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June 2022

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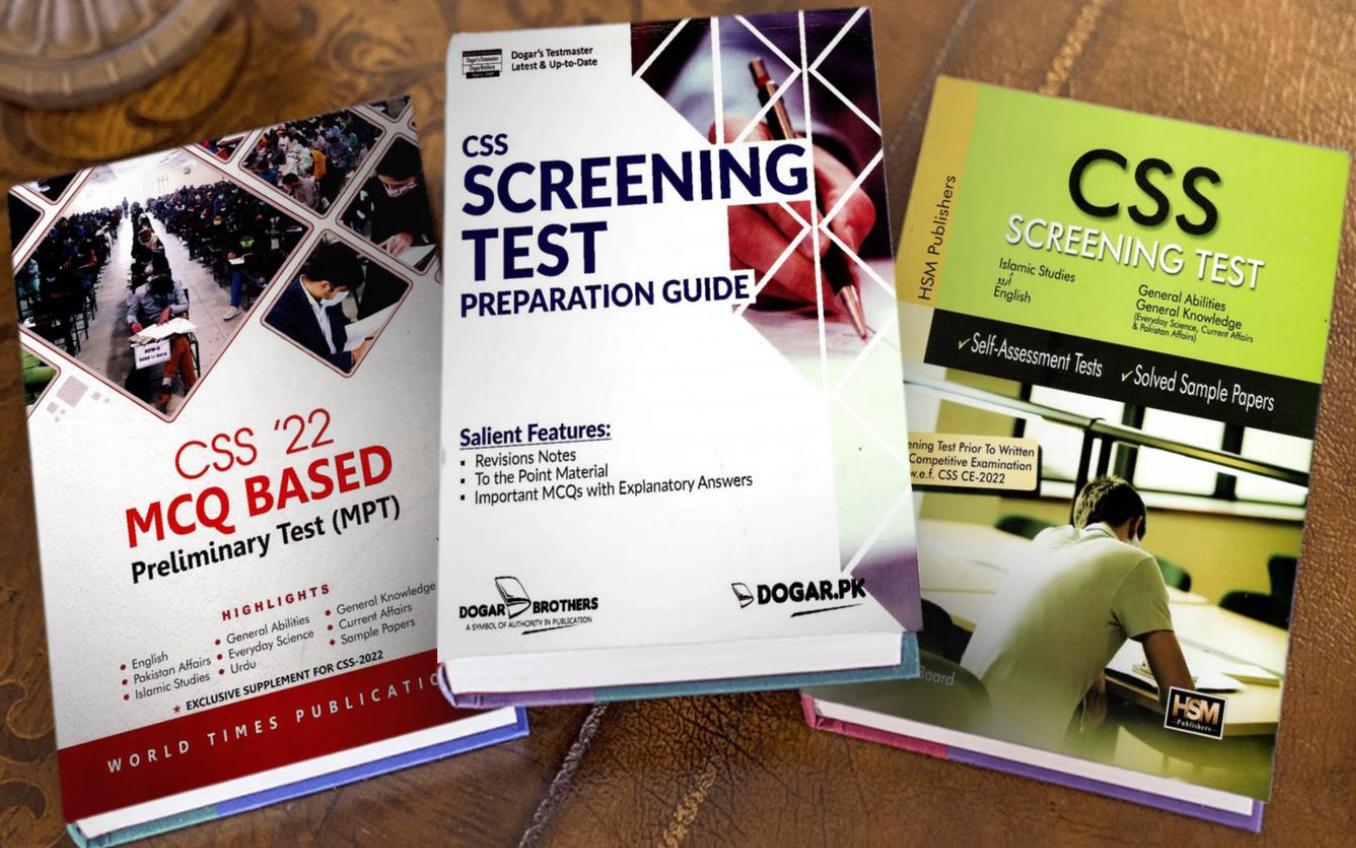


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Independent Foreign Policy? By Maleeha Lodhi

THE question whether Pakistan has ever had an ‘independent’ foreign policy has assumed an intensely partisan nature. In a polarised environment, it is important to consider some facts to set the record straight.

The historical record testifies that over the decades, successive governments acted to protect Pakistan’s core interests and defied external pressure to adopt policies contrary to our national interests. Continuity and consistency have been the hallmark of the country’s foreign policy through civilian and military governments alike.

The most outstanding example of ‘independence’ in Pakistan’s foreign policy is how the country acquired a nuclear capability in the face of Western opposition and unprecedented pressure. It saw the strategic imperative of possessing a nuclear deterrent once India detonated a nuclear device in 1974. This despite Western efforts to stop Pakistan after India’s nuclear explosion. The aim, given its conventional asymmetry with a hostile India, was to restore strategic equilibrium by securing the means to deter aggression. The traumatic experience of the breakup of Pakistan in 1971 had taught the lesson that the country could depend only on itself for its security.

The quest for a nuclear capability was encapsulated in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s much cited remark that if India built the bomb, “we will eat grass, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own”. It was a challenging journey with innumerable obstacles along the way. The objective could not have been achieved if successive governments comprising different political parties had not ALL pursued this regardless of the costs.

Over several decades, strenuous efforts were undertaken to develop a strategic capability and an operational deterrent with a credible delivery system.

Pakistan was a close ally of the US in the 1980s, the decade when the nuclear programme was at a critical stage. It was working with Washington in the joint struggle to roll back the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. In 1990, the US invoked the infamous Pressler Amendment to impose unilateral sanctions on Pakistan on the nuclear issue. This was preceded by US warnings that unless Pakistan changed course, military and economic sanctions would follow. Pakistan resisted the pressure and protested against the discriminatory US policy. It braved sanctions, censure and technology denial — and an unfair embargo on military equipment and aircraft it had paid for — because its national security was paramount and non-negotiable. From being America's 'most allied ally', Pakistan became its 'most sanctioned friend'. The more pressure mounted on Islamabad, the greater was the determination to stay firm and accelerate the programme. No government caved into coercive pressure — an unequivocal display of 'independence' in our foreign policy.

Successive governments defied external pressure to protect Pakistan's core interests.

Pressure from the West continued. Pakistan was asked to sign the CTBT, agree to a one-time inspection of nuclear facilities in return for release of its military equipment, sign up for negotiations to proceed in the UN Conference on Disarmament for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty and curb its missile development. As I was closely involved in talks on these issues, serving twice as Pakistan's ambassador to the US, I was witness to the number of times Pakistan said no to all of the above to pursue an 'independent' policy.

When India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998, the Clinton administration offered incentives (and disincentives) if Pakistan desisted from testing. Prime minister Nawaz Sharif went ahead regardless. Pakistan became a declared nuclear power.

The history of this remarkable achievement — involving multiple governments and the pivotal role of the country's scientists — is narrated by Feroze Khan in his insightful book, *Eating Grass*. It should be read by those who fallaciously argue that Pakistan's foreign policy has never been independent.

Those unacquainted with history would find another example instructive. This concerns Pakistan's evolving ties with China during the Cold War. Pakistan was then a member of Western military alliances, Seato and Cento; it had also signed

a defence agreement with Washington in 1959. But none of this prevented Pakistan from pursuing an independent line to forge relations with Beijing. It was the first Muslim state and among the world's first countries to recognise PRC. After the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Pakistan significantly strengthened ties with Beijing in the midst of America's efforts to isolate China.

As former foreign secretary Abdul Sattar wrote in his book, US warnings were cast aside that it would review ties with Pakistan if it built relations with China. Declassified documents show such threats were rejected — until 1971, when the US switched course and used Pakistan as a conduit for Henry Kissinger's historic trip to Beijing, that paved the way for rapprochement with China.

Recent illustrations of Pakistan standing up to sustained pressure are found in the uneasy Pakistan-US relationship during the 20-year war in Afghanistan, a war Islamabad counselled Washington not to wage in early exchanges following 9/11. Islamabad cautioned the US that a military solution would be elusive. It advised kinetic action against Al Qaeda to be "short and surgical" and to draw a distinction between Al Qaeda and the Taliban so that a diplomatic path could be found to eventually engage the Taliban in talks for a political settlement.

Washington did not heed this advice (but came to this conclusion almost 20 years later). Even as Pakistan came under pressure to 'do more', it never shied away from urging a negotiated end to the war.

Since Pakistan kept a channel of communication open to the Taliban, which eventually helped to bring them to the negotiating table in Doha, it was accused of playing a 'double game'. But Islamabad was acting on its own interests as it did not have the luxury of retreating to the other end of the world. In shutting down the Nato supply route to Afghanistan in 2011 for seven months to protest against the killing of Pakistani soldiers in a Nato air raid, Pakistan again took a stand on principle.

Examples abound of how Pakistan adopted an independent line when its interests dictated. Those ignorant of this denigrate the country when they say Pakistan only did what foreign powers wanted. Recalling these examples may sound like a statement of the obvious, but it is necessary when an alternate reality is being created by peddling a narrative based on untruth.

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

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Water Shortage | Editorial

Pakistan has been in the midst of a water crisis for years, and the impact of the issue is starting to show, especially in areas in Sindh. According to Sindh Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro, the province is facing an acute shortage of water that has reached 42 percent.

The disastrous consequences of water shortage in an agriculture-dependent country like Pakistan cannot be understated. Water shortage means pressure on food security, especially on growing crops like wheat and cotton, which account for seventy percent of the country's foreign exchange. Sindh also bears the brunt of heatwaves and harsh climate change. Food shortage, heatwaves and a poor economy are bound to follow if this water crisis is not tackled.

The situation is complicated. A lot of the issues with water shortage can be accounted not just to climate change but poor systematic distribution of resources. It is the Sindh Irrigation Minister's grievance that the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) is depriving the province of its allocated share of water by giving reasons of overall water scarcity in the system. Irsa, In turn, points out, the national shortage of water, and justifies that it has had to halve supplies to both Punjab and Sindh to pass on the shortage.

The problems however, are not just attributed to the lack of implementation of the Interprovincial Water Apportionment Accord (WAA) of 1991, but are more systematic in nature. The issues have stemmed from the interpretation of the and its operational plan, or rather lack of one. Rather, water distribution and the changing of the Indus Water Tributaries is an issue that dates back to partition, with a lot of the intra-provincial conflicts arising from it being unresolved.

It is unfortunate that those disputes remain unresolved and every year, Irsa's distribution becomes a contention. More transparency in water disbursal mechanisms is a must. Having more digital and efficient methodologies to estimate the need for water for the provinces would make it easier to get provincial approval for the sharing of water, and the data collected through such scientific methods can be used to perfect the system.

Source: Published in The Nation

Reinventing US-Pakistan Relations By

Hassan Khan

The United States has become the most talked-about country within Pakistani political and diplomatic circles in recent months not because of flourishing ties but because of the nature of the allegations made by former prime minister Imran Khan. He's adamant that Washington played a "primary role" in toppling his government via outwardly legal means.

Whether his stance has weightage or not, it has stirred a never-ending debate even in the local communities. His party has gained unprecedented support amongst the masses and the impression given by state institutions is pointing towards an impending showdown owing to an upshot in polarisation. This itself is an indication that the country is in a situation last witnessed in the 1970s. It's simply an ominous sign that no political or state-level stakeholder can choose to look away from. Going by the pulse on the streets and social media platforms, the seething anger is unwelcoming to the sociopolitical fabric of society.

As for US-Pakistan relations, they have remained transactional for a better part of their history with the security angle being the key factor. As someone who strongly advocates for multifaceted ties, I specifically wish for a major reset in bilateral ties based on pragmatically idealistic diplomacy that can repair them on the grounds of mutual respect and economic cohesion (especially when Washington is Islamabad's largest trade partner in the West). Frankly speaking, the cold nature of the relations under President Biden's Administration has rather increased uncertainty and made a vast number of Pakistanis tilt towards conspiracy theories. Of course, Khan's bravado nature in light of the Afghan quagmire is one angle no one can ignore but simultaneously, Washington itself was disinterested in pursuing better ties or more specifically, keep them "stable" which the Trump Administration chose to do so despite the initial hiccups.

While Khan-Trump ties implied stability, a Khan-Sanders bonhomie would've been the perfect symmetry that exuded idealism on a global scale.

Former Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in my last interaction, made serious allegations against staffers from the Obama Administration playing a key role in pushing Islamabad aside since Biden took

over. While this is something debatable, coming from someone who remained Pakistan's top diplomat should not be taken lightly.

There was much room for improvement in ties and both sides could've worked something to benefit one another. Yet the underlying hostilities overshadowed every possible door to stability. While Trump may have been eccentric and hungry for publicity, his team knew how to balance ties with the two South Asian rivals. Of course, New Delhi got the larger piece of the pie in the form of strategic and economic relations but the Republicans chose to keep Islamabad "happy" as well in one way or another. All of this was seemingly thrown out of the window under the new administration.

Hypothetically speaking, Khan would've went along really well with Senator Bernie Sanders had he won the nomination and subsequent elections. While Khan-Trump ties implied stability, a Khan-Sanders bonhomie would've been the perfect symmetry that exuded idealism on a global scale. More importantly, I don't agree with the notion of comparing Khan with Trump since his values are closely knit with Sanders on factual grounds. Some of his unconventional political methods may have a Trumpian glimpse but that's just it and nothing beyond that can prove that he's following his footsteps.

With Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif running the country and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari overseeing foreign policy, we are yet to witness a major breakthrough in Islamabad-Washington ties. Despite his young age, Bilawal has potential in reshaping Islamabad's place on the global stage but he needs to take expert opinion from the Foreign Office seriously and take everyone onboard in order to delve into the world of complex diplomatic challenges.

Pakistan is the fifth most populous while the US is the third most populous country in the world. This itself speaks volume of the potential in pursuing relations that cover everything whether of security, economic or political nature. One can only hope for an upward trend for both sides cannot choose to ignore or shut out each other regardless of who's in power in either capitals.

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Source: Published in Daily Times

Major Power Rivalries And Pakistan By

Imran Malik

The US is moving decisively to reinforce and retain its singular position as the global hegemon and pre-eminent economic power. Its current focus appears to be Europe while Asia is in its crosshairs too. To this end, it aims to counter the twin challenge posed by the Sino-Russia Combine to its overall global exceptionalism. The contours of its strategic design to dominate the world are visible. It has ostensibly operationalised its Strategy of Offshore Balancing to deal with this threat, albeit piecemeal—first Russia, then China. In Europe, it is Ukraine that is bearing the brunt of Russian aggression while the rest of US-led Western Europe has been marshalled in its support. In Asia, the US has established the QUAD to counter China. There are likely to be two potential theatres of war within the Asian context; the Indo-Pacific and the South Asian region. In the potential Indo-Pacific theatre it will be Japan and Australia supporting the US with India in tow. In the potential South Asian theatre, the US would like to pitch India against China although currently, the former seems seriously (and realistically) disinclined and hesitant to sign up. As a rider clause, in both instances, coalitions of the willing will be created to support the overall war effort(s). Consequently, it appears to be tackling Russia first. It has lured it into attacking Ukraine and is in the process of weakening it through a multidimensional approach. At the military level, it is aiming to dismantle the Russian claim to invincibility through a strategy of attrition. The US-led West has bolstered Ukraine's anti-aircraft and anti-tank resources substantially. Russian losses have been meaningful, though by no means crippling or decisive. In the diplomatic domain, the US-led West is endeavouring to totally isolate and demonise it as an aggressor. All countries that have not fully supported this US policy have started feeling the pinch of US' ire and sanctions. In the economic domain, sanctions on Russia are turning out to be double-edged weapons with Western Europe (especially Germany) being most affected.

In the South Asian theatre, it is India which will have to bear the onus of taking the fight to the Chinese on behalf of the US. Is it willing to do so? Will it have its soldiers bleed and die in the service of Uncle Sam? Though US and Indian interests might converge against China but are their desired end states, their objectives and the intensity thereto, the same? Can India credibly ever dominate or subdue China, even with the unstinted support of the US? Does it really need

to, considering the levels of bilateral trade between them? Is it willing to pay the costs thereof in men, materials and treasure? The US will again prefer to deal with Pakistan and China piecemeal. It will intend to neutralise Pakistan first, isolate China within the South Asian context, and then confront it.

It would be of paramount interest to the US-led West to see the BRI-CPEC being systematically delayed, disrupted and eventually destroyed as it ominously challenges its economic dominance of the world. Furthermore, there is a portentous clash of interests of three of the world's major military, nuclear and missile forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir Region (IIOJ&KR). It will be a herculean, nay impossible task for the US to neutralise the potential threat from Pakistan without any solution to the long festering IIOJ&KR, Siachen, water, Sir Creek and other issues with India. India will not concede to any such demands from the US and Pakistan will not accede otherwise either! China has thus far not proactively reacted to the various geopolitical moves underway in the South Asian region. It has made colossal investments in the BRI-CPEC and plans to further expand these into Iran, the GMER, Africa, Afghanistan the CARs etc. It is not likely to perpetually allow the delaying, disrupting and destroying of its magnum opus, the BRI-CPEC, without a compatible response. It is in Pakistan's interest too to see the BRI-CPEC flourish and bring about an economic revolution for its people.

Is Pakistan about to become an inevitable battleground for major power rivalries, then? Is the preparatory phase in progress here too? Will Pakistan be subjected to a multidimensional assault again? Is Pakistan to be perpetually maintained in a destabilised, controlled-chaos state? On the internal political front, it is not difficult to foresee an era of extreme political instability through potential civil unrest, disorder and upheavals. Furthermore, terrorist/sleeper cell activities within the country will suddenly flare up with Chinese personnel and institutions in particular coming under attack. BRI-CPEC projects, Pakistan's future economic lifeline, and the Armed Forces in particular will be targeted. The Pak-Afghan border will heat up further with Terrorism Central, mustered for such an eventuality, becoming proactive astride the Pak-Afghan border. The LOC/Working Boundary is bound to become active and hot all over again. The IFIs will target Pakistan's fragile economy, its Achille's heel, to force its hand. Pakistan will thus, in all probability, suffer the consequences of major power rivalries; with India and other hostile countries/agencies diabolically stirring the pot even further. It will require unity, very strong, courageous, decisive leadership, wisdom and astute statecraft coupled with sublime diplomacy for Pakistan to weather the impending storm without prejudice to its vital national interests. Source: Published in Pak Observer

IWT: India Exploits Treaty's Framework By

Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

CURRENTLY tension between the two nuclear armed states — India and Pakistan — is brewing over water resources in the Indus river system endorsed by the fact that despite Pakistan's justified reservations over Indian intension of building the Kiru, Rattle and Pakal Dul hydropower projects on the Chenab river (a reflection on Modi's ultranationalist policy vis-à-vis the Indus water Treaty (IWT), New Delhi is making progress on these disputed projects.

Pakistan had already shown its reservations— over Indian hydropower projects on the Neelum River in IOK — accompanied by the profound impact of climate change in the wake of growing ecological and hydro-economic challenges.

From the geographical angle, India is located upstream to Pakistan on all six rivers. Pakistan's lower geographical position — not only to the Indus Rivers in India, but also to the Kabul River in Afghanistan — makes it reliant on both neighbours for its waters.

Being an upper riparian country, India took some pivotal advantages.

Pakistan is especially vulnerable to changes in water supply, and is likely to become South Asia's most water-stressed nation in the next two decades.

Beyond irrigation and basic sustenance, the treaty thus also carries national security implications: Pakistan is highly justified in apprehending that India is unfairly using its upper-riparian geography to manipulate the flow of water through diversion or built-up storage in dams, flooding Pakistan during the rainy season or cutting water during the dry season.

This is why Pakistan watches Indian hydropower designs closely. During the 2021 PIC visit, the eight-member Pakistan delegation raised objections to the hydropower developments of the Pakal Dul on the Marusadar River (a tributary of the Chenab) and Lower Kalnai, on another tributary of the same river.

The delegation also requested information on Durbuk Shyok and Nimu Chilling, two of four projects under construction.

While Pakistan accuses India of “continuously violating the treaty by building dams on the western rivers”, India maintains that these are ‘run-of-the-river’ projects’ permitted under the treaty.

In 2016, Pakistan chartered concerns to the World Bank, which did not act fairly enough to resolve differences regarding separate projects.

While during the recently held three days meeting between the Indus Water Commissioners in March 2022 in Islamabad, both the sides had forwarded their recommendations.

Islamabad complained that the Indian side flow data was not sufficient as to satisfy Pakistan’s concerns.

Reportedly, conversely to Pakistan’s warranted concern, “India is fast moving towards achieving the capacity to manipulate the water flows of Pakistani rivers as in a new development, it has finished not only the civil works but also almost completed the diversion tunnel for the Kiru hydropower project of 624MW the new one being erected on the Chenab River...” Arguably, over the past two decades, Pakistan has launched multiple attempts to prevent India from building dams on both the Chenab and the Neelum rivers (see Kishanganga dam conflict).

The Neelum is a tributary of the Jhelum River and Pakistan has opposed both projects on the grounds that they contravene the Indus Waters Treaty signed by the two countries in 1960 (Gupta & Ebrahim, 2017).

Whereas, a study shows that deescalation of water conflict is core to long-lasting cooperation to manage transboundary water resources can be achieved by establishing joint institutions.

However, with only a limited number of trans boundary rivers governed by treaties and even smaller number of them being multilateral in nature.

This is the main reason why, besides being operational for almost six decades, questions are still being raised on its sustainability.

The IWT applies to the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej (“Eastern rivers”) and the Indus, the Chenab and the Jhelum (“Western rivers”) including all their tributaries.) A revisionist argument pleads that the IWT must adopt certain essential provisions which are incorporated in the Watercourses Convention, 1997.

Using the Convention as a reference point, the countries should revisit the IWT, and bring it in line with the Convention.

This would mean incorporating provisions regarding the factors determining equitability, and devising a sharing regime based on those factors as opposed to the current mechanical divisions of rivers.

It would also require India and Pakistan to incorporate adequate provisions for protection of the environment, as well as for integrated management of rivers by the two nations.

“ Historically, data sharing for supporting applied research is an exception rather than a policy.

Even in the agreed and functional water treaties (e.g., IWT), the flow data sharing which is an integral part of the sharing mechanism is frequently unfulfilled.

Additionally, even when the data are shared there is no mechanism for the research community to get an access to it.

This issue can be resolved by promoting open data policy to give free data access to international supervisory bodies and other stakeholders for promoting transparency and applied scientific research.

Some experts believe that sharing of trusted flow data can exponentially ease the tension among the riparian and diverts leaders to evenly focus on the crisis.’

Time and again, Pakistan has been reminding the Indian side to fairly provide the data flow, but New Delhi has ignored Pakistan’s request.

The record shows that till 1997, IWT remained instrumental in resolving the water issues between the two states, albeit beyond this period, the treaty remains inefficient to address the grievances—vindicated by the fact: “India and Pakistan

have been in disagreement over whether the Kishenganga Project on River Jhelum and the Ratle Project on River Chenab, initiated by India, are in violation of the IWT.

Thus, an inherent flaw in the Treaty is ambiguity, which makes room for conflict. As pointed out by Ramaswamy Iyer, one party can claim to be in full conformity with the criteria laid down in the treaty, and the other party can say that this is not the case”.

Despite some gray areas, in the IWT, neither India should exploit it, nor should the World Bank and its Court of Arbitration (COA) adopt a premeditated approach.

It goes without saying that to regulate the treaty provisions, a proposed joint action plan requires some prerequisites to be completed for its strategic implementation.

” To start with, the stakeholders need to form an internal mechanism for the real-time monitoring of flows along the length of the transboundary Rivers.

The other prerequisites include (1) real-time sharing of flow data with the concerned parties; (2) a research wing to identify the effects of changing climate on the river flows; (3) a governing body to supervise the research wing and data collection mechanism; (4) a combined forum containing officials of all the riparian countries to make a decision on the conflict and (5) an international guarantor to supervise the treaty”.

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

Source: Published in Pak Observer

India And Pakistan Facing Biggest Threat Of 21st Century: Climate Change – OpEd By Omaid Farooq Khan

The United Nations has reiterated that the biggest threat faced by the human race in the modern history is that of 'climate change' (United Nations, 2021). Extreme dry seasons, unusual Monsoon rainfall and glacial retreat are some of the common environmental challenges the world is facing. What's more disturbing is that these challenges and climatic changes are more obvious, consistent, and intense in South Asia.

South Asia is home to the most densely populated countries such as India and Pakistan, and lowest lying country such as Bangladesh and the Maldives. According to the Germanwatch, India and Pakistan ranked among the top twenty most affected countries in the 21st century, owing to recurring environmental and climatic changes (Kugelman, 2021).

In 2021, Pakistan and India stood at 8th and 14th on the Climate Risk Index, respectively. Over 500,000 people have died on both sides of the border owing to frequent environmental challenges and human-induced climate change. Moreover, in 2020 ninety-nine cities out of two-hundred were ranked as most polluted cities which were located in India and Pakistan.

Air pollution is now killing more people in India and Pakistan than terrorism which both countries see as a bone of contention in their bilateral relations. Similarly, both neighbouring yet antagonist countries faces frequent heatwaves and droughts during annual summer season. India and Pakistan also lies at the foot of Himalayan mountain ranges which, according to numerous observations, is the most susceptible to climate change compare to other mountain range across the world. Hence, heavy rainfalls and floods have become a come phenomenon during annual monsoon season.

One of the main contributors to heavy rains and floods are Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GOLF) which are common in Indus Water Basin during the summer seasons. Furthermore, some of the common environmental challenges and

climate-induced changes faced by India and Pakistan are explained in detail as follows;

Common Environmental Challenges in India and Pakistan

The first victim of the changing climate is the Indus River Basin (IRB). Indus River Basin is a transboundary river basin which has its origin in the Himalayan mountain range and originates from Tibet Plateau. India and Pakistan are renowned for their agriculture sector and millions of people and their livelihood depends on Indus Water Basin and its tributaries.

According to the Economic Survey of India (181-186: 2020), agriculture in India contributes around 18% to the total GDP and source of livelihood for over 70% of the population, mainly in rural areas. But the contribution and livelihood opportunities are shrinking by each passing year. Pakistan also faces similar trends in the context of agriculture and its role in absorbing the largest workforce in the country. According to the economic survey of Pakistan (17: 2019-20), the contribution of agriculture to GDP is following a decline as it only aids 19.3% to the total GDP in 2020.

There can be other reasons, but the scientists have revealed that the climate change is one of the major reasons behind the changing nature of the Indus Basin (Shidore 07: 2020) which eventually impact livelihood of millions across the border.

The second and the most obvious impact of changing climate is the melting of snow and retreating glaciers in Karakorum and Himalayan ranges. These mountain ranges hold world largest number of glaciers outside the North Pole. Being susceptible to the changing climate, these glaciers also pose the biggest threat to livelihood in India and Pakistan. Global average temperature is increasing, but according to the report (IPCC AR5) South Asia is facing substantial increase in the average temperature annually. This increase in temperature leads to the phenomenon of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) which results in floods as witnessed in Pakistan between 2009 and 2010 summer.

Similarly, floods are the most common environmental challenge India and Pakistan are facing. The super floods of 2010, took lives of nearly 1600 people, displaced millions and caused damages of worth \$10 billion (Kirsch et al 03: 2012). Since 2010, Pakistan is facing floods in every monsoon season. Similarly,

over 2,100 had died during monsoon rains in India in 2019, which also affected 2.5 million people in 22 provinces (India Today, 2019). Floods are the most common impact of climate change that India and Pakistan are facing. If India and Pakistan keep behaving like 'business as usual', both neighbouring countries can face agonizing impacts.

Yet another environmental challenge India and Pakistan are facing quite often, is heatwaves and droughts. Even Europe is not protected from the wrath of increasing global temperature and every year is warmer than the previous one. Similarly, with each passing year, changing climate are exacerbating the impacts of these heatwaves and droughts in India and Pakistan. In 2015 alone, over 2000 people have lost their lives to heatwaves in the financial hub of Pakistan i.e. Karachi and its surrounding districts, as temperature reached 45 degree Celsius (Haider & Anis, 2015). During the same summer, the heatwave took lives of 2,300 people in the next door neighbour India (Liberto, 2015).

Furthermore, frequent delays in monsoon rains couple with excruciating heat wave leads to drought like situations in India and Pakistan. Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) has sited that Pakistan has already crossed the water scarcity line back in 2005 (Ahasn, 2019) and will run out of water by 2025.

In addition, worsening air quality is one of the most recurrent human-induce phenomenon India and Pakistan are facing. For almost five consecutive year cities in India and Pakistan remain among the top ten most polluted cities in the world. By November 2021, 48 cities from India and Pakistan made it to the list of top hundred most polluted cities in the world (Duggal, 2021). In India, the worsening quality of air is choking people across the country at a very critical rate, as more and more people are dying by each passing year. Most of the health issues people face are strokes, respiratory complexities, lungs disorder, asthma and cardiovascular diseases.

Conclusion

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), human-induced climate change and environmental challenges will be more frequent and severely impact the already vulnerable states in South Asia, particularly India and Pakistan. Furthermore, the trans-boundary nature of the above mentioned common environmental challenges, environmental cooperation between India and Pakistan is inevitable and can act as an opportunity for breaking the

deadlock and create avenues for cooperation. Given the stringent bi-relations, common environmental challenges demands India and Pakistan to cooperate and work closely to counter the impact of frequently changing climate.

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Source: Published in Eur Asia Review

Deteriorating Pak-Afghan Relations By Dr Qaisar Rashid

On 5 February 2022, from inside Afghanistan, certain militants opened fire on Pakistani troops who were on patrol along the Pak-Afghan border in Kurram district. The attack took the lives of five soldiers. Similarly, on 14 April 2022, militants ambushed a military vehicle in Dattakel area and took the lives of seven soldiers of Pakistan. These were the second and third attacks respectively since the Afghan Taliban took control over Kabul on 15 August 2021. The Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Immediately after its formation in 2007, the TTP made Kurram its known stronghold. The former Kurram Agency also remained notorious for sectarian (Sunni-Shia) conflicts. From 2008 to 2011, however, the Pakistan Army launched a military operation in the Agency and expelled the TTP activists, who sought refuge in the Paktia province of Afghanistan. On 16 December 2014, the TTP retaliated by attacking the Army Public School Peshawar.

The Agency remained identified for the presence of a section of the Haqqani network, Afghanistan's Paktia province remained known for being the stronghold of the Afghan Taliban, who launched their Summer Offensive on 1 May 2021 to regain control over Kabul. The offensive coincided with the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan. The extraction that finished in August 2021 emboldened the Afghan Taliban immensely. The Haqqani network also derived strength from the triumph, and so was the case with the TTP.

Apparently, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP are two distinct groups with separate hierarchies, identities and goals. Nevertheless, both share the same ideology: the implementation of the Islamic Shariah whether in Afghanistan or in Pakistan. Similarly, the Haqqanis are divided: some support the Afghan Taliban in consolidating their hold on Kabul and some support the TTP to dictate to Pakistan its terms. The challenge before Pakistan is where it should draw a line between the Afghan Taliban and the TTP, and between the pro-Pakistan Haqqani network and the anti-Pakistan Haqqani network.

Generally speaking, the factious state of the militants, who are overwhelmingly Pashtuns, is owing to Pakistan's joining the War on Terror in 2001. The war is

over, the foreign forces have been withdrawn from Afghanistan, but Pakistan has been left to deal with the fall out.

One of the consequences for Pakistan has been earning the ire of both the TTP and the anti-Pakistan Haqqanis, who are antipathetic to fencing the Pak-Afghan border. In March 2017, Pakistan initiated the project of fencing off its 2,600 km long border (the Durand Line) with Afghanistan. The primary objective was to deter the to-and-fro free movement of the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis to prevent any attack on civilians, akin to the one that took place in Peshawar in December 2014.

In Kabul, the Afghan Taliban might be pleased with Pakistan for its all-out support to get the Kabul government recognized and viable financially, but it is highly unlikely that the Kabul government remains shorn of the influence of the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis. There may be presently a state of silence: the Afghan Taliban might express their antagonism by not supporting Pakistan against the TTP, the dissident Haqqanis and the Baloch separatists. The leftover weapons and ammunition of the withdrawing foreign forces has been adding to the strength of anti-Pakistan militant groups.

The situation along the border remained under control till August 2021 but it spiraled out of control afterwards, thereby indicating that with the change of leadership in Kabul the change of strategy on the border is inevitable. Whereas Pakistan yearns to keep the Durand Line fenced to offer a major stumbling block to the incursion of peace spoilers from across the western border, the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis are bent upon targeting the fence to flout Pakistan's resolve. In a way, the fence has become Pakistan's Achilles' heel, crystallizing Pakistan's doggedness to stave off both the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis. The same point indicates that Pakistan would be challenged on this account time and again.

In November 2021, the Afghan Taliban brokered a peace deal between the TTP and Pakistan. The deal, however, could not sustain for a month, as Pakistan's government came under pressure from social activists, who lambasted the government for its acquiescence to the TTP.

It is not sure if there is a direct relation between the TTP and the Baloch separatists who attacked the camps of the Frontier Constabulary in Nushki and Panjgur (in South West of Balochistan) on 2 February 2022, but it is clear

however that the Baloch separatists (together under the banner of the Balochistan Liberation Army) would seek the advantage of Pakistan's engagement with the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis and vice versa. That is, while Pakistan's government was busy in Balochistan to quell the rebel, security forces came under attack in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This aspect may be adding more troubles to Pakistan's security standing. The reason is that Pakistan has deployed its main chunk of army along its eastern border to defend against India. The emerging situation in the West calls for the relocation of the army to be deployed along the western border. The mere movement of the army is quite expensive, especially given the economic crisis Pakistan has been plodding through.

Hitherto, the Afghan Taliban have not jumped into the fray. Kabul yearns for refining ties with Islamabad. Moreover, Islamabad has been convincing the world to lift the ban on the Kabul regime, provide food and money to the Afghans, and recognize the Kabul government quickly. The world is still reluctant to recognize the sway of the Afghan Taliban over Kabul. The world is in no mood to offer legitimacy to the Afghan Taliban, as they stop listening to the world once they achieve their target.

Regional powers such as Russia and China dare not offend the Western countries which want to keep their pressure on the Afghan Taliban to comply with the Doha Agreement (the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan) signed between the USA and the Afghan Taliban on 29 February 2020 in Qatar. Though the agreement concluded the war, the Afghan Taliban did not start the promised intra-Afghan dialogue.

In Kabul, the Afghan Taliban might be pleased with Pakistan for its all-out support to get the Kabul government recognized and viable financially, but it is highly unlikely that the Kabul government remains shorn of the influence of the TTP and the dissident Haqqanis. There may be presently a state of silence: the Afghan Taliban might express their antagonism by not supporting Pakistan against the TTP, the dissident Haqqanis and the Baloch separatists. The leftover weapons and ammunition of the withdrawing foreign forces has been adding to the strength of anti-Pakistan militant groups.

Source: Published in Pakistan Today

Pakistan, US Ties By Kamran Yousaf

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is undertaking a visit to the US this week. He is going there primarily to attend the ministerial meeting on Food Security being hosted by the US and the UN in New York, but will also meet his American counterpart on the sidelines. The conference is taking place against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict that has disrupted the supply chains raising prices of commodities in the international market.

The invitation of the visit was extended by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a telephone call to Bilawal – the first between the two since Bilawal joined Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet. The nearly hour long telephone conversation discussed the whole gamut of relationship between the two countries. The long duration of the call suggests eagerness on both sides to reset their troubled relationship.

The ties between the two countries have remained tense despite Pakistan's role in ensuring the safe exit of the US-led foreign forces from Afghanistan in August last year. What has further dampened the chances of any improvement in the ties was the allegations by ex-PM Imran Khan that he was ousted from power as part of a US plot through a vote of no-confidence. The Biden Administration has denied the allegations but the ousted PM is adamant that the US was behind his removal since he was pursuing an independent foreign policy.

The basis of Imran's allegations was a diplomatic cable that Pakistan's then Ambassador to Washington Asad Majid sent to the Foreign Office in early March. The cable details a conversation between the Pakistani envoy and US Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia Donald Lu. Imran has presented the contents of the secret diplomatic cable as evidence of a foreign plot against his government. Imran says the US was not happy with his trip to Moscow at a time when the Russian President was preparing to invade Ukraine. On top of that President Joe Biden has never spoken to ex-PM Imran, something that also irked the cricketer-turned politician.

The reason Biden had been reluctant to speak to Imran since the US exit from Afghanistan was that he kept giving statements criticising American policies. He even described the US exit as "people of Afghanistan breaking the shackles of slavery". One western diplomat said such statements were unnecessary and only meant to "rub salt into the wounds of the Americans". It is believed that the

country's military leadership even advised Imran not to give such public statements as they could only complicate Pakistan's external relationship. But Imran never paid heed to the advice and kept targeting the West, particularly the US. Because of this reason, the high-level contact between the PTI government and the Biden Administration remained virtually suspended. So when Bilawal meets Blinken in New York this month, this would be the first high-level contact between the two sides since September last year.

The Pak-US relationship has remained transactional, meaning Washington only warmed up to Islamabad when it needed its support, particularly for its strategic and security interests. Against this backdrop, what can be expected from the Blinken-Bilawal meeting? The US, despite Pakistan's desire to expand the ties beyond security, is still primarily focusing on counterterrorism and security cooperation particularly with regard to Afghanistan. The US alone cannot be held responsible for the security-driven ties. The fact remains Pakistan has not done much to enhance its cooperation with the US beyond security prism. American diplomats often say it sounds sweet when Pakistan's leaders say they are seeking a shift from being geo-strategic to geo-economics but in reality they have no roadmap or vision to implement that policy. Bilawal's meeting with Blinken may be an icebreaker but is unlikely to lead to any dramatic shift in the bilateral ties.

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Prerequisites of an Independent Foreign Policy By Saad Masood

Recently, there has been a lot of talk about honour and independence in international relations, specifically in foreign policy formulation. Imran Khan particularly has struck a chord with the population all across the country. Right or wrong, his narrative of a “foreign conspiracy” to stop his “independent foreign policy” is gaining traction within the masses. Many of his recent statements confirm this notion – two especially, “no country is respected unless it stands on its own two feet,” and “my independent foreign policy was clear from day one, if someone didn’t like it, then I don’t know about it.” While these comments are good rhetoric, they are not easy to implement. Consider.

This links back to the rebooted national security framework which I have expressed in previous opinion pieces as a “four pillar” system. The foremost is national identity. Then, comes the national purpose. The penultimate pillar is national interests. While the national security policy, along with strategies to execute this policy, is the final leg of this structure. The critical requirement for the national security framework is that all the pillars are working with each other – in harmony – as opposed to acting as contradicting forces. If the latter happens, the national security framework can come crashing down, very quickly and very gravely! This is what seems to be happening currently. Talk of a sovereign foreign policy is good but without a robust national security framework – particularly with no defined national interest – it mostly sounds hollow!

Talk of a sovereign foreign policy is good but without a robust national security framework, it almost sounds hollow!

I have elaboratively discussed all components of the national security framework in the past but national interests merit a repeat here. They are the penultimate pillar of the national security framework and can be best expressed by the French expression *raison d'état*, reason of state in English. National interests are generally the goals and aspirations of a nation which can guarantee its survival. These are also what states seek to protect or achieve in relation to each other. For Pakistan, the following national interests were what I listed and believe should be defined, disseminated and reiterated. One, Pakistan should become a nationally harmonious country. Two, it should become a secure state, especially

with regard to its territory, citizens, and constitution. Three, Pakistan needs to be a successful economy and enhance the standard of its citizens through favourable social opportunities. Four, promote a morally stable and secure world governed by the rule of law. Five, initiate friendships globally by acting as a democratic and credible partner.

The astute amongst us would note that all five national interests are focused on the economic bounty, national security and favourable conditions. These – and the relevant national interests – are the lynchpin of an independent foreign policy! The same may be said of the complete national security framework but at least the securing of national interests – in one form or another – is key to honour and confidence in international relations! One must walk before one can run!

While it is very important to aspiring for honour, courage and respect, it is equally important to ensure that the foundations are there to enable one to do so! It just seems that at this critical juncture the cart is before the horse. No matter! At least the current political climate has opened up a national debate about what it means to have a sovereign foreign policy and that is how one progresses from idea to implementation.

It is not only Pakistan that will need to hold national interests and an independent foreign policy dear. Pakistan's regional and global allies will tend to do the same. The recent announcement by Pakistan's all-weather-friends to make bilateral loans conditional on IMF involvement indicates such. China, Saudi and UAE have said that they will discuss bilateral help once the next phase of the IMF programme is agreed upon. For Pakistan, this scenario contradicts the national interests espousing favourable regional and global conditions – which it should work on! For the others, it perhaps aligns with their national interest of being a credible and sensible nation on the world stage – which they should always desire to!

Glance through the global checkerboard and you would notice that countries that aim to be big players in this world are the ones who have acutely, passionately and successfully set up their national security framework – to an extent that they can now claim to have an independent foreign policy which secures their national interests further. As big a nation as the US and as small a city-state such as Singapore, both have followed the same blueprint, of national security framework first and a sovereign foreign policy second! Ultimately, it is a power-oriented world where the weak can't demand, only plead and honour and sovereignty may

not easily be the luxury of a struggling country. Therefore, it is important to get one's priorities right and only then one can provide true impetus to an independent foreign policy!

The writer is Director Programmes for an international ICT organization based in the UK and writes on corporate strategy, socio-economic and geopolitical issues.

Source: Published in Daily Times

Geo-Economic War By Maximilian Hess

The ongoing geo-economic conflict between Russia and the West is a complicated one, surrounded by nearly as much disinformation and misinformation as the war in Ukraine itself. As such, both parties are confidently claiming to have the upper hand. But looking at the evidence at hand objectively, it becomes clear that the Kremlin is in retreat.

On April 29, Russia's finance ministry announced that it would pay some \$650m to foreign creditors on two overdue Eurobonds. And by making the payments before the bonds' grace period expired on May 4, the Kremlin has avoided falling into sovereign default.

On the surface, this may look like a win for Russia. But in reality, the move was an embarrassing one for Vladimir Putin.

Ahead of the bond's formal maturity on April 4, the Kremlin announced that it would buy back the bonds in roubles – and pay those who refused to accept the rouble buy-back as well. Nearly 75 percent of bondholders (almost certainly all domestic) agreed to the new terms.

Emboldened, the Kremlin announced on April 6 that it was also depositing roubles into accounts set up for other bondholders. The Credit Derivatives Determinations Committees judged this to be a “potential-failure-to-pay” event, ruling that Russia would effectively be in default if it fails to correct the situation by the aforementioned May 4 deadline. In response, Russian officials accused the West of attempting to force Russia into a default by restricting its access to foreign currency reserves. The US Treasury, which oversees sanctions, however made clear that sanctions do not bar Russia from paying with funds it was earning from ongoing oil and gas sales.

Russia's recent decision to pay the bonds in foreign currency enabled it to avoid the all-but-guaranteed acceleration of other debts and lawsuits that would have followed a default and further impoverished the Russian people.

However, the move also left the Kremlin in a position of extreme hypocrisy and embarrassment. In the end, what Putin did was to repay domestic bondholders with roubles, which they cannot convert freely into hard currency to spend abroad. And pay foreign holders in full, in dollars – hardly a feat worthy of praise.

To achieve this Putin likely tapped into the record levels of foreign currency Russia accumulated through oil and gas sales since the beginning of its invasion of Ukraine.

And it seems, soon it may also lose that crucial income. On May 4, the European Union proposed plans to phase out the purchase of Russian oil.

Between the launch of its invasion on February 24 and the time of writing, Russia has earned \$22bn from oil sales to the EU according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CRE). This record income was partially due to high hydrocarbon prices resulting from the war itself. Russia's foreign currency stockpile, however, will not keep growing forever as the costs of the war are borne and oil and gas markets readjust. And now, it is also on the verge of losing a key customer.

Furthermore the EU is going after Russia's oil sales not just within the bloc but around the world.

The bloc's package of sanctions measures also includes a ban on providing transportation to Russian oil, regardless of where it is destined. This is certainly a fallible measure, given shipping companies set up outside the bloc could avoid it. However, the package will also bar the provision of insurance services for such shipping. This is far more difficult to evade, given the shipping insurance market is so dominated by EU, Canadian and US firms.

In case there is any doubt just how exposed the shipping sector is to Western sanctions, one just needs to look to the actions of Russian state-owned shipping company Sovcomflot. On May 3 specialist maritime industry publication Lloyd's List revealed that Sovcomflot was looking to sell at least 40 ships from its 121 ship fleet before wind-down authorisations expire and it becomes fully sanctioned on May 15.

If Sovcomflot fails to raise enough cash to honour its debts before then, it will fall into default and creditors will go after its ships. Just like the Russian state, Russian businesses are still fearful of defaulting on Western creditors – even amid a war.

These sanctions are unlikely to be lifted as long as Russian troops remain beyond the pre-February 24 lines of control. For example, none of the sanctions introduced after Russia's annexation of Crimea have ever been lifted.

Excerpted: 'The Kremlin blinks first in the geo-economic war over Ukraine'.

Courtesy: Aljazeera.com

Source: Published in The News

CPEC's New Phase of Rapid Development

By Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has now entered into new phase of rapid development in the country.

It seems that the change of gears in the policy making and decision making have once again put the CPEC and Pak-China bilateral relations on the roll coaster which is good omen for the two countries and their peoples alike.

In this regard, rigorous mutual consultations, collaboration and coordination at the highest political, diplomatic, official, bureaucratic and last but not the least, ministerial levels have been kicked off between the two friendly countries for the further development of CPEC. Even serious meetings have been held for the early start of its phase-II in the country.

In the past, the newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif played a key role in setting up many energy and infrastructure projects in the CPEC's initial stages, and definitely resuming work on the scheme will be like a homecoming.

Sharif as the former chief minister of Punjab province was deeply involved in negotiating infrastructure projects built during the early harvest phase of the 15-year CPEC scheme.

He has now been dubbed as strategic value-addition for the rapid development of the CPEC, especially the initiation of CPEC Phase-II in the country.

During his maiden speech Premier Shehbaz Sharif made clear his intention to breathe new life into the estimated US\$60 billion CPEC.

It was no coincidence that a Chinese embassy delegation was among the first callers on Sharif when he attended his first day in Prime Minister Office.

Even Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian termed the premiership of Sharif as positive, for the development of CPEC and, of course, further strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Unfortunately, the pace and productivity of the CPEC projects could not be up to the mark because of numerous but complex and complicated reasons during the previous government in the country.

In this connection, Beijing and the Pakistani Establishment conveyed serious concerns to ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan and his PTI-led government which never embraced the CPEC during its three and a half years rule.

Resultantly, most under-construction projects fell far behind schedule, while no new major projects were launched in the country.

The establishment of three special economic zones during the previous government has not yet received any substantial attention from the Chinese businesses looking to relocate their manufacturing facilities.

The response from Chinese firms was underwhelming, because of having no clarity of purpose and mechanism of implementation in which even CPEC Authority also played unproductive role which seemingly is going to be wrapped-up very soon.

Rather, Chinese diplomats and executives became increasingly vocal in their complaints about red tape holding back private and CPEC projects alike.

Actually, they were disturbed by undue bureaucratic bottlenecks preventing the payment of hundreds of millions of dollars owed to the state-owned enterprises which operate the power generation plants built during former Premier Nawaz Sharif's government.

Unfortunately, tragic incident of killing of its nationals working for the China Gezhouba Group Corp on Dasu hydropower project angered the Chinese policy makers and afterwards, comfort zones of mutual trust and promise of so-called immaculate security have been eroded.

It proved fatal for the development of CPEC project in the country. Despite the Khan Administration's best efforts, China did not make funding available for a US\$6.8 billion overhaul of Pakistan's crumbling railways network.

It is hoped that leadership of Shehbaz Sharif will be instrumental in accelerating the work on the CPEC.

The hopes of the Chinese are quite high as are the expectations. Shehbaz has become Pakistan's prime minister amid the rolling out of the second phase of the CPEC.

Furthermore, eventually troubleshooting some of the problems that Chinese companies operating in Pakistan have faced in the past few years will be amicably settled and resolved.

In this context, inaugurating a metro bus line connecting Islamabad with its new Chinese-built international airport on Monday, Shehbaz publicly appealed to President Xi Jinping to fund the revival of a mass transit railway system in the populous port city of Karachi by adding the project to the CPEC.

For the easy and smooth sailing of CPEC project Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appointed Ahsan Iqbal as the Minister for Planning & Development which would be a good omen for the development of CPEC.

He had good working relations with Chinese official when he held the post between 2015 and 2018, and experienced the implementation of the early harvest phase of the CPEC.

In this connection, the newly appointed Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal termed the CPEC a top priority however expressed serious concern over the sluggish progress on CPEC-related projects.

The minister directed that progress on CPEC should be reviewed twice a month and all Joint Working Groups (JWG) of CPEC to pursue their sector-specific projects and initiate work on them immediately, the Planning Commission said in a statement.

The Minister labeled the CPEC as a potential game-changer for the region but showed serious concerns about zero progress on the Industrial Zones of Port Qasim, Islamabad and Mirpur which is unfortunate.

In 2017, the excitement around SEZs was so high that all major foreign direct investors were lining up to be a part of it. However, due to an inordinate delay in projects Chinese investors moved away, said the minister.

The Minister noted that further delay in projects will not be acceptable and directed the officials to ensure expediting of the work.

As per the initial plan, CPEC plan, the SEZs were supposed to be ready by 2020 but unfortunately, in the last four years, there has been zero progress on SEZs, said the minister, adding that Interior Division should ensure foolproof security of the Chinese nationals working in Pakistan.

To conclude, speedy revival of CPEC should be mantra of newly formed government in which burning issues of security, delay in payments, incidents of mismanagement and overlapping of bureaucracy should also be plugged-in as soon as possible.

In this connection, Pakistan's paradigm shift from geopolitics to geo-economic should be transmitted and translated in true letter and spirit.

Early initiation of the CPEC Phase-II is the need of the hour. Ideal combination of public-private partnership by involving even the domestic banking & financial institutes would stimulate FDI in the CPEC projects.

It is suggested that new government should focus on massive green industrialization, agro-economy, innovative service sector, climate change and biodiversity, water conservation, multi-cropping, hydro-energy, artificial intelligence technologies, health and last but the not least education in the sphere of CPEC Phase-II.

Diversification of commercial diplomacy and connectivity options is the way forward in which even reformation and reaffirmation of diplomatic ties with ASEAN would be a value addition for the rapid development of CPEC.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

Global Economic Outlook and Pakistan By

Hussain H Zaidi

Having made a sound recovery in 2021 from the Covid-19 induced contraction in 2020, most of the major economies on the globe are heading for an awkward combination of rising prices and falling growth rates.

This situation together with actual or likely policy responses thereto weighs significantly on Pakistan's economic outlook.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s World Economic Outlook, April 2022, global economic growth is likely to recede to 3.6% in 2022, as well as in 2023, from 6.1% in 2021.

Advanced economies will grow on average 3.3% in 2022 and 2.4% in 2023, down from 5.2% in 2021, while the average projected growth for emerging and developing economies (E&DEs) is 3.8% and 4.4% in 2022 and 2023 respectively, down from 6.8% in 2021.

The US, the world's largest economy, is projected to grow 3.7% in 2022 and 2.3% in 2023, down from 5.7% in 2021. The economies in the euro area are likely to grow 2.8% in 2022 and 2.3% in 2023, down from 5.3% in 2021.

Among the E&DEs, China, the world's second largest economy, is projected to grow 4.4% in 2022 and 5.1% in 2023, down from 8.1% in 2021.

The war and sanctions-hit Russian economy will contract 8.5% in 2022 and 2.3% in 2023, compared with 4.7% growth in 2021.

The growth of Pakistan's economy is projected to slow down to 4% in 2022 from 5.6% in 2021 before registering a slight uptick at 4.2% in 2023.

From growth rates, we move to price movements. In 2020, the advanced economies experienced a modest 0.7% consumer price inflation and 3.1% contraction due to the lockdowns and the resultant fall in aggregate demand.

On the other hand, the E&DEs saw 2% contraction in output accompanied by a relatively moderate 5.2% inflation.

The contrast between the advanced economies on the one hand and the E&DEs on the other in terms of growth-price movement may be put down to the difference in the type of inflation they faced: predominantly supply side in the case of E&DEs and mainly demand side in the case of advanced economies.

This difference is crucial to understanding the global economic outlook.

The projected inflation for advanced economies for 2022 and 2023 is 5.7% and 2.5% respectively compared with 3.1% in 2021. For the E&DEs, the projected inflation for 2022 and 2023 is 8.7% and 6.5% respectively compared with 5.9% in 2021.

Thus, in case of both advanced economies and E&DEs, the current year is projected to be characterised by falling growth rates and upward price movement.

Such a combination is an inevitable result of supply-side inflation, or supply shocks, which is always more difficult to handle than the demand-driven inflation. The present supply shocks are largely the result of the Ukrainian crisis.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the world's largest economy was experiencing demand-pull inflation, caused by both the multibillion-dollar fiscal stimulus and a loose monetary policy, whereby the Federal Reserve (Fed), the central bank, kept the benchmark interest rate close to zero for two years.

The expansionary policies were a response to the pandemic-induced economic slump.

However, as the economy regained momentum in 2021 and demand-driven inflation built up, the Fed hiked the benchmark interest rate: first in March this year by 0.25 percentage point and then in the first week of May by 0.50 percentage point, which represents the biggest rate hike since 2000.

The Bank of England has also raised its prime interest rate by 0.25 percentage point to a 13-year high to ward off inflationary pressures.

These incremental increases in the interest rate, which are likely to continue for the rest of the year, will prompt a massive outflow of foreign portfolio investment (FPI) from several E&DEs to the US, UK and other advanced economies.

As a result, the currencies of many E&DEs will depreciate, stoking inflation. This inflation will be in addition to the fuel and food price increase set off by the war in Ukraine and the resurgence of the pandemic in China, the globe's largest manufacturer, which is exacerbating supply-chain disruptions.

While the interest rate hike in the US and the UK may put the brakes on the demand-side inflation, it will be of little help in coping with the supply-side inflation.

As a result, the US is projected to witness both upward price movement (7.7% from 4.7% in 2021) and a fall in growth rates (3.7% from 5.7% in 2021) in 2022.

The same goes for the euro area, where a lacklustre 2.8% growth rate will be accompanied by a relatively high 5.3% inflation, and the UK, which is also projected to have a falling growth (3.7% from 7.4% in 2021) accompanied by an increasing inflation (7.4% from 2.6% in 2021) in 2022.

Implications for Pakistan

For Pakistan, as for several other developing economies, the implications for this rising price-falling growth combination are likely to be significant.

The US, China and the UK are respectively Pakistan's three largest export markets. Growth recession in these and other important export markets, notably those in the euro area such as Germany, may put the brakes on Pakistan's export growth.

The first 10 months of the current financial year have seen a healthy 25.5% increase in exports.

A drop in exports, by itself, is not likely to significantly pull back Pakistan's overall economic growth, as exports account for less than 9% of GDP.

However, if the increasing trade deficit, which reached \$39 billion during FY22 (July-April), forces the introduction of import compression measures, economic growth rate may significantly fall.

Being a net food and net fuel importing country, Pakistan is likely to see a big jump in food and energy import bill.

During FY22 (July-March), food and energy imports increased to \$6.30 billion and \$12.66 billion respectively from \$5.34 billion and \$6.67 billion respectively during the corresponding period of FY21.

The interest rate hike in some of the major economies, notably the US, will put downward pressure on the exchange rate at a time when the domestic currency has already seen a steep fall in recent months due to an increasing current account deficit, political uncertainty and a stalled IMF credit programme.

The exchange rate depreciation will drive up the cost of imported raw material, components and machinery and thus add to the general price level, which at the end of March 2022 had seen YoY growth of 12.7%.

Since the interest rate is a function of inflation, in the last Monetary Policy Statement, the SBP increased the benchmark rate to 12.25%.

The increase in interest rate coupled with currency depreciation will add to the cost of debt servicing, the largest component of public spending. As a result, the fiscal deficit will go up.

The deficit will increase further in case the government continues to subsidise energy consumption.

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Peace Through Trade By Aizaz Ahmad

Chaudhry

LAST week, a routine matter made headlines. The government approved appointments of trade ministers in several Pakistani embassies, including our high commission in New Delhi. Suddenly, several circles started speculating that Pakistan was about to open trade with India. Sensing the uproar, the government clarified that there was no change in Islamabad's policy on trade with India.

The incident raised a broader question on how Pakistan should pursue geo-economics if it chooses not to trade with its neighbours. Geo-economics essentially means leveraging geography to enhance the socioeconomic well-being of the people. For Pakistan, geo-economics calls for enhancing trade with its four neighbours — Afghanistan, China, India and Iran.

Trade relations are a formidable peace constituency. The most instructive is the example of the European Union. Other regions, like those constituting Asean, have also discovered the huge benefits of regional trade for their people. South Asia, however, remains the least integrated region of the world. No doubt, much of the blame can be apportioned to India, which has not encouraged regional integration, allowed conflicts to fester, and kept Saarc marginalised.

Yet, at the end of the day, it is the South Asian countries that suffer more from intraregional conflict than India does. One major reason is that India, because of its economic size and military muscle, has become relevant for the US's Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China. The US tilt towards India has emboldened the Indian leadership to pursue aggressive Hindutva-driven policies, destabilising the region and even the Indian polity, compromising the promise of regional trade.

What Pakistan needs is a change of mindset.

So, what should Pakistan do under the circumstances? Should trade with neighbours be hostage to disputes or differences? Or should we begin to view trade relations with our neighbours through the prism of geo-economics and socioeconomic well-being of the people of Pakistan? Our trade with Afghanistan had expanded to over \$3 billion, but has shrunk since then despite the heavy dependence of Afghanistan on trade with and through Pakistan. With Iran, US

sanctions have kept us away from substantial bilateral trade. We did not avail the innovative solutions that were available, such as border markets. The result is that the bordering regions of Pakistan continue to receive smuggled goods from Iran with no net gain for Pakistan's exchequer.

With China, bilateral trade did receive a boost after the Free Trade Agreement of 2006, but the balance of trade is largely in China's favour. With India, during the peace process (2004-8), bilateral trade had jumped to over \$3.6bn. But since August 2019, all trade ties remain suspended.

Likewise, transit trade if handled well can bring enormous benefits to transit countries. However, the Pakistan-Afghanistan transit trade has often been misused, leading to the flooding of Pakistani markets with smuggled goods. India has often asked for the transit of its goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, but the pressures this could generate for our roads and customs infrastructure have inhibited progress.

Does this mean that Pakistan should continue to lose the enormous benefits that can accrue to it by establishing trade and investment relations with its neighbours? The obvious answer is that we should not. Look at India and China, which despite their border and other disputes, have a thriving bilateral trade that has now touched the figure of \$125bn. Likewise, China and the US maintain a robust trade and investment relationship despite the onset of strategic competition between them.

What Pakistan needs is a change of mindset. Nothing should matter more to our policymakers than the socioeconomic well-being of our people, which in turn would enhance our national security. The world is changing rapidly. Nations have learned that cooperation and competition can coexist as long as there is mutuality of benefit.

No confidence-building measure is more potent than bilateral trade as it can help reduce mutual distrust and position countries to address tougher issues on the bilateral agenda. In economic terms as well, low transportation costs, availability of road and rail links, and socially identical consumer bases provide a clear edge to trading with neighbours. The economic activity thus generated provides our traders access to vast regional markets. We need a whole new approach to positively engaging with all our neighbours in securing for our traders more opportunities of balanced and mutually beneficial trade and investment

opportunities, in the larger interest of economic security of the people of Pakistan. In due course, trade and investment ties can become a building block towards durable peace in South Asia.

The writer, a former foreign secretary, is director general of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, and author of Diplomatic Footprints.

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It's Not Just The USA: The Economic

Instability Is Global – Analysis By Paul

Tolmachev

The actions of the authorities in developed countries, essentially an extension of the Keynesian economic policy discourse, have brought the economies into disrepute. These actions consist of immense stimulus and virtually unfunded government indexation of voter income in the face of expected impoverishment amid COVID, lockdowns, and other global problems.

The government is making money cheaper, just to maintain electoral support. This leads to a dispersal of demand and a proliferation of zombie companies, it distorts the incentives for healthy competition, it reduces business efficiency, and it kills the innovation factor of economic growth. Most importantly: it creates leverage – the dominance of needs over opportunities, demand over supply-in other words, it leads to dramatic market disequilibrium.

Before COVID times, such imbalances over the past 20 years were bought with new leverage, and the imbalances went away for a while, giving birth to inevitable new imbalances in the future. The Austrian cycles perfectly describe this process, its starting points and its consequences. In fact, this leftist social agenda for buying electoral loyalty is a new political doctrine based on simplification, and most importantly, on the abolition of any concern for tomorrow.

In COVID times, however, all that has changed. Another injection of mega liquidity, the cheapening of money by all possible means – from direct budgetary donations to the inflating of the Fed's balance sheet – occurred against a background of blocked demand, rather than falling due to economic stagnation. As a result, the savings of all agents increased abnormally, people stopped wanting to work, the flow of investment into the stock market and into financial assets increased, creating hyperinflation in them and moving them away from their fair value.

The assumption was that, once the restrictions were lifted, the intensified and unmet buying intentions would sharply accelerate the economy, because the capacity and potential of supply is enormous: supply has the capacity to satisfy

demand, synergistically accelerating the economy. This has not happened, however, because there have been structural shifts as a result of excessive lockdowns: gaps in supply chains, reduced labor force participation, and labor shortages in general, hypertrophied growth of commodity markets, and geopolitical tensions that reinforce all of the above factors. As a result, supply is unable to meet the demand because of cheap money, and inflation is again eating away at the economy.

At the same time, instead of reducing its clumsy intervention, the government, on the contrary, increases social programs and government spending in the form of infrastructure projects. In this way it depresses business through the inevitable increase in the tax burden and further contributes to the compression of supply, reducing efficiency, the desire to invest and, in general, worsening business expectations and expanding the mandate and the number of bureaucratic entities.

Against this same backdrop, by continuing its conciliatory policy with resource autocracies, the government is forcing a green agenda at the worst possible time, underfunding both conventional and alternative energy, which cannot cover the current need for the capacity provided by conventional energy. A cursory reading of Klaus Schwab's *The Great Reboot* is enough to understand the inadequacy of such a utopian concept, the adherence to which, as we can see, leads to anti-utopian consequences.

The result was a geopolitical tension caused by differing interests, preferences and expectations of global players: Russia, as a resource autocracy, saw a window of opportunity and the vulnerability of the economic position of the Collective West – and played the tactical card. In the short horizon, the calculation proved correct: on the whole, post-conservative externalities and leftist populist policies of Western power elites weakened developed economies, led to stagflation and increased the threat of recession. The blow to the Western world in the form of the military conflict in Eastern Europe and its aftermath was well-timed for the resource autocracy itself, which from within needed a new impetus for self-preservation and confirmation of the regime's legitimacy by the population.

What do we get in the end? We end up with structural shifts, when all the post-Soviet problems multiply manifold. Stagflation is already a fact today; recession is inevitable tomorrow. Social discontent, which will inevitably happen and is

already taking place in various parts of the Western world, will force governments to continue to care about today without thinking about tomorrow – and to continue the policies of populism and leftist expansive discourse, which will inevitably lead to even greater leverage and exacerbate economic, and therefore social, imbalances.

Commodity inflation will not end quickly, since significant exporters of raw materials are in conflict and alternative channels of resource importation have not been established. New energy is clearly insufficient against the background of limiting imports of old energy from the resource autocracy. This means that traditional energy supplies must be recanalized, which is inevitably accompanied by rising costs and acceleration of inflation. Supply is under stress from rising costs – logistical lockups, commodity inflation and labor shortages. An additional stress is on the way, or rather, already in the room – rising credit costs and a potential drop in demand.

At the same time, China, as the embodiment of an alternative sociopolitical pole, benefits in the short horizon. Against the background of universal turbulence and socio-economic disequilibria in the Western world, the ability to centrally stimulate the market in the initial stages of the capitalist impulse can be quite a success story. At this point, there are still no acute dependencies on state injections, no meaningful imbalances in supply and demand dynamics, and no ideological constraints on imported raw materials.

China, with its own problems of growing state capitalism in the form of hypertrophied infrastructure capex and an authoritarian political frame leading to market and innovation inefficiencies over the long haul, now has a distinct advantage. It lies in the possibility of directive economic management and linear monetary and fiscal incentives. This is an advantage that Western states no longer have and that, by the way, China itself will soon lose, because games of “big government” do not succeed for too long. They always end in one thing: social and economic collapse in its various forms and outcomes.

As a result, Western economies are faced with a dilemma as never before: to continue state expansion and addiction treatment with a new dose, or to start bringing the economy into balance. Of course, this is associated with tough and unpopular political decisions, all the more painful in a situation of global tension. But this is precisely the situation in which politicians show their true skills, namely

the ability to convince voters to sacrifice something today for the sake of a better tomorrow. Otherwise, there will be no tomorrow at all.

So far, we have been assured of only one thing: we are living in one day and there is no tomorrow. In short, it's like Keynes: we are all going to die in the long run. I think we've been through this before.

*About the author: The Russian-born Tomachev is portfolio manager at BlackRock (London, UK), with \$500 million in personally managed assets. He also is a Visiting Scholar at the Stanford Institute of Economic Policy Research, where he researches institutional and political economy.

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EDUCATION

Education Plans: A Suggestion By Faisal Bari

PEOPLE are worried about the new government's education plans. Will the Single National Curriculum be continued or shelved? Will we return to the old curriculum and the old books, or will the government create a new national curriculum? Will the government rebrand the SNC as a minimum standard curriculum and allow more flexibility to the provinces and schools to have greater variation around and beyond minimum standards?

All these options and more are open. Though there were initial indications that the SNC might not be continued, it now seems there may be a 'conference' to discuss and decide the issue and the way forward. These things are hard to decide in conferences. However, we await its outcome.

The stated objective of the SNC — the reduction of inequity in society generally, and particularly in education, is too big for an instrument like a single curriculum. There have been issues with the curriculum objectives as well as the books based on the SNC. There have been major issues of implementation too. These points have been made repeatedly. We look forward to hearing from the government how it plans to address these issues.

But, aside from the SNC, we need to have a much deeper and more foundational look at education issues. These issues are for the K-12 (kindergarten-Grade 12) sector as well as the higher education sector. I will come back to higher education issues another day.

What do we as a nation want to achieve in the education sector over the next decade?

What do we as a nation want to achieve in the education sector over the next decade? Do we want all children to get 10 years of at least minimum quality education? This is the promise enshrined in the Constitution through Article 25-A

added as part of the 18th Amendment. But no government has worked on this. Even today, we do not have universal primary enrolment or completion. Instead, we have very high dropout rates. By some estimates, about 20 million five- to 16-year-olds remain out of school. Do we want to make the promise of Article 25-A a reality?

Similarly, we have plenty of evidence that the majority of children in school in Pakistan — most of those enrolled in government schools and in low-fee private schools and madressahs, and these make up some 95 per cent of all children enrolled in schools in Pakistan — have to endure a poor quality of education. Plenty of test, examination and assessment results establish this fact. Do we want to prioritise the issue of quality of education?

I have little hesitation in saying that Pakistan has probably one of the most iniquitous and differentiated education system in the world. There are divisions based on the income of parents, gender, geography, caste, religion, culture, language, examination systems and books. What education a child gets, if she, indeed, gets any, depends on many or all these factors. Is creating equity a goal for society and state? This question is much bigger than the single national curriculum issue.

We know that Pakistan's future depends on what happens to the children and youth of today. If they stay uneducated, unskilled and/or illiterate, the future — for them, their families and the country — cannot be bright. We have ambitions of development and achieving a sustainable high-growth trajectory. This cannot happen if the children today and those born in the next few years do not get quality education. No amount of short-term economic stability and/or level of support from other countries and multilaterals will put us on a medium- to long-run high-growth trajectory if we do not have human capital to underpin growth and sustain it.

So, if the answers to the questions here are in the affirmative, we have a lot of work to do. How are we going to move from where we are in, say, a five-to-10-year period, to where we want to be? That will require a lot of planning, commitment and support and it has to come from all areas of society.

But this task is beyond what one government can take up. It requires prioritisation, agreement and attention from successive governments. It is an agreement that society and state have to drive. The PML-N and its coalition

cannot do it — not only because there is uncertainty about how long this government is going to stay but because there is also a need for a broader consensus.

What can be suggested is that this government should set up a commission for creating this commitment. This should be a high-powered commission but one with a clear end date of 12 to 18 months. The terms of reference should be simple. The commission should work out our educational priorities for the next 10 years and provide a plan for how these priorities can be actualised. It should also provide a way for reaching consensus in society regarding the commitment to these priorities and the need for implementing them. It is thus important that the commission have eminent educationists and representatives of all mainstream schools of thought as its members. The commission should have experts but the report of the commission — and this should be a task for the commission before it is disbanded — should have the endorsement of all mainstream political parties. The education issue must be above partisan and party-based debate.

Education issues are too broad and deep and too important for our survival as a nation to be left to one government, one party or even to be left at the party level. To address the issues, a government must establish a body that allows dialogue to happen across political lines. A commission with specific terms of reference and a timeline might be one way to start this dialogue. I hope the current government gives the issue some thought.

The writer is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, and an associate professor of economics at Lums.

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Strengthen Education System By Mujeeb ur rehman

FOR centuries education has always remained an important tool in human resource development by societies.

Human capital is termed as the abilities, knowledge learned through education, improved capabilities of individuals, and promise for livelihood earnings to people.

Education has the potential to increase the productive ability of individuals.

Education can also justify the grandiose agglomeration of government earning mechanism that can be understood as government net income, achieving taxation targets, states financial and funding interventions in public affairs, and making pathways for better policy recommendations and implementations in due time and given a budget to prosper economic and social lives of the citizenry.

The rate of returns is associated with education and defined as the value of lifetime productivity and socio-financial earnings of individuals.

Academic studies and observations of educated people report that there is a positive relationship between years of schooling and earnings, thus justifying public and private investments in education and educational policy designing of the states for its citizens.

The national education policies and public spending on educating people are justified on the basis of two types of returns to education in any society or state. These are private and social returns to education.

Private return to education consists of the student's degree, diploma, life expectancy with better health, job, and opportunity for getting better careers with time and experience.

One of the reports of the World Bank, empirically shows that the rates of returns to primary education are 20%, a secondary level of education is 14%, and a tertiary level of education is 11% to individuals in their earnings across the globe.

For Pakistan, an additional year of schooling increases the average rate of returns up to 7% for individuals across national labor markets.

The social return to education means that society gets to progress, understanding civic roles, rational decision making, making responsible citizens, learning norms, social and religious harmony, a decrease of crime rates, and public knowledge to expose the power of ballot for creating democratic societies.

It is well evident that political decision-making became prosperous in educated societies and states across the globe since the dawn of human civilization.

The Constitution of Pakistan provides free and compulsory education and its access to all the national population from age 5 to 16 years.

In addition, education is one of the most effective keys by which a nation uplifts its socio-economic fronts to development.

That is why, parents that invest more and optimally for their children's education result in better prospects of long-term job creation, employment opportunities, personal, business development, and civic sense development among children.

The education is directly contributing to national causes of integrity and development, sense of responsibility in citizens, and many other social benefits that ultimately contribute into the progress of a nation.

More investment in education is likely to create knowledge creations in multiple fields of science and technologies, innovation, and providing technical and vocational skills to the youth bulge that may spill over into higher productivity in almost all the fields of national spheres of Pakistan.

Different economists and researchers have used various parameters and indicators to measure multiple aspects of such returns to education.

The most common is the years of schooling, experience after schooling, the levels of vocational skills, technical capabilities, innovation and creativity indicators, quality of education, and the level of schooling to mention a few.

Quantifying indirect returns to education is a challenge to measure yet faced by social scientists.

Similarly, the payoff matrix of education varies across individuals and fields of sciences and labor market responses across the globe.

The studies conducted in past , in this regard, have indicated parameters to bring fluctuations in returns are class size, teacher quality, school quality, student-teacher-parents collaboration mechanism, classroom attendance, teacher attendance, and the resources allocated for education purposes. All these parameters are the constituting components of any education policy.

The national education policy perspectives must ensure access to quality education for all, development of a unified national curriculum for national cohesion, encompassing the R&D requirements for knowledge generation in all fields of sciences and arts, prioritizing national objectives.

Through investing in education, increasing productivity and human capital formation of the labor force, human resource development in every field, provision of technical and vocational skills, promotions of science and technologies.

A public-private partnership for educating the youth bulge, sufficient funds allocated for education, dissemination of national harmonization policies through education, collaboration with international educational institutions, and encompassing the Constitutional requirements for providing educational access and quality to all the segments of Pakistani society.

The major obstacles in the education system of Pakistan are low enrollment ratio, poverty-driven out-of-school children, higher dropout ratios, and some of the teaching quality issues in most of the rural areas of Pakistan.

The national literacy rate in 1981 was 25.73 and is currently reported 62.3% by the end of the year, 2021.

Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is of dire need to strengthen the education system of Pakistan.

The writer is contributing columnist, based in Quetta, Balochistan.

Source: Published in pak observer

Higher Education: Up the Creek By Faisal

Bari

MANY public-sector universities, especially the older and bigger ones, have been facing severe budgetary pressures for the last few years. Inflation has been close to double digits during many of these years. The government has cut funding for recurrent expenses of universities a number of times, and in those years when the funds have not been cut, the government has barely covered the previous years' expenses in nominal terms.

The universities cannot increase their tuition fees by much. So, they have been feeling the squeeze a lot. Expenditures have been increasing, even without any expansion of facilities, due to inflationary and other cost-push factors, while revenues have not been increasing and government assistance has been going down. It is not surprising that some of the older universities, that also have significant pension liabilities, have been severely short of funds. Some have not been able to make their payroll in certain months and have, at times, had to be given emergency funds. Some universities have delayed salary payments and even pension payments to their faculty, staff and retired employees.

But all this did not stop governments from continuing to set up new public-sector universities. Punjab alone had announced the creation of around 10 universities last year. The federal government has also set up a number of new higher education institutes — some very expensive ones among them. The recurrent expenses of these universities and higher education projects, once they start, will have claim over higher education funding as well. This will only mean more pressure on all the universities.

A few days ago, we saw the current government proposing only around Rs30 billion for recurrent expenses for universities for next year. Last year, the amount was approximately Rs65bn. If universities were in trouble with Rs65bn, what are they going to do with only Rs30bn? How are they going to survive the next year?

The amount our universities actually need is well in excess of Rs100bn.

The amount our universities actually need is well in excess of Rs100bn. The last government could only give Rs65bn. This had created a very serious problem for

a number of universities and had even driven some to the brink of insolvency. If the proposal for cutting funds to Rs30bn goes ahead, this will completely decimate higher education in the public sector.

The appeal to the government would be to increase higher education funding. The future of young people and the future of the country depends on producing human capital that will put Pakistan on a decent growth trajectory and keep it there. Higher education plays a crucial role in this goal.

Read more: Higher education is in the doldrums

If funding cannot be increased, at the very least the universities should be given as many funds (in real and not nominal terms) as they had last year. If we assume an inflation level of around 10 per cent, it would mean funding of about Rs72bn for the coming year. Even with this funding level it might still be necessary to a) stop most development projects, and b) reverse or at least halt the development of new universities/ projects that were announced last year. We clearly cannot afford new universities at this stage. And if we keep reallocating from the same fund, we will keep compromising on the quality of education that we can give to our students.

If the government, God forbid, does decide to cut funding to Rs30bn, then we should have a serious debate in the higher education sector about closing down a significant number of programmes in many universities and maybe even a number of universities themselves. There is no conceivable way in which public-sector universities can continue to offer all the programmes that they currently are if their funding is cut by half.

Asking universities to raise their own funding is not going to be of much help. How much can they raise the tuition fee by, even if they wanted to, in one year? Raising non-tuition revenues in the higher education sector in Pakistan is not easy. It is hard enough for private not-for-profit universities, it is near impossible for most of the bureaucratic, rule-governed public-sector universities to do. So, the only viable option will be selective closures.

Does the current government really want that? Is this the ruling coalition's plan for higher education? They do not want to raise fuel prices for fear of the public reaction and for, supposedly, not wanting to hurt the poor, but would they be fine

with killing the higher education sector in the country? It seems to be a really strange choice the government seems to be making.

Ideally, the government should be raising funding for the higher education sector substantially as the previous government had reduced it by too much and, at the same time, had started many new university/ higher education projects. But, these are tough financial times as well. Clearly, the government has not made it a priority to give education, school or university level, more funds in these times. If more funding is not available, the government should keep the funding levels at last year's level but stop the work on new projects and move resources towards universities that are in financial distress.

If the government decides to cut funding by half, they should seriously consider closing down many programmes and universities. It will happen by default. It is better to do it by design. But the government should then also accept the fact that education has a fairly low priority for them. The consequences in terms of the impact on the current cohort of youth and on future growth prospects for Pakistan should also be acknowledged and accepted.

The writer is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, and an associate professor of economics at Lums.

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Iran Deal in Peril | Editorial

EFFORTS to revive the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 have seen many ups and downs, but recent indications indicate that the deal may be 'near death'. It is unfortunate that the meticulously reached agreement was torpedoed unilaterally by the Trump administration in 2018. This move only widened the trust deficit between the parties. The Ukraine war has further complicated matters, exposing clear divisions between the P5+1, specifically Russia and the US and its European allies. Moreover, the removal of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard from America's list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations is another major sticking point. Western diplomats quoted in the media have therefore quietly expressed apprehensions that the deal may be close to its demise.

If the Western parties to the deal are serious about salvaging the agreement, they would have to assure Iran of two things. Firstly, Tehran would want a promise that all economic sanctions would be lifted in exchange for compliance with the deal, and that the Islamic Republic would be free to sell its oil and gas in the world market. Secondly, the US should consider removing the Revolutionary Guard from its terrorism list. Whatever Washington's claims, the fact remains that the Guard is an essential part of Iran's defensive structure, and chances of the deal succeeding without the removal of the Pasdaran from the terrorism list are slim. As one Iranian official has told the media, the Pasdaran issue "is our red line". The ball, therefore, is in the West's court. All parties need to take bold steps to revive the deal, which has the potential to help normalise relations between Iran and the West. However, the opposite is also true. Should the deal collapse, the level of confrontation between Iran and its allies and the pro-American camp in the Middle East will rise to far more dangerous levels. Israel has already made a number of irresponsible statements in this regard, and any brinkmanship on its part can spark a fresh regional conflagration.

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Changing Global Order and South Asia By **Brig Tariq Khalil (R)**

TODAY the South Asian region is in turmoil. The reason, the shift in the world order from unipolar to multiple.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, the US is the sole supremacy in the world affairs. US became the judge, jury and the executioner.

The Arab spring offensive was initiated in Obama's era which destroyed the established regimes in the Western Africa and the Middle East.

The death and destruction followed the spring uprising is unprecedented. Hundreds and thousands of people died in the saga of unwanted wars.

The turmoil gave birth to a number of sponsored terrorist organizations, result, the region is still in turmoil.

Multiple events in the backdrop of international drama are still happening. The US supremacy as a superpower is declining.

In the East, China has emerged as economic superpower. Whereas Russia has been modernizing and consolidating its military strength in the last 15 years.

The alliance between these two countries, one an economic superpower and the other military power has tilted the strategic balance from West to East.

This phenomenal change is going to impact not the global scenario but also South Asia.

The readjustment in the policies of various countries is inevitable to face the emerging challenges to confront the pressures in the changed milieu.

The pressure on the US to stem the downward tide and to ensure its continued superpower status generates uncontrollable forces. Thus, the changing equilibrium gives birth to new conflict zones.

On the other hand, as a follow up, the Ukraine-Russia border war after WW-II, in the heart of Europe created a new strategic tug of war, not only in Europe but globally.

It is a battle between emerging power centers and the existing world order. This is almost 56th day. There is no doubt EU and America are fueling the Ukraine blaze.

Both US Secretary of Defense and State were in Kiev. Apparently, every effort to cease the hostilities is thwarted.

The sanctions imposed by the US and EU are hard but Russia and China have made arrangements for mutual financial security and transactions; that the ruble bilateral payments agreed between these two countries.

The arrangement/facility is being extended to other countries as well. They bypass the swift and have introduced alternate settlement systems.

Russia already also switched to gold standard detaching from US\$. This arrangement is likely to hit Petro dollar in the longer run.

Prolonged war is going to push the world into a catastrophic economic and financial storm. Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein tried to shift from Petro dollar.

They ended up being killed. Nevertheless, in the changing world order, the supremacy of Petro dollar cannot be sustained by America any longer.

The result is turmoil, conflicts and extreme hardships for the smaller countries like Pakistan.

It may be recalled that India-Russia deals at US\$ 35 has made tremendous gains to India (approx.US 20 billion \$) defying the sanctions.

India is getting away from the American wrath being a large country and a strategic compulsion of US.

Whereas Imran Khan's last May visit to Moscow envisaged the similar arrangement. Reportedly Russia has now offered a multi-billion dollar four year's economic and industrial proposal to Pakistan.

It has to be seen how new government responds. Yet in the new world order, the Petro dollar superiority cannot be sustained longer.

Similarly, pullback is necessary if smaller countries have to get out of this perpetual strangulation of dollar.

They must define own non-aligned course and should have the right to deal as it is fit in the currency of their choice, as ordained in UN Charter.

But the countries like Pakistan need national cohesion, very strong, prudent and sensible leadership.

Prepare the nation to bear the hardships which may be imposed by US by adopting policy contrary to their wishes. On the other hand, Russia-India deal, for Pakistan allows physical space.

Economy and security in unison is fundamental in the national policy adopted by Pakistan. Pakistan must maintain good relations with the US.

But that does not mean that Pakistan should become a subservient state and allow its territory to be used for offensive actions against other states.

This policy of allowing its territory has incurred not only tremendous human loss but also massive economic loss of billions of dollars to Pakistan in the bargain.

Let's not be naïve and must analyze The US policy towards Pakistan ever since 1948. The US State Department papers and various dispatches of the consulate and embassies since declassified indicate how stick and carrot policy has been used by Americans against Pakistan.

However, this cannot go on for two reasons, one, economic change occurring globally impacting the world order, second, rise of China as economic superpower coupled with Russia as a military power.

The strategic alliance between the two has tilted the strategic balance completely. Pakistan also has to readjust itself in new geostrategic milieu.

The second important factor reemerging in Pakistan is the rise of political consciousness in the youth.

The feudal and the strong Industrial elite, along with the Baradari (caste) system still holds good but dying, overpouring of young and old into streets to support Imran is the beginning of new dawn and political consciousness.

Our political parties must understand this important phenomenal change if they have to survive in coming decades.

Gone is the time that age old slogans bradriism (caste) and feudalism will continue to prevail.

There has to be a new political dispensation to usher Pakistan in the 21st century.

Failing, it will always at the mercy of big powers, as Daniel SMarkey, John Hopkins University, in his book NO Exist from Pakistan, elaborate the contours of US policy.

Keep Pakistan destabilized to be economically dependent. The hard fact is Pakistan though small compare to India its strength is in the army.

It is the center of gravity. The fear is the grass gets trampled when two elephants fight.

The partition of subcontinent Pakistan and India was done on the premise that both the countries will live happily like Canada/USA.

The death of Gandhi and Jinnah allowed the hawks in both countries to prevail into their government policies a la civil military bureaucracy created situations leading towards perpetual animosity.

Kashmir dispute is one lingering conflict. At partition as other problems were resolved at high cost, like division of Punjab, Assam and Bengal, the Kashmir problem could have been solved.

It was not in the interest of those elements in India. The result, we perpetually are a bleeding wound in subcontinent engulfing hundreds and thousands of lives and economic loss for both the countries.

The revocation of Article 370 and 35A, the RSS agenda. The regional balance can never be set right until this problem is resolved amicably by both the countries.

Being nuclear powers, they cannot remain at war-like conditions forever. They must learn from ASEAN where Indonesia as a big brother sacrificed some of its demands for common good.

Under Modi and RSS this may remain a dream. The sub-continent requires wisdom and foresight to achieve peace in the changing global order.

Domestically, the present political scenario is fraught with internal and external dangers. The nation must be ready to face economic and political fallout.

—The author is a Brigadier Rtd a decorated war veteran, a senior Defence and Industry analyst.

Source: Published in Pak Observer.

How to Save the Postwar Order By Michael

J. Mazarr

For the last decade or so, a debate has raged among scholars and policymakers about the significance of the post–World War II, rules-based international order. Is it a feeble myth, as Graham Allison has suggested in *Foreign Affairs*? Or, as G. John Ikenberry and others have argued, is it a powerful influence on state behavior?

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the global response to it has put these competing claims into sharp relief, underscoring that the postwar order places real and tangible constraints on most countries. But the war has also made clear how brittle international orders can be and highlighted two potentially fatal vulnerabilities of the current one: excessive ambition on the part of dominant powers and careful hedging on the part of middle ones. These weaknesses may have put the postwar order and the legitimacy of U.S. leadership in more danger than at any time since 1990—and preserving them will require walking a difficult diplomatic tightrope.

MORE THAN A MYTH

Broadly speaking, the international order is nothing more than the prevailing pattern of interactions in world politics. The existence of an order does not presume shared, enforced rules or any degree of stability. But in certain periods, rules-based orders have emerged that benefited many nations. These systems were not grounded in altruism or the ideal of a supranational government. Rather, the most powerful actors of the era, often under the leadership of one preeminent power or a small number of them, agreed to certain explicit or implicit rules and norms to promote their own interests—typically, territorial security and economic prosperity.

The post-1945 U.S.-led international order is by far the most institutionalized rules-based order to date. It is grounded in the UN system but incorporates regional organizations such as NATO and the European Union, as well as global economic institutions, intergovernmental processes, public-private coalitions, and nongovernmental organizations that set thousands of issue-specific rules and standards. The order embodies norms, imperfectly adhered to but widely shared and at least partly enforced, that promote the interests of participating countries,

most notably their interest in territorial nonaggression and relatively open economic exchange.

The postwar order may be in more danger than at any time since 1990.

The result is a material set of influences on states. The economic alignment of powerful countries, for example, made it possible for these countries to set standards—in the rule of law, financial and monetary policy, technology interoperability, and many other areas—and then to attract new adherents eager to benefit from the resulting coordination. Countries that sought cutting-edge technology, foreign direct investment, or support from international financial organizations found themselves at least partly constrained by the order's rules and norms. Exclusion from the economic order has proved economically fatal—ensuring that the vast majority of countries adjust their behavior, at least to a degree, in order to remain tethered to the international system.

The postwar order is often held to be the sum of its institutional parts, but its wider gravitational effect is the real source of its power. The order's norms and institutions derive from a more essential underlying force—the corresponding interests of a critical mass of the world community and the resulting global influence of that bloc. Dozens of leading economic and military powers have come to view the postwar order as essential to creating the conditions that produce economic and territorial security for themselves. Over time, the states enmeshed in the international order have been joined by potent nonstate actors: nongovernmental organizations, businesses, political parties, and movements now play important roles in advocating for and enforcing the order's rules. By conditioning full participation in economic, political, and even cultural networks on those rules, the states and nonstate actors at the core of the order create a formidable echo effect on world politics.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the full power of this order has been unleashed on Moscow. A core group of leading democracies and nonstate actors have rallied to the system's defense, using components of the order—from the United Nations to economic institutions and networks to the International Criminal Court—to threaten or impose penalties on those who defy it. These actions demonstrate that the postwar order is much more than just a product of U.S. power: far from blindly agreeing to American demands, these states and nonstate actors have defended the system out of their own volition and in pursuit of their own perceived interests.

A WHIMPER, NOT A BANG

If the global reaction to Russia's aggression has shown the postwar order to be far more than a myth, it has also made clear how vulnerable that order is. A direct assault by revisionist powers is often portrayed as the greatest threat to any international system. As the crisis in Ukraine has revealed, however, the more violently revisionists attack an order, the more powerfully its defenders will fight back. Frontal attacks on existing structures tend to consolidate the perceived interests and values that bind them together—a lesson China has also learned from its aggressive “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy. In addition, obvious rule flouting hurts revisionists' ability to enlist support for their actions, even from countries with hesitations or grievances about the existing system.

The postwar order is therefore less vulnerable to sledgehammer blows by revisionist powers than it is to two other vulnerabilities revealed by the current crisis, both of which have the potential to erode the consensus around postwar norms and principles. The first is excessive ambition: the architects of the postwar system risk pushing their objectives too far and generating a violent backlash. This is arguably what happened with NATO in Europe. Under the United States' watch, the alliance metastasized from a measured and carefully calibrated program to fortify European security into a limitless, duty-bound imperative. Without endorsing the legitimacy of Russia's claim to dominate the countries of its near abroad, it is possible to acknowledge that Moscow was always bound to object to NATO's expansion into areas it perceives as core security concerns.

Another product of excessive ambition is the concept of liberal interventionism, which helped to justify a series of interventions, from Iraq to Libya, which have done much damage to U.S. credibility. Elaborate ambitions for the postwar order's rules and norms also produced absolutist nonproliferation goals that led U.S. administrations to abandon imperfect but useful stopgap accords such as the 1994 Agreed Framework with North Korea and the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Pushing for absolute and uncompromising enforcement of any order's rules is not a sustainable approach.

The postwar order might perish not with the bang of a direct revisionist attack but with a whimper, as middle powers gradually drift away from its core institutions. The second vulnerability of the postwar order is the growing influence of what can be termed the “hedging middle” in world politics—countries that prefer to avoid taking sides in the U.S.-Chinese and U.S.-Russian rivalries and therefore

hesitate to enforce the norms of the order. These countries—including Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey—participate in and support many elements of the international system. They broadly support the order's norms and typically respect them. Some of these countries are set to become major economic and military players. Yet if more of them come to see a Chinese-Russian axis as a useful counterweight to U.S. and Western dominance and therefore defect from U.S.-led institutions, the postwar order will be in deep trouble.

This dynamic is already apparent in the international response to Russia's war. While impressive by any historical comparison, the global reaction has been more cautious than many realize. Less than two dozen countries are fully committed to imposing economic sanctions against Moscow, and many in the hedging middle have explicitly rejected such measures. Political leaders, scholars, and pundits in many developing countries have rejected the U.S. and European narrative on Ukraine and questioned the legitimacy of U.S. leadership. These divisions could deepen in the coming weeks if the situation on the ground becomes more ambiguous—for example, if Russia calls for a cease-fire to consolidate its territorial gains and Moscow and Beijing begin rounding up support from hedging countries.

In this way, the postwar order might perish not with the bang of a direct revisionist attack but with a whimper, as middle powers gradually drift away from its core institutions, decline to enforce its norms, and join China and even Russia in various efforts to formulate a more multipolar world system. Such a process would likely play out across dozens of institutions and issue areas, fragmenting and sometimes regionalizing trade, investment, and information flows and much else. And it could be accelerated by the continued rise of angry, resentful, self-glorifying nationalism in many countries.

Such a scenario illustrates how these two vulnerabilities of the international order are intertwined. It is when excessive ambition generates crises—whether over Iran, North Korea, or Ukraine—that the hedgers are backed into the most uncomfortable position. Events demand that they choose a side. In failing to do so, they seem to weaken the norms of the order—even though they had no desire to endorse the rule breakers and even though they broadly support those norms themselves.

BEND, DON'T BREAK

This dynamic points to an uncomfortable truth. To preserve the postwar international order, Washington will have to moderate and restrict its promotion of the order's norms and the enforcement of its rules. A rigid and uncompromising approach will produce repeated overreach, provoke needless backlash from hedging states, and ultimately jeopardize the consensus at the order's core. This may be the most important lesson of recent events in Europe and beyond: the United States needs to embrace a practical and sustainable, rather than inflexible and absolute, approach to the rules-based order.

Such an approach should focus on a few nonnegotiable norms: constraints on physical and cyber-aggression, collaboration on climate change, and cooperation to promote a stable global trade and financial system. It would accept the need to work with democracies and nondemocracies alike. It would actively promote free societies but do so by helping established and emerging democracies rather than forcing change on undemocratic ones. It would accept flawed but effective arms control deals rather than holding out for perfection.

At a moment when much of the world is aligned against Russian aggression, it may seem counterintuitive to suggest that Washington should dial back the intensity of its defense and promotion of the rules-based order. After all, that order has given the United States a tremendous competitive advantage and helped stabilize world politics. But the war in Ukraine has exposed the system's brittleness. And unless the United States adopts a more pragmatic and flexible approach to maintaining it, the postwar order may collapse into a new era of conflict.

Source: Published in Foreign Affairs

The War in Ukraine Calls for a Reset of Biden's Foreign Policy By Matthew Duss

The invasion of Ukraine is a paradigm shift on the scale of 9/11," British Foreign Minister Liz Truss told an audience in Washington on March 10. "How we respond today will set the pattern for this new era."

Truss's comments capture the prevailing view in Washington. A member of Congress remarked days later, "You'd have to go back to 9/11 to see such a unified commitment." Considering how that post-9/11 unity was put to use, its invocation now should be viewed more as a warning than as encouragement. The United States and its allies made many disastrously wrong choices in the wake of 9/11, choices that had far-reaching consequences: the declaration of a global "war on terror," the decision to turn the initial military intervention in Afghanistan into a long-term state-building operation, the invasion of Iraq, a worldwide campaign of kidnapping, torture, and assassination, to name a few. With those mistakes and abuses in mind, the United States must tread carefully as it responds to this new geopolitical turning point. It is desperately important that it makes the right choices this time around.

There is no doubt Russia's horrendous war in Ukraine has engendered a sense of unity and purpose among many U.S. foreign-policy makers who have struggled to respond to the United States' relative but steady decline in power. Russian aggression has also reinvigorated a moribund transatlantic alliance. The danger is that rather than develop a new paradigm for this era, policymakers will simply attempt to exhume an old "us versus them" Cold War model, shock it back to life, and put a tuxedo on it. As in the days after 9/11, a momentary sense of unity could be used to promote a set of tragically counterproductive policies.

So far, the Biden administration has delivered a robust but measured policy response to Russia's war in Ukraine, rebuffing calls for more aggressive action that might be satisfying in the short term but could prove catastrophic down the road. Although the White House should be applauded for its judicious reaction to the Ukraine crisis, it also deserves scrutiny for failing to apply similar attention and effort in places where just as much is at stake.

GETTING IT RIGHT

The Biden administration deserves credit for its handling of the war in Ukraine thus far. Its diplomatic surge ahead of the invasion, including the effective use of declassified intelligence, and the strenuous effort to forge and maintain unity among the transatlantic alliance was expertly done. By declaring early and continually reiterating that U.S. troops would not fight a war in Ukraine, President Joe Biden has created space for a considerable amount of U.S. and allied material support for Ukraine's defense. The United States and its allies should continue to supply these defensive weapons, but the administration should reject calls for the United States to threaten Russia more directly—for example, by signaling preparations to “win” a nuclear war, as a Wall Street Journal op-ed recently urged. Exhortations to “call Putin's bluff” by ignoring his nuclear saber rattling and dramatically ramping up military support for Ukraine may be emotionally satisfying to pundits, but the deterrent effect of Russia's thousands of nuclear weapons cannot be simply wished away: that arsenal must factor into the decision-making in Washington and allied capitals as leaders work to support Ukraine's defense while avoiding unnecessary escalation.

The administration's rallying of European allies and Asian partners such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan around a set of stringent sanctions has also been impressive. But the United States should make distinctions among the different sanctions it applies. Washington should strengthen sanctions that target regime officials with decision-making power and deny access to materials and technology necessary for Russia's war effort. But broad-based sanctions that only further immiserate ordinary working people in Russia by cratering the economy should face more scrutiny. After all, it has never been clear how laying siege to a population that has little say in its government's policy decisions is supposed to change those policies. As seen in Cuba, Iran, and Venezuela, such sanctions tend to achieve little beyond entrenching the target regimes and raising the domestic political costs of future diplomacy (something that hawkish advocates of such sanctions occasionally admit is the point).

The United States should also be aware of the compounding impact of both the war and the sanctions (along with, of course, climate change) on global food supplies. Ukraine and Russia are both major exporters of fertilizer, grain, and wheat, and shortages are already having a cascading effect on the most vulnerable populations across the globe. There are few things that can inflame conflict as quickly as food scarcity. The world could be facing a mounting set of crises if a formula for bringing these exports back online is not found quickly.

The United States must tread carefully as it responds to this new geopolitical turning point.

The easiest way out of this mess, of course, would be for Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to end his war. Although it is not the United States' place to dictate terms to Ukraine or to stand in the way of any agreement that ends the bloodshed, the Biden administration and its allies should be clearer about what steps Russia needs to take to get relief from sanctions. This should obviously include a sustained and verified cease-fire and the creation of humanitarian corridors, leading to a process of Russian withdrawal from Ukrainian territory and a return of the thousands of Ukrainian citizens that Russian forces have deported to Russia.

In the meantime, while military and humanitarian supplies remain the most urgent need, Washington and its allies can do far more for Ukraine. Among these steps would be forgiving its foreign debt, a measure advocated by a number of Ukrainian officials and a wider coalition of activists. This also points to a widening of the aperture that should take place in the U.S. approach to global security. Ukraine is not the only country in the world whose government is saddled with crippling debt, forced to spend the country's limited wealth filling the coffers of the International Monetary Fund rather than improving conditions for its own people. A more expansive program of international debt forgiveness would put the United States in a much better position to turn the reinvigorated transatlantic alliance toward a more genuine and sustainable global unity.

The fact is that the majority of the world's population, particularly in the "global South," has still not taken a side on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Many countries are skeptical of the rallying calls being made by a set of powerful nations that they see as never having hesitated to exploit the less powerful when their interests required it. It is quite true that some of these governments' hedging is driven by their own economic and military ties to Russia and China. At the same time, antipathy toward U.S. hegemony is genuine, particularly in regions that have endured American military interventions, coups, occupations, and assassinations.

POLICY NEGLECT

The Biden administration's attention to the Ukraine crisis puts in stark relief the areas where it has fallen short. One of the most egregious examples is its global vaccination efforts. Today some 2.7 billion people, mostly in Africa, are still waiting to get their first vaccine dose. Almost a year ago, after months of

pressure from international activists and members of Congress, the Biden administration announced its support for a waiver on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) at the World Trade Organization, a measure that would temporarily suspend intellectual property protections and make sorely needed technologies available for COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccine production in poor countries. On May 2, the World Trade Organization director general finally submitted a text for a proposed “compromise” waiver, a draft of which had been leaked to reporters in March. According to many global health advocates, this compromise would not lift enough of the barriers blocking equitable access and could actually prove worse than the status quo. Doctors Without Borders urged countries to reject the proposal, saying that the plan “does not provide a meaningful solution to facilitate increasing people's access to needed medical tools during the pandemic...and in fact would set a negative precedent for future global health challenges.”

The demand by the U.S. ambassador to the UN that countries in the global South get off “the sidelines” and condemn Russia’s war might ring less hollow if Washington itself would get off the sidelines when it comes to debt relief and vaccine access as first steps toward the larger redistribution of global power and wealth that these countries have urged.

What is more, the administration’s framing of the Russian war on Ukraine as symbolic of a battle between democracy and autocracy might be rhetorically satisfying but obscures more than clarifies the challenges and opportunities of this moment. First, it overlooks that the contest between democracy and autocracy is being waged within states as much as between them, including within the United States, as authoritarian-leaning ethnonationalist forces continue to gain strength—indeed, draw strength—from an us versus them discourse of civilizational struggle. It is also unconvincing in light of Washington’s own support for many autocratic governments, particularly (but certainly not only) in the Middle East. The Biden administration’s politically expedient coddling of repressive partners such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates doesn’t just undermine its democracy and human rights agenda among global audiences—it makes a mockery of it.

U.S. support for those governments—in the form of continued arms supplies and diplomatic support in the face of credible and serious allegations of ongoing human rights abuses and violations of international law—handicaps efforts to hold Russia accountable for credibly alleged crimes in Ukraine. Although there

are important differences in what the United States did in Afghanistan and Iraq and what Russia is doing in Ukraine, one reason Putin and other war criminals around the world believe they can get away with such abuses is that the United States consistently refuses to impose any meaningful accountability, let alone submit to an international tribunal, for its own transgressions. If Washington is serious about an investigation into Russian war crimes in Ukraine, then one of the best things it can do is to join the International Criminal Court, as called for recently by Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. Strengthening global rules against atrocities requires the United States to end its insistence that those rules don't apply to the United States and its friends.

The administration's policy in Ukraine could herald a new era of American leadership.

The democracy versus autocracy framing also glosses over how the United States continues to treat many autocratic regimes as key partners for stabilizing global energy markets, especially amid efforts to cut off Russian gas. Such tradeoffs may be necessary to address the more urgent crisis, but it is also worth noting that this is precisely the same logic that led the United States to treat Putin as an ally in the war on terror and former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein as an ally against Iran, to name only two partners who became problems.

To prevent future administrations from having to go hat in hand to corrupt authoritarian petrostate friends for help against corrupt authoritarian petrostate enemies, the United States ought to be accelerating a transition to green energy both at home and abroad. Biden can use his powers as president under the Defense Production Act to jump-start a long-overdue and desperately needed shift away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy. A recent bill sponsored by Democratic Representatives Cori Bush of Missouri and Jason Crow of Colorado and independent Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont would invest \$150 billion in onshore renewable energy manufacturing to speed that process.

Finally, as the United States considers what future it wants, it is helpful to remember the choices it didn't make when it had the opportunity. In the years leading up to 9/11, a global justice movement began to emerge in the global North. The protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 and months later against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington saw the mainstreaming of an environmental and labor coalition that had been fostered by years of work on the part of activists in the global South

and that took a stand against the corporate-dominated international trade system that enabled neoliberal plunder, elite corruption, and environmental devastation. Unfortunately, much of that movement's momentum was buried in the rubble of the World Trade Center.

In late 2019 and early 2020, the world saw a wave of protests driven by similar outrage against government corruption and self-dealing elites. These protest movements were momentarily snuffed out by the pandemic closures, but they will return, because the sources of those grievances endure. If the United States really wants to put itself on the side of democracy, it will hear these voices and commit to supporting a more expansive redistribution of global power and wealth and the building of a more humanitarian global order. The Biden administration took office having made bold promises about restoring American leadership for a new era. It now has an opportunity to fulfill those promises, but only if it has the courage to hear what the wider world is asking for. This approach would not come at the expense of the necessary and appropriate attention to Ukraine. This is not an either/or proposition but a both/and one. Properly framed as just one element of a renewed and genuine commitment to democracy and justice, the administration's policy in Ukraine could herald a new era of American leadership. If all that Biden seeks in Ukraine, however, is to reaffirm U.S. dominance, it will be just the latest instance of the United States failing to meet the moment.

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Global Security Initiative to Safeguard World Peace By Wang Yi

Changes of the world, of our times and of history, are unfolding today in ways like never before, posing challenges that must be taken seriously by humanity. At this moment critical to world peace and development, President Xi Jinping made a keynote speech entitled 'Rising to Challenges and Building a Bright Future Through Cooperation' at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, and proposed for the first time the Global Security Initiative (GSI). This important initiative gives explicit answers to questions of our times such as what security concept the world needs and how countries can achieve common security. It fully demonstrates President Xi's concerns for world peace and development, his internationalist vision, and his leadership as head of a major country. It contributes China's wisdom to the efforts of mankind in tackling peace deficit, and offers China's solution to addressing international security challenges.

I. Understanding deeply GSI's practical significance and its values to our times: This major initiative was proposed to meet the pressing need of the international community to maintain world peace and prevent conflicts and wars. Building on the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, the GSI seeks to promote the establishment of a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture. It thus offers a new approach to eliminating the root causes of international conflicts and achieving durable stability and security in the world.

This major initiative was proposed to meet the common aspirations of all countries to uphold multilateralism and international solidarity. President Xi pointed out unequivocally that the Cold War mentality would only wreck the global peace framework; hegemonism and power politics would only endanger world peace; and bloc confrontation would only exacerbate security challenges in the 21st century. The GSI is rooted in true multilateralism. It calls upon all countries to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and reject the obsolete mentality of zero-sum game and bloc confrontation. It advocates the win-win mindset to address the complex and intertwined security challenges, and champions the spirit of solidarity to adapt to the profoundly changing international landscape. It has provided a new approach for improving global security governance.

This major initiative was proposed to meet the shared desire of all peoples for working together to overcome difficulties and build a better world beyond the pandemic. The GSI echoes and reinforces the Global Development Initiative (GDI) proposed by President Xi last year. It accords with the trend of the times featuring peace, development and win-win cooperation, and represents a coordinated approach to safeguarding traditional and non-traditional security. It aims to seek the biggest common denominator and the widest converging interests in the international community, and to provide new support for countries in boosting livelihoods and development.

II. Inheriting and promoting the successful practices and valuable experience underpinning the GSI: The GSI takes root in New China's independent foreign policy of peace and the practices of this policy. Over the years, as a responsible major country, China has held high the banner of peace, development and cooperation for win-win results, and made active contributions to upholding global peace and security, setting a prime example as a major country.

China keeps to its conviction about peaceful development and remains a committed builder of world peace. Since the founding of New China, the country has pursued an independent foreign policy of peace and adhered to the path of peaceful development. It never started a war, never occupied one inch of foreign land, never engaged in proxy wars, and never participated in or organized any military bloc. Among the major countries, China has the best peace and security record. At present, China remains the only country in the world that undertakes to follow a path of peaceful development in its constitution, and the only one among the five nuclear-weapon states that has pledged no-first-use of nuclear weapons. No matter how developed China becomes, it will never seek hegemony, expansion or sphere of influence, nor will it engage in arms race.

China is committed to its international responsibilities and remains a firm defender of the international order. China is the first founding member of the UN to sign on its Charter. It firmly upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and advocates respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. China has dispatched the most peacekeepers among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. It is the second largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. China has taken an active part in international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. It has signed or acceded to more than 20 multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, including NPT and ATT. China opposes arms race and upholds global

strategic stability. China has pursued cooperation to address all forms of non-traditional security challenges, and provided more than 2.1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines to the international community in an active effort to bridge the “immunization gap”. China has announced its carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals and played its part in tackling climate change. It has launched the Global Initiative on Data Security as its proposed solution to global digital governance.

China stays committed to dialogue and consultation, and remains a steadfast mediator of hotspot issues. On Ukraine, China takes an objective and fair stance on the basis of the merits and demerits of the issue, and vigorously advise peace and encourage talks. On the Middle East, China has put forward a four-point proposal on resolving the Palestinian question and a five-point initiative on promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. On the Iranian nuclear issue, China actively promotes the negotiations to resume compliance with JCPOA, and upholds the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. On the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, China remains committed to making synchronized progress in the establishment of a permanent peace mechanism and the denuclearization of the Peninsula. And it believes that the legitimate concerns of all parties should be addressed in a balanced manner. On Afghanistan, China has taken the initiative to carry out international coordination and provide humanitarian assistance, playing a constructive role for the smooth transition of the situation in Afghanistan.

III. Implementing fully the major propositions and policy goals of the GSI: Visions set the course, and actions shape the future. More than proposing the GSI, China acts on this major initiative. We stand ready to work with the international community to ensure that the GSI will take root and come into fruition, so that the world will enjoy greater peace, security and prosperity.

We need to firmly uphold the authority and stature of the UN and jointly practise true multilateralism. We need to stick to the overall direction of promoting talks for peace and jointly explore political solutions to hotspot issues. We need to take a holistic approach to traditional and non-traditional security threats, and jointly improve the global security governance system. We need to strike a balance between development and security, and jointly contribute to a robust recovery of the world economy. We need to seek to build a new regional security architecture and jointly protect peace and stability in Asia.

By following the trend of history and taking the right path, one can reach high and go far. China stands ready to work with all peace-loving countries and peoples committed to development to carry out the GSI, open up a broad path toward lasting peace and universal security, and forge a strong synergy to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Let the torch of peace be passed on from generation to generation and the sound of peace echo throughout the world.

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China's Counter Strategies and US Policies in Asia By Dr Mehmood-ul-Hassan Khan

ACCORDING to various published reports of the US government and its establishment it has already taken two strategic initiatives in our region.

Mainly, it has formed “strategic partnership” with India and declared China and Russia as its enemy.

Undoubtedly, both initiatives have spillover repercussions in diverse spheres of economy, security, geopolitics and geostrategic.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has further exposed the ill designs of the US, NATO and the West alike.

In this regard, the policy makers of China are taking all possible peaceful counter strategies to cope with the emerging socio-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic conflicting realities in the region and beyond.

The EU has unilaterally announced 6th round of sanctions against Russia which have further divided the world into two ‘distinctive’ poles.

On the other hand, the USA and India have a strong strategic partnership based on so-called shared values and a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

That is why, the US supports India's emergence as a leading global power and vital partner in efforts to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is a region of peace, stability and growing prosperity and economic inclusion.

Thus supports India to “encircle” China from its backyard. Moreover, both countries cooperate on a wide range of diplomatic, economic and security issues, including defence, non-proliferation, regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, shared democratic values, counterterrorism, climate change, health, energy, trade and investment, peacekeeping, environment, education, science & technology, agriculture, space and oceans.

It seems that US-India defence cooperation has reached to new heights, including through information sharing, liaison officers, increasingly complex exercises like Malabar and defence enabling agreements, such as the secure communications agreement COMCASA.

As of 2020, the United States has authorized over \$20 billion in defence sales to India. Through the US-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative, the United States and India work together on co-production and co-development of defence equipment.

The US and India are also trying to closely coordinating on regional security issues such as Afghanistan.

Thus US, India, Australia, Japan, South Korea and last but not the least, Taiwan have clubbed their strategic priorities against China.

To counter these strategic alliances, China will have to further enhance its ties with Pakistan, Russia, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Central Asia and, of course, all the regional Muslim countries.

In this context, early initiation of CPEC Phase-II and reactivation of the BRI projects in all the South East Asian and Indo-Pacific regions should be the strategic priority of China.

In case of Central Asian countries, the policy makers of China should immediately extend its cooperation under the flagship project of BRI Health Silk Route.

All impediments in terms of PTA, FTA, FDIs, capacity building mechanism, commercial diplomacy and joint ventures should be resolved amicably.

The Chinese government should also chalk out a comprehensive roadmap to counter the Western Alternative Reality Doctrines (WARDS) and targeting its peaceful diplomatic efforts to achieve peace in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In this regard, close regional media cooperation, coordination of the prominent and genuine think tanks and collaboration of the marketing strategists is the need of the hour.

More precisely the role of “Centre for South Asia & International Studies (CSAIS) Islamabad” and “Daily English newspaper Pakistan Observer” may be effective to mitigate Western propaganda against China and its regional allies.

Since the start of unfortunate conflict between Russia and Ukraine the government of the US and its establishment have been targeting China by design.

Thus the US military and its constant arms support and the NATO secretive assistance have further delayed the prospects of de-escalation.

The International Relation Theory of “Just War” gives every right to Russia to defend its strategic vested interests mainly increasing eastward expansion of the NATO (Black Sea water) and succession of Ukraine to the EU and NATO alike.

But ironically, neither the US nor the EU and NATO are seemingly ready to pay attention towards Russian legitimate concerns.

Time and again, Chinese Foreign Ministry has conveyed its concern about the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and urged all parties to give peace a chance to put an end to ongoing war.

It further upheld that vicious intents of the US and NATO which hold no moral ground amid Ukraine crisis would not be effective.

A most recent statement by US Department of State claimed that so-called China’s uncritical amplification of Moscow’s messaging demonstrates Beijing’s support for Russia.

The statement intentionally targeted Chinese media, social media and diplomats, saying, “This amplification rationalizes President Putin’s unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine while undermining trust in the United States and other countries, democratic institutions and independent media.”

It is a self-contradictory illusion because on the same day, Michael Carpenter, the US Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, completely rejected the chances of China’s endeavouring to help Russia with its military campaign in Ukraine.

” Both statements reflect the US dual policies on China which are intended to draw a “red line” for China and put a ceiling in China-Russia cooperation.

It seems that US desires to affect Beijing’s autonomy in its policies toward Moscow, in a bid to maximize US attacks against Russia, while pushing China into a corner in both a moral and economic sense.

Most of the regional experts termed the US desire as a practice of a thief yelling “catch the thief!”

To conclude, the US has been manipulating the issue of “China supports Russia” with “fabricated narrative, constantly implying that China is responsible for the escalation of the situation.

On the other hand, China does not want to see the escalation of the Ukraine crisis.

It fears that the US false, fake and fictional narrative will only further harm the strategic mutual trust between China and the US and the two countries cooperation in the international community.

It is now proven that Washington is the main schemers for the Ukraine crisis, and the US-led NATO holds tight the key to its solution.

Therefore, it is right time to stop US public opinion war in the troubled situation, as the opinion war does not serve any purpose other than to encourage new confrontations.

In this regard, the Chinese Embassy in the United States showed its displeasure with the claims made by the US State Department that Chinese officials and media “routinely amplify Kremlin propaganda, conspiracy theories and disinformation” on the Ukraine issue.

China stands for total transparency, impartiality, peaceful conflict resolution through diplomacy, dialogue and development.

Chinese President's Global Development Initiative and shared community doctrine has repeatedly denied having prior knowledge of Russia's move, tacitly supporting Russia's operation or providing military assistance to Russia.

—The writer is Director, the Centre for South Asia & International Studies Islamabad & regional expert, China, CPEC & BRI.

Source; Published in Pak Observer

China's Ukraine Conundrum By Yan

Xuetong

Russia's war in Ukraine has produced a strategic predicament for China. On the one hand, the conflict has disrupted billions of dollars' worth of Chinese trade, heightened tensions in East Asia, and deepened political polarization within China by dividing people into pro- and anti-Russia camps. On the other, China blames the United States for provoking Russia with its support for NATO expansion and worries that Washington will seek to prolong the conflict in Ukraine in order to bog down Russia. Beijing sees little to gain from joining the international chorus condemning Moscow.

Regardless of what China says or does in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to wage war in Ukraine, Washington is unlikely to soften its strategy of containment toward Beijing. And as China's largest and most militarily capable neighbor, Russia is not a power that Beijing wishes to antagonize. Chinese policymakers have therefore sought to avoid unnecessarily provoking either rival power—abstaining from votes to condemn Russia in the UN General Assembly and carefully selecting its official statements about the war.

This balancing strategy is not without costs. Refusing to condemn Russia has strained China's relations with some of its neighbors and distanced Beijing from many developing nations that have lined up against Russia's war in Ukraine. It has also incurred economic costs stemming from Russia's war that could continue long into the future. Nonetheless, in order to minimize its strategic losses, China will likely hew to this middle path until the war in Ukraine is over. One thing that might shift Beijing's calculus and push it to side with Russia is if the United States provides military support for a Taiwanese declaration of de jure independence. Barring that, Beijing will likely continue its balancing act, since Washington's policy of containment toward China makes it very difficult for Beijing to side with the United States on the war in Ukraine.

CAUGHT IN A BIND

Since the beginning of the conflict, Western powers have accused China of passively or even actively supporting Russia's military actions in Ukraine. In March, for instance, The New York Times reported unverified claims that Russia

shared its war plans with China ahead of the conflict. But as Qin Gang, China's ambassador to the United States, pointed out in a March 15 op-ed in *The Washington Post*, China had much to lose from Russia's actions: "There were more than 6,000 Chinese citizens in Ukraine. China is the biggest trading partner of both Russia and Ukraine, and the largest importer of crude oil and natural gas in the world. Conflict between Russia and Ukraine does no good for China. Had China known about the imminent crisis, we would have tried our best to prevent it."

In reality, Qin understated the war's negative impact on China. The conflict has roiled commodities markets and disrupted supply chains, resulting in billions of dollars of losses for Chinese firms. The Chinese nickel titan Tsingshan Holding Group, for instance, lost \$8 billion on ill-timed trades after the war dramatically caused the price of nickel to spike. War-related disruptions have also resulted in large-scale cancellations of Chinese export orders and weakened Chinese industrial productivity. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the China Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index—which tracks economic activity in the manufacturing sector—declined by 0.7 percent in March, a much worse performance than market analysts had forecast and the first monthly contraction since August 2021.

The war in Ukraine has deepened political polarization within China.

The war has also heightened tensions between China and some of its neighbors. As the rivalry between Washington and Beijing has intensified, many East Asian nations have adopted hedging strategies to balance ties to both powers. But the conflict in Ukraine has driven some of these countries to lean more heavily toward the United States. In addition, the conflict has given Washington an excuse to approve another \$95 million in military aid to Taiwan—the third U.S. arms package that Taipei has received since U.S. President Joe Biden took office. And it is not just China's relations with its neighbors that have suffered: in March, two-thirds of UN member states voted to condemn Russia in a pair of resolutions at the UN General Assembly while only five voted not to and 35 abstained. China's presence in the latter group will be remembered by many small and midsized countries, especially in the developing world.

To make matters worse, the war has further strained relations between China and the United States and its allies. Australia, Canada, Japan and the United Kingdom have all said they will join the United States in imposing secondary

sanctions on Chinese companies that continue to do business as usual with Russia.

Finally, the war in Ukraine has deepened political polarization within China itself. On WeChat and other social media platforms, Chinese citizens have coalesced into opposing camps, one for Russia and the other against. Soon after the conflict began, some anti-Russia Chinese netizens began rehashing the unfairness of the 1858 Treaty of Aigun, which ceded roughly 230,000 square miles of Chinese territory to Russia. The political sensitivity of this historical event has in the past made Beijing wary of supporting any Russian efforts at territorial expansion. In this case, however, Beijing must give sincere consideration to the anti-Russian sentiment among some Chinese citizens.

“FUEL TO THE FLAMES”

Despite the war's negative impacts on China, however, Beijing is not prepared to accept Washington's approach toward the conflict. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Chinese government has argued that the United States provoked Russia by pushing for NATO's eastward expansion. It now sees Washington as deliberately escalating the war in order to perpetuate it, thereby weakening both Russia and China. In a virtual call on March 5, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken that China opposes any moves that "add fuel to the flames" in Ukraine. Chinese leaders and journalists have since repeated the phrase, underscoring Beijing's distrust of Washington's intentions. On March 30, for instance, the state-run People's Daily published an editorial arguing that by "adding fuel to the flames" the United States "is creating larger obstacles to a political solution of this crisis."

Having failed to deter Russia from waging war in Ukraine with threats of severe economic sanctions, the United States has shifted its goal from ending the conflict to prolonging it. In a speech in Poland on March 26, Biden said, "This battle will not be won in days or months either. We need to steel ourselves for the long fight ahead." To Beijing, this read as an admission that the White House no longer aims to end the war but rather to prolong it in order to weaken and defeat Russia. When the following week Russian and Ukrainian negotiators appeared to make progress toward a tentative peace plan, top U.S. officials expressed skepticism about Russia's desire to curtail its military assault on the cities of Kyiv and Chernihiv. Of the supposed progress, Biden said, "I don't read anything into it until I see what [Russia's] actions are." The next day, he told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that the United States planned to provide Ukraine

with an additional \$500 million in direct budgetary aid. As Beijing sees it, Washington is scaling up military aid to Ukraine in order to deny Russia a diplomatic off ramp for troop withdrawal. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's comment last week that "we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine" has only deepened China's conviction that the United States' priority is to weaken Russia, not to seek a swift end to the war.

Beijing now sees Washington as deliberately escalating the war in order to perpetuate it.

Nor does China believe that seeking common ground with Washington on the war in Ukraine will meaningfully improve broader Sino-U.S. relations. Even if Beijing were to join in the international condemnation of Russia, the United States would not soften its containment policy against China. Since the start of the war, some East Asian countries have publicly questioned whether Washington will sustain its focus on the Indo-Pacific while Europe is in crisis. In response, the Biden administration has been quick to reassure them. On March 28, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks told reporters: "Even as we confront Russia's malignant activities, the defense strategy describes how the department will act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence with the PRC as our most consequential strategic competitor and pacing challenge." The next day, Biden told Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong that even though the United States is focused on Ukraine, it is "strongly supportive of moving rapidly to implement the Indo-Pacific strategy."

Chinese leaders see no reason to believe that Washington would somehow shift these priorities even if Beijing distanced itself from Moscow. In their eyes, condemning Russia publicly and siding with those enforcing sanctions against it would only open the door for the United States to impose secondary sanctions on China itself. The United States has already threatened to punish Chinese companies that do business with Russia. On February 3, U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters: "We have an array of tools that we can deploy if we see foreign companies, including those in China, doing their best to backfill U.S. export control actions, to evade them, to get around them."

After Russian troops crossed the border into Ukraine, the United States dialed up the diplomatic pressure on China. In mid-March, before U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met with Yang Jiechi, the director of China's Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, Sullivan told the media: "We are

communicating directly, privately to Beijing, that there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them.”

THE MIDDLE PATH

This is not the first time Beijing has found itself caught between major rival powers. Between 1958 and 1971, the People’s Republic of China faced the most hostile international environment in its brief history. During this period, it had to confront strategic threats from the United States and the Soviet Union simultaneously. In response, the Chinese government devoted all its economic resources to preparing for a full-scale war against one of the two powers. To better shield its industrial base from attack, it moved many factories from more developed areas in eastern China to underdeveloped and mountainous western areas, hiding them in artificial caves. This large-scale industrial reorganization plunged China into a significant economic hardship, causing severe commodity shortages and widespread poverty.

The memory of this awful history has informed China’s response to the war in Ukraine and hardened its commitment to avoid getting sandwiched between Washington and Moscow once again. Official Chinese statements have thus been finely calibrated to avoid provoking Russia. In an interview in March, for instance, Qin made clear that Beijing seeks a cooperative relationship with Moscow but does not support its war in Ukraine. “There is no forbidden zone for cooperation between China and Russia, but there is also a bottom line, which is the tenets and principles established in the UN Charter,” he said. In a press briefing on April 1, Wang Lutong, director-general of European affairs at China’s Foreign Ministry, sought to walk a similarly fine line: “We are not doing anything deliberately to circumvent the sanctions against Russia imposed by the US and the Europeans,” he said, adding that “China is not a related party to the crisis in Ukraine.”

In choosing a middle path on Ukraine, China has refrained from providing military aid to Moscow but maintained normal business relations with Russia, a decision that other countries have also made. For example, India—a strategic partner of the United States—has adopted a similar stance, drawing a clear distinction between military and economic affairs. Even some NATO countries have continued to buy Russian gas to heat homes through the winter. If the war in Ukraine drags on, more countries may start mimicking China’s balancing policy to minimize their own economic losses caused by the war.

As the world's second-largest economic power, China intends to play an important role in shaping global economic norms. But it has no ambition to play a leading role in global security affairs, especially in matters of war, because of the huge military disparity between it and the United States. Shaping a peaceful environment favorable to China's economic development remains an important diplomatic goal. As long as the United States does not offer military support for a Taiwanese declaration of de jure independence, China is unlikely to deviate from this path of peaceful development.

Source: Published in Foreign Affairs

Syria And US Policy – Analysis By Carla E. Humud

Since 2011, conflict between the government of Syrian President Bashar al Asad and opposition forces seeking his removal has displaced roughly half of the country's population and killed over half a million people. Five countries operate in or maintain military forces in Syria: Russia, Turkey, Iran, Israel, and the United States. The United States seeks a negotiated political settlement to the Syria conflict and the enduring defeat of the Islamic State (IS, aka ISIS/ISIL). Challenges for U.S. policymakers include responding to threats posed by IS remnants and detainees, countering groups linked to Al Qaeda, facilitating humanitarian access, and managing Russian and Iranian challenges to U.S. operations in Syria.

Syria in 2022: Protracted Stalemate

In early 2022, U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pederson described the conflict in Syria—between the Syrian government and its partners on one side and various opposition and extremist groups on the other side—as a “stalemate,” noting that “militarily, front lines remain unshifted.” Pederson also warned that “any of a number of flashpoints could ignite a broader conflagration.” Several rival administrations hold territory in Syria, including the following.

The Asad Government

The Asad government—backed by Russia, Iran, and aligned militia forces—controls about two thirds of Syria's territory, including most major cities. In 2021, President Asad won a fourth seven-year term; U.S. officials described the election as “an insult to democracy.” Pockets of armed resistance to Asad rule remain, particularly in the south.

Kurdish-Arab Military and Civilian Authorities

Following the defeat of the Islamic State by the U.S.- backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Kurdish authorities and their Arab partners in northeast Syria established the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), also known as the Self Administration of Northeast Syria (SANES)—shown in yellow in Figure 1. The SDF and its political wing (the Syrian Democratic Council, SDC) play a leading role in the AANES, whose leaders have stated that it is not aligned with either the Asad government or with opposition forces.

Opposition and Extremist Forces

Opposition-held areas of northwest Syria are administered by the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG). The SSG was established in 2017 and is affiliated with Hayat Tahrir al Sham, which the United States has designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) due to its links to Al Qaeda. Many residents of this area have been displaced from areas of Syria now under Assad control, and an estimated 75% depend on U.N. assistance to meet their basic needs. Armed extremist groups also operate in this region.

Turkish Forces and Aligned Militias

Turkish-held areas of northern Syria include territories occupied in three military operations by Turkish forces in cooperation with Syrian Arab proxy forces (Operations Peace Spring, Euphrates Shield, and Olive Branch). In these areas, Turkey has established local councils subordinate to the Turkish provinces they border, with Turkish provincial governments overseeing the provision of some basic services. Many of the original inhabitants of Turkish-held areas remain in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in AANES-held areas.

The Islamic State

U.S. military officials assess that the Islamic State remains entrenched as a cohesive, low-level insurgency, focusing its activities against Assad government forces in southwest Syria and the central Syrian desert, and against the SDF in northern and eastern Syria. In 2021, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) assessed that, “ISIS likely has sufficient manpower and resources to operate indefinitely at its present level in the Syrian desert.” In February 2022, a U.S. military operation in Idlib resulted in the death of IS leader Abu Ibrahim al Qurashi, also known as Hajji Abdullah. In March the group named a new leader. Some reports have identified him as Juma Awad al Badri, an Iraqi national and brother of former IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.

Islamic State Detainees. The SDF continues to hold about 10,000 IS fighters in detention facilities across northern Syria. In January 2022, U.S. air and ground forces in Syria joined SDF partner forces in a lengthy battle to retake a prison seized by IS fighters. It was the largest U.S. military engagement with the group since 2019. The SDF also retains custody of about 57,000 people linked to the Islamic State (mostly women and children) at the Al Hol IDP camp.

U.S. Policy

In late 2021, the Biden Administration completed a policy review on Syria and identified four policy priorities to meet the U.S. objective for a political settlement to the conflict as envisioned in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254: (1) sustaining the U.S. and coalition campaign against the Islamic State; (2) supporting local ceasefires; (3) expanding humanitarian access; and (4) pressing for accountability and respect for international law while promoting human rights and nonproliferation, including through the imposition of targeted sanctions. The Biden Administration has stated that it will not recognize the Asad government, and that it opposes others doing so.

U.S. Military Presence: Operation Inherent Resolve

U.S. forces have operated inside Syria since 2015 pursuant to the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF), amid ongoing debate in Congress about the authorization for U.S. operations in Syria. U.S. operations focus on countering the Islamic State as part of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). Roughly 900 U.S. troops are based in Syria to support counter-IS operations by local partner forces. Most U.S. forces are deployed in what military officials term the Eastern Syria Security Area (ESSA), in support of the SDF. About 100 U.S. personnel support Jaysh Mughawir ath Thawra (MaT), an Arab force, at the At Tanf garrison. At Tanf is located along a primary transit route between Iraq and Syria, including for IS fighters.

Since 2015, CENTCOM has conducted periodic military strikes in Syria outside the framework of OIR, including on targets linked to Al Qaeda, the Syrian government, and Iran-backed militias. In February and June 2021, the U.S. military conducted airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in eastern Syria, which have used Syria-based facilities to target U.S. forces in Iraq. Iran-backed militias also have targeted U.S. forces at At Tanf with armed drones.

U.S. Policy Tools

Syria Train and Equip Program

The United States continues to train, advise, and enable partner forces in Syria as part of the Syria Train and Equip program authorized by Congress in 2014. The program seeks to make partner forces in Syria capable of defeating the Islamic State. U.S. military officials in late 2021 stated that while SDF operations limited the Islamic State's ability to reconstitute and conduct high-profile attacks, the SDF "remained fully dependent on the Coalition's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities."

FY2022 Funding and the FY2023 Request. The Administration's FY2022 defense funding request sought \$522 million in Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) funding for train and equip programs in Iraq (\$345 million) and Syria (\$177 million). The FY2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Division C of P.L. 117- 103) makes \$500 million available for CTEF, including \$155 million for Syria. It also directs the rescission of \$250 million in prior year CTEF funds. The FY2022 NDAA extends the authority for the program until December 2022. The Administration's FY2023 defense funding request seeks \$541 in CTEF funds, including \$183 million for Syria.

Sanctions

The United States maintains sanctions on Syria relating to its support for terrorism, interference in Lebanon, use of chemical weapons, and human rights violations. The Biden Administration has expressed support for a regional deal to export natural gas and electricity from Egypt and Jordan to Lebanon via Syria, describing it as a humanitarian effort that would be funded by the World Bank and thus not require a sanctions waiver. In a February 2022 letter to Secretary of State Blinken, the ranking Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee argued that the deal would "undoubtedly enrich the Assad regime and trigger U.S. sanctions under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act."

Humanitarian Assistance

The United States is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to the Syria crisis, allocating more than \$14 billion since FY2012 for humanitarian efforts in Syria and in neighboring states that host Syrian refugees.

Cross-Border Assistance. Due to the Asad government's obstruction of humanitarian assistance to opposition-held areas, the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) in 2014 authorized U.N. agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance cross-border via four international crossing points with notification to the Asad government. In 2020, the UNSC authorization was reduced to a single crossing point from Turkey (Bab al Hawa) due to pressure from Russia and China, who argued that cross-border aid violated Syrian sovereignty and that aid distribution should be coordinated with Syrian authorities from government-held to rebel-held areas (termed "cross-line" assistance). Humanitarian actors state that cross-line assistance cannot replace the scale of U.N. cross-border assistance. The current

UNSC authorization for cross border aid expires in July 2022. Stabilization Assistance

The United States has provided more than \$1.3 billion in stabilization assistance for Syria since 2011. The State Department describes such assistance as “a critical element in the OIR mission because it mitigates the economic and social cleavages previously exploited by ISIS, closes gaps in local authority capacity, and supports civil society to advocate for citizen needs.” The Department also has described stabilization assistance as a counterweight to the influence of Iran, Russia, and the Syrian government. Stabilization aid funds projects in non-regime-held areas.

Issues for Congress

Recent appropriations measures reflect congressional efforts to prioritize security at detention facilities for IS fighters, particularly following the January 2022 IS takeover of a detention facility in northern Syria. The FY2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act, presented to the President in March 2022, prohibits the use of CTEF funds in Syria and Iraq for any construction activity other than detention facility fortification. The Administration’s FY2022 request sought \$10 million for prison basic life support services including \$2 million for infrastructure repair and renovation (including of detention facilities).

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Decline Of The USA And The Rise Of China

– Asa Superpower By Mr. Kamran Hashmi

The history of the world reveals the rise and fall of superpowers. After the first world war, four empires collapsed: the Russian Empire, the German and the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman in 1922, and fourteen new countries emerged after the war.

Similarly, the Second World War consequences, 50 Africans, 17 Asians, two countries in Europe were formed, the collapse of the British Empire, and the emergence of the USA and USSR as superpowers, the formation of the UN, NATO, and WARSAW. The world was divided into two blocks.

Fifteen countries emerged from the disintegration of the USSR, the USA agreed with Russia that NATO would not be expanded, later 14 members of the former USSR joined NATO after the cold war.

Ukraine has the same importance for Russia as Afghanistan/ Saudi Arabia for Pakistan, Cyprus for Turkey, or Sudan for Egypt. Ukraine intended to join NATO, a dangerous move from the Russian point of view, which resulted in war with Ukraine. The outcome of the war will see the downfall of the US and the rise of China due to the following:

The way the USA left Afghanistan abruptly is considered the beginning of the end of the American century. The allied countries were surprised they were not even consulted.

In the winter Olympics in China, despite the US boycott, more than 30 heads of state from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Egypt, etc. attended the ceremony.

The UAE recently suspended talks on a \$23 billion deal to purchase American-made F-35 planes and is now buying 80 Rafale aircraft from France.

The UAE and Saudi Arabian leaders declined calls with President Biden during the Ukraine crisis.

The US role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is not lucid, it is a failure of diplomacy, it will help Russia to improve its image as a big power. Ultimately Europe will suffer economically which may cause it to move away from the US policies.

The cancellation of the French conventional submarine deals by Australia abruptly and the formation of AUKUS in which Australia will acquire nuclear submarines from the US and UK hurt the relations between France and these countries. Although not declared the sole purpose of the AUKUS, QUAD is to contain China.

Saudi Arabia is in talk with Beijing to price some of its oil sales to China in yuan, a move that would dent the U.S. dollar's dominance of the global petroleum market and mark another shift by the world's top crude exporter toward Asia. Meanwhile, US Dollar share dropped by 1.078 % in global transactions in February 2022. This may be the first step but if other countries follow the dominance of the US \$ will be diminished and Yuan will emerge as the main currency.

India is buying cheap oil from Russia ignoring the US pressure.

The US is also involved in changing the regime of the countries. The latest remarks of President Biden to change the regime in Russia sparked the world.

China has improved its image by gaining economic/ technological prosperity. The Belt and Road initiative (BRI) along with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in which China has spent around one trillion US Dollars. China's BRI development strategy aims to build connectivity and cooperation across six main economic corridors encompassing China and: Mongolia and Russia; Eurasian countries; Central and West Asia; Pakistan; other countries of the Indian sub-continent; and Indochina. This investment will strengthen the relations between China and these countries. The Chinese demands are quite different from the US. The US sells its old arms and ammunition, invests less in these countries, involved in regime changes. Chinese investment improves the infrastructure of these countries and improves the countries economically. Unlike the US, China will never interfere with the politics of any country.

China is also the biggest or one of the biggest trading partners for most countries.

China is flexing its military muscle, establishing its first overseas base in Djibouti, another in Equatorial Guinea which will pose a strategic challenge to the US in the Atlantic Ocean. Chinese ships patrol/exercise the Indian Ocean littoral countries apart from the South China Sea.

It is difficult to predict how many years will be taken the US to lose and China will gain the status of a superpower. The policies of the US will strengthen the case for China to emerge as a superpower. The allied countries are not happy with the US and developing/under developing countries of the world are looking toward China for investment and to improve their economic conditions.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

Will Russia's War on Ukraine Lead to Nuclear Proliferation in Europe? By Angela Kellett

Nuclear weapons are playing a role in the Russo-Ukrainian War, even if they haven't actually been used. Some suggest that public support for acquiring the bomb may be rising as a result of Russia's invasion. But is this really the case, and if so, will that support translate into new nuclear states?

In a recent episode of Ploughshares Fund's Press the Button podcast, Dr. Lauren Sukin, and Dr. Alexander Lanoszka—of Stanford University and the University of Waterloo in Canada, respectively—discuss how Russia's nuclear saber-rattling has affected Europe's views on nuclear weapons.

Sukin and Lanoszka polled citizens in Poland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia on their views of nuclear weapons, finding that between 77 and 93 percent of citizens polled said that “they distrusted Russia's nuclear decision making and 9 out of 10 of them have unfavorable views on Russia.”

From their polling data, respondents in Eastern and Central Europe expressed some support for national nuclear weapons programs. According to the survey responses, support for a national nuclear weapons program came in at 66 percent in Poland, 51 percent in Estonia, 45 percent in Romania, 40 percent in Latvia, and 38 percent in Lithuania.

This support for national nuclear programs is derived from the viewpoint that nuclear weapons can be used as a tool for deterrence and that countries would have autonomy over nuclear decisions. “So having their nuclear weapons program,” Sukin explains, “might provide them with that reliable sense of security.”

“We also get the sense that [there are] concerns about who decides about when and why you might use nuclear weapons,” Sukin added.

On a larger scale, the data collected showcases the concern about Russia's nuclear threats to European security. Of those polled, there was significant

support for NATO. “About 90 percent of our respondents had pro-NATO views and 66 to 85 percent trusted NATO nuclear decision making,” Sukin told Collina.

This renewed salience of nuclear risks in Europe led Sukin and Lanoszka to question its influence on nuclear proliferation moving forward.

In this instance, the question of whether Ukraine should have returned its nuclear weapons to Russia illustrates the fact that nuclear weapons are viewed as a viable solution to the threat of nuclear aggression by Russia, despite the efforts of states, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to promote nonproliferation.

Nuclear programs have gained support due to Russian leader Vladimir Putin's saber-rattling. However, American and NATO involvement in the non-proliferation process will likely prevent this, Lanoszka argued. According to Lanoszka, the United States has utilized a variety of tools throughout history, particularly during the Cold War, to compel allies not to use nuclear weapons, no matter how they pursue them. These tools, such as sanctions and targeting key financial sectors, diminish the likelihood that governments will follow public opinion on nuclear weapons.

Despite growing public support for national nuclear weapons programs, the majority of citizens do not support their use. Sukin adds that “85 percent of those who took our survey said there are no situations in which the use of nuclear weapons would be morally justified.”

Lanoszka emphasizes that the renewed fear of nuclear risks in Europe does not necessarily mean that additional states will seek nuclear weapons. “I’m fairly optimistic that the war in Ukraine, which indeed has been going on for almost eight years now, is not going to motivate new countries to reconsider their past nonproliferation choices,” said.

Lanoszka and Sukin share additional findings from their polling data in their report on the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists website.

Find the entire Press the Button interview with Dr. Alexander Lanoszka and Dr. Lauren Sukin [here](#).

Angela Kellett is the Roger L. Hale Fellow at Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation. Her Work focuses on nuclear policy. You can follow her on Twitter @angielkelllett.

Source: Published in The National Interest

Xi's Global Security Initiative: A Policy

Analysis | By Dr Mehmood-ul-Hassan Khan

WORLD is passing through a difficult phase because of numerous socio-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic emerging conflicting realities in the region and around the globe.

It seems that two different forces of convergence and divergence are battling out for total political dominance and economic superiority.

Thus most recently Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a Global Security Initiative (GSI) in the Boao Forum for Asia to achieve peace, harmony and stability in the region and beyond.

It is indeed a first giant step towards world's peace and tranquillity. In this connection, rise to notorious unilateralism of the West, leading by the US and its allies have further divided the world into two distinctive poles.

Eastern expansion of the NATO has become hot topic in all the capitals of the Asia and Indo-Pacific regions.

The world is now witnessing perverse attempts to wage a new Cold War, rampant hegemonism and power politics, a rising tide of division and confrontation, the fragmentation of the world into different blocs and camps, and a fierce information war and battle for public opinion between the West and East.

In this context, Russia, China and many ASEAN countries showed their displeasure about the expected presence of the NATO in their backyards.

Moreover calculated move of the NATO towards East also poses threats to Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

In this regard, many regional security experts fear that Taiwan would be the next point of tussle and conflict of interest between China and US in the days to come.

It seems that flames of Russia-Ukraine conflict is slowly but surely approaching Indo-Pacific region.

So Xi's Global Security Initiative aims to create an Asian Security Framework (ASF) to replace "confrontation, alliance and a zero-sum approach with meaningful dialogue, sustained partnership and befitting propositions".

Critical analysis of the Xi's GSI reveals that it carries vision of integrated security system in which mutual respect should be taken as the fundamental requirement.

Furthermore, indivisible security should be treated as the important principle, and building a security community as the long-term goal to form a new type of security.

Interestingly, the Xi's GSI showcases the spirit of the UN Charter, offers a fundamental solution to eliminating "the peace deficit" and contributes Chinese perspectives to meeting international security challenges.

The US and the EU have indulged in false, fake and fictional propaganda against Russia and China.

China's firm stance against unilateral imposition of socio-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic sanctions against Russia has now unfortunately put it in the line of fire.

Both imperialistic forces have been suspecting on the sincere efforts of China to put an end to ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Thus both have been trying to malign China. Moreover, the western media has once again started propaganda against the Xi's GSI and termed it anti-Asian security architecture, especially the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK and the US) under the Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework.

At an online dialogue of global think tanks called 'Seeking Peace and Promoting Development' last week, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng vehemently denied claims that China was aware of Russia's plan to attack Ukraine when President Vladimir Putin met President Xi during the Winter Olympics in February, when both sides vowed to establish a "no limits" bilateral ties.

In beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war many Western capitals called China an ideal mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

Such optimists cite the supposed pragmatism of the modern Chinese Communist Party.

According to Xi, the initiative is meant to “uphold the principle of indivisible security, build balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and oppose the building of national security on the basis of insecurity in other countries.

” Xi also emphasized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, as well as their right to choose their own development paths and social systems.

According to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin the Xi GSI is meant to combat growing threats of unilateralism, hegemony and power politics, eliminate deficits in peace, security, trust and governance.

Even Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi elaborated strategic significance of the Xi’s GSI which will highlight Chinese wisdom to make up for the human peace deficit and provide Chinese solution to cope with international security challenge.

” Wang added that “China will never claim hegemony, seek expansion or spheres of influence, nor engage in an arms race.

” It promotes integrated efforts to form an alternative security framework to protect and defend genuine vested interests of the Asian countries.

It is hoped that Xi’s GSI will gain significant support in some parts of the world, especially the Middle East, Africa, and other regions around the globe.

Unfortunately, most of the Western countries and their mass media outlets have been turning a blind eye to China’s positive role in and contribution to international security.

They have made groundless allegations, distorted China’s position and tried to make China take the blame for their own actions.

In the ongoing Ukraine crisis, for instance, all sorts of misinformation and disinformation have been thrown around to smear China.

Some western countries accuse China of standing on the wrong side of history for not joining the US and other Western countries in condemning and sanctioning Russia, and they even threaten to impose secondary sanctions on China.

Reality check is that China has never been on the wrong side of history in the past 5000 years.

China never follows in others' footsteps or jumps on bandwagons. Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, China has been committed to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the principle of indivisible security.

China has committed itself to international law and universally recognized norms of international relations and rejected the attempt to replace international rules with "house rules".

It has been rigorously working for the global solidarity and cooperation, and rejected the attempt to revive bloc politics and ideological confrontation.

Thus Chinese President's Global Security Initiative is the paradigm shift in the Asian Security Framework which is indeed a right step in right direction because it promotes harmony not hegemony.

—The writer is Director, the Centre for South Asia & International Studies Islamabad & regional expert, China, CPEC & BRI.

Source: Pak Observer

China-US Relations in Post-Cold War By

Aayla Areej

WITH every second see-saw in the international scenario, the Sino-US diplomatic relations are at centre stage.

Whether it is trade war between the two giants, blame game amidst Coronavirus Pandemic or bombarding each other with new strategies of their own.

Even today when Russia-Ukraine crisis is the burning issue at the international arena, US-China rivalry seems to be stealing the show by releasing statements against each other.

Whole world seems to be affected by it, particularly Indo-Pacific region that has come to limelight for being the showdown region of Sino-US rivalry.

Their relations are bearing great potential to shape the future international politics as these are the most important relations of this century.

Soon after the end of Cold War, US turned to be sole mighty superpower on the globe, but this supremacy of US has been put in jeopardy by China's emergence as one of the major powers particularly in economic domain.

Deng Xiaoping of China deserves credit for efficiently and effectively leading Beijing on the path of development and prosperity that has borne fruit by making China an economic giant.

In this situation, it is quite understandable that the relations between both the countries cannot be called as warm relations.

However, the tricky situation here is that it is extremely difficult for both to boycott each other because of complex interdependence despite animosity.

It is not that both the countries have been enjoying cordial relations previously, their relations have a history of their own.

They have witnessed a series of twists and turns particularly during and after the cold war.

Since the establishment of China, US has been the epitome of a capitalist society and China was following communism.

It was quite natural that their relations were not that great to begin with. They were at odds with each other during Korea and Vietnam wars.

But soon after, a twist in Sino-US relations made appearance after Sino-Soviet split causing China to turn to the US.

After a period of good relations, Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing caused set-back to Sino-US relations. In 2000, trade initiated between both, and China joined World Trade Organization (WTO).

Soon China became the largest creditor of US and surpassed Japan as second largest economy by 2010.

The rapid growth of China became a major source of irritation for the US which made the US initiate "Pivot to Asia.

" China also became more assertive under President Xi Jinping. China's mega project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) made US more committed to its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

In the wake of Russia-Ukraine war, China's support for Russia has made US consider putting sanctions on China as well.

But it would not be an easy task considering China's importance in global economy and supply chain.

US will be facing grave consequences of sanctioning China as they are major trading partners of each other.

China recently released a statement saying that "China is an economic bomb" which effectively highlights China's importance.

Both the countries are trying to curb each other's influence by introducing various strategies and initiating cooperation with different international partners across the globe on economic, strategic, political and diplomatic level.

Importantly, the recent statement in this regard is given by President Xi Jinping, in which he has talked about Global Security Initiative (GSI) as a measure to counter Indo-Pacific Strategy of US.

The effectiveness of President Xi Jinping's strategy is yet to be seen and will be decided as the future unfolds.

But one thing is for certain that their competition is going to play a decisive role in world politics.

Source: Published in Pak Observer

What Future Holds For Afghanistan? By

Talat Masood

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has diverted global attention from Afghanistan, and the Taliban government is left to fend for itself. There is also a general fatigue among major powers, especially the US, about Afghanistan. It had been directly engaged militarily in the country for nearly twenty years from October 2001 to August 30, 2021. It took a heavy toll on American lives, and the financial cost of the war was staggering. According to the figures available, US servicemen killed in Afghanistan were 2,448 and 3,846 those who were employed as US contractors. The Afghan military's losses were 66,000 men in uniform and 46,000 civilians had lost their lives in the conflict and a staggering number wounded and disabled during this period, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. As of April 2021, more than 71,000 Afghan and Pakistani civilians are estimated to have died as a direct result of the war. Despite the support provided to the Ghani government, the Taliban clearly emerged militarily as the winner and established their writ over the whole of Afghanistan.

A quick recall of these events was to bring into focus to what extent Afghanistan has suffered and regrettably continues to do so. The intransigence of Taliban leadership not to show any flexibility in their extremely conservative policies, particularly in respect of women, has resulted in inviting a host of sanctions from the US and the EU which bars them from receiving aid. Afghanistan today is politically isolated, economically the government is sanctioned and not officially recognised even by its immediate neighbours including Pakistan and China. Although China and Pakistan would like to assist Afghanistan but security and political issues are coming in the way of their extending greater level of cooperation. Afghanistan is also burdened with huge refugee and drug problems. These are aggravated due to its dismal state of economy and international isolation. Trade prospects between Afghanistan and Pakistan and neighbouring countries will only pick up when Afghanistan economy stabilises. About 60 per cent of the Afghan population faces the prospect of facing severe food shortages that could result in mass hunger and deprivation.

But the Taliban leadership's response has been of defiance with no let-up on any of their strict Islamic code of conduct. They have reconciled to being isolated and maintaining minimum contact with the outside world. It appears as though they have unburdened themselves of any shackles that come from being a normal member of the world community. According to their thinking human rights and women's rights are foreign concepts. Particularly disturbing is their indifference and denial of girl's education and enforcing strict seclusion and segregation of women in society. From their perspective the entire struggle was after all to establish a state modelled on their understanding of Islamic Sharia. In short, they are the prisoners of their ideology. They have become an ideological island pursuing an agenda that conforms to their retrogressive thinking. For the Taliban it is ideology versus international goodwill being rewarded in the form of a more supportive assistance program. To gain international acceptability they posed to have changed but the façade was short lived. The question arises: is it tenable to maintain such an isolationist policy for too long especially when the economy is unable to sustain more than 50 to 60 per cent of the population? It is also not clear what is brewing in the minds of all those groups and people — men and women — who had tasted both power and freedom now stifled, brooding and waiting for an opportunity to reassert themselves. Moreover, Afghanistan's retreat into a shell of their own making sustainable for long? How is the national trauma that Afghans suffered going to be healed? Or international indifference and primary focus of US and West on Ukraine give Taliban the respite to pursue their agenda unhindered?

The Chinese government's support to the Taliban regime is invaluable. China was never in favour of the democratic transformation of Afghanistan and believes it brought instability and chaos in the state and misery and hardship for its people and the region. However, China like Pakistan has been advising the Taliban leadership to form a broad-based and inclusive government. China is also apprehensive that if Afghanistan government does not take appropriate measures the fight against terrorism would be considerably weakened.

What are the implications of Taliban ideology on Pakistan's polity, especially on less developed and adjoining region of erstwhile FATA and Balochistan? Equally disturbing, since the last few months there has been an increase in cross border attacks in K-P and Baluchistan from Afghanistan. The TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army and IS-Khorasan are largely involved in these incidents. What is most disconcerting is that the Taliban government despite Pakistan's urgings

looks the other way to TTP brazen attacks on Pakistan territory and treats them as comrades in arms. The committee which was formed by a jirga in South Waziristan to facilitate talks between Pakistan Army and TTP has not made any significant breakthrough apart from short-term ceasefire agreements. It is also questionable whether it is a wise move to engage with TTP considering their anti-state agenda and wider goals of challenging the authority of the state and spreading their ideology.

The indifference or inability of Taliban government in Afghanistan to act against IS-Khorasan group has wider implications as it has seriously upset China, Russia, Pakistan and Central Asian States. Tension between the Taliban government and Pakistan will create greater space for militant groups in Afghanistan and also encourage India to exploit the situation. This would be an unfortunate development as Pakistan expects that the Taliban leadership would ensure that there are no cross-border raids, and groups engaged in hostile activities against Pakistan are kept under strict scrutiny.

Whereas Pakistan does not have the level of influence over the Taliban that it initially enjoyed but the international community expects that it uses its leverage to make them respect fundamental rights and fulfill counter terrorism commitments.

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Putin Is Going to Lose His War (And the World Should Prepare for Instability in Russia) By Anders Åslund

Russian President Vladimir Putin could hardly have used his May 9 Victory Day address, an annual holiday marking the Nazis' surrender to the Soviets, to declare victory in his military campaign against Ukraine. Neither did he use the occasion to declare a general mobilization, as some analysts had predicted. Instead, speaking from a podium in Moscow's Red Square, Putin sounded like a sore loser, whining that NATO's threats had "forced" him to act preemptively in the Donbas.

Three months after launching his ill-conceived invasion of Ukraine, it seems increasingly likely that Putin's bid to liberate the Donbas from Kyiv will be remembered as one of the most spectacular failures in contemporary military history. Russian troops lost the battle for Kyiv within the first month of the conflict and are now struggling to make any headway in eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile, they continue to suffer devastating losses: by May 16, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, Ukrainian forces had killed more than 28,000 Russian soldiers. The question now is whether the national humiliation Russia faces more closely resembles the 1905 Russo-Japanese war, which marked the beginning of the end of the Tsarist era, or Josef Stalin's failed attempt to seize Finland in the Winter War of 1939-1940.

CRIPPLING GRAFT

Systemic corruption has hobbled Russia's ability to fight a war successfully. Since 2013, for example, Putin has awarded at least \$3.2 billion in military procurement contracts to his friend Yevgeny Prigozhin—who has provided Russian troops with such meager food supplies that they have resorted to looting grocery stores simply to feed themselves. Cheap, poorly-made Chinese tires have been blamed for slowing the advance of Russian military convoys. According to reports by Ukraine's anti-corruption agency, one contractor supplied Russian troops with what were advertised as bulletproof vests but which turned out to be filled with cardboard instead of armored plates.

Ukraine's military, by contrast, has exceeded all expectations. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have volunteered to defend their motherland. Thanks to the eight-year war in the Donbas, tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have combat experience, and many have benefited from U.S. and British training. Ukraine's Western-made anti-tank weapons and Stinger anti-aircraft systems have proved highly effective, and its Western allies are stepping up supplies of arms and military equipment.

After Russia's invasion on February 24, the United States and its allies quickly imposed sanctions to choke off Russia's economy. Western sanctions no longer aim to deter Russia but to weaken the Russian economy and reduce its ability to pursue wars. Critically, Western sanctions are now targeted against major Russian state banks. The G-7 froze the Russian Central Bank's international currency reserves and removed many Russian banks from SWIFT, the international messaging system for interbank transactions. In response, the Russian government is regulating the economy ever more, further damaging Putin's war effort. In a single day, Putin wiped out most of the economic gains Russia had made since 1991.

SHIFTING TIDES

The tide of Putin's war in Ukraine is increasingly shifting against Russia, and it will almost certainly end in a devastating Russian defeat. This would not be the first time Moscow has launched an ambitious military adventure in search of additional territory, only to find itself outmatched and humiliated.

One parallel that comes to mind is the Winter War of 1939-40, a campaign on the sidelines of World War II, in which Stalin himself decided to invade Finland and establish his own Finnish government. The Red Army failed to make any headway against the small but brave Finnish army, and it suffered horrendous losses. But the parallels end there. When the effort failed, Stalin let professional generals take over the command, giving the Soviet army's chief of staff, Marshal Boris Shaposhnikov, full authority over operations in the Finnish theater. After three months, Stalin settled for a peace treaty with limited gains at an enormous price. Putin, by contrast, has not relinquished command to his generals. On the contrary, he has reinforced his control of detail, and Ukrainian leaders are not prepared to give up any land lost after February 23.

The more plausible parallel is the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. Its origin was imperial rivalry. Russia sought a warm-water port on the Pacific Ocean, colliding

with Japan's imperial ambitions. The war started off poorly for Russia, but Tsar Nicholas II insisted on fighting on, while the hope of victory dissipated. Even so, he continued the war to preserve the dignity of Russia by averting a "humiliating peace." But Russians were humiliated by the defeat and rose against Tsar Nicholas II, extracting a more liberal regime.

ECONOMIC WOES

Today, Russia is facing not just a humiliating defeat but also a horrendous economic collapse, for which Putin bears full responsibility. Russia's official predictions are an 8-12 percent decline in GDP, but it might become twice as large. In August 1998, after six days of a far less severe financial crisis, Russian President Boris Yeltsin dismissed his government. Putin, by contrast, has not allowed anyone in his government to resign, compelling everybody to be with him until the bitter end. Needless to say, fear appears to prevail among the Russian government elite.

The conventional wisdom is that Putin's Praetorian Guard, the Presidential Protection Service, is so strong, well paid, and loyal to Putin that it will protect him against any coup attempt. However, the cost of Putin's continued leadership to Russian society is so great that it would be surprising if no group would mobilize against him. Sudden ample leaks from the otherwise secretive intelligence community suggest an elevated degree of interagency rivalry. Even if Russia continues to censor news of the war and the scope of its loss in Ukraine, the truth will eventually become obvious. During a decade of war in Afghanistan, 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed, a failure that contributed to the collapse of communist rule, but more Russian soldiers than that were killed in the first two months of fighting in Ukraine.

Russia's domestic environment looks explosive at every level. Plausible rumors are spreading about arrests and sacking of top security officials; at least seven top Russian businessmen have reportedly committed suicide after first having killed their families, making these appear like executions. Social unrest has not been widespread in recent years, but it does occur, and the level of anticipated decline in output and living standards has not been recorded since the early 1990s. A natural popular reaction would be widespread social unrest, which would aggravate the tensions among the security services.

Russia's domestic environment looks explosive at every level. Eventually Russia's Security Council could oust Putin. This body meets once a week, but in the last two years it has only convened in person once, on February 21, when Putin demanded approval of his war against Ukraine. They met in one of the big halls in the Kremlin at a distance of many meters from Putin. Initially, Putin's reticence to meet with his colleagues was attributed to his extreme fear of the coronavirus, but now he appears most of all scared of his collaborators, as indicated by his predilection for sitting at the end of a long table.

The Security Council has replaced the Politburo as the highest decision-making body, but it enjoys no popular authority. If the Security Council were to take over, Russia might once again see a collapse of political power, as in the coup attempt in August 1991, and power could end up in the street. A couple of years of unpredictable disorder might ensue. The alternative would be that Putin succeeds in mobilizing his secret police and transforms Russia into a new North Korea, which would be much worse. It is difficult to discern any middle road in this dramatic situation.

Whatever the outcome, the West must begin to plan for the collapse as well as the reinforcement of Putin's regime. If Putin reinforces his power, Western policy needs to act correspondingly. Its sanctions on Russia need to be maintained until all Russian troops have left Ukraine. While the West should offer Ukraine substantial material support for its reconstruction, sanctions on Russia should be maintained until Russia has agreed to make reparations for the horrendous damage it has caused to Ukraine. Future flows of Russian émigrés are likely to exceed the millions currently streaming out of Ukraine.

If Putin loses power, however, Russia's future looks much more hopeful. A time of disarray would be to be expected, but if Russia eventually achieves a decent democratic regime, the West should stand up and deliver a proper Marshall Plan, as it did not do in 1991. Hopefully, a preceding Western reconstruction of Ukraine can serve as a master plan.

Source: Published in Foreign Affairs

The Impact Of Globalisation By Burhan

Ahmed Lodhi

The world is facing a newfound threat of human security from the impact of globalisation. Globalisation has fairly divided the world into the global south and north. The monoculture and mono-economic hegemony of the global north in the era of globalisation has resulted in the destruction of local economies and cultures in the global south. Alvin Toffler in his book “Third Wave” forecasted the rapid change in technologies and mode of productions in the coming eras. Technology and modes of production are changing so rapidly that it has caused a huge generation gap or status quo between developed and under-developed countries.

In conventional times, industries designed products as per local cultures. In globalisation, cultures are being influenced by industries instead. Global north is technologically more advanced in industrialisation and using the elements of media, marketing and foreign investments in the global south, the global north countries have proved that their culture, economy and mode of production would be a leading giant in the markets. The generation gap in countries’ technological progress led to a biased and uncontrolled transformation of the production system in developing countries. Market consumers are highly motivated by the imported products and foreign modes of production; as a result, local marketers are bound to follow the rapid transformation of production in their businesses. These trends of globalisation do not meet the rate of local transformational capability and resources. Even a single businessman of a photo studio in a small village of a country is bound to replace the printing technology decade after decade due to the global technological advancement in his surrounding and larger cities of his country. And as a result, the high range of competition between locals for competing technology has been raised with an uncertain and uncontrolled manner and that has affected the socio-economic values.

In the last few decades, more than 40 percent of the population in the global south had been pushed below the poverty line. The crime rate, terrorist attacks and liberation movements due to the growing socioeconomic disparities had immensely increased in past decade. Controlled and gradual competition and advancement is beneficial for progressing. But the ongoing technological progress as an impact of globalisation is a loss to the moral and socio-economic

values of the global south. Few decades back, many territories that were considered as cultured and peaceful are now becoming the victim of competition and have dropped off their socio-economic values i.e. Ladakh. As a result, they become the victims of artificial scarcity. Despite having all the capabilities and resources, they are becoming the victims of technological advancement in globalisation and facing major hunger crises while 35 percent to 45 percent of their population below the poverty line.

Every country has its own transformational rate in respect to its human power, resources, geography, and stance in international relations. Globalisation has ignored this fact and every country is forced to follow the transformational change of the most developed country. The global north is continuously investing in the global south countries for more income generation and destroying the local transformational rate. As a result, the local population is going below the poverty line and then to stabilise the economy, the global south is then bound to take loans and aid from global north countries. In the present condition, as a fact, cultures, economics, business, marketing, financial resources, politics and trade are all mono-cultured. That cannot be reversed for now. As a fact, society's negligence in comparing these technical influences in the daily market lives will be a call to their end. The concept of conventional or local production without being a part of globalisation is nearly going to completely end. Therefore, such a revolutionary change, if not managed properly, can cause destruction in the social world more than that caused by industrialisation.

Afterward, the fourth revolution of robotics is going to give an even higher instant boost to globalisation. The complete mono-culture dominance will raise the economic and cultural competition to an extreme level. Machines or artificial intelligence will raise the transformational rate of the global north to an even larger extent and then again, the global south is bound to follow those transformational rates. Hence, even more destruction to the local economies and culture as compared to the past decades. Hence, these aspects raise concern for human security for the global south. In order to stop further exploitation, the major steps have to be taken for self-help. The government has to influence its controlled governance in many sectors. Above all, education should be promoted in advanced courses. The public policies on state level should be charted to stop population uncertainty. The more controlled economy should be emphasised. Altogether, the government's concentration toward this sector is immensely important for stable and well-being socio-economic values.

Source: Published in The Nation