pakistan-China Relations By Urooj Hayat

HE Pak-China friendship is described as higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the deepest sea, sweeter than honey by the leadership of both countries.

Pak-China relationship is unique in nature, which the Chinese describe through a particular Chinese terminology “Tie Gee Men Err” or simply “Ba Tie” which can be translated as “Iron Brothers” in English.

It is a unique case indeed in the international system that we live in. Chinese have reached economic progress with Pakistan’s cooperation.

As China’s investment in Pakistani infrastructural expand, the Chinese government announced the CPEC project in 2015 with an aim to expand its trade links and influence in Pakistan to grow better relationship between the two countries, in which Karot Hydropower Project is a great example of China-Pakistan friendship.

I have personally worked at Karot Hydro Power Project and it is an absolute pleasure working with the Chinese.

Not only has it helped me in my self-growth and learning their language and culture, I’ve had a great experience growing intellectually and learning how things are done in China. The Chinese are happy, hard-working, proud and free people and their model is far more effective in getting things done.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will enhance cooperation by win-win model which will result in a well connected and integrated region of shared destiny and harmony and China will also help Pakistan achieve great development in technological revolution.

This will be completed under industrial cooperation which will help Pakistan in achieving rapid economic development.

Karot Hydro Power Project is also being developed in a way which not only stimulates our economic growth but also provides a great basis for the local people's integrity, development, and reduces poverty by providing jobs to the locals who are struggling to make both ends meet. This is just one example from a project.

CPEC has provided more than 20 energy projects to Pakistan. It not only provides financial support but also gives a chance to individuals to build a strong persona by living and working in challenges and adapting the skill of finding solutions to any problem causing hindrance.

Every individual working here is earning a decent salary for all the hard work they are putting in.

This project has also become a way to meet new people with healthy and productive minds and an urge to prove their skills and develop better plans.

Living and working here provides a big opportunity to be part of a social circle that influences your healthy thinking.

People residing in areas around the project sites are greatly benefitted from job opportunities and development of their entities.

On the whole, CPEC is the biggest project having all kinds of benefits to both nations and setting the bars high for other countries in their social interactions with other countries.

The harmony, dedication, and hard work of employees here is the core reason behind the project's success.

Pakistan has no shortage of natural beauty, and after the development of energy projects, 3000 km road, hospitals, educational institutes, agriculture, irrigation system, human resources development and most importantly, poverty alleviation by China-Pakistan cooperation, tourists from around the world would visit Pakistan and Pakistan's economy will flourish.

This is how the tourism and other sectors will most likely complement the GDP of Pakistan in upcoming years.

It is a wave of change in Pakistan and no doubt Pakistan is developing and becoming economically strong. May the Pak-China friendship prosper more and become stronger like steel.

Source: Published in pakobsever on 31st August 2021

‘Pakistan in Control, China to Cement Grip in Afghanistan’s New Great Game’

The Russian and British empires battled over Afghanistan in the 19th century, and the United States and the Soviet Union in the 20th. As the Taliban take over in the strategic, landlocked nation, the new Great Game has Pakistan in control, with its ally China looking to cement its grip on the region.

The West claims that Pakistan has ties with the Taliban as it battled the US-backed government in Kabul - charges denied by Islamabad. When the insurgent group captured Kabul last week, Prime Minister Imran Khan said Afghans had broken the "shackles of slavery".

As the Taliban hold discussions to decide on its government model, media reports have said some Pakistani officials are involved.

A Foreign Office spokesperson in Islamabad said Pakistan wanted an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan that ensured peace and stability in the region but added the "key role remains with the Afghans".

China, with no previous involvement in Afghanistan but a strong alliance with Pakistan, has held out an olive branch to the Taliban, enticed by the country's mineral wealth, including its large reserves of lithium, a key component for electric vehicles. China is also looking at the prospect of extra security for its narrow land route through the Karakoram mountains into Pakistan.

And then there is India, Pakistan's old enemy, which has been locked in a military standoff with China along their disputed border for more than a year. India was a key supporter of the ousted regime in Kabul and as both Pakistan and China become key players in a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, New Delhi's nervousness is increasing.

China however says its main aim in reaching out to the Taliban is to protect its western Xinjiang region from anti-Beijing East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) militants, who could seek sanctuary within Afghanistan.

Also read: Taliban have assured won't allow use of Afghan soil by TTP: Rashid

"While Pakistan might be thinking of leveraging on Afghanistan against India, this is not necessarily the case for China," said Zhang Li, a professor of South Asian studies at Sichuan University.

"China's primary concern now is for the Taliban to ... build an inclusive and moderate regime so that terrorism would not spill over to Xinjiang and the region. Any other calculus further to that remains to be seen."

The US government says ETIM no longer exists as a formal organisation.

China has dangled the prospect of providing the two things the Taliban needs to govern Afghanistan: diplomatic recognition and much-needed infrastructure and economic assistance, said Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi.

"China is certain to exploit the new opening to make strategic inroads into mineral-rich Afghanistan and deepen its penetration of Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia," he said.

Bitter memories

There was much cheering in Pakistan over India's discomfiture at the turn of events, said Raza Ahmad Rumi, a political commentator, who teaches at Ithaca College in New York. The two countries have fought three wars since they became independent nations when the subcontinent was divided in 1947.

"The jubilation in Pakistan witnessed on social media and TV screens was largely linked to the undoing of Indian influence as conventional policy circles viewed (Afghan President Ashraf) Ghani's close links with India as a threat," Rumi said.

India has bitter memories of the previous Taliban stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

An Indian Airlines plane was hijacked in 1999 and ultimately landed in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. "Our position today is one of adjusting to reality. We have to play the long game in Afghanistan. We don't have a contiguous border

but we have stakes there," said Jayant Prasad, a former Indian ambassador to Kabul.

Over the past year as the Taliban emerged as a dominant force and US-brokered negotiations began in Doha, Indian diplomats had opened a line with the group, diplomatic sources in New Delhi said.

"We are talking to all stakeholders," one of them said but did not want to get to the specifics of the discussions. There has been criticism at home that India put all its eggs in the basket of the Ghani government when the United States itself had begun talks with the Taliban, and that New Delhi left it too late.

'Taliban takeover a setback for India'

Still, India as a major economic player can be attractive to the Taliban, looking to avoid an over-dependence on China, the source said.

India has development projects in every one of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, small and big, including the parliament building in Kabul that it built, which was over-run by gun-toting Taliban men after sweeping into the city last week.

Myra MacDonald, author of three books on South Asia and a former Reuters journalist, said while the Taliban takeover was a setback for India, it was not game over for New Delhi.

"This is not a re-run of the past. Everyone is going to be much more careful this time about letting terrorism in Afghanistan explode as in the pre-9/11 days."

A senior member of the Taliban has told Reuters that impoverished Afghanistan needs help from countries in the region, including Iran, as well as the United States and Russia.

"We expect them to help us, to support our people, especially the health sector and especially the business sector and mining sector," said Waheedullah Hashimi, who has access to the group's decision-making.

Published in Express Tribune

The Sino-US Rivalry: Pakistan's Predicament By M Alam Brohi

Pakistan, wittingly or unwittingly, is caught in the crosshair of the rivalry between the two great powers of the world, which would test the diplomatic skills of our foreign and security policy mandarins. Diplomacy without military prowess and economic strength does not yield desired results. Economic stability is the foremost pre-requisite for a country's success in carving out a safe and secure strategic place for itself at the global level. Within the intensifying Sino-American competition, we need to review the prototype of our bilateral relations with both the competing powers, revisiting the challenges and opportunities we had in the past, and what the coming years hold in store for us.

Pakistan's relations with the USA had always been transactional, subject to ebb and flow and mostly driven by the American interests and priorities. The bitter fact is that the US never treated Pakistan at par with India even when the latter was in the Soviet Union's tight embrace. We had many disappointments. Notwithstanding the past setbacks, we could never resist any inducement to return to the US stables when occasioned by a cataclysmic event. Today, India has been elevated to a higher pedestal as a trusted ally to countervail China. Much water has passed under the bridge. Pakistan will have no privileged relationship as in the past with the US in the evolving global power politics. The world has long past the Cold war era.

Conversely, the dependability of China's friendship with Pakistan, despite our weaknesses or aberrations in policy and practice needs no elaboration. Much before its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US lowered Pakistan in its foreign policy priorities leaving it with the only option of moving closer to China with which we have already had a multi-faceted relationship including an advantageous partnership in the CPEC and understanding on peace process in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan, too, partially succeeded to mend its relations with Russia. However, all this did not deter Pakistan to engage the US for recalibrating relations between the two countries on the basis of mutual respect seeking trade and investment and convergence on the issues of international concern without any compromise on its rounded relationship with China. This engagement continues unabated.

Pakistan, today, has a much deeper political, economic and strategic relationship with China, which is a thorn in the body of India and the US-led West.

Nevertheless, we should be well prepared for the American pressure, which will be brought to bear on our foreign policy options when the rivalry between the two powers intensifies in the coming decades. The Americans would very much like to undermine our old and trusted friendship with China by targeting BRI, in general and the CPEC, in particular. India is hell bent to fail CPEC. President Donald Trump's senior officials supported India's stance on CPEC. Stepping up its pressure, the US can possibly squeeze Pakistan through international financial institutions and FATF. This would pose a formidable challenge. Our chronic dependence on the IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank for loans and aid could be our Achilles' heel.

We have withstood American pressures in the past. But those pressures had a different background and intensity. The Chinese leaders understand our vulnerability to external pressures on many counts. Pakistan, today, has a much deeper political, economic and strategic relationship with China, which is a thorn in the body of India and the US-led West. For economic connectivity with South West and Central Asia, Pakistan and China have evolved a mutually supportive policy on peace and stability in these regions. Peace and stability in Afghanistan is the key to economic integration of these regions and Middle East.

Foreign policy of a country cannot be divested from its internal situation. Our vulnerabilities to external as well as internal pressures are monumental. Pakistan is a medium country with strong military and nuclear assets but a chronically weak and unstable economy. It is overburdened with foreign loans. The federation is not homogenous and suffers from political, economic, ideological and cultural fault lines with small provinces chronically resenting the injustice meted out to them in the distribution of state resources. The elite have completely captured state resources. Corrupt oligarchies have taken hold of the country. Corruption is endemic. Almost 60% of our population is deprived of its constitutional right to education, healthcare, livelihood, security of life and honour.

The population of the hewers of wood and drawers of water is on the rise. The economic structural and stabilizing reforms have been long overdue and cannot be further delayed. We have to reset our economic priorities rationalizing our

revenues and expenditures and reducing dependence on foreign loans and financial aid. The IMF has been chronically entrenched in our economic and financial affairs controlling our budgets, prices of the utilities, tariffs, taxes, salaries and pensions. This is too much for a self-respecting nation.

The chronic tug of war between the main institutions of the country for more power and space has critically undermined constitutional democracy and governance. We have to address this anomaly forthwith along with other pressing political, federal and ideological fault lines and economic woes to rise as a nation to be reckoned with. Our immediate concerns should be the insurgency in Balochistan; the increasing militancy of religious outfits, parochialism and ethnic divide in Sindh. These problems look daunting but are not insurmountable.

The CPEC is termed as the linchpin of BRI – a game changer and harbinger of prosperity in South Asia and beyond. Simultaneously, it is viewed as a fissiparous project heightening domestic rivalries for a bigger piece of the cake, and generating regional and international controversies over the passages of the corridor through territories disputed by certain states. It is also increasingly looked at as an extension of the new economic Great Game being played out in the neighbouring Central Asian region between the world powers and the regional countries including USA, China, Russia, Pakistan, India, Iran and Turkey. All these views about the CPEC have some merit, and need to be examined properly.

The author was a member of the Foreign Service of Pakistan and he has authored two books.

Source: Published in Daily Times on 21st August 2021

Constructive Dialogue | Editorial

On Thursday, a delegation of Afghan politicians met with Pakistan's civil and military leadership to discuss the ongoing situation in Afghanistan and the need for an inclusive government. During the meetings, the delegation was of the view that a new chapter will be commenced in Af-Pak bilateral relations, and that it considered Islamabad to be an important player for achieving regional peace.

Such meetings are essential at this critical juncture and Pakistan's efforts deserve to be acknowledged. Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan on Thursday met former Afghan president Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah to discuss future steps now that the Taliban have announced the creation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. On the same day, Ambassador Khan also spoke with an official from the Afghan Taliban. Islamabad's approach of holding talks with various political factions in Afghanistan must be emulated by other key actors if a sustainable peace is to be achieved for the benefit of the Afghan people.

Meanwhile, officials of the Afghan Taliban have stated through multiple channels that the group would like to resolve problems faced by citizens, meet their aspirations and stay committed to forming an open and inclusive Islamic government. Of course, these are just words at the moment and it is actions that will make the difference and allay concerns.

However, to ensure that such promises are kept, international actors will have to sustain their engagement with Afghanistan and the Taliban. Beijing has echoed similar sentiments as the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying recently remarked that China encourages and hopes that the Taliban can follow through on its positive statements and adopts moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies. Such a measured attitude during the current transition phase makes sense. Refusing to engage with the Taliban will only be to the detriment of the Afghan people in the long run and is also not in line with today's reality. Dialogue amongst both internal and external stakeholders is the only way forward.

Published in The Nation on 21st August 2021

FATF Grey List: What Pakistan Has To Do –

OpEd By Azimul Haque*

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) decided to keep Pakistan on its grey list in their June 2021 session. Pakistan has been dealing with this problem for a long period of time. The country has apparently been doing a lot to overcome this. Let us have a discussion on FATF, Pakistan's inclusion in the FATF grey list and what Pakistan should do to resolve it.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established in 1979 through the initiative of the G7 to formulate policies aimed at combating money laundering. It is an intergovernmental organization. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the issue of "Terrorism Financing" was expanded to include its mandate. By 2021, the FATF has 37 member countries; Indonesia is an observer country and several regional and international organizations are its associate member, most notably the United Nations.

The purpose of the FATF is to set the standards for implementing legal and effective measures to address money laundering, terrorist financing and other threats to the transparency of the international financial system. The FATF is a policy-making body that works to generate the political will needed to reform a country's national economical arena. FATF monitors the progress of implementation of its recommendations through peer reviews of member countries. Since 2000, the FATF has been reviewing the economic parameters of all the countries in the world and has been operating by including some countries in the FATF Black List and FATF Grey List. Although there are only 37 member countries, the reason behind its massive importance is, if a country is included in the FATF grey or black list, the UN advises other major economies to impose economic sanctions on that country.

If FATF finds evidence of money laundering or terror financing inside the border of any country, it places the country on its grey list and directs it to act on 40 recommendations. If the country can properly comply with these 40 recommendations, its name will be removed from the grey list (or it can be said to be white-listed as well). If the recommendations are not fulfilled within the

stipulated time, the specific country will be blacklisted by the FATF. At the moment, North Korea and Iran are on the FATF blacklist.

Why is Pakistan on the FATF grey list?

Pakistan has been on the grey list twice so far in 2012 and 2018. One of the reasons for being included in the gray list in 2012 was the discovery of the existence of the internationally banned militant Osama Bin Laden by the US government in 2011 in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The incident calls into question the activities of Pakistan's security and intelligence agencies. At the same time, the credibility of the Pakistan Government in front of the international community fell under threat. Another reason is that Pakistan has taken a stand against two UN Security Council Resolutions in 2012 and refrained from signing them. The resolutions were 1267 and 1373, stating that no country would in any way support any militant group within its borders, consent to conduct its activities and confiscate all their property. The UN had suggested that the country be included in the grey list if it failed to comply with these two resolutions. The history of that time shows that militant groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jama'at-ud-Da'wah, etc. were conducting open activities inside Pakistan. For these reasons, Pakistan, which is included in the grey list, has been working on 40 recommendations for the next 3 years. In some cases, progress has actually been made. In 2013, Pakistan amended their Anti-terrorism Act. In 2014, Pakistan implemented the National Internal Security Policy for the first time in their history. For these reasons, in February 2015, the FATF removed Pakistan from the grey list.

In 2016, a ruling in the Lahore High Court said that, Hafez Saeed, the head of Jama'at-ud-Da'wah, would be released and his property would be returned to him because international organizations could not provide sufficient evidence against him. As a result of this incident, in 2018, the FATF again included Pakistan in the grey list. Subsequently, the FATF initially asked Pakistan to act on 27 recommendations. According to Pakistani media, Pakistan has fully complied with 26 recommendations. The FATF added six more points and asked Pakistan to work on them as well.

What Pakistan should do

So far, Pakistan has been working diligently on the 27 points and six additional points recommended by the FATF. One thing is clear here, America and India have direct and indirect role behind this. The US wants a military base inside

Pakistan on the Afghanistan issue. On the other hand, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan has made it clear that this is 'Absolutely Not' possible. In response, in June this year, the US government influenced the FATF to keep Pakistan on the grey list.

On the other hand, the Indian media has always accused Pakistan of being behind the operations of militant groups like Jama'at-ud-Da'wah, Falah-e-Insaniat, Jaish-e-Mohammed and others in India. India will always want Pakistan to be on the FATF grey list as a weapon to put pressure on Pakistan to maintain its subcontinental power.

Considering these aspects, what Pakistan can do is –

First of all, the initiatives taken so far can be clearly presented to the media as taken against the 27 + 6 points recommended by the FATF. For example, in 2020, the government of Pakistan amended the Anti-Money Laundering Act, the Anti-Terrorism Act and the United Nations Security Council Act which are capable of meeting all the requirements of the FATF.

Secondly, the Pakistan National Counter Terrorism Authority, the Pakistan Security Exchange Commission, the Federal Bureau of Revenue and the State Bank of Pakistan and other finance related organizations can highlight major developments in their regular reports.

Thirdly, the government can instruct all finance agencies to work transparently, as well as to issue citizen charters and ensure the right to information to ensure the positive image of the concerned agencies.

Fourthly, by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the countries where money laundering is being alleged against the country, Pakistan may investigate the issue of money laundering and take necessary disciplinary action against those involved.

Fifthly, Pakistan can completely move away from the Geo-Strategic Foreign Policy, establish and effectively execute the Geo-Economic Foreign Policy (in which they are already working on) to strengthen its economic ties with different countries and restore its positive international image. The countries of the Muslim

world, Turkey, Malaysia, China (CPEC) will be on Pakistan's first consideration list in this regard.

In order to survive economically and get off the FATF grey list, Pakistan must adopt a strong foreign policy while focusing on the technicalities of the domestic economy.

*Azimul Haque, Freelance Journalist and Researcher on South Asian Affairs

Published in Euro Asia Review

The China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Triangle By

Huma Baqai

CHINA may not be a very vocal player in the situation unfolding in Afghanistan; nevertheless, it is an important one.

It has a lot at stake in Afghanistan. Chinese stakes in Afghanistan are not limited to the potential for it to become a safe haven for militant groups targeting China, its economic and political stakes in the South Asian region and beyond have grown considerably.

Beijing is also conscious of the negative spillover in Pakistan which would have a direct impact on CPEC.

The Chinese government has long sought to reach agreements with the Taliban largely focused on the question of their ties with Uyghur groups and the recent meeting between Mullah Barader and Wang Yi in Tianjin was unusually publicized but the two sides have been interacting with each other for decades now.

Having said this China still does not tend to perceive Afghanistan through the prism of opportunities, it is almost entirely about managing threats and ensuring the security of One Belt One Road initiative.

Since 9/11 the US military presence in Afghanistan has presented a dilemma for China. Beijing by instinct perceives American troops in Chinese backyard as a strategic threat.

However, China is also convinced that it has benefited from the security umbrella that the United States has provided there specially in curtailing anti-China terrorist groups.

Thus, in principle China does not have a problem with US withdrawal but is extremely weary of the power vacuum that may ensue and destabilize the entire region.

Beijing is conscious of what happened to Britain, the (former) Soviet Union and the US in Afghanistan and thus does not want to get entangled directly into Afghan conflict.

More interestingly, America's unending wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East are seen by many in China as a window of opportunity for it to build its strength, while Washington was distracted and in a state of utter strategic confusion spending trillions of dollars initiating one war after another. Today China is in a position to make the US rethink its foreign policy thrust.

The Biden Administration's Interim Security Strategic Guidance released in March 2021 asserts that China is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.

Biden followed President Trump's policy of pressuring China, and cold shouldering it. Many are of the opinion that the policy has backfired.

The US increasingly finds itself in need of China's support and coordination on various fronts, including issues like Iran, Afghanistan, climate change and international trade regimes.

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price is on record saying US China relationship is fundamentally competitive at the core, there are elements of this relationship that are adversarial, but there are also going to be elements where interests align.

This so-called competition, cooperation and confrontation approach of the US dealing with China will have repercussions for Afghanistan.

Previously, Beijing had viewed the US and Soviet military presence in Afghanistan as a geopolitical threat, but it had gradually grown to see it as the lesser of two evils.

Ridding China's backyard of Islamic militancy and elimination of militants on China's hit-list ranked above the fear of US' presence in Afghanistan.

The risk of entanglement in Afghanistan is a huge concern for China. Beijing does not want to involve itself too deeply in Afghanistan as it is concerned about the strategic trap that has weakened the other great powers.

China is more inclined “to work with all stakeholders of Afghanistan, including Pakistan, Taliban, Afghan government and the US, to make concerted efforts to promote peace talks and mediation.”

At the same time, China is likely to continue relying on Pakistan to conduct its Afghan policy, and in managing responses to the situation on the ground.

On the other hand, Pakistan is in the middle of redefining its relationship with the Biden Administration, nevertheless at this point in time it seems that Pakistan is most likely to support China, if Washington and Beijing are unable to settle their differences on Afghan affairs.

The blame game and public humiliation used as a tool of foreign policy by the United States against Pakistan is not helping the situation.

China’s and Pakistan’s interests in Afghanistan are not entirely identical but are broadly in sync, however, a growing convergence is expected that can lead to deeper engagement in the future between the two, post-complete American withdrawal. China is convinced that Pakistan has a key role to play in the stabilization of Afghanistan.

While advancing its own interests in Afghanistan, China knows it cannot ignore Pakistan’s influence in Afghanistan and will have to accommodate its interests as well.

The list of challenges China will have to face due to its Afghanistan commitment is long and concerning, from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan’s (TTP) possible alliance with Uyghur and Baloch separatists, the disjointed Afghan peace process, to the seemingly inflexible Pakistan-Afghanistan discord.

The China-India-Pakistan triangle is another major regional fault-line that can impact the prospects for stability in Afghanistan.

Through its OBOR initiative China hopes to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the region as terrorist activities can become an obstacle to the operations of OBOR initiative; a testament to this is the Agreement on the Coordination Mechanism on Counterterrorism by Afghanistan-China-Pakistan-Tajikistan Armed Forces and the Protocol on Counterterrorism Information Coordination Center by Afghanistan-China-Pakistan-Tajikistan Armed Forces.

In addition, China's deepening involvement in Afghanistan is closely tied to the country's economic aspirations.

Afghanistan has a competitive advantage over its neighbors as it lies at the crossroads of Central Asia and South Asia, and its geographically strategic location makes it a possible regional hub for trade and transit.

China aims to link its own markets with South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia through Afghanistan.

Chinese economic and political interests in Afghanistan have grown considerably since it became a major player in the super-power competition.

The security situation in Afghanistan is spiraling out of control and in the light of the current developments Beijing needs to rethink its Afghanistan policy in order to protect its interests in the region.

With the aim of achieving great power status, Beijing maybe pushed to assume a more assertive role in Afghanistan in the coming future.

There are also talks about the possibility of China deploying a peacekeeping force into Afghanistan for coping with the worsening security situation.

China needs to learn a lesson from history and not repeat the mistakes of the US and Soviet Union, in order to avoid stepping into a hellish quagmire.

China can take on a more active political role in Afghanistan to deal with the fallout of US withdrawal; without being completely sucked in. The China-Pakistan convergence may do the magic.

The extended Troika that includes US, Russia, China and Pakistan are actively seeking to develop a regional consensus on Afghan conflict.

The 31st August deadline for the completion of the withdrawal of US forces is fast approaching and the prospects of reduction in violence are diminishing.

The Taliban have captured nine provincial capitals. As per EU official Taliban are now controlling 65% of Afghanistan.

If anything the Taliban have become more aggressive and have leverage to economically strangle the Afghan government.

The only way forward perhaps is strong regional pressure on the Taliban to let go of violence and return to a negotiated {political} solution.

Three regional countries Russia, China and Pakistan have decent relations with the Taliban and could collectively put requisite pressure on them to reduce violence and opt for a political solution. Pakistan cannot and should not be expected to do this alone.

—The author is an Associate Professor of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi.

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The New Quad — Pakistan’s Breakthrough

Diplomacy By Ozer Khalid

The pioneering Quadrilateral diplomatic forum (Quad) promoted by America strategically integrates Pakistan, the US, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan bringing our world closer to long-term peace in a highly volatile Afghanistan.

The New Quad geo-politically swings the pendulum in Pakistan’s favour. It is a unique opportunity for Islamabad to diplomatically and strategically converge foreign policy amongst competing spheres of influence in South and Central Asia. It is a geo-economic breakthrough promising far-reaching diplomatic dividends.

The international community carefully observes the new quadrilateral diplomatic platform dubbed the ‘New Quad’ encompassing Pakistan, the US, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan which rivals the conventional Quadrilateral arrangement between the US, Japan, Australia and India.

The New quadrilateral diplomatic platform strategically synergises with Pakistan’s Vision of Central Asia, it’s multilateral regional foreign policy, the Islamabad Security Dialogue, CPEC and the BRI-New Silk Road.

The distinguishing feature between the conventional Quad with the new Quad is that the latter aspires for geo-economic centred regional connectivity in Eurasia through the Tashkent-Kabul-Peshawar railway network whereas the conventional Quad is a Thucydides trap, keeping checks on China in the Indo-Pacific deploying Cold War era zero-sum geo-strategy.

The New Quad helps Pakistan lure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Net foreign direct investment inflows into Pakistan from 2016-2020 were t \$2.3 billion. Pakistan’s economy rebounds as the global fiscal crunch from Covid-19 subsides and prices stabilize.

Islamabad must now diversify its commercial trading partners to economically self-actualise. Luring US investment incentivising them to headquarter themselves in a country of 220 million citizens is a unique value proposition. The

American and regional organisations are encouraged to pledge funds to Pakistan through Special Economic Trading Zones and Preferential Trade Agreements with favourable terms and concessions. This enhances employment in an ever-growing Frontier Market like Pakistan.

The New Quad calculatedly shields Pakistan from disproportionate economic dependence on Beijing in the future by encouraging both superpowers (China and the US) to constructively engage in mutually beneficial competition in the newly emerging Silk Road Economic Belt. A Belt integrating South and Central Asian markets with Ground Lines of Communication (GLOCs) producing a win-win for Pakistan, its citizens and consumers.

As EU and US organisations are magnetically drawn towards Pakistan with the pandemic subsiding, foreign troops in Afghanistan exiting and economic infrastructure projects being financed the likelier it is that America will be less prone to endorse India's subversive weaponisation of FATF, spoiler status in Afghanistan and along CPEC. This strengthens Pakistan's Ease of Doing Business reintegrating it into our global economy.

Obviously America will carry on nurturing preferential rapport with India, however this will neutralise if more US businesses invest in Pakistan as their headquarters gaining unrivalled access to Central Asia via the New Silk Road Economic Belt, the BRI.

The New Silk Road Economic Belt can fully connect the US via Pakistan through to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Markets worth \$100 billion with lucrative power and energy sectors are home to 72 million consumers. The US capitalising trade with the CARs boosts its own revenues. This New Quad can eventually also evolve into a security and intelligence bloc.

The geo-economic thrust of regional connectivity lies in Pakistan's positively influencing America through the New Quad's role in securing the Tashkent-Kabul-Peshawar railway network inducing American economic participation in the CARs simultaneously appeasing Beijing and Moscow.

Washington now has a unique opportunity to reap competitive advantage of the New Quad and its South-Central Asian economic trade corridor strategically

coursing through Pakistan. So the US will be less likely to overtly turn a blind eye to India's Hybrid Warfare against CPEC if US commercial imperatives are negatively impacted by such covert operations.

Washington won't officially endorse CPEC due to realpolitik as BRI offers Beijing direct access to the Indian Ocean Region and sea lines of communication (SLOC). Though Washington can get used to CPEC and fully benefit from Pakistan's Chinese-constructed infrastructure to facilitate its own financial self-interests in the CARs.

The New Quad strategically assists Pakistan to assert a broader balance with America's South Asian strategy reconciling American and Chinese interests. Islamabad must constructively incentivise Washington to restore balance in its South Asian strategy given Washington's India pivot. The safest way to accomplish this is via geo-economics. The birth of the New Quad highlights an ongoing failure for Washington and New Delhi to reach a trade deal despite years of negotiations.

Biden's administration has dealt directly with Pakistan and must finally realise that it's easier to do business with Islamabad than with India. In India financial uncertainty looms owing to farmer's protests, an alarming surge of Covid cases, restrictive forex controls and bureaucratic lethargy. Such realities can steer a commercial rebalancing act in America's South and Central Asian foreign policy.

The involvement of Pakistan and the US in the New Quad helps the former balance great superpowers in light of the New Cold War between Washington and Beijing. Islamabad balances relations by diplomatic multi-tasking: intelligently preserving its rapport with Beijing (through CPEC); and brokering new energy and defence agreements with Moscow like the Tashkent-Kabul-Peshawar railway network and the Russia-Pakistan Pakstream North-South gas pipeline. Pakistan thereby influences Washington via geo-economics to reconsider a regional foreign policy reset.

The New Quad therefore secures a mutual strategic interest convergence of the US, Russia and China. Such positive sentiments are echoed by China's Ambassadors to Pakistan and Russia — Nong Rong and Zhang Hanhui — both emphasising Washington's responsibility for Afghanistan's stability, reflecting the statements of President Putin's Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov.

Pakistan through the New Quad is perfectly poised to reconcile competing interests between Beijing, Washington, Moscow and Kabul.

Such realities facilitate positive contributions by the US in institutionally rebuilding Afghanistan. The New Quad is a good omen for Kabul, a geostrategic nerve-centre bridging South and Central Asia. However, the government in Kabul should conduct less politicking and engage in non-duplicitous diplomacy with Islamabad, especially after recent bilateral setbacks and diplomat recalls. New Delhi, increasingly sidelined in Afghanistan, has nothing to apprehend as long as it relinquishes its zero-sum politics and 'spoiler' status.

Realising the above bolsters Pakistan's strategic leverage over India, reinforces Islamabad's alliances with Beijing and Moscow, reconciles differences between Washington and Beijing, and reasserts stability in a nuclear-powered high-stakes South Asian region.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 10th, 2021.

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan By Yasmeen Aftab Ali

Richard Armitage, former secretary of state, was bull's eye when in 2002, he said that Pakistan was never important to the US in its own right. It was important, he said, because of third parties. This statement comes true yet again in 2021. The US wishes Pakistan to keep its borders open for incoming refugees from Afghanistan. Turkey has likewise been asked to accommodate Afghans until 14 months by when they can be resettled in the US. This suggestion has been turned down by not just Pakistan but even

Turkey. Whereas National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf in Washington stated that arrangements need be made to keep the displaced in their own country, Turkey said the US will destabilise the region by moving refugees regionally. They must be moved to other countries outside the region. Turkey, too, is hosting thousands of Afghan refugees, though Pakistan way outnumbers Turkey.

“According to refugee officials, an estimated nearly 200,000 Afghan refugees are living in Turkey, a number that is increasing daily since the United States announced its full withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in early April.” [July 7, 2021: Nilly Kohzad]

Pakistan's repeated insistence on its positive role in Afghanistan and her repeated mantra of being the first casualty in WoT has not led to any revisit of US policy in Afghanistan and neither will it. For the simple reason that the interests of the US, as they stand today in Afghanistan, are different from the interests of the US post 9/11.

Let not Pakistan yet again become a party to be used as a whipping boy.

A certain segment in Pakistan fears the repercussions Pakistan may have to face should it not follow the directions of its master. A friend wrote, “Our economy and security both are largely dependent on the USA. It supports forums like World Bank, IMF, ADB etc. The inflow of US\$ is possible only when it is cleared by US Central Bank.”

To implement the new strategy Pakistan must overcome her fear of certain steps being taken against her. The fact is even with doing US bidding they still may happen. First, all stakeholders are aware that Afghanistan now is a strategic depth area for India. It will continue to be used against Pakistan whether or not Pakistan plays ball. Second, the US interests are different from that of Pakistan so far as Afghanistan is concerned. Pakistan needs to stop explaining herself anymore like an errant schoolboy. This only happens in unequal partnerships. This has to change. Pakistan also must overcome the fear that without being a part of every initiative in Afghanistan some catastrophe is going to befall her.

Once Pakistan's policymakers get these fears out of their psyche, they need to put their strategy for Afghanistan in place. They need to step up on the border fencing coupling it with mining and manning to be effective. Pakistan must return the Afghan refugees to their native land as soon as possible. They are a security hazard also offering easy cover to incursions from another side of the border besides

being an economic burden.

Post 9/11 Pakistan has gone out of her way at the cost of lives, at the cost of the economy and at the cost of the erosion of her social fabric to help the US in Afghanistan without getting even appreciation. The result has been threats and name-calling. Time for Pakistan to let all stakeholders determine upon and put in place whatever strategy they deem fit to put in place. Let not Pakistan yet again become a party to be used as a whipping boy.

In 2007, Pakistan conducted a registration exercise of Afghan refugees within Pakistan. It issued Proof of Registration (POR) cards offering temporary legal stay in Pakistan, freedom of movement and exemption from the application of the Foreigners Act, 1946. Kindly reread. Temporary Legal Stay. These were extended till 2017 and owing to the Afghanistan situation. It was determined further refugees coming from Afghanistan shall come under the umbrella of the refugee status determination procedure conducted by UNHCR.

They do not have permanent residence rights. The U.S needs to understand that countries like Pakistan cannot afford any more economic or political pressure of increased refugees. Not only that the economy will not bear it, but sleepers entering Pakistan in the garb of refugees will also only create further issues for

Pakistan. This programme is aimed to resettle Afghans who have affiliations with America against the Taliban and may be a sitting target for the Taliban to unleash their violence upon them. “The program applies to Afghans who do not qualify for the Special Immigration Visa (SIV) program that covers interpreters and others who worked for the U.S. government, and their families.”

The bottom line is if the US wants to play Godfather let it do so on its turf! Not at the expense of others who are or have been “unequal partners” in the WoT. The US needs to at some point face up to the mess it created in the region. Stop asking Pakistan to lick it up!

The writer is a lawyer, academic, political analyst and a published author. She can be contacted at yasmeenali62@gmail.com and tweets at [@yasmeen_9](https://twitter.com/yasmeen_9).

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Electoral Reforms: A National Interest By

Muhammad Ali Alvi

IT was only in 2013 when a democratically elected Government completed its five years term.

However, it was not before a troublesome period of 66 years. Although a government completed its tenure in 2007 but according to critics and analysts, it is not considered a democratic period.

Now after all those years of distress and struggle one can say that the Democracy of Pakistan is on the right track and it has started to hold its reins.

From here the first focus should be on the free and fair electoral process so that a government with a public mandate can work for the betterment of people and start the nation-building process.

Despite the vision of the founding fathers, democracy could not prevail in Pakistan from the beginning and it was only in 1970 when the first general election were held in Pakistan 23 years after independence.

According to analysts, the 1970 election is the only free and fair elections in Pakistan till now.

This shows the poor condition of the electoral process in Pakistan. And, now the election rigging is performed in a systematic and organised way by political parties and rich elites.

It can consist of three phases; pre-poll rigging, poll-day rigging and post-poll rigging. The worst and most exploited form is poll-day rigging.

The traditional paper ballot system is exploited by ones with wealth and power. On the other hand, the majority of the population is illiterate and unable to cast a vote properly. Hence, scores of votes are rejected.

In the current paper ballot system, the validity of a vote is at the discretion of a presiding officer. However, this discretion can help or affect a candidate, hence creating a loophole in the process.

Not only illiterate people are affected by the current voting method but sometimes literate and skilful people face difficulty in casting their vote properly. The case study of Senate elections gives us a glimpse of the problem faced by the voters in a traditional paper ballot system.

For example, in both cases, rejected votes played a decisive role in defining the winning candidate.

Then how can one expect that illiterate and marginalised sections of society can vote properly? There were 35 constituencies in 2013 and 30 in the 2018 general election where the winning margin was less than the rejected votes.

Above all, after every election, the opposition blames the Government for election rigging. And, the whole emphasis of the government is on proving its credibility. It has been going on for years and it can only be ended with electoral reforms.

Electoral reforms, as a whole, is a lengthy process it includes but is not limited to the right of vote to Overseas Pakistani, use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), free and fair census and other aspects. But to start with, the change in the voting method by the use of EVMs can work well for Pakistan.

The experiment of EVMs has gone well with the other countries and it should be introduced in Pakistan as well. The use of EVMs can bring people's faith back in the electoral process. It will also help in dealing with the problem of rejected votes.

If Pakistan is to transform into a truly democratic state it has to let every section of society participate. This can only happen with the introduction of reforms in the Electoral Process.

Instead of blaming each other, the Government and Opposition have to sit together for a greater cause for the stability of democracy in Pakistan.

Years after years have passed, several promises have been made but no solid action has been taken so far. However, the incumbent Government has promised of electoral reforms.

In their bid, they have presented the Election (Amendment) Act 2020 with 62 amendments in Election Act (2017) in the National Assembly which has been passed unilaterally and is now in the Senate for final approval.

But, the Election Commission of Pakistan has shown concerns over the proposed bill. The extent of concern shown by the ECP is grave as it is not in favour of 28 of 62 proposed amendments in the bill and has termed some clauses of the bill unconstitutional.

Here, it is important to mention that along with the Government and the Opposition, all sections of society must play their role in electoral reforms.

Only time will tell what will be the outcome of these efforts but for Pakistan, the use of technology in the voting process is the need of the hour.

One can hope that with peaceful democratic transitions and electoral reforms a truly democratic culture will prevail in Pakistan and the essence of true democracy will be seen in the future.

—The writer is a contributing columnist, based in Islamabad.

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Pak-Russia Ties: Prospects and Challenges

By Wali Ejaz Nekokara

Pak-Russia relations are a saga of mistrust. There are three main periods in which a trust deficit was triggered between the two countries. The first period began in the 1960s when Pakistan decided to help the USA against the USSR by providing the former with intelligence and air bases for spying on the latter. The U2 incident marked this period when a Lockheed U-2 Spy-plane was shot down in Soviet airspace in May 1960. Secondly, Pakistan's bid to facilitate a rapprochement between the USA and China in the 1970s can be identified as the second period. In reaction to Pakistan's policy, Russia signed a mutual-friendship treaty with India in August 1971. This treaty paved the way for assistance to India in the 1971 war. Thirdly, the Pak-US alliance to counter the USSR following its invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s further added to distrust.

Moreover, the USA's imprudent policy to turn back on Pakistan after the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan and imposition of sanctions under the Pressler and Glenn amendments, left Islamabad bewildered. USA's ebbing and flowing relations spurred Pakistan to reconsider its policy towards Russia. Then, official visits to Moscow showed some semblance of proximity. Ayub Khan in 1965 and Nawaz Sharif in 1999 visited Russia but in June 2002 the Musharraf-Putin meeting at the Multinational Security Summit in Almaty made the institutionalization of relations possible.

Pakistan and Russia have made considerable efforts to thaw the relations, especially in the last 15 years. A recent visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has proved to be a positive omen in terms of bridging the gap. He said that "we have provided 50,000 doses of anti-Covid vaccine to Pakistan and intend to provide 150,000 more". He further mentioned that "both countries were considering a new protocol on the 'stream gas pipeline project'". He hinted at Russia's desire to help Pakistan militarily. He emphasized the significance of trade ties between both nations. He also stressed the need of increasing the Pak-Russia Trade by 46pc.

Conclusively, Pakistan needs to form economic relations with Russia because, in this age, only economic ties have the power to create mutual understanding and amicable relations among nations. In simple words, a state's relevance is determined by the economy. Secondly, Pakistan should form relations with Russia based on realpolitik without expecting Russia's support to solve the Kashmir issue. Conclusively, Pakistan needs to form economic relations with Russia because, in this age, only economic ties have the power to create mutual understanding and amicable relations among nations. In simple words, a state's relevance is determined by the economy. Secondly, Pakistan should form relations with Russia based on realpolitik without expecting Russia's support to solve the Kashmir issue.

Along with economic relations, Russia can help Pakistan in various manners. Firstly, When US President Donald Trump restricted Pakistan from participating in the International Military Education Program; Russia took advantage of the situation and inked a 'Security Training Agreement'. That agreement helped Pakistani military officers to get training in Russian institutions. Pakistan's joining Russian military institutions can prove to be an appropriate alternative to the USA and it will have an impact on the strategic thinking of the Pakistani military because institutions shape the way of thinking. Secondly, Pakistan can learn the strategies to counter hybrid warfare from Russia because Russia has a good understanding of hybrid warfare. Russian General Valery Gerasimov is known as an architect of hybrid warfare in Moscow. Thirdly, Russia can help Pakistan in enhancing its energy output. Islamabad wants to establish business ties to acquire nuclear fuel, nuclear reactors, and technical assistance from industrial nuclear suppliers. Pakistan wants Nuclear Supplier Group Membership to achieve nuclear legitimacy in the world. Pakistan emphasizes a criterion-based approach to membership but France, the UK and Russia favored the merit-based approach. Russian Embassy officials in Islamabad hinted at a policy shift from backing the merit-based to backing the criteria-based approach. Russia's support to Pakistan in achieving NSG membership will be a great step towards amicable ties.

Palpably, Russia's attempt to gain ground in South Asia and to get proximity to Pakistan is not free of challenges. According to some analysts, Russia can have three main challenges in South Asia. First is India's changing equation with Russia and her dependence on the USA. Second is Russia's challenge to walk a

tightrope for keeping the balance between Pakistan and India. Indeed, Moscow cannot afford to abandon India despite the latter's changing preferences because of the size of the market it provides. On the other hand, mistreating Pakistan will be tantamount to damaging its newfound interests.

The third is the sprawling influence of China in South-East Asia, its proximity to Pakistan, and the BRI project. All of which are attracting Russia. As Pakistan is deemed as a major player in the BRI project, it has unavoidable importance. Russia is interested in becoming a part of CPEC.

Furthermore, there are some areas of divergence which have the potential to mar the establishing of relations. First, Russia is not comfortable with Pakistan's support to jihadists in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Pakistan's commitment to eradicate violent forces will serve Pakistan's as well as Russia's interests.

Secondly, Russia does not see India as a trouble maker in Afghanistan that will not be in favor of Pakistan's interests. Thirdly, there are remote possibilities of Russia's support to Kashmir's cause as it can be a blow to his relations with India. Fourthly, Russia will not downgrade its defense and trade ties with India. It is also contrary to Pakistan's objectives.

Last but not least is the uncertain relationship between Pakistan and the USA. History shows that when the USA left Pakistan the latter resorted to Russia. It leaves a negative impression on Russia because it suggests Russia is less important to Pakistan than the USA.

Conclusively, Pakistan needs to form economic relations with Russia because, in this age, only economic ties have the power to create mutual understanding and amicable relations among nations. In simple words, a state's relevance is determined by the economy. Secondly, Pakistan should form relations with Russia based on realpolitik without expecting Russia's support to solve the Kashmir issue. Without over-expecting and with a deep understanding of mutual interests, Pakistan should try to bridge the gap. Thirdly, Pakistan should not overlook Russia as it is a major player in the region. Here Pakistan needs bilateralism to keep a balance between Russia and the USA.

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ECONOMY

Economy Uplift | Editorial

ON the face of it at least, the new short- to long-term plan announced by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin for the development of 14 key sectors of the economy including agriculture, construction, tourism, IT and micro and small enterprises for putting the country back on the road to inclusive and sustainable economic growth lacks what it boasts: a planning-based strategy.

From the details published in newspapers, the plan seems to be a collection of certain targets that the government wants to achieve in the next two to three years ahead of the next general elections. How? Although Mr Tarin claimed that the achievement of these targets would 'set the stage for long-term inclusive, sustainable growth and rid us of the boom-and-bust cycles', he did not elaborate on the road map he has developed for realising the goal.

For starters, the strategy seeks to boost economic growth to 6pc in the medium term without putting pressure on the country's balance of payments, and by keeping inflationary expectations subdued. But it does not elaborate on how it plans to do so. The current account deficit is already billed to breach the central bank's estimates of 2pc-3pc of GDP this year as imports are set to surge further to support the nascent economic recovery of recent months. Resultantly, the currency is already under pressure with the rupee weakening from 152.28 a dollar in May to around 166, fuelling inflation. Then, it seeks to double the current investment-to-GDP ratio to 24pc. That is a tall order. Although negative interest rates and the availability of cheap long-term financing has encouraged investors to invest in capacity expansion and new projects in the last one year, the trend may reverse as soon as the State Bank ditches its accommodating monetary policy stance to focus on price stabilisation. Likewise, the plans to increase tax collection by 1.5pc-2pc of GDP a year and boost annual exports to \$40bn-50bn — even though doable — appear ambitious at this time.

Pakistan is at a critical juncture. The economic slowdown induced by IMF-mandated stabilisation policies and Covid-19 have left deep scars on the economy and the people. There is no doubt that the economy is turning the corner. Yet the recovery is fragile at best, with uncertainties — such as the potential insecurity spillover from Afghanistan, currency volatility, inflation, current account deficit and uncertain ties with the IMF – putting pressure on the business environment. It would be silly to expect piecemeal policies to tackle the issues and uncertainties facing the economy and people today. Instead of coming up with half-cooked strategies every few years, Pakistan's political leadership and policymakers should focus on a comprehensive economic framework with short-to long-term targets for addressing structural problems in the economy as well as formulate policies to build the resilience of private businesses to enable them survive without the government's assistance.

Published in Dawn, August 30th, 2021

Strategic Significance of Pakistan's Gwadar Port in the Region By MD Pathik Hasan

Pakistan's Gwadar port under the China's project 'Belt and Road Initiative' is going to be one of the top trade hubs in the region, linking the West Asian nations to (Commonwealth of Independent States) CIS countries. 'China Pakistan Economic Corridor' (CPEC) has been formed around Gwadar.

Although the seaport of Gwadar is in Balochistan in Pakistan, its root is deep in the whole region. A deep link is going to be formed between Asia and Europe centred on Gwadar Port and CPEC.

The huge investment of 60 billion US dollars has taken Pakistan-China relations to the next level. Not only that, CPEC will open a new horizon in Pakistan's trade and commerce.

CPEC under 'Belt and Road initiative, China's multifaceted project will not only connect China's landlocked province of Xinjiang, but also take Pakistan's trade to a new level by taking advantage of Pakistan's unused coastline.

This multifaceted project includes the construction of the deep seaport of Gwadar in southern Pakistan and the construction of a wide road from Karachi to Kashgar in China.

Karachi, a busy commercial city of more than two core people, has two huge seaports through which all trade and commerce of Pakistan is conducted. Karachi is the main centre of trade and commerce in Pakistan.

The seaport of Gwadar in Pakistan's Balochistan and the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC) built around it will boost up Pakistan's economic prosperity. This corridor will significantly reduce the distance between Pakistan and China.

The multi-purpose corridor project will establish Pakistan's connectivity with the landlocked province of Xinjiang. Besides, Pakistan's unused coastline will be utilized.

The CPEC will connect China's Kashgar with Pakistan's commercial cities of Karachi and Gwadar. Karachi, the world's fifth largest city, already has two ports that cater to all trade and commerce needs in Pakistan.

Balochistan, the largest province by area and rich in mineral resources, is a gem of Pakistan.

There are immense treasures hidden under the soil of the Rocky Mountains of Balochistan. China's huge investment in Gwadar is like a pearl for Balochistan.

The seaport of Gwadar, located on the Strait of Hormuz in the United Arab Emirates, which connects the Caspian region, is a gateway to the development of the Caspian region. The port of Gwadar will serve as a hub for future trade and commerce.

In case of any threat to the port of Malacca, the port of Gwadar will be the only option for China to enter the Indian Ocean and the Middle East and West Asia.

About 60% of China's energy demand comes from the Persian Gulf. Gwadar will play a huge role in China's energy imports. In 1971, India attacked the port of Karachi twice.

The port of Gwadar will act as radar for Indian deep operations in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden under the Indian Navy.

Surrounded by Central Asia, South Asia, Iran and Afghanistan, the Caspian Sea, known as the energy-rich 'Lake', has always been known as an area of peace due to its economic and geographical importance. China has already announced its intention to invest in the Chabahar rail link project.

China's contribution to the development of Chabahar port would be a great opportunity for this port to further establish itself as a trade hub in the region since China is currently one of the world's most advanced countries in terms of maritime and port industries.

Gwadar is located at a very important place at the junction of the Energy Corridor in the Gulf States and Central Asia. Gwadar plays an important role in fuel transportation in landlocked Central Asia and the western provinces of China.

In addition to its economic and business importance, the port of Gwadar is expected to create at least two million jobs in Pakistan, analysts say.

The first part of this huge port was completed in 2006. PSA International Company of Singapore operated the first part of the port from 2007 to 2012.

In 2013, the port's operations were transferred to China Overseas Holding Company, a Chinese state-owned company. The second phase of work is underway. The second phase of the plan includes work to increase the scope and efficiency of the service.

The port of Gwadar has emerged as one of the largest and most important ports in the world under the CPEC.

Located on the southern coast of Pakistan, the seaport of Gwadar is surrounded by the Harjum Strait, the important region of South Asia, the oil-rich Arab Peninsula, and the abundant natural resources of Central Asia.

The key to the larger international political game has now shifted from Central Asia to the West.

Moreover, the hidden resources in Balochistan, gas, coal, gold, as well as Pakistan's steel-hard friendship with China (Iron Brother) will be a source of frustration for India and Israel, as the agenda of these two anti-Muslim states destabilizes Pakistan.

Balochistan is a paradise for Pakistan not only for its breathtaking natural beauty but also for its vast natural resources. Balochistan has a lot of resources to enrich not only Gwadar but also Pakistan.

The discovery of gold in Chaghai will soon make Pakistan one of the richest countries in the world. Pakistan has been using Sui gas for the last 60 years. The tourist attractions from Jiraat to Jhal and from Bolan to Hingal are special.

These sights will attract tourists from all over the world. 600 million tons of iron and 500 million tons of copper were found in Chaghai alone. Concerned quarters are of the opinion that when the Gwadar port is fully operationalized, it will provide employment to millions of people.

According to Pakistani media, the central government of Pakistan has adopted a new plan for the development of Balochistan.

According to the new plan, once the port development of Gwadar, including Balochistan, is completed, Gwadar will be the most developed and beautiful city in Pakistan, which will probably outperform Singapore.

Due to Pakistan's geographical location and geographical strategy, it would take Pakistan to a higher level of geo-economic development.

Gwadar port makes Pakistan a more strategically significant state in the region. It is the clear-cut example of 'Shifting of Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards geo-economic from geo-strategy.

However, States of Asia, Europe and Africa will benefit from this Chinese project. It is going to be a communication link between Asia and Europe.

Published in Pakobsever

IMF Allocation | Editorial

With the pandemic now well into its second year, the world's economies have started to adjust to the coronavirus and are now rebuilding. Like always, it is the developed countries that bounce back the easiest, and the developing countries who are hit the hardest and may find it impossible to recover the losses delivered by the pandemic. While rich countries were able to reinvigorate their economy and counter unemployment by injecting more than \$11.5 trillion as stimulus, developing countries have been pleading to get their loan payments deferred from international organisations.

The US is estimated to show its strongest growth since 1984, with their government considering removing mask mandates; contrastingly, developing countries are plagued with problems of vaccine shortages.

This severe discrepancy has been pointed out to the IMF, with Pakistan especially making the case for debt relief for developing countries in the time of the pandemic which had savaged economies. The IMF has seemed to respond now with the largest allocation in history—an allocation of \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDR) became effective on Monday. The total amount of \$650 billion will be distributed among member states in accordance with their quota of the SDR. The amount distributed to Pakistan can amount even to \$2.7 billion.

This is a large sum that will provide some breathing space to the economy. The government has not yet announced what it will use the funding for. There are options—IMF members can exchange SDRs for freely usable currencies among themselves and with prescribed holders. The government can use the funding to shore up foreign reserves or allow for fiscal manoeuvring—Pakistani currency depreciated to over a 10-month low this month. Another option the government has is to invest the funding into government spending projects in a smart way that is bound to see returns for public benefit. What the government must not do however, is waste the money on debt servicing—this will only propel a vicious debt cycle.

Published in Thenation on 25th August 2021

Inflation—A Growing Cause of Concern By

Dr Kamal Monnoo

Imran Khan's approval ratings are finally beginning to become somewhat positive since the economy started to perform, inspiring hope among his supporters and supportive media that he can fulfil at least some of his campaign promises. With extremely thin majorities almost in all houses and a vocal opposition crying foul on everything from election fraud to corruption to accountability to a flawed foreign policy, Khan has to be sure that his party stalwarts remain committed and continue to follow his lead.

The term "stalwarts" in the current political context designates the type of elected officials who either won elections as independents but went on to swear allegiance to his party or a coterie of electables who jumped ship seeing that his could be forming the next government; their mindsets though could still be very different from the original ideology of the party possessing an inherent political trait that tends to quickly disown policies or a particular policy direction, the moment they feel that the ongoing governance developments, especially relating to the common man or in particular their own vote bank are headed in a way that can see their chances diminish the next time they go back to their voters in respective constituencies; so naturally runaway inflation and anything that reeks of excessive pain or policies that consistently create pressure to increase taxes get to be a cause of concern.

But that is not all. The real campaign comes from a group of loosely aligned opposition parties that vociferously project that the economy is in fact headed in the wrong direction on the grounds of a lurking danger of inflation. So, no surprises when they recently announced to restart their anti-government campaign, albeit this time on the grounds of the punishing inflation that is making the life of an average man rather difficult—something they feel could be more relevant and closer to the heart of the Pakistani people, thereby unleashing a movement that finds more traction with the public in general. They maintain that the combined effect of unrealised COVID-19 relief (both internally and externally), an ambitious real estate amnesty that pumps black money into the system and a series of monetary blunders accompanied by unwarranted and poorly thought through taxation drives will stretch the economy to the point of

triggering uncontrollable inflation (if not already so), the bugbear of nearly all professional politicians. Ironically, a call or no call, the brewing local situation starkly resembles the sort of resistance that Biden seems to be facing in his brief time as President of the US.

Over there the original allies, the likes of Barack Obama, Larry Summers and even the Clintons to some extent are talking about an urgent need to control rising inflation in the US; their argument being that while Biden may want to be remembered as the new Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the real inspiration to change his current course of economic initiatives should actually be coming from learning through the mistakes of his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. Imran Khan in contrast, has been in power for much longer than Biden and naturally with the next elections in Pakistan looming around the horizon perhaps needs to be more cognisant of the ills of an ever-prevailing high inflation and therefore needs to act with more urgency. Just to reiterate, Hoover was the president on whose watch the 1929 stock market crash occurred. Historians have identified excessive leveraging and the inflation of asset prices as the main contributing factor to the 1929 crash that marked the end of the “roaring ‘20s”. Proud of their role in ending Europe’s war, Americans saw the post war era as an open invitation to indulgence. While unchecked debt contributed to artificial growth, terming the 20s as the roaring decade, the stock market quickly reached for the ceiling, before crumbling to the floor in 1929.

So what is happening vis-a-vis inflation, primarily in the context of Pakistan? The analysis is that a significant portion of this inflation is being driven from external forces or factors, and simply being sucked into the Pakistani economy through poorly selected imports compounded by currency devaluations. As the Western economic managers, in order to avoid their mistakes that led to depression, craft new preferred ways to fend off economic slowdowns in their respective economies, their latest trick seems to be (perfected after 2008) quantitative easing (QE), a fancy name for printing of money gifted to banks and corporations skilled at keeping it out of the reach of ordinary people. Quantitative easing magically inflates asset prices with little effect on the consumer index, a phenomenon all politicians gloried in for two reasons. First, it avoided consumer blowback against price-tag inflation (that always puts voters in a bad mood, threatening prospects of reelection) and second, QE meant that there would be unlimited cash available to corporate donors to finance their political campaigns. However, the on-going COVID-19 crisis—now exacerbated due to the new Delta

variant of the coronavirus—suddenly threatens the optimists' vision of a prosperous post-pandemic world and makes things much more complicated. The question that arises for Pakistan is that is it sustainable to fund rising expensive imports while banking on printing money to solve unsolvable problems?

The answer is no, because the current policies provoke inflation and even run the risk of entering the stage of runaway inflation to the likes of the one currently being witnessed in some South American countries. Also, the writer firmly believes that any notions on the current inflation in Pakistan being a transitory problem are most likely misplaced. The flip side of course being that whereas one debate centres around the effects of inflation on the consumer index, the other could very possibly be of a market meltdown, possibly a new depression/slowdown in which the true villain turns out to be the present obsession with shoring up asset and commodity prices. A recent study documented by Yale Insights points to a historical constant that exists despite radically changing market and regulatory conditions and this is the argument that downward leverage spirals are believed to be one of the main triggers of the 1929 US stock market crash and also leverage-induced fire sales were a contributing factor even to the 2007-2008 financial crisis in the US. Meaning, measures taken with the intent of avoiding a depression may paradoxically be responsible for leading to that feared depression. The link between the two may be more direct than most people recognise. Essentially, in today's times with COVID-19 still creating havoc and climate change showing more and more visibly aggravating effects, governments of developing economies are walking a very thin rope. In the sense that it is important for them to be careful that while pushing for growth and job creation at home they are not in any way stoking inflation in their own economies by importing anyone else's flawed discourse on artificially shoring up asset and commodity prices through quantitative easing.

Source: Published in The Nation 20 August 2021

Way Forward for CPEC | Editorial

News that General (r) Asim Bajwa resigned as CPEC Authority chairman as soon as Prime Minister Imran Khan appointed Khalid Mansoor as his special assistant on everything related to the Corridor didn't really catch anybody by surprise; at least not anybody associated with CPEC. Word in Islamabad was that both the Chinese and the planning ministry, which handles CPEC, were not exactly very happy with the way he was handling the project. Things had, in fact, been going sideways since his family business empire became the subject of much controversy in the local press and also since he decided to step down as special advisor to prime minister on information and broadcasting.

CPEC is now moving beyond the initial phase of setting up the necessary infrastructure in Pakistan for such an extensive venture and into the second stage which, according to Planning Minister Asad Umar, will 'focus on industrial cooperation'. And the PM office very rightly believed that it needed someone with more entrepreneurial skills to deal with the Chinese at this fragile time. Reports in the international media suggest that Beijing is pretty unhappy with Islamabad at the moment because the speed of the Corridor has slowed down somewhat. If that is true then we will not only have to make up for the time already lost but also work much faster in the future because of the nature of the negotiations to come.

Nobody needs any reminding that CPEC is truly a godsend for Pakistan. Without it we would never have been able to erect the kind of infrastructure that we are in the process of doing right now. And with it will come the kind of economic and financial bonanza that can really turn our fortunes around. The Chinese idea of resurrecting the ancient silk route in the modern setting can change everything about this region; and CPEC is a small but very important part of the wider Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pakistan must make sure that it is ahead of the curve on all important developments and milestones when it comes to CPEC. Anything less would amount to letting a very precious opportunity go begging.

Economic Achievements By M Zahid Rifat

NATIONAL economy had been facing volatile pattern of growth over the years, with regular boom and bust cycles facing challenges in achieving long-term and inclusive growth.

Unsustainable economic growth was caused by over-due but not addressed long-standing structural issues for instance, loss-making State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), weak external position due to insufficient export capacity and low Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), under-reformed energy sector, low savings and investment.

In the backdrop of these challenges, the incumbent federal government has focused on an economic vision of securing sustainable economic growth by improving efficiency, reducing cost of doing business, improving regulatory environment, enhancing productivity and increasing investment.

Even before the pandemic of COVID-19 had hit the national economy, the incumbent government had started implementing decisive and far-reaching reforms in every sector of the economy.

The reforms started to address the economic imbalances and laid the foundation for improved economic performance in terms of strengthened fiscal and external accounts, exchange rate stability and improved investors' confidence.

Moreover, inflation started to stabilize and market confidence greatly recovered and appreciably improved.

Quite obviously, these reforms had paved the way for long-term growth and resultantly lead towards ending the unsustainable growth pattern that had plagued the national economy somehow for years together in the past.

The FY2021 began in the midst of the most severe global health crisis experienced by humanity in modern history.

Pakistan's economy, like rest of the world, struggled to combat the economic consequences of COVID-19 shock through prompt measures for supporting the economy and equally importantly saving the lives and livelihoods.

Besides taking timely virus containment measures, the federal government also implemented a comprehensive set of measures including the largest ever economic stimulus package of Rs 1240 billion, a construction package, an expansion of the social safety net to protect the vulnerable segments of the society and supportive monetary policy stance along with targeted financial initiatives.

Quite obviously and expectedly, these measures helped the national economy in lessening the negative impact of the pandemic.

In contrast to other world economies, Pakistan started witnessing recovery during the first half of FY2021 on the back of continued domestic economic activity due to above-mentioned measures along with a smart lockdown policy.

Needless to mention here that during the last three years, the incumbent PTI federal government has faced numerous economic challenges which were aggravated by the sudden and surprise invasion of COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the federal government has quite successfully and appreciably progressed from recovery and stabilization to sustainable growth of the national economy.

While approving the estimates of its third budget for FY 2021-22, the federal government considered it imperative to control the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic, manage twin deficits, recover and stabilize the national economy and provide relief to the vulnerable segments of the society.

According to information gathered from official quarters concerned, facts and figures for entire financial year 2020-21 were not immediately available.

However, keeping in view the above-mentioned objectives, the achievements of the federal government in economic and other sectors for the first ten months ie July 2020-April 2021 are briefly given below for information of the readers at

large, please: Pakistan's economy witnessed a V-shaped recovery after contracting by 0.47 per cent in FY 2020-21.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate for FY2021 was 3.94 % against the targeted growth of 2.1 % as a result of policy initiatives undertaken by the federal government during the period under report. The nominal GDP for FY2021 increased from Rs 45567 billion to Rs 47709 billion.

The Economic Stimulus of Rs 1.24 trillion announced in March 2020 has since been extended for the FY2021 and an amount of Rs 155 billion already released to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of pandemic of COVID-19.

The Current Account balance during the period under report posted a surplus of \$ 0.8 billion (0.3 % of GDP) against a deficit of \$ 4.7 billion (-2.1 of GDP) last year. Country's exports increased by 6.5 % to \$ 21.0 billion against \$ 19.7 billion last year. Home Remittances from Overseas Pakistanis grew significantly by as much as 29.0 % to \$ 24.2 billion surpassing the target of \$ 21.5 billion as compared to \$ 18.8 billion during the corresponding period last year.

Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) posted a growth of 8.99 per cent during the period under report against a negative growth of 5.10 % for last year. The inflation was down 8.6 % against 11 % during the same period last year.

Tax collection by Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) grew by 14.4 % to Rs 3780 billion during the period under report against Rs 3303 billion last year.

Fiscal consolidation helped in containing the fiscal deficit to 4.2 % of GDP against 5.3 % of GDP last year. Private sector borrowed Rs 454.5 billion during the period under report as compared to Rs 318.5 billion during the same period last year showing growth of as much as 43 %. Pakistan entered the international capital market after a gap of three years by successfully raising US \$ 2.5 billion.

Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme initiative was recognized by the World Bank as amongst the top four social protection interventions in the world in terms of numbers of people covered.

Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) resumed the \$ 6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and completed second to fifth review under the programme.

It was duly appreciated by the IMF that the policies of the Pakistan Government were crucial in supporting the national economy and saving lives and livelihoods of the people in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inflow of foreign exchange through the Roshan Digital Account (RDA) crossed the \$ 1 billion mark in a short span of time after the scheme was launched.

Moody's rating agency upgraded Pakistan's outlook to "Stable" from "Under Review For Downgrade" in August 2020 and Fitch affirmed Pakistan's stable outlook.

—The writer is Lahore-based Freelance Journalist, Columnist and retired Deputy Controller (News), Radio Pakistan, Islamabad.

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EDUCATION

Education: Unfulfilled Promises By Zehra Arshad

August marks a month of both celebration and reflection; celebration of our independence and reflection on what we have achieved so far as a nation.

Education has a central value in the development of any country as every aspect of human life is impacted by the overarching role that education plays.

However, in 74 years of its existence, Pakistan has struggled to ascribe the level of significance and priority to education that it deserves in the process of nation building.

Pakistan is a known low-spender on education among regional territories. According to the budget data made public by finance division, Pakistan plans to spend PKR 83.3 billion on education affairs and services in 2020/2021 depicting a slight increase from the revised budget of PKR 81.2 billion from the previous year.

This year's education budget once again falls short of the international commitment of 4% if considered in terms of expenditure as a percentage to GDP.

As per Economic Survey 2021 the government has significantly reduced the actual expenditure on education for the fiscal year 2019-2020 bringing it down to 1.5 against the former value of 2.3 in terms of percentage of GDP.

This is alarming because Pakistan has an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 out of school.

Due to COVID, as per World Bank's recent estimates an additional one million children have dropped out of schools, majority of them being girls.

According to United Nations Development Program, Pakistan is ranked 152 out of 189 countries having not demonstrated any progress in key educational indicators such as literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, and expenditure on education, as compared to the adjoining regional territories.

Another concern is the huge gap between the funds earmarked within the education budget for development and non-development expenditure.

During the current fiscal year, the federal area has the most rationalized division of funds between development and non-development education expenses but even then, 66 percent of the federal education budget is servicing non-development expenses.

This percentage stands at 90 percent for Sindh and 88 percent for both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It is also important to ensure that unspent development funds are not allowed to lapse and are carried forward into the next fiscal year for effective completion of education development initiatives.

Global education summit held in London on July 28-29 gathered the leadership on education, donors and civil society from all around the world in one place to refresh their pledges commitments on increasing financing for quality education for all children.

At the summit, the world leaders made 5-year pledges to support and transform education system in their respective countries.

Pakistan was represented by officials from the Federal, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments.

Provincial and federal ministers made commitments towards increasing the existing expenditure on education as a share of total budget up to 20% of education spending.

Other policy commitments vary from government to government but majority of them address the issues related to infrastructure, gender disparity, out of school children particularly girls and technological integration et al.

Despite various commitments, the progress on implementation of Article 25-A, Sustainable Development Goal four and Ehsaas education component — after 11 years, six years and two years respectively — remains extremely slow.

Hence the major issue is lack of holistic and inclusive interpretation of the existing policy frameworks in general, and effective implementation in particular.

For a motivated, civilized and prosperous nation, we need a strong education system that is accessible to all with an inclusive, transparent and open policy processes backed by sufficient credible data. Pakistan Zindabad

—The writer is a policy analyst and campaigner for education.

Source: Published in pakobserver on 26th August 2021

Education Disruption | Editorial

FOR over a year now, the education sector has been particularly hard hit all across the world due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All learners, from grade scholars to those studying in higher education institutions, have been affected, with education systems in both developing states as well as less-developed nations feeling the effects in varying degrees. And while high-income states have been able to cope to some extent, countries with limited resources such as ours — where the public education system is already in a fragile condition — have faced major challenges in meeting educational goals during the pandemic. As per Unesco, half the world’s students are still affected by partial or full school closures, while “over 100m additional children will fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of the health crisis”. Schools in Pakistan have mostly remained closed during the pandemic, opening for short periods when cases have dipped but closing again when numbers rose. On Monday, the Sindh government announced that schools could reopen on the 30th of this month if they ensured 100pc vaccination of staff, as well as 50pc attendance of students. On the same day, school owners and staffers held protests in various Sindh cities and towns calling for all educational institutions to be reopened.

Balancing the need for educating Pakistan’s children while ensuring their health and that of school staffers is indeed a tough call. While college and university students can cope better with online lessons, younger learners find it more difficult. Also, there are issues of access, as low-income households cannot afford reliable high-speed internet and tablets, smartphones etc to enable online learning. Therefore, educational authorities across Pakistan must ensure that all school staff have been vaccinated so that school can reopen with strict SOPs in place. Meanwhile, the pandemic also offers an opportunity to rethink the education system in Pakistan. With the help of technology and greater access, education can be brought to more children, specifically those millions that remain out of classrooms.

Published in Dawn, August 25th, 2021

One Nation One Curriculum By Attiya Munawer

A uniform curriculum is being implemented in Pakistan. After the implementation of this uniform curriculum, it will be taught in all educational institutions and seminaries of the country including Punjab province. In the first phase, the uniform curriculum has been implemented at the primary level. The books of Punjab Curriculum and Text Book Board will be studied in all private and public schools, and seminaries, across Punjab. The decision of the provincial government to have a uniform curriculum has been welcomed by some quarters, while some constituencies still have many reservations.

There is no doubt that the need for a uniform curriculum has been felt across the country for a long time and voices have been raised in various quarters in this regard, but the previous governments did not pay any attention to this important issue. Thus, this important issue has been constantly ignored.

Prime Minister Imran Khan had expressed his desire to implement a uniform curriculum in the country as soon as he came to power, but the journey from setting a uniform curriculum to implementation was not so easy. There were many difficulties along the way and the covid-19 pandemic made it more difficult to implement a uniform curriculum, while private educational institutions and publishers have also expressed concerns over the implementation in such a short time. Due to various reasons and factors the implementation of uniform curriculum has been stalled, but it has not been allowed to be ignored. After three years of continuous struggle, the government, in consultation with educationists, the heads of public and private educational institutions and the publishers, has not only succeeded in allaying their reservations, but is fulfilling the dream of its implementation.

Due to there being a PPP government in Sindh, the federal government may face difficulties. The government will have to join hands with the opposition to make the nation have a single curriculum and it will help create equality at the societal level and enable all to move the country forward by playing their part in national development side by side on an equal footing.

It is gratifying that after the implementation of a uniform curriculum, students belonging to the backward and poor classes will also have equal opportunities to advance, as the education system that was prevalent in the country before, had a clear distinction between English medium and Urdu medium, and only the children of the privileged had the opportunity to advance. On the contrary, if we look at the education system of developed countries, there are equal opportunities for ordinary citizens to move forward, while in other backward countries like Pakistan there is a perception that some people are born to rule and lead, so they are also given better opportunities for higher education, so that they can rule the common people in a better way.

When the Prime Minister stood up against this thinking, he faced stiff resistance and the work that should have been done three years ago is now being done after great difficulties. The mafias that have been creating difficulties in the implementation of uniform curriculum will continue to create obstacles in the future. However, only the consistency and prudence of the government can thwart the mafia. Therefore, instead of being blackmailed by the mafia under the guise of reservations, the government should ensure the implementation of a uniform education system across the country, which will enable the elimination of class and linguistic divisions from the country to a large extent.

The introduction of a uniform curriculum by the PTI government is commendable, but will it really prove to be a better curriculum? It is too early to say at this point, as private educational institutions say they were previously teaching the world's best curriculum, while the curriculum being offered to them by the government lags far behind the first curriculum in terms of quality, but the biggest advantage of a uniform curriculum is that the quality of education in public educational institutions will be better and easier for parents who cannot afford to send their children to private educational institutions. Private educational institutions used to show superiority because of their curriculum, which will not be the case after the implementation of uniform curriculum.

Undoubtedly, after the implementation of a uniform curriculum, students will increasingly turn towards public educational institutions, as public educational institutions are a cheap source of education. However, the government will now have to focus on the performance of public educational institutions as well. Implementation of the uniform curriculum in all provinces will not be easy. The new curriculum has been implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa even before the

announcement of the government. It will be implemented easily in Punjab and will also be easy in Balochistan with the help of allies.

However, due to there being a PPP government in Sindh, the federal government may face difficulties. The government will have to join hands with the opposition to make the nation have a single curriculum and it will help create equality at the societal level and enable all to move the country forward by playing their part in national development side by side on an equal footing.

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Uniform Curriculum | Editorial

Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched the first phase of the Single National Curriculum. The SNC scheme aims at bringing about a revolution in education in the country. Its main goals are elimination of the duality in the education system and promoting moral values in line with the teaching of Islam, taking due care of the followers of other religions, and to link it up with the demands of modern times by focusing on the teaching of science and technology subjects and on vocational and technical training. Since the SNC will encourage inculcation of morals, based on religious teachings, it will foster tolerance and help achieve national cohesion.

The inclusion of the vision of the Father of the Nation, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, will further cement national unity. By doing away with the dichotomy caused by the hitherto different curriculums being taught in English-medium and Urdu-medium schools, the SNC is expected to remove disadvantages faced by those receiving instructions in Urdu and the inferiority complex that the dual system induces in the latter category of students. Now English will be taught from Grade-1 in all schools and seminaries. The SNC will help towards attaining social justice.

Sindh, however, has some reservations on the issue. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah insists that the curriculum in Sindh is good enough and there is no need for adopting the unified educational curriculum. The province's concerns need to be addressed.

Meanwhile, in his speech at the launch of the scheme, the PM pointed out a bitter reality that Pakistan is the only country in the world that has different syllabuses for private schools, government schools and seminaries. He said at present there were 800,000 pupils in English-medium schools while 30 million were in public schools and 2.5 million in religious schools. This shows the level of disparity in the education system.

The PM is upbeat about the scheme's success, saying "the process that has been started is irreversible." We have long been imparting an education largely based on Macaulay's model, to produce only an army of pen pushers and clerks, and the need for dumping this has long been felt. The introduction of English in all schools will need the appointment of thousands of teachers thus opening up

vast job opportunities. As for detractors, the government should take only constructive criticism.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 19th, 2021.

Poor State of Education By Sajad Jatoi

The Covid wave, among other things, has affected our education system badly, most of which already was in a state of shambles. Educational institutions have been shut down various times during Covid outbreak. Thus, it is imperative examine the sorry state of education in Pakistan.

Despite the fact that education is indispensable for social development, increased awareness and robust economy, our education system is declining continuously without an end in sight. The 22.8 million out of school children, according to UNICEF, remains second highest in the world. Moreover, the dropout rate in Pakistan remains one of the highest as compared to the developing countries. For instance, according to the report of Finance Division of Pakistan, the average dropout rates in primary from 2007 to 2016 for Pakistan, India and Iran remained 22.7, 9.8, 2.5 percent respectively. The dropout rates of Iran and India are better than that of Pakistan. The statistics reveal a sorry state of our education.

As mentioned earlier, education plays a pivotal role in nation building. Countries that regulate the world order have reached this position due to advancement in their education: science and technology. For example, countries such as America, China and Japan are a lot more powerful than Pakistan. They are far better than Pakistan on many fronts with robust economy, greater per capita income, increased life expectancy, and remarkable positions in Human Development Index.

Japan and China have made rapid progress within the last century. After World War II, Japan had almost been destroyed and its economy was devastated. However, just 75 years after the war, Japan is once again a developed country and ranks at 20th position in Human Development Index with literacy rate at 99 per cent. Moreover, China was overburdened with huge population. It was not in a position to even feed its entire population. Some 30 million Chinese starved to death in the Great Chinese Famine that lasted from 1959 to 1961. Although there were numerous reasons behind this disaster, the point is that China is a well-developed nation now. Both China and Japan have undergone rapid development and economic growth. So what exactly accounts for their breath-taking progress? There can be other reasons in terms of economic policies and

check and balance mechanisms. However, the most apparent reason seems to be their emphasis on education. During the period of development, the education remained at the forefront of their policies. They made sure that people are educated and informed.

There are numerous factors responsible for the downfall of our education.

There are numerous factors responsible for the downfall of our education. For example poverty, poor infrastructure, unskilled teachers, improper supervision, low budget, poor policies, political intervention, boring environment in school and lack of co-curricular activities. These are all major factors that have contributed to the collapse of education.

Of all these, poverty and poor infrastructure are two main factors that have negatively impacted education. Children belonging to poor families, start going to school late, and even in some cases never go to classrooms as per the UNICEF statistics, 5 million children are not enrolled. Some children drop out too soon in order to earn and contribute to their meagre family income. According to a report of World Bank and projection of IMF, poverty in Pakistan has risen from 24.3 per cent in 2015 to about 40 per cent in 2021. This paints a grim picture when it comes to the education attainment of children. Thirty six per cent of the children belong to poor families in Pakistan.

According to a report of UNICEF, about 3.3 million children are trapped in child labour which, among other things, deprives them of education. Education is a basic right guaranteed by the article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan which states that the state would provide free and compulsory education to children in 5-16 age group. Hence, through implementation of policies, reduction in poverty is crucial to the improvement in education.

In addition to poverty, poor infrastructure also hampers access to education. A survey being conducted independently, in 2016, stated that about 48% schools lack toilets. Besides this, a number of schools lack basic necessities such as access to clean drinking water and electricity. As revealed by a report of Reform and Support of the Sindh Education and Literacy Department, in Sindh alone, out of 49130 schools, 30000 run without electricity; 26260 lack facility for drinking water.

The list of the causes for the decline in our education will go on endlessly. Without going into the details of the other contributing factors, let us have a look at the things that can be done for the betterment of it. After a careful analysis, one would conclude that the non-availability of budget is not the sole factor responsible for this grim situation, for education is now a provincial subject after 18th amendment. Provinces are free to allocate as much part of their budget as they want. However, the issues that plague the system are deeply ingrained in our governance system. Largely, bad governance and mismanagement on the part of the authorities have resulted in this. For example, the funds available for the repair and renovation of schools are inappropriate; government teachers evade from delivering their duty without any fear of check and balance.

Bad governance is the mother of all kinds of corruption. It stems from political instability, political interference in the affairs of other departments, lack of accountability and transparency, poor policies and so on.

Unless the bad governance is tackled effectively, there will hardly be any improvement in our education. Only the sound policies and their fair implementation, without making the frequent changes, will help achieve the goals, otherwise, the same vicious cycle would continue endlessly. We need to get away with the bad governance if we want to reap the benefits of education as other developed nations do.

The writer is a freelance columnist.

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Challenges of Post-Online Education By Prof Dr Zia Ahmed

Pakistan is one of the few countries that have fared well during Covid-19 while the pandemic is still raging at multiple points and levels. Along with many new businesses and demands of pandemic times, education has met its jeopardy because of the non-professional attitudes towards the digital online culture and a passing fancy idea about the radical changes that it very forcefully brought all around. Most of the students and teachers have taken this opportunity to upgrade their usage of the 21st century new normal but many have taken as an opportunity to relax and thrive on the state funded facilities and generous and compromising attitude of the evaluators and happily grabbing the degrees by simply paying the requisite finances to the universities.

After the new normal afforded opportunity to the learners to stay at home and feed themselves at their will on the instructions of their teachers in a dull and passive manner without having reached to the critical learning level and without developing in quality and quantity, the most demanded aspect of the students was to take the exams online via open book mode and they did remarkably well in these assignment based examinations and so the evaluation did not prove a proper test of the acquired abilities of the student. So far so good, yet it has created new dimensions among the students that they are yearning for the same free style learning and taking tests. Although a few of them have joined classes in person with some enthusiasm because a longtime separation from the institution created a longing to reunite again, yet the enforcements of rules, regulations, and teachers intensive infusing of information and knowledge is being taken rather boringly. Mostly students lack interest in equipping themselves with the skills they are required to successfully pass through in order to take up the jobs constructively in future. They wish to find the online facility again.

Same is the case with the in-person examinations where students are expecting easy question papers with the excuse that they have not been taught properly and there is no end to all relaxation demands. The authorities, students and the society, as a whole may be able to fulfill the gap by intensive teaching during the at campus sessions, yet the practical side of the learner would remain deficient. The laboratory and library work they are required to undergo, especially the

professional schooling, needs to be intensively incorporated with the online learnings.

The time has come that we shift our teaching methodologies from a traditional lecture method to the doing-with-hands activities in the classroom.

Besides these academic and professional issues, there are psychological issues that are also raising their heads. Students are much bored because of the lack of education activities in the class room and there is a dire need of reviving class room and its liveliness along with the activities in the playgrounds. This must be associated with the extracurricular activities but with a little tinge of curricular orientation so that the classroom knowledge could be strengthened through these as well. This four-dimensional strategy can help a lot to improve not only the psychological dimensions of the classroom but also fill the gap caused because of online learning.

Mark Bracher in his book 'Radical Pedagogy' suggests that the learner needs to establish his identity in the classroom to become a fruitful member of the society. Online education diminished these opportunities. When a learner does not find this opportunity, he begins to find it outside classroom which is mainly in the negative aspects of society and thus make him a not-so-useful a member of the society. So, to tackle with such socio-educational loss, the institutions need to afford plenty of such opportunities to the learners in the shortest possible time, so that their psychological issues may be resolved and they may come up as successful social human beings.

The time has come that we shift our teaching methodologies from a traditional lecture method to the doing-with-hands activities in the classroom as John Dewey would suggest, to a complete progressive attitude to teaching and learning. This would equip our students with necessary practical skills automatically and would provide them a congenial environment to develop psychologically as successful human beings. Along with these two radical philosophies, the teaching should also be decolonized as Paulo Freire would suggest. He has rejected totally the rote learning because this way, according to him, we simply turn the learners into banks. He has suggested a revolutionary strategy of teaching by way of critical thinking which means to let the students raise questions on the traditional acceptable forms and concepts and then learn to find the answers.

The recent history has proved that human life would keep on facing varied type of pandemics which could be capable of causing, if not a total halt, at least, a change over to the regular path of human life more than often even. There may be even more closures and shut downs in future. So, to keep on with healthy learning and teaching, so that future generations may be even better equipped, we need to teach the young people through ways and means which may be useful and practicable and could be workable in all types of circumstances. It would, on the one hand, prepare us to cope better with the ever-repeating circles of pandemics but also, on the other hand, we would be able to keep our learners interested in the classrooms.

The writer is the principal of Emerson University, Multan. He serves as Adjunct Faculty at ISP, Multan; Visiting Faculty at NUML; BsU, Multan and English Dept Chairman Dept, GEC, Multan

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Education Crisis | Editorial

WE are already into the fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Delta variant has been declared by leading medical experts as the fastest, the fittest and the most formidable version of the coronavirus. What's next is yet to be seen. What's known is that far from being over, the pandemic is hitting us harder than before. One of the casualties is education, especially at the primary, middle and tertiary level.

With over 1.5 billion learners impacted worldwide due to school closures in 192 countries, the educational crisis caused by Covid-19 may worsen as the Delta variant spreads. The matter poses a greater challenge to low-income countries such as Pakistan, where, according to Unesco, 22.8 million children, aged five to 16 years, do not attend school. The staggering figure equals 41 per cent of this age group in Pakistan.

Fifteen months into the current crisis, what awaits the country's already dismal education milieu in the current as well as the post-pandemic era, depends a great deal on what kind of strategy our policymakers devise, and with what promptness its implementation is ensured. After all, one cannot live on the hope that the pandemic will end and normalcy will return to the education landscape.

Had the Covid-19 emergency been limited to Pakistan, internationally, there would be nothing to compare it to. However, the infection has disrupted studies and led to the closure of educational institutions in several countries. The latter can learn from each other's success stories, as well as their failures.

Online platforms must be developed to reach out to students.

Other than the developed Global North, there are also examples of determination and innovation in the rest of the world to learn from. Wuhan in China, where the coronavirus first surfaced, opted for conducting 'air classes' for its more than one million learners. It also supplemented teaching with extra classes on how to stop the spread of the virus. The city of São Paulo, Brazil's most populated city, sought strategies in addition to online instruction for learners. All over Bangladesh, the state-run Sangsad Television broadcast lessons for students.

Kashan in Iran televised educational programmes for learners in the city; and Turin in Italy shifted to online teaching for students.

In March 2020, the calamity caught Pakistan not only unawares but also unprepared, exposing our lack of resources and insufficient infrastructure in the face of such a crisis. The more worrying question is, whether we are better equipped now, 15 months into the pandemic. What steps have been taken to resume educational activities for primary, middle and secondary school students, especially the ones who do not have the privilege of studying in privately run institutions?

What is the way forward? The Teleschool at the federal level and Taleem Ghar in Punjab air lectures for learners from Grades 1 to 12 and 1 to 8, respectively. Notwithstanding these welcome initial steps, the absence of a uniform curriculum has made it difficult to target students throughout the country. Providing feedback, achieving the relevant course learning outcomes and conducting assessments are issues that will still go unattended until they are given greater attention.

By taking their cue from the practices of most of the universities which resorted to online teaching in the country and collaborating with leading private schools that have developed their own online platforms, the educational authorities can run similar operations to reach out to the maximum number of learners in Pakistan. It is true that massive investment will be needed to ensure that no one is left out, even those who live in remote parts of the country. But the effort will be worth it at a time when the end of the pandemic is nowhere in sight.

Keeping in view the recommendations of the steering committee of Sustainable Development Goals-Education 2030, and understanding the fact that education is the primary responsibility of the state, it is imperative to avoid measures that could further dent an already weak and vulnerable school system. In our case, a strong sense of purpose is required to deliver what is needed: a well-thought-out strategy, generous funding to ensure that an alternative instructional system, in the form of online teaching platform, is established and made accessible to all learners. Spending on education is not a cost but an investment that builds sustainable, inclusive and more equal societies. Establishing a resilient and prepared education system is the need of the hour — in these times of Covid and beyond.

The writer is chair, Department of English (Graduate Studies) at the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.

inayat@numl.edu.pk

Twitter: InayatKhattak

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WORLD

Talibanisation of Afghanistan and Rise of a New Global Order By Shahid Javed Burki

The impact of the fall of Kabul to the Taliban on August 15, 2021 will have consequences that will go well beyond the country's immediate borders. Pakistan, undoubtedly, would be the most affected country with the passage of power into the hands of the Taliban. But looking at the developing situation, there will be reordering of relations among countries bordering Afghanistan or those with strong interest in the area of which Afghanistan is a part.

There were prominent voices from the Trump era that advised Biden not to recognise the Taliban regime. Among them was Nikki Haley who was the Republican governor of South Carolina before being sent as the US ambassador to the United Nations by President Donald Trump. "Shockingly, the Biden administration has yet to rule out recognising the Taliban," she wrote in an Op-Ed article for The Washington Post. "The administration is 'taking stock' of the situation, while calling on the tyrannical group to protect the Afghan people's rights. Hopefully, Biden is just posturing until we get all Americans out."

She was of the view that the Taliban of 2021 are not all that different from the Taliban of 2001 when America sent in its troops to push them out of Kabul. "There's precedence for holding back. It took 30 years for the United States to recognise Communist China and 20 years to recognise Communist Vietnam," she continued. While Britain and the European Union are not rushing in to recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, "China and Russia have already cozied up to the Taliban, as they believe a terrorist-run Afghanistan weakens and endangers the United States." She was also totally opposed to sending any economic or financial assistance to the Taliban-led Afghanistan and pleaded for resisting any United Nations attempt to admit the new Afghanistan into the organisation.

It doesn't take deep reflection to conclude that three countries have lost as the Taliban have taken control of Afghanistan. They are United States, Britain and India. We should probably add Japan and Australia to the list since in the global refiguration that is underway, these two along with the United States and India constitute what former Japanese prime minister called the "quad." The quad idea has been fully embraced by the Biden administration. Three countries have come out on the winning side. They are China, Russia and Pakistan.

Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, made his first public comments on the Afghan situation at a joint press conference on August 22 in Moscow with German Chancellor Angela Merkel who was preparing to retire from the job she had held for several years. He said he knows Afghanistan well and understood that it was counterproductive to impose external forms of government. "Any such sociopolitical experimentation has never been crowned with success and only led to the destruction of states, and degradation of their political and social systems." He said that "it is necessary to stop the irresponsible policy of imposing other people's values from outside, the desire to build democracy in other countries, not taking into account either historical, national and religious characteristics, and completely ignoring the traditions by which people live." He was speaking not just about what the Americans and the West had attempted to do in Afghanistan but had in mind also the interference by them in the countries of Eastern Europe that were once part of the Soviet Union.

He said that many Western politicians were waking up to the fact that "you cannot impose your standard of political behavior or social organisation on others because others have their own religious and cultural specification." In making these comments he ignored what his country had attempted to do precisely in Afghanistan in the 1970s by first installing and then militarily supporting a Communist government in Kabul. That experiment was resisted by several mujaheddin groups. It was their inability to agree to a system of governance that led to the emergence of the Taliban as a political and military force. In recent years, Russia has fostered contacts with the Taliban some of whom worked for the groups that fought against Soviet occupation. Recently Russia had flexed its military muscle by holding war games with Tajikistan's military. Following it there were exercises with the militaries of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This was done to

prevent the spillover of extremism from Afghanistan to the Muslim nations of Central Asia.

China has the same concerns; it fears that a Taliban regime in Afghanistan may export its version of radical Islam to the restive region of Xinjiang that has a short border with Afghanistan but a much longer one with Pakistan. China has spent years in the efforts to make the Uighurs who live in the region more Chinese. But the Chinese have other interests in Afghanistan. Stopping the flow of Islamic ideology would be one of the reasons of China's abiding interest in the region.

But there are other reasons as well. It would like to exploit the enormous amount of mineral wealth the country sits on. It is valued at over a trillion dollars. Beijing has already made large investments in developing copper mines in the mineral-rich areas south of Kabul. Once the minerals are extracted from the earth, they need to be processed and transported to the points of their use. This needs a system of roads and railways of which there is very little in Afghanistan. China has made no secret of its desire to bring Afghanistan into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor programme of investment. CPEC is a part of the much larger and more ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, BRI, in which the powerful Chinese President Xi Jinping is taking personal interest, and which will alter the Central Asian landscape. Once in a one-on-one meeting with me, Zhu Rongji, the then Prime Minister of China, said that his country was the only large landmass nation that was landlocked on three sides. It wanted to open to the West and the only feasible way to do that was to build a road and rail corridor for connecting China's West with the deep-water port of Gwadar in Balochistan province. That conversation took place in 2013. When the Chinese think about the future they think long.

There is no doubt that given Pakistan's past involvement with the group, a Taliban-led administration in Kabul would be friendlier towards Islamabad. It would be prepared to work on a series of infrastructure projects that would closely knit Pakistan with Afghanistan but also with the landlocked countries of Central Asia. If this were to happen, China would be interested in extending CPEC into these landlocked states. The under-development port of Gwadar could become a major port on the Arabian Sea. In fact, with most of Chinese trade carried through the port, Gwadar will be turned into one of Asia's most important gateways.

Once the Taliban government settles down in Kabul, it will move fast to develop relations with the countries in its neighborhood. China will work hard to keep the Americans out of this area. Afghanistan may not become a part of the geographic space over which Beijing and Washington are fighting.

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Post-USA Afghanistan By UK Dar

In April 2021, the USA announced that it would close its military mission in Afghanistan by September 2021. The Taliban, who were controlling a few pockets of rural Afghanistan then, ramped up attacks on the Afghan National Army (ANA) and areas under their control. By the first week of August 2021, the Taliban started capturing provincial capitals which began to fall in rapid succession. On August 15, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, and Afghanistan was left with no government. The Taliban entered the capital despite announcing a few days ago that they would not attack Kabul, as chaos and anarchy could have engulfed the city in the absence of any security forces.

Two weeks have passed since the takeover of Kabul but no official government has been announced in Afghanistan yet. The Taliban leadership seems to be in no hurry to form a government and is meeting with other leaders like Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah to reach a political settlement. It seems that they had realized that stable governing will need to include ethnic minorities, or else the country risks falling into the same sort of civil war that erupted in the 1990s.

History tells us that ending wars is relatively easy as compared to building peace after the end of the war. Anna K. Jarstad in her work titled *The Peace In Between* argues that peace in a war-torn country is normally violent, sometimes more violent than the war itself. She further explained that lasting peace can be achieved when international organizations impose sanctions on the warring parties and force de-weaponization and demilitarization of the conflict zone and called it a “pacified peace”.

Some activities by the anti-peace forces may be carried out like the recent terrorist attack at Kabul airport, but it should not deter the world and let the Taliban establish their rule and then only be held accountable. It is equally important that the future government of the Taliban fulfils its international responsibilities and for the international community to accept them as legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. Any efforts on the contrary would create an unstable Afghanistan and that can again become the breeding ground for terrorism that the world wants to avoid at all cost.

However, this cannot be ensured in Afghanistan as major international forces were themselves a party in this war and the USA has left so much military equipment while withdrawing that it is sufficient for raising a military for a medium-sized country. So, is peace even possible in Afghanistan?

The Taliban in their earlier stint in the 1990s were able to de-weaponize Afghan society and hence brought peace to the country. Though there were international concerns about human rights and women's education, their achievements in eradicating poppy crops and de-weaponization have been acknowledged by all.

Peace in Afghanistan can only be ensured if all the regional powers play their positive role and do not support any local warlord for projecting their proxy wars in the region. Afghanistan is a tribal society with warlords exercising control over their tribes. Most of the warlords have either fled the country or surrendered to the Taliban, but their influence on their tribes cannot be easily diminished by the Taliban. One of the leaders, the son of the slain Tajik warlord Ahmad Shah Massoud, and deposed Vice President Amrullah Saleh have already set up a base in the Panjshir valley, north of Kabul, and have announced resistance against the Taliban. Their success, however, depends on whether they can gather support from overseas, especially India or Tajikistan.

Tajikistan supported Ahmad Shah Massoud during the earlier Taliban government of the 1990s, however, the power dynamics and the on-ground situation has changed. Russia and China, the new regional superpowers, have already held talks with the Taliban leaders and given a hint of recognizing their government. Russia has already ruled out allowing redeployment of the American military forces to the countries neighbouring Afghanistan and thus it is quite unlikely that Tajikistan will be willing to support the Tajik warlord Massoud. Moreover, the Taliban have made a deliberate strategic move by capturing all the entry points to Afghanistan, including the Shir Khan Bandar pass with Tajikistan, thus ruling out any major ground support from there. Thus, all-out support for Massoud is quite unlikely if not impossible.

India on the other hand has been a major loser in the present scenario. Its heavy investment in Afghanistan has gone to waste as it had not developed any contacts with the Taliban and was supporting the government of the Northern Alliance throughout. Therefore, India can try to support an insurgency movement in Afghanistan by supporting Massoud and Amrullah Saleh as they did in the

1990s by establishing hospitals and providing military support for the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. However, with no direct ground link to Afghanistan, it would be an almost impossible task to provide any substantial military support to its proxies on the ground.

The future of Afghanistan is with the Taliban; the earlier this is understood, the better. Western powers led by the USA have learned it the hard way. Twenty years of trying to impose the puppet government and providing it with billions of dollars of aid and arming ANA with the most sophisticated of weaponry has all proven to be a futile effort. The real thing is that the Taliban was and is a political reality in Afghanistan. Now, it is a big challenge for the Taliban to form a government in Afghanistan that can ensure lasting peace in the region and an all-inclusive government seems to be the step forward.

Some activities by the anti-peace forces may be carried out like the recent terrorist attack at Kabul airport, but it should not deter the world and let the Taliban establish their rule and then only be held accountable. It is equally important that the future government of the Taliban fulfils its international responsibilities and for the international community to accept them as legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. Any efforts on the contrary would create an unstable Afghanistan and that can again become the breeding ground for terrorism that the world wants to avoid at all cost.

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Reforming UN Security Council By Asad

Tahir Jappa

There is a larger consensus among the member states that UN Security Council must expand to become more inclusive and its reform has been on the agenda for well over a decade now. However, they haven't been able to agree as to how big the council should become and whether other nations should have veto powers. As a result, the Security Council continues to bank on the global power structure of 1945, when the Second World War winners the likes of US, UK, France, Russia and China acquired their privileged status. Political analysts and critics have long argued that the Council in its present form, is both undemocratic and anachronistic and is bound to lose its effectiveness and legitimacy unless it is transformed to deal with the growing challenging confronting today's world. They propound that Security Council stands as an impaired organ. It has failed to act with clarity and credibility largely owing to its unrepresentative nature. Hardly anything tangible has been achieved by the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) which is a group within the United Nations that is critically focused on UNSC reforms. There have been no serious endeavors to come up with a consolidated text to begin formal negotiations due to resistance by certain countries such as China that are opposed to the expansion of UNSC membership. Although for years, India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil have been lobbying tooth and nail to get a permanent seat to the UN Security Council yet the UN charter gives permanent members the veto power to kill any resolution, including the one about the expansion of membership. While the first four have kept India guessing about their support in its bid for permanent membership, China has repeatedly opposed it by laying down conditions to meet. China argues that there are palpable differences among UN members over UNSC reforms and insists that a "package solution" should be found to entertain the interests of all parties. The Chinese mission to the UN has questioned the need for reforms in "haste". It doesn't matter that the informal negotiations for reforms have been on for the last 10 years. "To start text-based negotiation in a haste or to impose a single document is not conducive to building a consensus and promoting unity," the Chinese mission said in a statement. On the other hand, India told the UNGA president that the inter-government negotiation process had become a cover to hide for those who didn't want to see any reforms in the

Security Council, a tongue in cheek reference to countries such as China, Turkey and Pakistan.

The world knows that India has waged 20 wars with its neighbours since independence and acted as a peace spoiler, fomenting terrorism and causing instability across the region, especially in Pakistan.

The UN General Assembly in September, 2014 adopted a negotiating text, setting the stage for talks on the reforms. Since it was the first text-based negotiation after the inter-government negotiations were started in September 2009, some Indian media acclaimed that the nation's bid for permanent UNSC seat has been boosted. The US, China and Russia at that time did not contribute to the text, a move which was seen as an attempt to thwart India's bid for permanent membership of the global body. The US also strongly opposed the G4 proposals in 2005 and has remained non-committed to support the permanent membership of these nations till to-date. Biden administration's non-committal on support for permanent UNSC seat for India is extension of US policy which always refused sincere support from inception of proposal back in 2008. India has long hoped to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. On the other hand, it has arbitrarily violated the UN Security Council resolutions and trampled upon the authority of the international organization. India stands unqualified for permanent seat in the UNSC because the international community is cognizant of its dubious track record in human rights and flagrant disregard to various international covenants. China has also opposed the proposal of considering India for permanent UNSC seat on the same argument. The resolutions passed on Kashmir from 1947 to 1957 cannot be termed as recommendatory only. Pakistan continues to adhere to the UN resolutions on the disputed status of Kashmir. These are binding also on India. Pakistan has adopted a principled, clear and firm stance on the proposal of adding new permanent members to the UN Security Council (UNSC). It has reiterated its position on various occasions that India does not qualify for a seat on the 15-member body – permanent or even non-permanent. India in violation of UNSC resolutions in occupied Kashmir, had deployed 900,000 troops to crush the Kashmiris' legitimate freedom struggle. Back in August, 2019 it has, unilaterally and illegally, ripped off the special status of Jammu and Kashmir by abrogating articles 370 and 35A. It continues with its malicious designs to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory in clear violation of international

law, including the 4th Geneva Convention and has, reportedly, already issued over 3.4 million fake domicile certificates.

The basic principles about the UN resolutions on Kashmir are amply clear and unambiguous. Ironically, the complaint relating to Kashmir was initiated by India in the Security Council. The Council explicitly rejected India's claim that Kashmir was ever a legitimate Indian territory. Instead, the resolutions established the right to self-determination as the governing principle for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute. This is the UN commitment to the people of Kashmir. The resolutions endorsed a binding agreement between India and Pakistan reached through the mediation of UNCIP, that a plebiscite would be held, under agreed and specified conditions. The Security Council has rejected the Indian contention that the people of Kashmir have exercised their right of self-determination by participating in the so-called elections which India has from time to time organized in the held Kashmir. The 0.2% turn out during the 1989 "elections" was the most recent clear repudiation of the Indian claims. It is evident that Indian has deliberately chosen to defy UN resolutions with regards to peaceful settlement of Kashmir issue. Time and again, the world community has openly expressed their serious concerns about Indian attitude which has been a source of disturbance to regional peace involving three nuclear armed states. The international community must be made aware of the difference between words and actions of a country which presents itself as world's largest functioning democracy, an inclusive, tolerant and secular state.

Time has already come that world must recognize the real face of a country involved in gross human rights violations, pursuing Hindutva policy and, thereby, set to become a fascist Nazi state. The world knows that India has waged 20 wars with its neighbours since independence and acted as a peace spoiler, fomenting terrorism and causing instability across the region, especially in Pakistan. International stakeholders and members of UNGA must be reminded of their shared responsibility to compel India to act in line with the UNSC resolutions on Kashmir issue before aspiring for a permanent UNSC seat. India must be told to stop the gory drama of blood and tears in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir. It has to first deserve then desire!

The writer is a civil servant by profession, a writer by choice and a motivational speaker by passion!

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A reformed Taliban? By Pervez Hoodbhoy

AFTER capturing Kabul the Taliban want to be seen as rulers rather than just as a religious militia. Eager to secure legitimacy — internationally and among Afghans — closed door negotiations are afoot for a government inclusive of non-Taliban Afghans. Will these actually work out? And what lies ahead for young, urbanised, internet savvy Afghans seeking to live in the 21st century rather than the 7th? This choice had been denied just a while ago.

Under Mullah Omar, the earlier phase (1996-2001) of Taliban rule had single-mindedly concentrated upon rigorous enforcement of the Quranic injunction *amr bil ma'roof wa nahi 'anil munkar* (promote that which is good and approved, and forbid that which is evil and disapproved). Imbibed from madressahs scattered across Pakistan, this was understood in the sense of a demand for strict religious policing.

Liberal Islamic scholars, however, say the injunction merely enjoins believers to seek piety through self-control. The Taliban under Mullah Omar disagreed emphatically with this interpretation. They carried out stoning of adulterers to death, amputation of limbs for theft, public floggings, closure of girls' schools, extreme limits on the mobility of women, and destruction of the 2,000-year-old Bamiyan Buddhas. Similar actions do not exist in the living memory of older Afghans.

The new face suggests that *amr bil ma'roof* will henceforth be more liberally interpreted. Whether rank-and-file fighters will see eye to eye on this cannot presently be foreseen. But some leaders of this religious militia — one that thrived for decades on foreign aid and extortion — have become aware that economic reasons demand change.

Pakistan should welcome the Taliban's new face but must resolutely insist upon their civilised behaviour.

This is understandable. Those accustomed to the comfort of Doha's luxury hotels, and of their bungalows in Quetta and Peshawar, are unfit for returning to the mountain villages from where they fought against an invader. Instead they now want the good life the invader has invented. In time they, or maybe the

generation that succeeds them, will send their children to regular schools instead of Pakistani or Afghan madressahs.

For this to happen, the spigot of international aid must be turned on again. Still more urgent: under Afghan soil lies a trillion dollars ready to be scooped up. But to extract these minerals, technology and organisation have to come from outside. Many countries are eager, China and Russia particularly. This implies complicated geopolitics and much wheeling and dealing.

In this new game Pakistan hopes to play a big part. While the Chinese are said to be capable of eating everything that moves, they cannot stomach an unreformed Taliban; this would create hellish indigestion within Xinjiang. Former Taliban allies, Saudi Arabia and UAE, are wary of Taliban radicalism spilling over and wrecking attempts to liberalise their countries. Much needs to be thrashed out.

That Pakistan may be accepted as a mediator is possible because the “Naya Taliban” — an evocative term first used by Dawn’s columnist Niaz Murtaza — feel ideologically comfortable with the leader of Naya Pakistan. The commonality lies in shared opposition to western dress, education, and language. Both place high value on symbols such as shalwar-kameez and turban, and both equate morality with regularity of prayers and fasting. Indeed, unable to contain his joy at the Taliban takeover of Kabul, PM Khan declared that Afghanistan had “broken the shackles of slavery”.

In creating a new dispensation, the Naya Taliban will naturally turn towards those who made their ascent possible. But here caution will kick in. Even if pragmatism presently forces them to deal with those they know to be hypocritical, the Taliban are not hypocrites themselves. They also know full well who packed off their comrades to Guantanamo Bay – from where some are yet to return.

To quote from the back cover of General Musharraf’s autobiography, written in 2006 while still in office: “We have captured 672 and handed 369 to the United States. We have earned bounties totaling millions of dollars”. Memories cannot disappear easily although the freshly victorious may not dwell upon such betrayals for now.

On the other hand, the Taliban have fully trustable allies inside Islamabad. When some days ago the white Taliban flag flew — albeit briefly — from Jamia Hafsa,

this sent across an important message from Maulana Abdul Aziz and his likes to their victorious Afghan colleagues: we were with you when you were being bombed in Tora Bora. And we are with you now that you have won.

Like it or not, AfPak has become reality. Despised in Pakistan because of its American origin, this term rings true. Geographical proximity is now augmented by the ideological proximity of rulers in both countries. Taliban style thinking is bound to spread through the length and breadth of Pakistan.

Now that the Indians have been chased out of Afghanistan, Pakistan's dream of strategic depth stands fulfilled. So have we reached nirvana? Well, almost, but not quite.

Fears that the Naya Taliban are no different from the Purana Taliban has made millions of Afghans desperate to flee. But there is opposition to accepting these refugees into Pakistan even from those who might have on their lips Iqbal's couplet: butan-e-rang o khon ko tor kar millat mai gum ho ja; na toorani rahay baqi na irani na afghani. (Smash the idols of blood and colour, become Muslim; be not Turani nor Irani nor Afghani, be just Muslim.)

Subcontinental pan-Islamism — that which created Pakistan — ends at the Durand Line for most Pakistanis. But the Naya Taliban could think differently; Afghan nationalism has come into its own. The cultural and ethnic continuity from ages past cannot be eliminated by fencing. Indeed, after booting out the mightiest power of all times why should the Taliban consider as sacred the arbitrary straight lines drawn by a long dead, stuffy old Englishman?

Pakistan must open its doors for fleeing Afghans; to not do so is immoral. Using its considerable influence it must also impress upon Taliban victors that the world will not accept their old-style barbarity. This is not the age when women should be confined to their homes and shoved into burqas, or where religious and ethnic minorities are persecuted and killed. For this message to get across, we might first have to get our own house in order.

The writer is an Islamabad-based physicist and author.

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India's Afghan Policy Unmasked By Amjed Jaaved

Indo-Afghan bonhomie has seen many ups and downs. India's friendship with Afghanistan is ostensibly actuated by altruism. But, deep down, it is the upshot of antipathy to the Taliban and Pakistan that India regards as the Taliban's mentor.

Through diplomatic maneuvering and machinations, India did its best to isolate Afghanistan from Pakistan. It is eerie that India has no common border with Afghanistan, yet it has always tried tooth and nail to create a foothold in Afghan affairs.

Like India, the USA, too, had been constantly changing its foreign policy towards Afghanistan.

Initially, the US Air Force used to rush quickly to rescue the Afghan forces it trained. But they then began to ignore the Afghan SOS calls. The situation took such a grim turn that the Taliban used to "breakfast" with 20 to 40 casualties of the Afghan forces each day. The USA ignored faults with the Afghan army. They knew that the actual strength of the Afghan army was never more than 200,000, but the government inflated it to 300,000. The figures were inflated to devour funds and rations. There was no coordination plan or battle strategy to defeat the Taliban foot soldiers numbering about 25,000 to 30,000. The Afghan troops owed their allegiance to the governors or political figures in their homeland rather than their senior commanders. Once the governors capitulated, the Afghan troops lost the will to fight.

Some retired Indian officers, including Maj Gen (retd) SP Sinha, even allege that it is well nigh impossible that the Afghan forces surrendered without US connivance. Sinha alleges that the USA "instructed" the Afghan forces to surrender. It did so to drag China in the Afghan imbroglio. The USA wants to bleed China in "the graveyard of empires".

Following the East Pakistan debacle (1971), Pakistan developed a doctrine of "strategic depth." The idea is to have a secure refuge in the case of a future war with India. The porous border offers a route by which Pakistani leaders, troops

and other assets, including its nuclear weapons, could retreat to the northwest in the case of an Indian invasion' (William Dalrymple, A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) India believes the myth that it is cornerstone of Pakistan's military strategy to keep the Taliban under its sway. That is how Pakistan's "strategic depth" could be maintained in case of a military conflict with India regards the Taliban of all shades as Pakistani stooges. India's antipathy to the Taliban is obvious from India never recognising the Taliban's short-lived government of 1996. It had earlier been the only South Asian country to recognise the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

When the Northern Alliance took over the Afghan government, after the collapse of the Taliban, India quickly recognised it. India then boasted that the "strategic depth" Pakistan had yearned for, had evaporated overnight.

The way India hastily vacated its consulates in Afghanistan portends that India would take such steps as would offend the nascent Taliban 2.0 government. After the Taliban's ouster, India began to bolster its cooperation with successive Afghan governments. India provided Afghanistan \$650-750 million in "humanitarian" and economic aid. India became the largest regional aid donor

In the guise of infrastructural projects, India kept trying to deepen its influence in the Afghan government. It initiated a mining project while recruiting Afghans to carry out sabotage inside Pakistan. The scale of India's investment in Afghanistan's development is stupendous. It built over 200 public and private schools, sponsored over 1000 scholarships, besides building many bridges, roads and small dams.

In 2011, India signed a strategic-partnership agreement with Afghanistan to further boost mutual relations. The second Strategic Partnership Council meeting was held in New Delhi on 11 September 2017. Making use of the fresh \$1 billion development assistance announced India, the two launched a 'New Development Partnership'. India agreed to implement important new projects such as the Shahtoot Dam and drinking water project for Kabul that would also facilitate irrigation; water supply for Charikar City; road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyán Province to promote tourism; low-cost housing for returning refugees in Nangarhar Province; a gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul; and a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif among others.

Besides, India outlined 116 High Impact Community Development Projects in 34 provinces. These projects were in a broad range including education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydro power, sports and administrative infrastructure.

India also announced that on-going assistance programmes for education, capacity building, skills and human resource development of Afghanistan, would continue for five more years to 2022.

Since its 2017 inauguration, the India-Afghanistan Air-Freight Corridor has witnessed close to 1000 flights, carrying goods valued at over \$216 million. It provided a boost to Afghan exports to India and has benefited Afghan farmers and small traders and exporters. India and Afghanistan now aim to expand the Corridor to other cities in both countries.

Another important initiative was the operationalization of the Chabahar Port in December 2017, followed by a commercial port management agreement in February 2018. The Port has so far handled over 5,000 containers ferrying over 110,000 tons of wheat and over 2,000 tons of pulses sent by India as assistance to Afghanistan via Chabahar. These were delivered to various parts of Afghanistan and average transportation time was under two weeks. In 2019, Afghanistan shipped around 700 tons of agricultural and mineral products to India through Chabahar.

An average of over 3,500 Afghan nationals underwent training/education in India every year. More than 15,000 Afghan students went to India on self-financing basis.

India helped Afghanistan rebuild power infrastructure including the 220KV DC-transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri, capital of Baghlan province. Telecommunications infrastructure in many Afghan provinces were also been restored by India.

India has also gifted Afghanistan 400 buses and 200 mini-buses for urban transportation. This is in addition to 105 utility vehicles of municipal operations

and 285 military vehicles. India also donated military helicopters and other aircraft.

Most of the above-mentioned assets have been captured by the Taliban. However, the possibility of losing a key strategic ally in South Asia may surpass concerns for its \$3 billion investment.

India plumes itself for having cooperated in Afghanistan's development, but also tries to vilify the Taliban by alleging that Pakistani militant groups have infiltrated its rank and file. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishanker made many veiled attacks on the Taliban and Pakistan in his speech before the UN Security Council.

He pointed to the delay in designating terrorist individuals, entities. Without directly identifying Pakistan, he also referred to states "clearly guilty of aiding and supporting terrorism, and willfully provide financial assistance and safe havens".

"Counter Terrorism is a priority area for India during this term and [it] looks forward to contributing to the meeting that seeks not only to identify emerging trends but to also laying the groundwork for common priorities that would shape the future multilateral action in the domain of Counter Terrorism," sources said, explaining the context of the speech.

India was offered to chair three important committees including the Taliban sanctions committee, the counter-terrorism committee and the Libya sanctions committee during its tenure at the UNSC.

By accepting the Taliban-sanctions committee's chairmanship, India made it clear it would continue to make mischief against the Taliban. Its hostility is conspicuous from the FIRs filed against persons expressing jubilation at the Taliban's victory.

Samajwadi Party MP Shafiqur Rehman Barq was booked for sedition for defending the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and equating it with India's own freedom struggle. He was charged following a complaint from BJP leader Rajesh Singhal .

The MP has been also booked under sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs). Barq had called the Taliban a force that did not allow Russia or the USA to establish themselves in Afghanistan, “and now they want to run their own country”. The MP had said that when India was under British Rule, the entire country fought for independence.

“They want to be free. This is their personal matter. How can we interfere?” the SP legislator had said on developments in Afghanistan. Endorsing the Taliban takeover, Barq had said the Afghans want to run their own country in the manner they wanted.” The remarks drew sharp criticism from UP CM Yogi Adityanath. In the state legislative council, he on Tuesday slammed the opposition MP. The chief minister said, ‘He was shamelessly supporting the Taliban. It means supporting their barbaric act.’

India has no border with Afghanistan. Yet it created its own brand of mujahideen belonging to the Northern Alliance. India not only provided multi-faceted aid to the Alliance but even trained Northern Alliance fighters.

The support involved helicopters, ordnance, mortars, small armaments, refurbished Kalashnikovs seized in Kashmir, combat and winter clothes, packaged food, medicines, and funds. These supplies were delivered circuitously with the help of other countries (like Tajikistan) or through Massoud’s brother Wali in London.

India opened four consulates at Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif, besides its embassy at Kabul. It pampered Ahmad Shah Massoud as its protégé for use on the Afghan chessboard as and when circumstances allowed. India is still using these consulates to stoke up secessionist movements in Balochistan and the volatile tribal belt.

The way India hastily vacated its consulates in Afghanistan portends that India would take such steps as would offend the nascent Taliban 2.0 government.

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Learning From History and Own Experience

By Talat Masood

One of the principal characteristics of a superpower is its ability to alter the behaviour of nations or a particular nation, in order to ensure the successful pursuit of its regional and global ambitions. The US after 9/11 launched a major offensive named 'Operation Enduring Freedom' against the Taliban forces as Mullah Omar refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden to them and by virtue of its military might was able to easily overthrow the Taliban regime. And during the last twenty years, the US made massive investment along with its Nato allies to raise equip and train the 300,000-strong Afghan army to support the quasi-democratic government in Afghanistan and counter militant forces. But in reality, as the situation unfolded the Afghan army melted away without giving a fight and the government of Ashraf Ghani is all set to be replaced by a Taliban-led government which seems to enjoy support largely in the rural areas.

US interventions in different countries are well remembered more for their failures than successes. The pictures of US forces withdrawing from Vietnam in April 1975 still remain a memorable but tragic chapter of history. Despite the death and destruction that characterised the military adventure in Vietnam it failed to break the will of the Vietcong. During 1960s Cuba too under Fidel Castro and successive regimes have resisted US domination despite having to pay a heavy price. The irony is that generally countries such as Iran or Venezuela — where the US has brazenly intervened militarily or pressurised these through economic strangulation and strategic isolation for refusing to accept its dictates — have turned inwards and further tightened their hold on their people. So, it is essentially the people of these countries that are its worst sufferers and not the regimes per se. Pakistan too had a taste of US sanctions, not once but frequently, and here too our experience was that the thrust of the punitive measures was borne by the masses. Another aspect of it is that it generates ill will against the superpower and facilitates the challenger, be it China or Russia, to make inroads. A similar pattern is emerging in Afghanistan with China in the lead, and Russia, Iran and Pakistan likely to facilitate the regime's acceptance followed by its recognition. For China, having good relations with the Afghan government is vital for the BRI programme. Besides, China is obviously not concerned about promoting democracy for it considers it to be an internal matter.

A recent example of this was witnessed when Beijing rushed to assist Myanmar's military-led government when the Western countries had imposed strict sanctions for overthrowing an elected government.

The US and Western countries too although keep harping on democracy and human rights are selective in pressing for its adherence. Pakistan has experienced this duality of approach frequently since its very inception. Gen Ziaul Haq was a pariah until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Similarly, Gen Pervez Musharraf was treated with disdain until 9/11 when Pakistan sided with the US against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. One cannot forget those humiliating moments when Bill Clinton addressed the Pakistani nation on our television network in which he mostly sermonised while making sure that Musharraf is kept out. And as soon as 9/11 occurred, Musharraf's fortune changed. These were some of the turns and twists of history that are firmly etched in our memories and are common knowledge. These examples only confirm that if a nation has to change course for the betterment of its people it is not a foreign country even be it a superpower that can alter the direction or transform its destiny.

History also bears witness that when outside powers have intervened, the process of positive change from within has not only been delayed but distorted. And as mentioned earlier, countries like Cuba and Iran turned inwards retarding their political and economic progress. In Syria, President Assad — fearing a regime change sponsored by the US and Western countries — has further tightened his grip on its people and increased their suffering beyond measure. Moreover, the people having suffered due to sanctions bear lasting grudge against the US. For example, in my country I have seldom heard any one blaming the government for inviting sanctions. It is always the US or the West that imposes it, however justified from their perspective these sanctions might be.

Of course, this is not to acknowledge that sanctions have worked occasionally and helped the country by improving governance for the betterment of its people. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), by placing Pakistan on its grey list, although troubling and one-sided, did force the government to take more effective measures against money laundering, leading to terror financing that led to investigating and prosecuting leaders involved in these activities.

Historical experience shows democratic nations that are accountable to their people are today leading the world in economic and social progress. They are

also in the forefront in the race for technological and scientific progress. For these nations, education and health of their people have always been the highest priority. China too, although not a democracy, but only when it accorded the highest priority to education and cared for its people that it was able to make phenomenal progress. Learning from our own checkered past and from the successes and failures of others we need a similar focus. Even the PM whose efforts for a Green Pakistan are laudable should also be accompanied by sermons for an educated and healthy Pakistan. Green Pakistan will not be achievable until the people have a level of education that makes them realise the fallout from global warming on their lives, and successive governments address the curse of poverty that drives them to cut trees to cook their meals.

Our young political leadership has reached the top by virtue of inheritance rather than struggle. More the reason for them to establish their credibility by formulating and implementing policies that break the shackles of poverty and ignorance of our teeming millions.

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State of Uncertainty By Maleeha Lodhi

LAST week's dramatic developments in Afghanistan that stunned the world raise a host of critical questions about the future. What can be expected under a Taliban government? How is the international community responding to this extraordinary turn of events? And what does it mean for Pakistan?

The situation in Afghanistan is in flux so any assessment is necessarily tentative. But first, the much-debated question as to why a 20-year Western project ended in chaos and a political and military collapse. Varying answers have been offered. A key explanation lies in the fact that no dispensation imposed by foreign military intervention outlasts the departure of its patron. This has long been a lesson of history. A 21st-century version of a colonial-style 'civilising' mission lay in ruins as the final act of a project plagued by strategic flaws and tactical misjudgements from the very start. What was imposed on Afghanistan by the US-led coalition was a war of retribution — for 9/11 — and not one defined by consistent or realistic objectives.

The meltdown of Afghan national security forces represented a collapse of political will — a reminder that more than military training and sophisticated weaponry it is the motivation to fight that counts. An imposed government deeply mired in corruption hardly provided a reason to fight for demoralised and abandoned soldiers. Pakistan's former army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani had presciently warned US officials over a decade ago that the Afghan army would eventually collapse. Not to be underestimated was the popular yearning for peace which may also explain the lack of armed resistance to the Taliban as that would have involved more bloodshed.

Most consequential for Pakistan is whether the situation stabilises and peace is established in Afghanistan.

What next for Afghanistan under the Taliban? Again, a much-discussed question is whether their rule will be a throwback to their austere and repressive reign of the 1990s or a break from that dark past. Answers will only emerge with time. For now, the Taliban are keen to dispel the impression that the future will resemble the past, in recognition of the reality that the international environment today is very different from two decades ago.

In the first press conference after their takeover of Kabul, Taliban spokesmen claimed they would behave differently, having learnt from experience. Pledging no retributory action against those who fought them they also sent a number of messages about how they intend to govern. They vowed to establish an inclusive government, respect human rights and women's rights and ensure Afghanistan's soil will not be used against any country.

This was aimed to reassure an anxious and sceptical international community. Whether the Taliban live up to these promises remains open to question especially as there are already some indications of relapse into their old ways. Nevertheless, talks between the Taliban and former political foes are in progress to set up a broad-based government. It is to be seen if a political settlement emerges. Many countries are in a wait-and-watch mode and suspending judgement for now. Clearly though, concerted pressure by the global community seems to be working. The Taliban are making reassuring statements in their desire for international legitimacy and recognition. The country's fragile economic situation must weigh significantly in their calculation especially as dollar reserves are dwindling while the IMF has suspended funding. Without international assistance and trade the economy would simply collapse.

The international consensus — as also reflected in the Aug 16 UN Security Council statement with the focus on an inclusive government, respect for human rights and combating terrorism — has sent a common message. It has encouraged the Taliban to adopt a conciliatory stance, in words at least. This means two things. One, engagement is having a moderating effect and two, consensus over key expectations is eliciting assurances from the Taliban. The converse may also hold true. If the international community divides over the recognition issue or there are cracks on other issues this could provide wriggle room to the Taliban to back out of promises. Thus, the need for the multilateral community to engage the Taliban, hold out diplomatic inducements but also sustain collective pressure to ensure promises translate into actions.

To make good on their promises the Taliban will have to ensure that local commanders abide by their leaders' decisions. Moreover, mollifying the international community is one thing and living up to public expectations is another. Governing a war-ravaged country will be the real test and an imposing challenge especially as the Taliban have been a warring force, not one adept at governing. Consolidation of power will depend on how well the country is

administered, accommodating others as well as addressing the needs of a new generation who are more educated and connected to the outside world.

Islamabad has long argued that other than Afghanistan, Pakistan has the most to gain from peace in its neighbouring country and the most to lose from more strife and instability. There is understandable relief among officials that bloodshed has been avoided so far. But as the situation is yet to settle Pakistan must move with caution and prudence. In this fluid period Islamabad must stay in lockstep with the international community and coordinate closely on the issue of formal recognition. There is no advantage in going it alone. Diplomatic engagement is in any case continuing and so is cross-border trade. Islamabad is also extending help in intra-Afghan talks aimed at a political settlement. But its involvement should not go beyond this in line with its stated policy that it should be an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process. Our security forces should also step up border surveillance as a fluid situation can encourage cross-border attacks from militant groups based in Afghanistan that Kabul has yet to act against and on which Islamabad should secure ironclad guarantees.

Above all, the government should speak less on an evolving situation and with one voice. There is no reason to sound triumphal, be spokespersons for the Taliban or to keep obsessing about the past. It is the future that should concern us and what is most consequential for the country — whether peace will return to Afghanistan after decades of war, strife and foreign interventions.

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

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A Strategy for Avoiding Two-Front War By

A. Wess Mitchell

THE GREATEST risk facing the twenty-first-century United States, short of an outright nuclear attack, is a two-front war involving its strongest military rivals, China and Russia. Such a conflict would entail a scale of national effort and risk unseen in generations, effectively pitting America against the resources of nearly half of the Eurasian landmass. It would stretch and likely exceed the current capabilities of the U.S. military, requiring great sacrifices of the American people with far-reaching consequences for U.S. influence, alliances, and prosperity. Should it escalate into a nuclear confrontation, it could possibly even imperil the country's very existence.

Given these high stakes, avoiding a two-front war with China and Russia must rank among the foremost objectives of contemporary U.S. grand strategy. Yet the United States has been slow to comprehend this danger, let alone the implications it holds for U.S. policy. So far, Washington's efforts to grapple with the "simultaneity" problem (as it's called in Pentagon circles) have been overwhelmingly focused on the military side of the problem. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) replaced the two-war standard with a laser focus on fighting one major war with America's most capable adversary—China. In its wake, a debate has erupted among defense intellectuals about how to handle a second-front contingency.

By comparison, there has been much less discussion of how, if at all, U.S. diplomacy should evolve to avert two-front war and, more broadly, alleviate the pressures of strategic simultaneity. While the Trump administration rightly inaugurated a more confrontational approach toward China, this was not accompanied by a rebalancing of diplomatic priorities and resources in other regions to complement the NDS' justified focus on the Indo-Pacific. Nor does the Biden administration appear to be contemplating a redistribution of strategic focus and resources among regions. This misalignment in the objects of U.S. military and diplomatic power is neither desirable nor sustainable. America will have to limit the number of active rivalries requiring major U.S. military attention, improve the functionality of its existing alliances for offsetting the pressures of

simultaneity, or significantly grow defense budgets—or some combination of the three.

In the current budgetary environment, though, the most likely outcome could well be the worst of all worlds—namely, that America will continue to try to overawe all threats without significantly improving the performance of its alliances while reducing real defense spending. Such an approach keeps U.S. power thinly spread and limits Washington's bandwidth for managing policy tradeoffs among regions. This creates an ideal setting for an increasingly aligned Russia and China to conduct repeated stress tests of U.S. resolve in their respective neighborhoods and, when conditions are ripe, make synchronous grabs for, say, Taiwan and a Baltic state.

Averting such scenarios should not only or primarily be a concern for the U.S. military; it is also the job of U.S. diplomacy. Indeed, diplomacy in its highest form has historically been used for precisely this purpose, as an instrument for rearranging power in space and time to avoid fighting numerous enemies at once. This role—the sequencing of rivalries—should be the central preoccupation of American diplomacy today. Rather than trying to contain Russia and China simultaneously, the United States needs to find a way to stagger its contests with these two powers to ensure that it does not face both at the same time in a war.

While accomplishing this task will not be easy, COVID-19 may present an unexpected opportunity. By widening the power disparity between China and Russia, the pandemic has heightened Russia's economic dependency on China as a source of capital, markets, and international political support. Paradoxically, the very fact of this deepening dependency is likely to increase Russian fear of becoming a sidecar to Beijing's ambitions and create incentives for Moscow to reorient its foreign policy.

Within this paradox lies an opportunity for the United States. The aim of American diplomacy—and the crux of our strategy for avoiding a two-front war—should be to sharpen Russia's dilemma and render that country less menacing to ourselves on a faster timeline than China is able to realize its ambitious military potential as a great power. Rather than attempting to woo or court Russia into a conciliatory stance, we should present it with a combination of insuperable obstacles to westward expansion (including, if necessary, by inflicting a far more

serious defeat than it has heretofore experienced in Ukraine) while presenting new opportunities for cooperation, investment, and growth in Russia's east. Simply put, the goal should be to alleviate America's simultaneity problem by giving Russia incentives to be less of a European power—and more of an Asian one.

COMPETITION WITH more than one hostile peer in peacetime is not something that the United States has much experience navigating. The ability to outproduce, outgun, and outdistance multiple enemies, courtesy of America's size, resources, and geography, was the key to U.S. success against all of its twentieth-century major power opponents.

Freedom from two-front pressures reached its apogee after the Cold War, when the United States found itself in a strategic environment devoid of any peer competitor. This nimety of power was reflected in the Pentagon's maintenance, from the early 1990s onward, of the so-called "two-war standard"—under which it planned for wars against regional powers in the Middle East and Asia simultaneously. In such a setting, there was little need to contemplate significant tradeoffs between the country's major objectives. Because America could be militarily strong in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East at the same time, there was no need for it to develop positional diplomacy to support shifts of concentration between these regions.

By contrast with these greenhouse conditions, the defining characteristic of the emerging international landscape is the array of constraints that it presents to the exercise of American power. The rise of China confronts the United States with arguably the most capable adversary it has faced in its history as a global power. Most projections show China having, by 2030, an economy that will be between 1.5 and 2 times the size of America's and a population more than four times as large. By 2049, Beijing has the stated intention of possessing a military that outclasses America's. By some estimates, it has already reached parity in important categories of military power.

China's rise is accompanied by other unfavorable permutations in the international system. Chief among these is Russia's persistence as a militarily capable and politically motivated opponent. Russia's significance is often downplayed because of its relative demographic and economic weakness. But Russia remains a great power by virtue of its physical size, population, and

possession of one of the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. Russia's leaders, more than those of any other large power, identify their country's interests in terms that are antagonistic to the United States. Indeed, as a growing list of hostile Russian actions demonstrate, Moscow is already waging a kind of war on America.

From a U.S. strategic perspective, it is the confluence of threats from these two large powers that presents the organizing challenge for the United States. The proposition here is not that the two will necessarily form a durable military alliance—though that is certainly possible. Rather, it is that these two large Eurasian states function in ways that tend to amplify threats from the other.

This takes the form, first, of synchrony, or action by both powers that threatens U.S. vital interests in different regions simultaneously. As the recent build-up of Russian forces in Ukraine and Chinese ships off the Spratlys showed, the physical location of large adversaries at opposite ends of Eurasia would make it difficult for the United States to draw upon the same military capabilities for responding to both adversaries.

Secondly, there is the distraction effect, whereby the actions of one of these states, even if uncoordinated, generate opportunities for the other that otherwise might not have existed. A move by Russia in the Baltics would create a favorable opening for China to move against Taiwan. This translates into a de facto second-mover advantage that would be very tempting for Beijing to exploit. And vice versa. Put differently, the very presence of a risk-acceptant Russia could catalyze a more aggressive China than might otherwise have been the case.

IT WOULD be easiest if the United States could be able to handle the two-front challenge either entirely or primarily by military means by simply adopting a supersized version of the two-war standard that it maintained after the Cold War. If this were possible, we would not need to worry overly much about developing diplomatic options to handle simultaneity because there would be no power gaps to address. We could safely assume the continued ability to deter, and if necessary, defeat, both powers at the same time.

But that is not the case. Under plausible levels of defense spending, the Pentagon can reasonably plan to defeat one major opponent in a future conflict. That reality is a byproduct of both of America's projected resources for defense,

which are declining in real terms as a result of political priorities in the federal budget, and the capabilities being fielded by our two top adversaries. Indeed, even if the United States increased its defense budget, it would not be able to simply overcome this problem, given the growth in Chinese military spending in particular.

The changing fiscal and strategic realities led the Pentagon in 2018 to abandon the old two-war standard and to concentrate on China as the pacing threat. In practical terms, this means that, for the foreseeable future, the U.S. military will prioritize planning and resources for war in the western Pacific rather than Europe or the Middle East. This is not just a rhetorical shift; it means that the Pentagon will make fewer of the kinds of weapons used for land warfare or counterinsurgency and more of those used for aerospace and naval warfare, and less money and people for U.S. military commands in Europe and the Middle East to support United States Indo-Pacific Command. It also presumably means that, as Elbridge Colby has pointed out, even in the event that Russia moved first—say, against a Baltic state—the Pentagon would see a very powerful reason to reserve the bulk of its fighting strength for countering an opportunistic move by China in the western Pacific.

If America possesses a military that is geared for war with one but not the other of its two great-power rivals, then America will have to rely on something other than only or primarily the U.S. military to cover its liabilities in what, by default, becomes the secondary theater: Europe. In that theater, it can be reasonably assumed that the United States will continue to maintain forces, but that these will be less and less adequate for deterrence or defeating Russia in a regional conflict. The job of diplomacy is to help cover these liabilities by bringing about international political configurations that better align finite American military and economic power with the primary threat. It can do so in two basic ways, which are not mutually exclusive.

One is to build and operate effective coalitions of allies and partners in one or both regions for taking on more of the military burden vis-à-vis the two threats. Since the United States possesses extensive allies and partners in both regions, this becomes mainly about getting better value out of those relationships. Such an effort has been underway for several years and will inevitably continue. Successive administrations have sought to increase burden-sharing among allies and partners in both Europe and Asia. The tactics can be debated (Barack

Obama used charm and shaming, Donald Trump used pressure, often to better effect; both pursued the same end) but recent experience suggests that, for the foreseeable future, allies may not take on the scale of defense burden that would be needed to significantly offset the U.S. military burden in their neighborhood vis-à-vis Russia and China.

THE OTHER way diplomacy can help manage the gap between military resources and threats is by rendering one of the major rivals less threatening—in particular, by sequencing. While unfamiliar terrain for the post-Cold War United States, using diplomacy to sequence threats has in fact been the preferred method of averting two-front wars for great powers throughout history. The strategy has taken many forms, but generally boils down to three options.

Option 1: “Flip” the weaker. Perhaps the most common form of sequencing is to align with the weaker of two rivals in order to concentrate resources on the stronger. This is the method that Edwardian Britain used when it recruited Tsarist Russia—against which it had waged a decades-long cold war in Central Asia no less intense than our own—into an alliance against Imperial Germany.

This option is the most familiar to Americans from what was, arguably, our only episode in big-league sequencing: President Richard M. Nixon’s China gambit. Whenever the China-Russia problem is raised, this strategy is invariably discussed, except with Russia now cast as the rival to be courted and “flipped” in order for the United States to concentrate on China. The appeal of this option is obvious: as the largest and most formidable of China’s landward neighbors, a friendly (to us)—or even unaligned Russia—would force China to divert attention from the coasts (and competition with the United States) to its land frontiers. Perhaps it is for this reason that successive administrations have attempted to ease tensions with Russia to support a shift of emphasis to the Indo-Pacific.

The problem with this approach is that Russia does not need it. When Henry Kissinger approached China, Beijing needed the opening as much or more than the United States because it feared attack by the USSR. Similarly, when the British brokered the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, Russia had just suffered a devastating defeat by Japan and needed relief from the resulting intense military, budgetary, and domestic pressures. It shared with Britain the common and very compelling threat of Imperial Germany. And the two had something

tangible (Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet) to barter over as a means of cementing the deal.

None of these conditions are present in U.S.-Russia relations today. Russia has not recently suffered a defeat or major setback; indeed, Vladimir Putin is riding high. Contrary to misconception, there is nothing tangible, at least as Russia would define it, over which the United States and Russia can constructively barter. Setting aside the moral considerations of say, a partition of Ukraine, any such understanding would lack enforceability and almost inevitably result in Moscow moving the geopolitical line of contact a few degrees of longitude to the west, to Poland or Romania. Were this to happen, the United States would likely find the pressure on the NDS' intended secondary theater heightened rather than alleviated.

Option 2: Defer competition with the stronger. A second sequencing strategy is to delay rivalry with the stronger of two opponents in order to deal conclusively with the weaker. The mid-sixteenth-century Republic of Venice employed such a strategy to deflect the threat of the rising Ottoman Empire and deal conclusively with its mainland rival Milan. A similar logic guided Britain's ill-fated quest in the 1930s to appease Germany in order to prioritize naval resources for the Far East and buy time for rearmament in Europe.

In today's context, a deferment strategy would require America to palliate disputes with China and avoid outright military collisions with Beijing in order to concentrate pressure on Russia, with a view to eventually shifting attention to China at a later date. Taken to its logical extension, this strategy would require at least a partial reconsideration of the NDS' hyper concentration on China. If pursued on the historical pattern, it could potentially even entail an effort to enlist a "responsible stakeholder" China, at least tactically and temporarily, in the effort to isolate what is the more truculent Russia.

The obvious problem with this option is that the window of opportunity it requires vis-à-vis China has probably already closed. The ideal time for such an approach would have been earlier in the previous decade, after Russia had already embarked upon its aggressive course but when China remained a nominally constructive player and the balance of power remained favorable to the United States. Since then, the U.S.-China dynamic has deteriorated in ways that make a prolonged period of tranquility in that relationship hard to imagine. Crucially, this

is more and more because of the decision on Beijing's part to relinquish a hide-and-bide posture and align closely with Moscow, and by its increasing material strength vis-à-vis the West. Against this backdrop, taking a softer U.S. line on, say, Taiwan, might encourage rather than deflect Chinese ambition while impairing Washington's ability to recruit the regional coalitions upon which its long-term prospects in Asia ultimately rest. As the 1930s British example shows, the results of such a miscalculation could be catastrophic, potentially even hastening the advent of the two-front war that the strategy was intended to avoid.

Option 3: Co-opt both rivals. The third and most difficult, but perhaps most elegant, solution for the simultaneity problem has been to transcend it entirely—to negate its pressures by co-opting both rivals into cooperative structures that prevent or mitigate conflict. This was the method that the nineteenth-century Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich used to enmesh Austria's flanking rivals, France and Russia, in a system of concert diplomacy that kept the peace in Europe for almost a century.

The modern equivalent of Metternich's strategy would be for America to use international institutions to engage China and Russia in the pursuit of win-win outcomes on shared global problems. That is what the Biden administration appears to have had in mind in its efforts to find common ground with Beijing and Moscow on "transnational" problems like climate change.

Cooperation with geopolitical rivals can be beneficial when the resulting structures are built on stable power relationships and shared interests. But neither of these conditions are present in U.S. relations with China and Russia. Both powers maintain active revisionist claims, the fulfillment of which are, from their perspectives, a prerequisite to achieving their full potential as great powers. Both correctly see the underlying power relationships upon which current institutions rest as being in flux and, in China's case, changing in their favor. For both, international institutions are a means by which to pursue power politics and constrain U.S. power. As such, U.S. efforts to jointly tackle, say, climate change, are attractive insofar as they entail self-damaging U.S. concessions with which China can feign compliance while waiting on the correlation of power to shift more decisively to Beijing's advantage.

IN SUM, none of the classic sequencing strategies pursued by past great powers perfectly fits America's circumstances today. Russia is too hostile to be "flipped,"

China is too far along in its rise to be deferred, and both powers' demands are too expansive and incompatible for either to be effectively co-opted.

The common denominator in all three cases is the extent to which U.S. relations with its rivals have hardened into patterns of confrontation and escalation. If anything, the emerging pattern in world affairs, with antagonistic and increasingly irreconcilable blocs, more closely resembles the lead-up to World War I rather than the flexible diplomacy and shifting coalitions of earlier centuries.

There is, however, one force that could change this pattern and spur a moment of creativity in international alignments: fear. Historically, fear of a rising power has been, far and away, the primary motivation for states to realign their priorities. Advocates of détente with Russia (option 1) are correct to see that that country is likely to be more subject to the effects of fear, due to its weaker power position. To date, Russia's willingness to cooperate with rather than counterbalance China has coincided with Beijing's pursuit of a "hide-and-bide" foreign policy. But as China converts its growing economic heft into greater military power and political influence, Russia's fear of subordination to China will inevitably grow.

From an American strategic perspective, the big question is: when will that occur? Advocates of deferring competition with China (option 2) are right that that country has not yet realized its full military potential. This creates a window of opportunity for U.S. diplomacy to effect permutations that would place us in a more favorable position. At the same time, we cannot let up our military guard in the western Pacific during this period, as such an alleviation could tempt the Chinese to attempt a break-out now—by, say, trying to grab Taiwan—before the United States can realize the force upgrades envisioned under the NDS. Thus, America needs Russia's fear of China to mature on a faster timeline than China's aspirations for meeting key military capability targets vis-à-vis the United States can be realized.

That may, in fact, be what is now happening. The moment of truth for Russia on China is being accelerated by two factors. First, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly widened the power disparity between the two Eurasian powers. Whereas China has seen historic growth over the past year, Russia has experienced a severe contraction, which is likely to prove sustained. The effects can be seen not least in Russian budgetary debates, where for the first time the

momentum seems to be shifting to advocates of tapping Russian reserve funds to provide stimulatory spending on infrastructure, likely at the expense of defense.

The second factor is Western sanctions, one practical consequence of which has been to push Russia toward greater reliance on Chinese finance and markets. Nowhere is this more keenly felt than in the Russian Far East, Siberia, and Central Asia, where China's bid to become the dominant investor in industries and infrastructure increasingly threatens Russian interests and sovereignty.

In both cases, the paradox is that it is Russia's deepening dependence on China that will increase Russian fear and fuel its need for strategic alternatives. The dilemma facing the Kremlin will be whether to continue to abet China's rise and risk becoming a sidecar to Beijing's ambitions or to seek to counterbalance its power.

Within this paradox lies an opportunity for the United States. The goal of our diplomacy toward Russia—and the crux of our strategy for avoiding a two-front war—should be to sharpen Russia's dilemma and ensure that, as its fear of China ripens, it has viable options for a foreign policy other than aggression toward the West. Such an approach would not operate on the premise that the United States can court or woo Russia into a conciliatory stance. To the contrary, its premise would be that to the extent that any reduction in tensions with Russia is still possible, it will be because Russia's leaders decide on the basis of a cold-blooded read of their own interests that détente with the West meets Russia's security needs better than their present, aggressive policies do.

Rather than asking "at what cost" would we achieve détente with Russia, such an approach would ask "under what conditions" can we imagine Russia choosing that path for itself and focus on defining and setting those conditions. The more Russia sees the path of westward expansion blocked and the more it sees practical alternatives to Chinese dominance in the east, the less it will be at odds with our fundamental interests and the more it will be at odds with China. In this sense, the late Zbigniew Brzezinski had it backwards: we shouldn't want Russia to become more Western in its geopolitical vocation; we should want it to become more Eastern.

OF COURSE, it is not in America's power to choose an eastern path for Russia. What is within our power is to shape the incentives for Russia to make this choice for itself. In practical terms, that would require the United States to form a coherent—but in effect bifurcated—Russia policy, with one plank focused on Russia-in-Europe and the other, largely distinct plank focused on Russia-in-Asia. The leitmotif of the Russia-in-Europe policy should be adamant resistance to Russian expansion culminating in a decisive defeat for Russia's present aims in Europe's borderlands. If history is any indication, Russia only takes détente with an adversary seriously after it has been forced to do so by a defeat or serious setback. This was as much a precondition for Ronald Reagan's success at Reykjavík after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan as it was for the English statesmen who brokered the Anglo-Russian entente after Russia's defeat at Port Arthur in 1905. Attempts to reach détente before Russia has suffered such a setback are not only likely to fail, they are also likely to be counterproductive insofar as they implicitly concede territory and validate the wager of Russia's current leaders that renewed empire in the west is achievable by force of arms.

The equivalent of Port Arthur or Afghanistan today is Ukraine. The United States should wish to see Russia suffer a military rebuff of sufficient magnitude to prompt its leaders to reassess their assumptions about the permissiveness of the post-Soviet space as a preferred zone of strategic expansion. America can help bring about this outcome much as it did in Afghanistan: by providing locals the means to better resist Russia at higher volumes than it has done to date and encouraging European allies to do the same. And we should significantly raise the costs for cyber and other attacks on the United States, including via reciprocal attacks on Russian critical infrastructure and by sanctioning Putin's inner circle and the secondary market for Russian bonds.

This pain, however, must have a goal beyond simply punishment; namely, to inflict a defeat for strategic effect, with the calculated aim of convincing Russia that its chosen path of westward expansion is closed. By contrast, U.S. policy toward Russia-in-Asia should be calibrated to encourage a redirection of Russia's focus and energies in this direction. Such a policy would consist of economic, military, and political planks.

Economically, the United States should create incentives for its Asian allies and partners to prevent China from gaining an economic monopoly in the Russian Far East, Siberia, and Central Asia. The country best positioned to do so is

Japan, which possesses the proximity, capital, and demonstrated desire to compete with China in these regions. Indeed, the Abe government's Eurasian strategy aimed explicitly to prevent a Sino-Russian combination and devoted more than \$30 billion toward the regions in question. Rather than stymieing these efforts as U.S. policy has tended to do, we should encourage them. A good starting point would be to create targeted exemptions from U.S. sanctions for Asian allies and partners whose firms are attracted to Russia's east. Over time such an arrangement could evolve into a broader "three peninsulas" framework, modeled on the Three Seas Initiative in Central Europe and aimed at developing alternatives to the Belt and Road Initiative. The aim should be to introduce strategic competition in the form of investment from America's Asia-Pacific allies and partners, and thereby deprive China of its current monopoly status. The military plank of the new U.S. policy would entail easing U.S. opposition to Russian arms sales to any country in the Indo-Pacific theater that seeks to acquire those weapons to resist Chinese expansion. There is no reason that the United States should wish to sanction companies or individuals in India—a strategically vital country that America is trying to court—when the weapons triggering the sanctions are aimed at the common foe of China. Sanctions waivers could include reasonable safeguards for U.S. weapons systems operating alongside one another in the same country—though, in many cases, it may actually be in the U.S. interest to see the states in question continue buying Russian weapons that are cheaper, easier to operate, and already familiar to local militaries, rather than opt for more advanced Western weaponry. Reducing U.S. obstacles to this outcome could prove useful, not only in removing a source of friction with these regional allies and partners but in introducing new points of friction between Russia and China.

The political plank of the policy would aim to assist in the alignment of Russia with other Asian states concerned about China's rise. Regional allies like Japan and South Korea have long advocated for such an approach. Should conditions allow, it's not unimaginable that the United States could even reprise its role from the early twentieth century in helping Russia and Japan resolve outstanding territorial disputes such as that over the Kuril Islands, progress on which was a major objective of the Abe government's efforts to build a common Russo-Japanese front vis-à-vis China. These are efforts the United States, given the proximity of Alaska to the territories in question, should want to see succeed. The aim should be to create a barrier to China's further development as a north Pacific/Arctic power—objectives which Moscow shares.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are other areas, such as arms control and the Arctic itself, where overlaps in U.S.-Russian interests may eventually be found, albeit on a more modest scale. The point is not to oversell the prospect for progress in any of these areas but rather to advocate for the United States to carve out a carefully defined set of issues specific to Asia where a greater Russian presence and focus would benefit the United States and then create incentives for that to happen even as we seek the defeat of Russia's agenda in the West.

AN EASTWARD reorientation of Russia's foreign policy is not as far-fetched as it might at first seem. Earlier great powers have used similar techniques to encourage competitors to refocus their energies away from collisions with their own. In the 1870s and 80s, Otto von Bismarck pushed Austria, following its defeat at Sadowa, away from its centuries-old focus on Germany toward a new vocation as a Balkan power. Great Britain successfully encouraged Russia to refocus its attention away from India's northwestern frontier following the defeat in 1905, and achieved a similar feat in helping to reorient France's attention away from Egypt following its rebuke at Fashoda.

A U.S. strategy along similar lines would not, of course, be risk-free. The current Russian leadership could simply pocket the benefits of Japanese investment in Vladivostok or arms sales to India and use these proceeds to fund aggression in the west. To work, the strategy would require the door to westward expansion to be slammed—hard. The worst of all worlds would be to open up opportunities for Russia in its east while going soft in the west. An effective pivot requires a fulcrum, and Ukraine is that fulcrum.

But the risks of the strategy have to be weighed against the risks of failure to “turn off” one of the two theaters requiring significant U.S. military attention in the event of a major crisis. The greatest of those risks would be a two-front war itself. Another is the risk that the threat of such a war could eventually tempt the United States into trying to appease or barter with Russia on its western frontier—a course that is fraught with moral hazard and could paradoxically complicate America's ability to militarily prioritize the western Pacific. The strategy advocated here would not require the United States to defer a robust defense of its interests in Asia; Indeed, the strategy's European component can be pursued using

current U.S. force levels there—or eventually even less, as the Europeans step up more and more.

This strategy would, in any event, mark an improvement over the current U.S. approach, which seems to operate on the premise that the United States can continue running its foreign policy in ways that are fundamentally out of alignment with its military resources—or that America will be able to someday return to Cold War-era defense spending levels. It would work with the momentum and logic of current U.S. Russia policy and need not come at the expense of America's emphasis on democracy and human rights in relations with that country. In fact, the focus on the development of "carrots" in the east could be made conditional on specific forms of Russian behavior in a number of fields, as circumstances warrant. But nor does the strategy's success hinge on the assumption of regime change; to a greater extent than current policy, it would harness punitive measures like sanctions to a coherent goal (reorienting Russia eastward) that, critically, includes a positive component (the development of Russia's neglected east). It also has the merit of working with, rather than against, the interests and desires of U.S. allies in Asia without coming at the expense of the interests of European allies or the independence and security of Europe's frontline states.

A virtue of the proposed strategy is that it is active rather than passive. It would take the United States out of the position of waiting idly for opportunities to emerge to "drive wedges" between Russia and China. Instead, it would involve an active political program that harnesses the various instruments of U.S. national power (diplomacy, financial, military, alliances) toward a tangible goal.

But perhaps the greatest selling point for the strategy is that it would make the most of America's window of opportunity to sequence the Russian and Chinese threats. That window is closing quickly. The deepening dependency of Russia on China bodes ill for the United States in a future conflict. We should use the time available to bring U.S. power to bear in the most efficacious ways possible to avert a two-front war.

A. Wess Mitchell is a former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs and is now a principal and co-founder at The Marathon Initiative, a think-tank dedicated to the study of great power competition. This essay draws

upon elements of a report that he prepared for the Pentagon Office of Net Assessment in fall 2020.

Published in The Nationalintrest

A New Afghanistan and History By Atle

Hetland

Today, I had planned to write about Afghan refugee issues, and also draw some lessons from the past, noting that Pakistan has been the main hosting country for Afghan refugees, quite successfully, over two score years. But being a columnist, it is probably expected that I also write about the broader issues in the New Afghanistan.

After 20 years of foreign occupation, Afghanistan now finally has indigenous rulers. Whether we find the new rules, led by the Taliban, who were also having a controversial rule before the foreign occupation in 2001, to be to our liking or not, we should indeed be glad that the country is now ruled by locals, not occupiers from far away. That is a prerequisite for democratic development.

The new Afghan leaders are supported by the country's immediate neighbours and countries in the region from Turkey to China, from Saudi Arabia to Russia, and obviously including Central Asia; more than ever, Pakistan will play an important role. We all wish and pray that the new rulers, having a particularly demanding task, will succeed for the good of all Afghans. Statements at a press conference last Tuesday promise well, but then words are not action.

I had just returned to Pakistan for a year-long contract dealing with refugee education in UNHCR when 9/11 happened. Soon thereafter, the USA began the bombing of targets in the mountains of Afghanistan bordering Pakistan. It was claimed that Afghanistan was harbouring perpetrators belonging to the Al-Qaeda network, who were accused of the terrorist attacks in New York and Pennsylvania on 9/11; other countries were also mentioned, but it was Afghanistan that became the US' war target. That time, I and many colleagues in the UN thought that maybe the bombing would last for a short time (similar to the 'habit' of the USA having bombed Iraq on several earlier occasions). Nobody could have imagined that it was just the beginning of a full US occupation of Afghanistan, even after the Taliban regime had been removed. NATO was also included, but that and the UN support remained questionable.

From being a response to the 9/11 tragedy in the USA, the West decided to prolong its occupation of Afghanistan till last week, claiming nation building and a build-up of Afghanistan's military and civilian institutions. None of us, not even the occupiers, could believe in our darkest moments that it would become America's longest lasting war to go on for 20 years—until USA with the coalition members reduced its military presence over this summer, aiming at full withdrawal by this year's 9/11. And then, 'suddenly', the Taliban movement, with the majority of the Afghan people, took over a few days ago—to the West's disbelief.

In 2002, I became a consultant in UNESCO since we thought that the UN Education Organisation should be more directly involved in professional aspects of providing education and training for refugees, again, including peace education. UNHCR and the Pakistan government, with German and other NGOs, were practical implementers. We were all of the opinion that education was a key to Afghanistan's future success, for individuals, families and the country. The international community did a lot, but their talk was sweeter than the concrete actions and more than half of all refugees received no assistance.

In 2002 and 2003, many refugees returned to Afghanistan. Some had come as long ago as during the Soviet occupation from 1979-1989, and during the civil war years in the 1990s, and others had come during the Taliban rule from 1996-2001. But then after the USA-NATO occupation, many refugees felt it was safe to go home. However, work and shelter at home proved much more difficult than foreseen, and many ended up in the slums in Kabul and other big cities, not in home villages, and some gave up and came back to Pakistan.

Still, there are some two and a half million Afghans in Pakistan, most of them urban refugees, and about three-quarters of a million in Iran. Now that the US and the West are over with their unfortunate war in Afghanistan, it is expected that the West will continue assisting Afghanistan's development and redirect its efforts to more important fields than girls and women, and in such ways that are good for all. I have dealt with development aid, including to refugees, for several decades of my career. It is always important that we don't behave as bosses, but as helpers and advisers, as foreign individuals, organisations and countries should. Afghanistan will need help with citizens in the drivers' seat; it is one of the world's poorest and most unfortunate countries, often with internal divisions, and

with foreign occupations. Let us pray for God's mercy and help; may he give us wisdom and compassion.

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Could The Unfolding Situation After Taliban Takeover Of Kabul Be A Game Changer For Afghanistan US Pakistan By Fahd Husain

THE Taliban have upended most calculations. Their lightning reconquest of Afghanistan has pushed the situation, and its stakeholders, into uncharted waters. The magnitude of change could surpass many estimates.

The United States of America is reeling from both the loss of war and loss of face. In the latest issue of the US magazine New Yorker, Robin Wright has penned an article titled 'Does the great retreat from Afghanistan mark the end of the American era?' In the piece, she writes: "It's not just an epic defeat for the United States. The fall of Kabul may serve as a bookend for the era of US global power."

The cost of the humiliating defeat in the two-decades-long 'war on terror' launched by president George Bush in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks — a war that for all practical purposes ended the day the Taliban took back control of Kabul and US personnel had to be evacuated from their embassy via helicopters — indeed the cost of this war is more steep than Bush and his successors could have imagined.

The New Yorker article explains: "For the United States, the costs do not end with its withdrawal from either Afghanistan or Iraq. It could cost another two trillion dollars just to pay for the healthcare and disability of veterans from those wars. And those costs may not peak until 2048. America's longest war will be a lot longer than anyone anticipated two decades ago."

Pakistan is in a delicately promising position after the relatively peaceful transition of power in Kabul.

President Joe Biden is under fire both from Republicans and many Democrats while he grapples with what is being described as a full-blown foreign policy crisis that may overwhelm his domestic agenda. The two-decade-long debacle, the American fatigue from its 'forever wars' and the battering of its perception as a

global leader that its allies could rely on — all these factors may lead to a shrinking American role in this region, and perhaps even beyond. The question therefore is, will the defeat in Afghanistan become a game changer for the United States?

Afghanistan is teetering on the edge, again, after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul and the rest of the country. A civil war has been averted but the shape of things to come remains unclear in the absence of a formal government in Kabul. The Taliban are a reality though that few can ignore. Most will not. The Taliban for their part have to be careful not to give the world a reason to isolate them diplomatically and cripple them financially. The worst-case scenario is a continuation of violence and instability that has ravaged Afghanistan for the last five decades. The best-case scenario however is also a possibility given how various factors appear to be gelling together.

In this scenario, the following could take place: (1) Taliban form an inclusive government that includes leaders from the former Northern Alliance who may also have been part of the Ashraf Ghani regime, as well as representatives from all major ethnic groups; (2) this government is accorded recognition by the international community; (3) with all rivals joined in the government, fighting comes to an end and there is finally peace in the country after decades of conflict; (4) international pressure, and need for assistance, moderates the Taliban government to a degree of acceptable normalcy and the country begins to inch towards the global mainstream; (5) China and Russia as the two largest regional powers enhance their diplomatic and economic footprint inside Afghanistan, with investment leading to greater inter-regional trade and infrastructure connectivity. Prospects brighten for linkages between Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative spinning off prosperity via Afghanistan.

The question therefore is, will the Taliban victory become a game changer for Afghanistan?

Pakistan is in a delicately promising position after the relatively peaceful transition of power in Kabul. After two decades of turmoil across its western border that spilled over and created havoc inside the country, Pakistan could possibly be looking at a vindication of sorts of its long-held policy about the Taliban. The general conclusion drawn by analysts and experts is that Pakistan,

China and Russia have consolidated their positions in the region as a result of the latest developments in Afghanistan while the US and India have lost out.

The possible advantages that Pakistan is looking at are: (1) Kabul will not have a pro-India regime with an intelligence service like NDS actively promoting instability in Pakistan; (2) Peace in Afghanistan would mean reduced pressure of refugees coming into Pakistan, and possibly at a future date a return of some of the nearly four million Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan; (3) Pakistan could open up a land route to Central Asia and beyond and push forward its geo-economic agenda; (4) Pakistan could also try and settle its TTP problem once and for all if the Taliban regime is willing to cooperate in all aspects; (5) a peaceful western border would enable Pakistan to focus more on the continuing threat from the eastern border.

There is of course a downside even to the upside. The fears of scapegoating by the US and other Western nations remains real even though it has not picked up momentum. However, handled deftly, and with greater support from China and Russia, Pakistan can push back if such a campaign is orchestrated. If the Taliban behave, and do the right things, the prospects of a Western blowback against Pakistan can diminish significantly.

The question therefore is, could the strategic change in Afghanistan become a game changer for Pakistan?

Exciting and uncertain times are upon us. With the two-decade-long chapter that started with the 9/11 attacks now closing, a new and promising one is opening up in our region. Are we positioned well to leverage the huge opportunities that may be on offer in the months and years to come?

The writer is Dawn's resident editor in Islamabad.

Twitter: @fahdhusain

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American Senseless War in Afghanistan By

Dr Farah Naz

DESPITE the old saw, success has many fathers while failure has none. America is losing the debate of its strategic and military moves in Afghanistan.

In the past, America had a luxury to choose sides and hold negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan government but no more.

This is not the end of the war; it is merely the end of its direct American phase in Afghanistan/South Asia.

At this phase, we are simply too close to make measured assessments about the American troops' success or failure in Afghanistan.

To assess the cost benefit analysis, we can make preliminary assessments, judgments and embark on morally and strategically prudent American policies.

But, we also understand why America got into the Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan wars. What were its objectives behind such as bringing actual peace; installing democracy; improving their infrastructure development, economy, civilian well-being or security or regime change but for what? The Iraq, Libya and Syrian wars clearly indicate that the American war design/strategy was only to strengthen Israel's position in the Middle East.

To improve that America went into full-fledged war and destroyed their infrastructure. America also went all the way against humanity to help support Israel.

The issue of how such actions are justified in the international arena is becoming a hot debate in International relations.

If we look at the US invasion of Afghanistan it began more than four decades ago with its first American phase, in the 1980s, featured indirect United States intervention on behalf of the anti-Soviet Mujahideen.

According to Eliot A Cohen, the war will assuredly last well beyond the American exit. There will be no power-sharing, no reconciliation, no peace of the brave.

But it looks like the Taliban will receive an edge in the current phase who may torture and slaughter even as they repeal the advances made in women's education and secularism in any form.

But, the entire region including Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, India and the Central Asian Republics will be directly affected with the way this war settles down.

These states have their own stakes involved in the Afghan War. But, the direct cost of this situation will be paid by the people of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's 'Absolutely Not' stance created havoc in the American strategic design towards Taliban/Afghanistan.

But, Americans should remember that they were often not the most important actors on the scene.

The Pakistani and other secret services, the Europeans, the Russians, and, yes, the Afghans themselves made their decisions and did consequential things based on American performance in Afghanistan.

There were abler and weaker leaders, contingent events, and good decisions badly executed as well as bad ones vigorously put into effect.

Sorting out American blunders in Afghanistan is the proper job of historians, not the contemporaries who will most assuredly get it wrong because of preconceived notions, partisan bias, or desire for vindication of previously held positions. The American vague security policies can lead towards destabilization of the region.

With this more debates are emerging such as if the American World War-style of conflicts/actions are correct, justified or merely based on vague security policies.

Does America have had a plan to wage a war or no abstract ideal of a policy implication successfully executed by those charged with so doing at a given moment.

More than four decades of the Afghan War it has become evident that high-level American commitment for years now is lacking.

If there is any surprise, that is regarded as pessimism and distaste. In the past twenty years, the George Bush term of office along with eight years of Barack Obama and four years of Donald Trump, the United States persisted in a conflict that most senior officials in those administrations remained arrogant, over-confident and had poor war/strategic policies.

They have been misleading the Congress and its citizens about the on ground realities and narratives that they build around their victory in Afghanistan during their war with the Taliban to justify their moves.

However, they left behind collapsed infrastructure and non-competitive Afghan status in the international market.

The question arises why America went into war in Afghanistan? What sort of interests America was looking forward to achieving from the Afghan war? If America failed to achieve its interests in Afghanistan, then what's next? To me, the only reason why America went into Afghanistan could be to keep an eye on China.

As an attack on the Iconic World Trade Center was a complete intelligence failure by the United States or it was a part of the grand strategy to invade Afghanistan. Militants who were a part of the 9/11 attack were trained and educated in America.

If the latter is correct then since Chinese government is capable enough to control its borders, having a strong intelligence and surveillance system, for America taxing war in Afghanistan becomes onerous. However, the US strategic freedom in Afghanistan will come at the cost of strategic reputation.

It is not simply possible to walk away from a war one has been committed to and pay no penalty, even if the penalty is less than the cost of continuing to fight.

The Afghan exit will also come with a moral cost, which honesty should compel Americans to acknowledge and act upon.

Looking at their track record, can America afford future wars? I think, no. Because America is already struggling to win the modern war as this is the information warfare age.

According to the SIGAR report 30 July 2021, if American troops try to invade any other state in the future they will reap the same consequences.

The SIGAR report further highlights that America built its war strategy based on infinite lies to its own citizens and Congress. America has not received any victory in Afghanistan.

Though, an exaggerated tone is used to justify its actions in Afghanistan. These lies came from the ambassadors, armed forces and people with authority.

They have been misleading the Congress about facts on ground and build fancy narratives around their fake victory.

This is, then, a humbling moment for America and a moment of relief for the parents of servicemen and servicewomen who would otherwise deploy to a war in which their politicians do not believe.

It should be a moment of reflection for the leaders of institutions that performed less well than they ought to have.

It is a moment for diplomats to rebalance and reconfigure elements of American foreign policy and it is most definitely a moment of moral responsibility.

Looks like American war strategy in Afghanistan was based on short term planning rather than a long term strategy.

Unfortunately, wherever America invaded they confronted the same fortune. Such as in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Vietnam and Afghanistan. America lost the wars but self proclaimed victory based on lies remained at the forefront.

It's high time to realize that the US continuous involvement in various wars provides avenues to the Chinese government to gradually strengthen its economy and power position across the world. It's America's senseless war that has made China what China is today.

—The writer is an Assistant Professor, Department of Government and Public Policy, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Sciences and Technology.

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Changing Shades of US-India Ties Under Biden By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

THE conventional wisdom suggests that the US-India partnership, due to the bipartisan support it has been enjoying in Washington may still face some crosscurrents.

This relationship, impelled by intensifying cooperation in the security sphere and traditionally pushed by strategic needs, will continue to gain momentum, albeit some reservations could arise in grey areas such as US relations with China, Pakistan, US-India trade relations, and India's Afghan role.

Heuristically, the US-India relationship is going to be in a good place — albeit no matter who won the 2020 election, simply because there is strong bipartisan support in Washington for US -India partnership, and there has been for several decades against the odds, US-India relations flourished under President Donald Trump.

It looks that a Biden Administration will be a less abrasive and more traditional partner for India and is likely to seek continuity in deepening ties with India, particularly as it seeks to work with partners around the world to tackle global challenges and compete with China.

Although the shared concerns over China and a strong rapport between the previous Trump Administration and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi insulated the relationship from much of the chaos other US partners experienced, India welcomed President Joe Biden's "spectacular victory."

Enthusiasm for Biden's win signalled a hope in New Delhi that the new administration would cement the gains made over the past four years and pave the way for a closer US-India partnership.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration is sought to amplify US strength by banding more closely with allies across the region — vindicated by the latest talks in Alaska, US officials choreographed a series of meetings with allies as part of an effort to corral them as a bloc.

That consisted of a virtual meeting of Australia, India, Japan and the US, or the “Quad”; a previous visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin to South Korea and Japan; and also manifested by Austin’s solo trip to New Delhi.

Former Indian Ambassador to the US Meera Shankar said the handling of China and sustaining a balance in Asia will be, perhaps, the most important international challenge for Biden, and countries like India will play an important role in this.

“I think the upward trajectory of our strategic relations will continue. There is a bipartisan consensus in the US to have a strong relationship with India, whether it is a Republican or a Democratic Administration”, Shankar said.

For the enthusiasts both in New Delhi and Washington, there could be a good start of US-India relations under the Biden Administration; for traditionalists, there could still be some grey areas— such as India, Kashmir policy, India’s role in Afghanistan, the fake news role of Indian media as surfaced by EU disinformation Lab, India’s overwhelming desire of acquiring more nuclear weapons — that could create some cross currents between the American and Indian policymakers.

And above all, the Biden Administration approaches Pakistan could also limit US -India cooperation. Biden may warm to Pakistan in hopes of receiving concessions in Afghanistan.

Any rapprochement between the United States and Pakistan is enviously viewed in New Delhi -thereby downgrading Washington’s reliability, as a security partner.

However, given the bipartisan consensus in Washington about the intensifying geopolitical and technological competition between China and the US, Delhi will be relatively confident that India will continue to be seen as a key security partner in Washington.

Also, the US emphasis on democratic institutions and norms across the world and that “a shared commitment to democratic values is the bedrock for the US - India relationship” did not find any space in the Indian readout of the Biden-Modi phone call. This could be an issue that may put India in an awkward situation.

In addition, as Washington has become increasingly concerned about China’s growing presence and assertiveness across Asia, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, launched under the Trump Administration and developed in part as a way of recognising India’s growing role in the region seems likely to persist in some capacity under Biden.

The Biden Administration has also expressed a propensity to cooperate with China on transnational issues like climate change, non-proliferation and global health security.

And yet Biden Administration seems also determined on the human rights issue. For India, there is a flip side to the potential return of human rights as a cornerstone of US foreign policy.

Gone are the days when Biden stated his admiration for India’s diversity and inclusiveness, his campaign website and other members of the Democratic Party have expressed concerns over the potentially adverse human rights impact of some of the Indian government’s recent policies, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the clampdown on political freedom in Jammu and Kashmir since the revocation of its special status in August 2019.

Biden’s approach to US-India trade disputes is unclear. India seeks reinstatement of its privileged access as a developing country to the US market.

Trump abolished this benefit and Biden may not restore it without greater US access to the Indian market in return — exactly when New Delhi itself has become more protectionist.

More liberal US visa policies for Indian professionals could take the sting out of these trade problems.

The US and Indian visions of global order have important differences and there could be as many opportunities for irritations as perceived cooperation.

The current visit of the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to India, where concerns are glaringly shown over India's discriminatory policies against the Indian minorities, and the Modi Administration's HR violations in India-occupied Kashmir indicates that everything is not good between the two sides.

The currently upheld concern of the UNSC whereby it condemns India's terrorist attack on the Dasu dam is also reflective of changing Washington's stance towards New Delhi.

And most importantly, given the gravity of the Quartet strategy for Afghanistan, thereby involving the US, China, Russia, and Pakistan's role in the future settlement of Afghanistan is a clear endorsement of the fact that India's role is by no means welcomed in Afghanistan.

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

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Global Race For Supremacy By Talat Masood

History bears witness that powerful nations have peacefully competed or gone to war to attain regional and global dominance. At the end of World War-II in 1945, Britain had won — but at a great cost. Its economy had been seriously impaired and so was that of its allies, and the US clearly emerged as the lone economic and military superpower. The US is still the largest economy but is now under threat by China. In the last few decades, the Chinese economy has been on the rise fueled by its extensive manufacturing infrastructure and rapidly growing technological base. The US has, however, maintained its supremacy due to its startup culture that incentivises risk-taking and innovation.

Competition between nations is not new and historically has been the norm. But the rapid rise of China and the trajectory of its economic growth, according to the US, have not been based on fair practices, including industrial espionage. And if not checked, it could disincentivise investment and creativity, impacting the global economic growth. Such allegations are not new, as many major growing economies in the past have been accused of similar practices. Even the US at one time apparently benefited in the design and development of some high-tech military equipment by copying German technology.

The rivalry between the US and China is also a clash between two very different political and economic systems. Which model would prevail in the end and what would be the major factors contributing to the success or failure need to be assessed? Innovation requires freedom of thought, a liberal environment and a culture of risk-taking where failure is not punished but is looked at as learning experience. The US has instilled a culture of risk-taking and its economy can sustain it.

An innovative environment also has to be supported by extensive network of Research and Development organisations that in turn require qualified and experienced engineers and scientists. To establish and maintain R&D and industrial organisations requires a continuous flow of talented human resource and funding.

Only those countries that have established this elaborate network are able to sustain high production and innovation. In terms of manufacturing capacity, there is no other country that has the manpower and support infrastructure to scale as China can. This is an area where its superiority is unquestionable. The way it can mobilise people and direct them due to the hold that communist party or government exercises is obviously not available in free societies.

There are nevertheless certain major weaknesses that China will have to focus to compete with the West in the long-term. It will have to update its education system to develop the culture of questioning of status quo and the thirst for enquiry to compete with the US and Europe in technology and science. However, China's political system is authoritarian and does not encourage independent thinking. It is also doubtful if Chinese authorities would allow total freedom to institutions engaged in pursuing scientific and technological endeavors.

For the US to compete with China in manufacturing it will have to invest in the supply chain eco system as well as automation. There is always a flip side to any upgradation. For example, automation would require the US to find alternate means of livelihood for those who lose their jobs. It means retraining whole new areas of investment — not an easy proposition by any means — the US will not be able to compete with China in low-tech products such as toys, home accessories, cycles, etcetera.

In defence equipment and technology, China is trying to build a solid manufacturing and R&D infrastructure and has made huge strides but would still take few years to be close to the US or even some of the European countries. It has to be seen as to what extent China would benefit by procuring Russian military hardware and technology. We need to keep in mind that notwithstanding China's serious efforts to calm the political environment and reduce apprehensions about its economic policies, the US, Japan, South Korea and European countries are all strengthening alliances to counter China's rise. It is not surprising that the economy of all these countries is closely integrated with that of China and it is not easy to find an alternative.

The latest President Biden's policy of cracking down on Chinese apps, and adding several Chinese companies to the US investment blacklist reflects how wary the administration is of their penetration and dominance in the US market. China has responded with caution and restraint but realises that its relations with

the US have entered an adversarial phase and it would have to adjust its external and internal policies to confront the emerging reality.

For Pakistan it poses a new set of challenges, trying to maintain its strong strategic and economic relations with Beijing and keeping the avenues of cooperation with Washington open. However, with Taliban in Afghanistan occupying provincial cities and Afghan government crumbling, the possibility of any negotiated settlement has totally faded. Unfortunately, the unreasonable and hostile attitude of the Afghan government that is under heavy influence of India places Pakistan in a difficult situation. Dealing with US in this chaotic regional environment is not easy.

In the last few decades success of the international trading systems and overall increase in global GDP has been the cooperation and interlinking of economies. It is only through the successive implementation of this cycle that high tech major powers are able to sustain mass production and innovation. As indications are, the US and Europe may introduce new rules and regulations to prevent China from acquiring high-end technology. These measures could distort the functioning of free market enterprise and push back the very forces inherent in its success. Moreover, which other country or group of countries could the US trade with on such a mass scale as China and be one of the engines of its economy?

The new 'Cold War' would have a ripple effect on countries such as Pakistan and dealing with it would be a major challenge.

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China And America: A New Game In A New Era – Analysis By William H. Overholt

China and the United States are in a different game than the rising power/established power conflicts of the past. Most analyses of such rivalries are based on pre–World War II history and fail to notice that the game changed radically after World War II. Sometimes when alterations are made in the rules or implements of a game, the risks and the optimal strategies change.

Leading scholars and strategists tend to misread the lessons of the past for Sino-American conflict because they fail to recognize that these radical changes constitute a new game.

Disciplinary silos favor an overemphasis on political-military relationships and enable political scientists and historians to ignore decisive economic issues. Those leaders responsible for managing the U.S.-China relationship arrive at the same over-emphasis on the military because in peacetime our national allocation of resources is determined by Congressional lobbying, where the military-industrial complex has an overwhelming advantage.

I will begin and end with the problems of understanding and playing the right game, while addressing other crucial issues in the relationship. The key messages are; military conflict is far from inevitable; we have serious conflicts with China, but also enormous common interests that are currently being neglected; China is not a demon and our allies are not angels; we need to live in the world as it is, not as we wish it to be; and, above all, to continue as a world leader, Americans must play the new game.

Is War with China Inevitable?

A common baseline analogy of the U.S.-China relationship is the Thucydides Trap. From the time of ancient Greece through World War II, when a rising power met an established power, war resulted roughly three out of every four times.¹ Even putting aside that fourth time, political scientists have been unwilling to confront the way things have changed since World War II. From ancient Greece through World War II, important conflicts were typically between neighbors, each using its military power to grab territory from its neighbors: examples include

Athens and Sparta, or Germany and France. Post–WWII conflicts are not like that. Two things have changed: We have learned how to grow economies much faster; and military technology— not just nuclear technology—has become vastly more destructive. Both sides are likely to lose if they pursue the historical path to great power dominance.

As a result, the path to becoming or remaining a great power has become primarily an economic path. This is a fundamental shift in the way the world works—a new game. To miss that, as most of our international relations writers and strategists do, is tantamount to an economist missing the industrial revolution.

During the Cold War, the United States needed a superior military. We had to prevail in the Berlin Airlift and the Cuban Missile Crisis. But it was our economic strategy that ultimately won the Cold War. We delivered decisive aid and institution-building programs, starting with Greece and Turkey. Then, using the Bretton Woods system, organized around the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO), we created a global network of development centered on ourselves, uplifting friends and allies in a way that was sustainable and continually growing. In contrast, the Soviet Union poured all its resources into its military, while maintaining a traditional empire, and bankrupted itself. For us this was an economic victory. The United States played the game the new way. The Soviets played the old way and lost.

What About Other Countries?

Japan became a big power without much of a military. South Korea, initially inferior economically, militarily, and in political stability to its northern opponent, changed its bet under General Park Chung Hee from military to economic priorities. It is now about 50 times larger economically than North Korea, which continues to emphasize military priorities.

Until the 1960s, Indonesia claimed much of Southeast Asia but had a hapless economy and less regional stature than the Philippines. Social distress made Indonesia home to a vast, potentially violent and destabilizing Islamist movement as well as a huge communist party. After 1966, it refocused on economic development and, having stabilized by providing most of its people a stake in society, became the unquestioned leader of Southeast Asia. Importantly, it

became a leader by giving up most of its territorial claims in order to focus on economic development. It played the new game.

In China, Deng Xiaoping instituted dramatic cuts to the military budget as a percent of GDP and settled most of China's land border disputes in order to focus on economic growth. The subsequent economic takeoff made China a major power well before the current military buildup began. China's military rise is impressive, but its global leadership lives or dies on domestic economic growth and its international economic strategy.

The path to becoming a successful big power has become an economic strategy protected by a strong military—or an ally with a strong military. Economic strategies differ from military strategies in that they are not inherently zero-sum; both sides can win. When Germany and France fought, one won while the other lost. When the United States and Japan, or the United States and China compete, both can prosper. That is a vital aspect of the current U.S.-China rivalry.

China is 8000 miles away from the United States: U.S.-China territorial issues are trivial. If we behave like a pre-World War II power, we risk making the Thucydides Trap a self-fulfilling prophecy. To some extent, we are falling into that trap, as are China and Japan. If we play the game the traditional way, we may indeed end up trapped. Graham Allison's *Destined for War*, offers a brilliant exposition of the consequences.² We may just lose in the struggle for leadership by fumbling our economic management. Military conflict is not a law of history, particularly post-World War II.

A Complex Relationship

There are some issues on which the United States must confront China frontally; for instance, some of China's predatory maritime claims, as well as its refusal to provide foreign access to its domestic market. These critical issues are well known, so I will largely focus on less-known interests. There are times and events that call for decisive action, including military action when necessary. In 2012, China took action to claim Scarborough Shoal near the Philippines. This was a critical moment. Scarborough Shoal has long been an important fishing ground for Philippine families. Unlike other South China Sea rocks, Scarborough Shoal was officially claimed by the Philippines in the 1930s, so China's assertion that its 11-dash line was the first claim in the region is false.³ Lacking

Scarborough Shoal, China's line of rocks is broken. In 2012 the United States had overwhelming military superiority in the area and, a very loyal Philippine ally. This was a time for decisive action to limit China's claims and reassure allies. U.S. failure to intervene militarily at that moment was a critical historical turning point in the region.

The area which is claimed under China's nine dashed line. (Keanehm, May 14, 2020) south china sea

The area which is claimed under China's nine dashed line. (Keanehm, May 14, 2020)

While we have conflicts with China that require decisive action, we also have enormous mutual interests. For instance, China is much more open to U.S. trade and investment than allies Japan and South Korea. This openness to trade enabled us to save a failing General Motors and a huge number of jobs during the 2007-2008 financial crisis, an imperative for the American economy. Car companies, the movie industry, all major luxury goods manufacturers, and much of the rest of the economy can only survive with access to Chinese demand. The center of gravity of the world consumer market is now Asia, mainly China, in the way the Western baby boomer generation once was. That is only going to increase, and advocates of decoupling, who typically focus only on China as a supplier, may lead the United States into radical decline. These mutual interests are inextricable.

Effective Sino-American economic collaboration has led to the greatest reduction of poverty in human history. For the first time in thousands of years of human existence, mankind has more basic goods—clothes, food, and much else—than we actually need. There are immense unpublicized national security benefits from the resulting stabilization and concomitant reduction in global grievance and terrorism.

Sino-American collaboration has midwived the world into a post-industrial era, where the majority of jobs are in the service economy, mostly higher-paying and free of the backbreaking labor of the agricultural and industrial eras. Sino-American collaboration has given our world real hope of addressing the fundamental challenges of the next generation; climate change and environmental degradation. If China were still mired in poverty, as is India, there would be little hope of meeting these challenges.

One would never know this from U.S. politicians of both parties, who prefer to focus exclusively on the conflicts with China. They particularly like to blame China for our own failure to adjust to a world of automation. Our society was severely stressed by losing three million manufacturing jobs in a decade, but when China lost 45 million state enterprise jobs in an earlier decade, mostly in manufacturing, their leaders helped citizens find new jobs, mostly in services, rather than blaming us. Our politicians chose to blame China rather than address a domestic social crisis that has dangerously polarized our society.⁴

China's Maritime Issues with Our Allies

These look like a Thucydides Trap problem. They are important but complicated. Chinese behavior in the East and South China Seas, particularly its militarization of rocks there, is destabilizing. China broke its promise not to militarize the area; it broke its promise to withdraw from Scarborough Shoal. China signed the UN Law of the Sea agreement, then violated it. It is impoverishing millions of people in Southeast Asia by using dams to divert vitally needed water. The United States must oppose some of this behavior and be prepared to use force. But there are some other things we must keep in mind as well:

China's behavior reflects our friends' and allies' historical behavior. China is just late and on a Chinese scale.

The maritime claims of smaller Japan cover twice as much of the ocean as China's claims.

The model for Chinese island-building is Japan's earlier buildup of Okinotorishima, halfway between Taiwan and Guam. Japan's territorial claim of 400,000 square kilometers around it is more expansive than China's around any South China Sea rock. Repeated Japanese assertions that the UN has recognized this claim are false.

If you apply the Hague Tribunal standards to the Senkaku/Diaoyu islets, they are rocks, not islands, and Japan should not claim an exclusive zone around them. While the biggest of these rocks is about twice the size of the biggest Spratly or Paracel rocks, they are unable to sustain human life in the manner of the Itu Aba and Woody Island rocks.

U.S. policy for decades acknowledged that China's claims to those rocks have the same legal status as Japan's. That remains true.

Our base in Diego Garcia is key to our strategic position in the Indian Ocean and rests on British control, which offends international standards roughly as much as China's island claims do.

U.S. use of surveillance vessels to provoke and read Chinese defenses evokes deep Chinese fears from a century of predation by Western maritime powers. China's reaction is the exact counterpart of how we feel about their militarization of South China Sea rocks.

Our allies plead for our protection but also that we should not provoke China. Too often we hear the first part but mute the second.

The danger of demonizing China rather than taking a balanced view is illustrated by the Senkaku/Diaoyu crisis of 2012. A Japanese right-wing extremist, Governor Shintaro Ishihara of Tokyo, faced with fading support, decided to mobilize his base by having the Tokyo government purchase the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands from their private owner. The national government, not wanting to be outflanked in domestic politics, proposed to buy them instead. That would break a 40-year understanding with China that kept the peace by promising to defer sovereignty conflicts for the indefinite future. Despite strong warnings from the United States and China, the Japanese government went ahead and bought the islands, effectively transferring sovereignty to Japan in fact, if not in law. China protested with ships and planes as well as words, but in a relatively moderate fashion. The United States reversed its stance and backed Japan emphatically, characterizing China as a potential aggressor.

That action broke the traditional, evenhanded U.S. policy in Asia. That policy was exemplified when President George W. Bush, a strong supporter of Taiwan, finding that Taiwan President Chen Shui-Bian was pushing to the edge of conflict with China, made clear that, if Taipei provoked war, Taiwan was on its own. Based on Bush's wise management, his administration ended up with good relations with both Beijing and Taipei. Likewise, in the early 1970s, U.S. Ambassador to Philippines Philip Habib often started his briefings by saying, "I have two jobs. One is to prevent North Korea from coming south. The other is to prevent South Korea from going north." That balance in no way compromised

successful U.S. defense of its ally. In contrast, the foolish decision to fully support Tokyo's provocation in 2012 ceded to a marginal politician of Japan's extreme right wing the ability to provoke war between the United States and China.⁵

We have serious legitimate grievances about Chinese behavior, but we live in a glass house and need to aim cautiously when we throw stones. America's post-World War II successes have always been facilitated, not harmed, by pragmatically managing complex realities, often relying on soft power.⁶ Our soft power derives heavily from providing a public good of peace and international law, which is impaired if we shift to being just a leader of one gang.

Managing Relations with a Rising Power?

First, we must realize that China will not collapse. Unlike the Soviet Union and its successor state Russia, China has a competitive, self-sustaining economy. Moreover, it has taken care of its people to a degree that countries like Russia, let alone India, cannot imagine. Unlike the Soviet Union and Russia, China's economy and social system are both successful and sustainable.

Second, China is not destined for fast growth indefinitely. Its current administration is seriously mismanaging China's economy. The things our politicians denounce most should actually make them happy; China is making the same mistakes as Japan once did, turning inward and conceding power to giant, inefficient traditional industries. Moreover, this Chinese administration is giving Party committees—politicians—final say over strategic business decisions in every company. China's growth is slowing—it is weaker than official figures suggest—and destined to slow more. Decades of surplus resources have given Chinese leaders a bull market mentality that will likely lead to tears. From 2030 on, China will probably struggle to sustain 3 percent annual growth. China is destined to have the biggest but far from the most advanced or innovative economy.

Third, within a few years, China will change dramatically. Its strategy of maximizing political control is at war with its economic strategy of market efficiency.⁷ While Xi Jinping has strong popular support, the balance of elite opinion is that he is taking China backward. China's decades of rapid growth have made generational change extremely sharp. Each decade, a new generation has brought fundamental change to China's economic and political structure, and generational change is overdue.

China will experience this change—it might get much better, it might get much worse— but it will not remain the same. The United States therefore must position itself for rapid adaptation to a wide range of possible outcomes. We must be ready for an even more muscular authoritarianism and an effort to subdue Taiwan. On the other hand, we must also be ready for the possibility of a much more friendly, restrained, and liberal China. We cannot ensure a good outcome, but if we lock ourselves into an institutionalized Cold War mentality, we can ensure a bad outcome.

Can We Live with The China Model?

Many U.S. commentators, led by Princeton's Aaron Friedberg,⁸ argue that we cannot live with another great power that has such an alien system. This lesson was learned from the depredations of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. But, unlike those dictatorships, China is not trying to impose its system on other countries. Unlike Russia, it has not sought to destabilize democracies. China sees its system as unique. Although that is wrong, because China mainly emulates lessons from the earlier Asian miracle economies, it contradicts any temptation to impose a China Model everywhere. Beijing's mantra is that every country should have the right to choose its own path without foreign pressure.

While China does not impose or proselytize its model, its success in improving the lives of its people, compared to India or the Philippines, challenges our insistence that the Western form of democracy always works best for every country at every level of development. While China formerly was attracted to the Western model of political economy, the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the ascent of President Donald Trump and Brexit convinced Chinese leaders that the Western political economy is vulnerable to catastrophic economic mismanagement. We cannot beat that argument by force, subversion, or economic disincentives. We must find ways to make democracy work better than it has in places like India, in Africa, and recently at home. If we uphold India as the good society in contrast with China, on the basis of a philosophy supposedly based on human dignity, most of the developing world reacts with justified disdain. That is a fundamental challenge, but it is our problem as well as India's, and not a Chinese threat.

Where does this leave us? For the foreseeable future, we cannot defeat or dominate China and they cannot defeat or dominate the United States. We have a peer competitor. That peer competitor does not seek war. A world in which multiple systems coexist is normal in history.

For a brief historical moment—in the 1990s—we were spoiled by a world in which we were not only the dominant economic and military power but also the preeminent role model. Recent peaceful history, not aggression, has changed that. If we eschew nuclear war, we have to live in the world that is and not the world of our dreams.

Geoeconomics: the World We Live In

In the Cold War era, we won the geopolitical game with a geoeconomic strategy. The Bretton Woods system, the core of which was the World Bank, funded infrastructure together with the IMF and the GATT/WTO; they set international standards and managed economic crises.

Economic success stabilized, energized, and unified our alliance system. Again, military superiority was absolutely necessary but not sufficient; the core game was economic.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China in Red, the members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in orange. Credit: Lommes, Wikipedia Commons
China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China in Red, the members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in orange. Credit: Lommes, Wikipedia Commons
Having won the Cold War, we allowed the Bretton Woods institutions and aid systems to atrophy. After the 1994 costless Mexican bailout, Congress banned such bailouts, making it impossible to rescue allies like Thailand during the Asian Crisis of 1997-98. A stingy Congress refused to increase the capital of the World Bank and IMF—even though that capital ultimately costs the United States nothing. Congress did not want to reform the governance of those institutions to conform to the world economy of today, rather than the world of the 1940s. Conforming would have meant ceding some authority to rising powers, especially China. Short-sighted leaders gutted the State Department budget, eliminated the U.S. Information Agency, and truncated our aid and institution-building development programs.

Recently our overuse of economic sanctions has soured much of the world, including leading European allies, on the hegemonic U.S. dollar although they have not (yet) found alternatives.

More recently the Trump administration has reacted against the constraints and price of global leadership, attacking allies, the WTO, the World Health Organization, and the International Criminal Court. Sometimes in dealings with allies and international organizations, we paid a price for leadership; often a leader must give more than it gets. But the prize of leadership was the most powerful position in world history.

The effort to constrain China to a disproportionately small role created a vacuum—for instance, a deficit of \$12 trillion needed for global infrastructure investment—and more recently, a vacuum of leadership on international economic integration, environmental improvement, and amelioration of climate change. China has moved into that vacuum. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is now the big game. It emulates our Bretton Woods system: development banks to fund infrastructure; systematic efforts to create common standards (in railroads, customs clearance procedures, IT standards, and much else); an effort to build the Chinese renminbi (RMB) into a global currency; a currency swap system to aid countries in economic crisis; and institutions to liberalize trade and investment. BRI is a constructive theft of U.S. intellectual property. Moreover, China is now the leader in every form of green energy, and it spends more on environmental alleviation than the United States or all of Europe, while we abandon leadership and subsidize a declining coal industry.

BRI is an inspiring vision—as was the Bretton Woods vision. China convenes four dozen African heads of state to make development plans, then delivers funding and roads. In contrast, the United States provides special forces teams to fight terrorism plus an offshore naval and air presence. If that is the game of competition for influence, China wins. Our greatest recent source of influence in Africa has been President George W. Bush's HIV initiative known as PEPFAR. Even on terrorism, we win local battles but the BRI contains terrorism in the long run.

Three Potential Responses to BRI

First, we can compete. This is our game and we are good at it, but we largely withdrew from the field. The Japanese do compete successfully. China

negotiates a power deal in Indonesia, offering second-rate technology and high prices while demanding a government guarantee. Japan enters, offering first-rate technology, reasonable prices, a record of reliability, and feasibility studies that eliminate the need for a state guarantee. Japan wins. Indonesia wins.

Second, we can compete and coopt, as we did when we faced the same situation with Japan. Japan was competing unfairly in exactly the same ways as China today; bribes, tied aid, and subsidies. We gradually negotiated some common standards. We and the Japanese both won. Above all, countries like Indonesia won. The same is possible with China. The key new Chinese institution—the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank— accepts the basic standards of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Its leader, Jin Liqun, is a respected veteran of both, and many of its projects co-invest with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. While other, bigger Chinese institutions use much lower standards, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank shows where China wishes to go. Recent Chinese reforms of BRI have moved in the right direction—although still inadequately—for the same reasons that Japan did.

Third, we can stand on the sidelines and complain. So far, this third option has been our main response, repeating thoroughly refuted claims⁹ that China is deliberately building a great wall of debt, focusing exclusively on the (very substantial) weaknesses of BRI while ignoring its strengths.

Not only is this a competition we can win if we engage. We win even when BRI succeeds. When successful, Bretton Woods and BRI stabilize countries, reducing the risk of war or terrorism. With competitive Japanese-American help in the 1960s, the growth of the Indonesian economy gave almost everyone a stake in society and Indonesian jihadism mostly evaporated.

Likewise, in the 1970s, everyone knew that Bangladesh was hurtling toward state failure. It might have turned into a gigantic jungle Somalia, spewing terrorists. Instead, the textile industry spilled over from China, employing millions, and stabilized the country. While the factories moved from China, the largest ownership of those factories was American. Bangladesh's stabilization was a joint Chinese-American national security success.

Not long ago, Ethiopia had six violent Leninist parties fighting for control, along with a great famine. But more recently it has been the world's fastest growing country and prior to a recent ethnic flareup showed the potential for more stable politics. The largest foreign contributor to Ethiopia's success is China.

Each of these successes saves the United States both blood and treasure in antiterrorism efforts. The United States must compete against while collaborating with China to spread such successes. BRI mostly services the parts of the world least affected by Bretton Woods successes; Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Just denouncing it, as recent U.S. policymakers have done, has only discredited ourselves.

The outcome of the BRI is unclear. What it means and how it works change frequently. It has big victories, especially in Africa, and huge failures, especially its effort to make the RMB a global currency. BRI has potentially significant vulnerabilities. China has escalated counterproductive sovereignty disputes with all its maritime neighbors from North Korea around to India. It has frequently conducted economic warfare, making countries wary of dependence on China. In Hong Kong and elsewhere it has shattered its previously superb record for honoring international agreements. Chinese leaders overestimated the financial resources that will be available for BRI, and Chinese banks have paid inadequate attention to the creditworthiness of BRI projects.

However, BRI also has major advantages. It puts mutual development at the core of China's policy and brand. Its roads, railroads, ports, and telecommunications are connecting Africa and Central Asia. BRI is giving Chinese business global reach. When BRI promises a road, it gets built immediately, whereas the atherosclerotic World Bank is likely to take 8 years to make a decision. And just as Bretton Woods rode and accelerated the waves of Western European and Eastern Asian recovery from World War II, BRI rides and accelerates the great waves of the 21st century; the integration of Eurasia¹⁰ and the emergence of Africa. The BRI vision of a global network of development is much more sophisticated than the mostly bilateral thinking of the IMF and World Bank.

The highest LEED Certified Green Garment factories in the world. February 2, 2020 (Photo by Fahad Faisal (WIKIPEDIA))

The highest LEED Certified Green Garment factories in the world. February 2, 2020 (Photo by Fahad Faisal (WIKIPEDIA))

China Is Playing the Right Game; the United States Is Not

Why is the United States failing to play the right game when its Cold War strategy delivered the most successful big power outcome in modern history? A small part of the problem is that our scholars have failed to articulate the new game. But the big problem is that in peacetime our resources are allocated by Congressional lobbying, not by any strategic calculation.

Our problem is not a self-aggrandizing military. In fact, our top military officers and officials are the most conscious that we have left the military bereft of the complementary resources that it needs. General James Mattis said, “If you don’t fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.”¹¹ Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, General H.R. McMaster, and many others have been equally outspoken. If we don’t re-energize all the instruments of national power, then we are not just going to spend ammunition. We are going to waste our soldiers’ lives.

Competition, Cooperation, and Overarching Issues

In national security, this combination of competition and shared interests mirrors the economics. Everyone knows the conflicts. They are very important. But also:

The world’s greatest threat of nuclear war is North Korea and there the Chinese goal of denuclearization overlaps 90–95 percent with ours.

Middle East stability matters even more to China than to us because China is far more dependent on Middle East oil.

The United States and China combine efforts to combat piracy.

The greatest long-run threats to us are environmental degradation and climate change. China is now the world leader in those areas.

The national security benefits of the global development created by Sino-American collaboration are never counted but they are vital.

Chinese leaders are very conscious of common interests and do not seek to destabilize the U.S. and EU democracies the way Russia does.

To live in a peaceful world, we Americans must accept that we have a peer competitor, something that never occurred to us during the President George W. Bush years. We can manage that or choose nuclear war. China wants to be number one but is not trying to destroy the United States. We can no longer rule the seas to the beaches of Fujian. We can no longer dominate space unilaterally. We can no longer make all the trade and investment rules or set all the IT

standards. No strategy will get us to that dominant end-state; the likely future is simply competition forever. Our assertion that democracy is the best path to human dignity for all societies at all levels of development will be challenged for the indefinite future. This will be a really difficult adjustment for Americans. However, when we have tried to confine China to a disproportionately small role, we have harmed ourselves and created a vacuum that actually strengthened China. We have to live in the world as it is.

China's challenge is that it must grow up. If it wants to be a great power and world leader, it can no longer aggrandize the South China Sea as if it were Vietnam or Malaysia. If it is to be a great power, then it can no longer exploit its century of weakness to play the victim. If it has four of the world's ten largest banks, it may no longer use infant industry arguments to protect its banks. If it wants Huawei to have the opportunity to run the world's 5G network, then it can no longer exclude foreign firms from the opportunity to play a similarly large role in China. If China wishes the West to limit decoupling, then it must abandon its long-term drive for "self-reliance," which is the same as decoupling.

While the United States can coexist with China, it must still compete successfully. In the Cold War, we integrated all the elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME). Now we have world history's finest military, but we have allowed the other instruments to atrophy. We have a military budget as large as the next eight powers combined, but it is never enough. We always feel exhausted. We do not lose but we do not win. America can only succeed if we recognize that since World War II we have been competing in a new game. It is time to articulate a national security strategy suitable for this new game.

While a successful national strategy requires a rebalance to an economic emphasis, the articulation of that strategy is going to have to come primarily from the war colleges. In the relative complacency of this new century, we no longer elect presidents with foreign policy experience, our Congress allocates resources based on lobbying influence rather than on strategic needs, and our academies are too siloed to provide strategic leadership. Only the war colleges, with their singular focus on national security, and a handful of think tanks have the combination of resources and motivation.

*About the author: William H. Overholt, Senior Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, is the author of *China's Crisis of Success and Asia, America and the Transformation of Geopolitics*, among other works.

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Notes

1 Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; First Edition (May 30, 2017).

2 Ibid.

3 Jay L. Batongbacal, "Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal): Less-known Facts vs. Published Fiction," Institute for Maritime and Ocean Affairs, De La Salle University, September 26, 2014.

4 The decline in U.S. manufacturing jobs has been inexorable since 1947 for the same reasons that agricultural jobs disappeared earlier: automation and rising productivity. The increase of U.S. manufacturing output has remained relatively steady, just refocused on much higher value-added, less labor-intensive manufacturing. For the statistics and political analysis, see William H. Overholt, "The Great Betrayal: How America's Elites are Failing to Confront the Challenges of Trade Politics," *The International Economy*, Winter 2017, available at <http://www.international-economy.com/TIE_W17_Overholt.pdf>.

5 Supporters of this regrettable policy often resort to legalism. The U.S.-Japan alliance requires that the United States treat any attack on an area under Japanese administration as an attack on the alliance. But all U.S. alliances have a hedge for exactly this kind of contingency; the

U.S. response will be based on U.S. constitutional processes. If any ally provokes an attack for domestic political reasons, the United States can reasonably indicate that its constitutional processes will move slowly and uncertainly.

6 For the original articulation of the concept of soft power, see Joseph Samuel Nye Jr., "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power (London: Basic Books, 1990).

7 See William H. Overholt, China's Crisis of Success (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

8 Aaron L. Friedberg, A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

9 See Agatha Kratz, Allen Feng, and Logan Wright, "New Data on the 'Debt Trap' Question," Rhodium Group, April 29, 2019, available at <<https://rhg.com/research/new-data-on-the-debt-trap-question/#:~:text=The%20sheer%20volume%20of%20debt,the%20loans%20to%20finance%20t hem>>.

10 The masterwork on Eurasian integration and its importance is Kent E. Calder, Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

11 General James Mattis, Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 5, 2013.

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The BRI and Syria By Arhama Siddiq

While taking the oath to officiate to reaffirm his authority as Syria's President for a further seven years, Bashar al-Assad postulated that he was the only man who could rebuild his country. As the war in most parts of the country attenuates, the perilous condition of the heavily sanctioned economy has come to the forefront. More than a merciless decade of conflict has resulted in 90 per cent of the populace living below the poverty line. Severe economic mismanagement, international dictates, a wrecked industrial sector, and afflictions in neighbouring Lebanon have all added fuel to internal discontent in Syria.

However, amidst the despondency, a flicker of hope could be discerned with the Chinese Foreign Minister's visit to Syria on July 17. During meetings with President Assad and his Syrian counterpart, he offered Syria to join multi-billion-dollar BRI. Concurrently he proposed a four-point proposal for solving the Syrian crisis at hand. The proposition included preservation of Syria's sovereignty, prioritisation of the well-being of Syrian people (this comprised unhindered flow of humanitarian aid), a continuation of a firm stance against terrorism, and an inclusive and reconciliatory political solution in line with the UN's 'Syrian-led, Syrian-owned' principle.

Chinese inroads into the Middle East have been growing steadily extending from shares in oilfields to investment in critical infrastructure. Throughout the Syrian civil war, China has always maintained a low profile albeit maintaining a cautious and consistent approach. Its votes at the UNSC have always been a reaffirmation of the aforementioned four-point proposal. Over the years, China has made ventures in Syria, examples of which include a \$2 billion industrial park, several cooperation agreements on trade, and shares in two of Syria's largest oil enterprises — the Syrian Oil Company and Al-Furat Petroleum. Huawei has also avowed to revitalise Syria's nationwide telecoms network.

For Syria, inclusion in the BRI portends numerous benefits. Therefore, the question is: what are the gains for China?

Firstly, Syria represents a passage to the Mediterranean which is a recourse to the Suez Canal. Chinese investments in eastern Mediterranean ports are aimed at reviving the significant Eurasian commercial routes which link China to

Europe, Africa, and beyond. Undoubtedly, the inclusion of the Tartus seaport would fortify China's position in the Levant.

Secondly, Syria is advantageously located at the junction of oil and gas pipelines that not only link resource fields in the Arabian Peninsula, Persian Gulf, and Iran with European markets but on a wider scale is at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This fact was accentuated by Assad himself in 2009 when he proposed a 'four seas' initiative in the hope of creating a unified economic bloc comprising Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran — the Mediterranean Sea, Caspian Sea, Black Sea, and the Persian Gulf. With Syria's inclusion in the BRI, China will be placed to regenerate this initiative besides having an easier access to the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula.

Furthermore, July 17 also marked a year to additional sanctions imposed by the US on Syria in the form of imposition of the Caesar Act which entails that third-party entities connected to the Syrian regime will be subjected to sanctions as well. The enactment is an obvious ticker to another China-US altercation in the Middle East.

All in all, only if China's four-point proposal is implemented, Syria's inclusion in the BRI might become a reality since it will automatically ensure stability in Syria.

Safe to say that apart from being a win-win situation, China- Syria cooperation may be the UN's last hope for amity in the war-torn country, and an answer to the Syrian populace's cry for help.

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Back to the Future By Maleeha Lodhi

AS concern grows in Pakistan about the fallout of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, protracted fighting that morphs into a civil war will pose severe dilemmas and multiple challenges for the country. Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated this fear in a recent interview with an American TV network when he said such an outcome would be the “worst-case scenario for the country”.

Pakistan’s security is inextricably tied to Afghanistan. Prolonged strife in its neighbour will expose Pakistan to security threats that it has dealt with in the past at a heavy cost in lives and social and economic consequences. For over four decades Pakistan has borne the brunt of war, foreign military interventions and conflict in Afghanistan that produced grave repercussions for the country’s security, stability and economic development. The destabilising ramifications are too well known to bear repetition here. More turmoil on its western frontier would mean the country will have to simultaneously deal with internal, regional and international challenges that would flow from this outcome.

In a back-to-the-future scenario Pakistan will be faced with a serious threat to its stability if civil war erupts in Afghanistan and spills over into its border areas. Pakistan has sought to mitigate this danger by fencing much of the border, sealing illegal crossing points, increasing border posts, strengthening the capacity of the Frontier Corps, upgrading training of law-enforcement personnel, enhancing technical surveillance and stationing regular troops there. While these measures are necessary, they may not be sufficient to stop the determined from crossing over given the long border and the mountainous terrain and topography.

Moreover, a chaotic situation across the border will provide fertile ground and more space to a host of militant groups to continue operating from there. The principal but not only threat is from the TTP (the Pakistani Taliban) whose 6,500 members are based in Afghanistan and launch cross-border attacks from there. A reunified TTP has reinforced its capacity. The latest report of the UN’s sanctions monitoring team notes that “the return of splinter groups to the TTP fold has increased its strength”. The TTP’s links continue with the Afghan Taliban, which are acknowledged by Pakistan’s security officials. TTP leader Noor Wali Mehsud surfaced recently to announce in a CNN interview that his

militant group will continue its “war against Pakistan’s security forces” and its aim is to “take control of the border regions and make them independent”.

A civil war next door would pose serious threats to Pakistan’s security and multidimensional challenges.

A surge in violence in North and South Waziristan has led to rising casualties among Pakistani security personnel in recent months. Since May, there have been 167 terrorist incidents in KP and Balochistan, an ominous portent of what could lie ahead. Armed groups residing in Afghanistan would pose a threat to Pakistan with some making common cause with elements who were defeated but dispersed after a series of successful operations by security forces. The UN report says that “a significant part of the Al Qaeda leadership is based along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border” while ISIS-K or Daesh “remains active and dangerous”.

Pakistani military officials have already warned of terrorist sleeper cells being galvanised if there is protracted fighting next door. In Balochistan there could be a further rise in violent activity by revived dissident and other groups orchestrated by hostile foreign intelligence agencies. Thus, Pakistan’s hard-won gains in its counterterrorism campaign could be upended. The prime minister said pointedly in the PBS interview that a civil war in Afghanistan would mean “terrorism in Pakistan”. Also, forces of extremism in the country will take heart and be emboldened by the Taliban’s military success.

A civil war could also lead to a fresh refugee influx into Pakistan which has hosted three million Afghan refugees for decades now. Pakistani officials worry that fighting will force more Afghans to flee with estimates of new refugees ranging from 500,000 to 700,000. Apart from instituting more effective border controls the government is working on a plan to establish camps near the border to prevent refugees from entering the mainland. Whether the Iranian ‘model’ can work here is open to question especially as tribes are so intertwined on both sides of the border. Using the nomenclature ‘externally displaced Afghans’ to describe them could put at risk international assistance for these refugees as that depends on their refugee status. World Bank funding for refugees too could be in jeopardy.

Then there is the likely economic fallout that Pakistan also experienced in the past. Given how fragile and vulnerable the economy is the shock from a civil war next door and threat of violence at home will jeopardise prospects of growth and investment. This will place Pakistan in a zone of instability which will dampen trade and investment badly needed to achieve economic growth targets. The recent past shows that Pakistan had to bear billions of dollars in economic losses in the aftermath of 9/11 when the 'war on terror' spilled over into the country's border areas and cities.

Beyond this, a civil war can lead to a regional proxy war, as it did in the past, but with more damaging consequences and drawing in more countries that perceive threats to their security and are already beefing up their defences. It could turn out to be fiercer than what followed the Russian military withdrawal in the 1990s as neighbours and near neighbours act to protect their interests. More regional states have security concerns now than was the case during Afghanistan's previous bout of civil war because of transnational armed groups and foreign terrorist fighters who operate from there. They include ETIM, Daesh, IMU, TTP and of course Al Qaeda. There are also fears of fighters in Syria relocating to the region. A proxy war could trigger a regional geopolitical crisis of uncertain proportions.

All this may sound alarmist but it is predicated on a worst-case scenario of Afghanistan descending into chaos and civil war. This only underlines the urgency of regional and international diplomatic efforts to avert such an outcome. There is time yet for these efforts to make headway. Ultimately however, it will be up to the Afghan parties to make the difficult compromises that can deliver peace to their long-suffering people.

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

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