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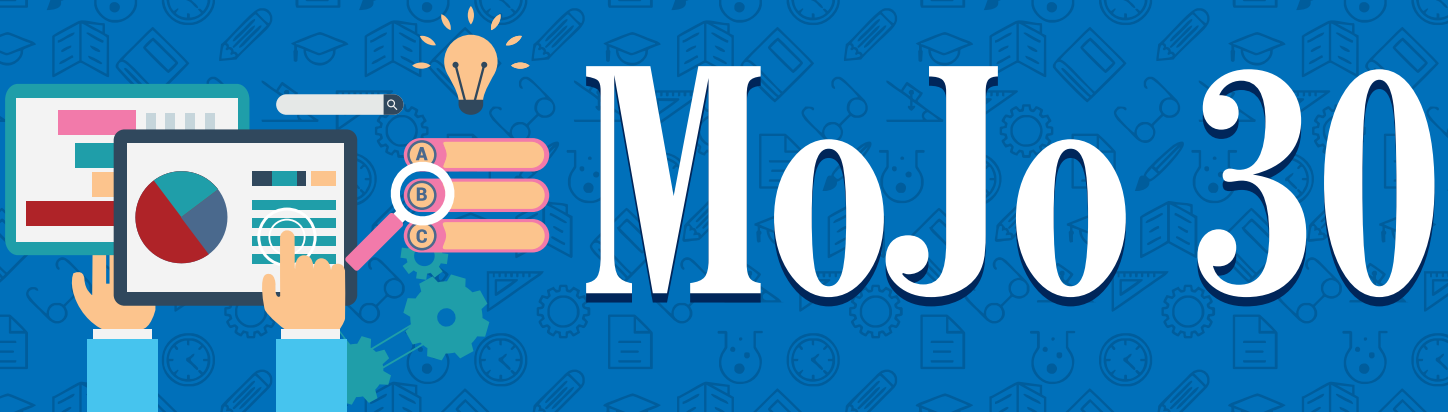
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Index

It's game over for PUBG, 117 apps.....	2
'China using non-military tactics to expand influence'.....	4
India sends reinforcements to tackle Chinese aggression along its border.....	7
Cabinet approves MoU between India and Finland for cooperation in the field of Geology and Mineral Resources.....	9
India, Russia to hold naval drills in Andaman Sea.....	11
India must exercise hard power in response to Chinese hostility.....	13
A new dimension: The Hindu Editorial on India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quadrilateral.....	15
Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh addresses Combined Meeting of Defence Ministers of SCO, CSTO & CIS Member States in Moscow;.....	18
INDRA 2020: Indian and Russian Navy to hold naval drills in Bay of Bengal.....	20
Japan to offer incentives to companies shifting base from China to India: Report.....	22
Indra Navy – 20.....	23
In dealing with Chinese power, Delhi needs an internationalism that is rooted in realism.....	27
Tibet, a resource and a solution.....	30
Situation in Ladakh 'very serious', says External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.....	32
An all-powerful President and a 'rubber stamp' Parliament?.....	34
UAE-Israeli breakthrough must be seen in the context of moves to contain Iran.....	37
Amending to destroy.....	39
What is in a NAM and India's alignment.....	40
The breakdown with China.....	44
Indo-Pacific trilateral dialogue held.....	46
Realism and the undemarcated border.....	48
Why Iran matters for regional security - editorials - Hindustan Times.....	52
India and Japan sign logistics agreement.....	53
Ladakh: India, China agree on 5-point plan for resolving border standoff by by 3.....	55
Drawdown in Iraq: The Hindu Editorial on U.S. troop reduction.....	57
India and Japan sign agreement on Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between Forces of both countries.....	60
India, China agree on 5-point action plan.....	61
Jaishankar-Wang talks raise hopes for defusing India-China tension at LAC.....	63
A game of chess in the Himalayas.....	64
Glimmer of hope: The Hindu Editorial on India-China five-point consensus.....	68
A counter-coalition of Eurasian powers.....	71
Singapore Convention on Mediation comes into force.....	74
US, Maldives ink defence deal amid China's growing presence in Indian Ocean.....	76
Jaishankar attends meeting on Afghan peace process.....	78
Xi Jinping's aggressive moves against India 'unexpectedly flopped': Report.....	80
Road from Doha.....	83
It is time India gave its policy on Tibet some strategic coherence.....	84

IT'S GAME OVER FOR PUBG, 117 APPS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The Centre says it received several complaints and reports about the misuse of some apps on Android and iOS platforms

India on Wednesday banned Chinese mobile gaming app PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, popularly known by the acronym [PUBG](#), and 117 others, including Alipay and Baidu, amid a fresh spell of border tensions between the two neighbours.

"In view of the emergent nature of threats, (India) has decided to block 118 mobile apps since in view of information available they are engaged in activities which are prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the state and public order," the ministry of electronics and information technology said in a statement. The [apps](#) have been banned under the section 69A of the Information Technology Act.

The ministry said it had received several complaints and reports about the misuse of some mobile applications available on Android and iOS platforms for 'stealing and surreptitiously transmitting user data in an unauthorised manner' to servers outside India.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, which comes under the administrative control of the home ministry, had also recommended blocking of these apps, the ministry said. Some of the other banned apps are CamCard-Business Card Reader, VooV Meeting-Tencent Video Conferencing, Ludo World-Ludo Superstar.

"The compilation of these data, its mining and profiling by elements hostile to national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon the sovereignty and integrity of India, is a matter of very deep and immediate concern which requires emergency measures," the statement said.

The move is expected to safeguard the interests of millions of mobile and internet users, the ministry said, adding the decision will ensure safety, security and sovereignty of India's cyberspace.

According to App Annie, an agency that monitors the use of mobile apps, Tencent Holdings' PUBG has over 50 million users in India, of which close to 35 million are active users. PUBG bagged the top spot in consumer spending on games in India in 2019, according to App Annie.

The development comes two months after the government banned 59 Chinese apps, including Bytedance's TikTok, Alibaba's UC Browser, citing security concerns. Post the ban, several clones of these 59 apps as well as similar apps had risen to the top of Google Play rankings. Thereafter, India banned 47 more Chinese apps. Soon after, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a new AatmaNirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge to promote existing Indian apps.

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'CHINA USING NON-MILITARY TACTICS TO EXPAND INFLUENCE'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Flexing muscles: PLA soldiers taking part in a training session at the Pamir mountains in Kashgar, in this file photo. AFPSTR

An annual report from the U.S. Department of Defense to Congress describes Chinese leaders' use of tactics short of armed conflict to further the country's objectives, citing border conflicts with India and Bhutan among the examples. The report also says China is trying to establish stronger bases outside the country so the People's Liberation Army (PLA) can project military power at greater distances.

Other key conclusions the U.S. presents include the notion that China's military is at least as advanced as the U.S. in several military modernisation areas such as shipbuilding, land-based conventional ballistic and cruise missiles and integrated air defence systems. China also uses multilateral organisations to limit criticism of its initiatives, as per the report.

The report describes Non-War Military Activities (NWMA) as one of two kinds of military operations (the other is war) used by the PLA.

"NWMA can be conducted internationally or domestically and encompass activities in multiple domains. NWMA can notably include operations in which the PLA uses coercive threats and/or violence below the level of armed conflict against states and other actors to safeguard the PRC's sovereignty and national interests," the report says.

"China calibrates its coercive activities to fall below the threshold of provoking armed conflict with the United States, its allies and partners, or others in the Indo-Pacific region," the DOD China Military Power Report for 2020 says.

"These tactics are particularly evident in China's pursuit of its territorial and maritime claims in the South and East China Seas as well as along its border with India and Bhutan... China also employs non-military tools coercively, including economic tools during periods of political tensions with countries that China accuses of harming its national interests," said the report, which is in its 20th year of production.

The report cites the role of the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM), which plays a major role in coercive operations including, in 2009, "the harassment of USNS Impeccable conducting normal operations" and the 2012 Scarborough Reef standoff.

Overseas bases

On overseas military bases, the report says that beyond the base in Djibouti, China is "very likely already considering and planning for" additional military logistics facilities to support ground, air and naval forces. Locations in the following countries have likely been considered for use, as per the report: Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, UAE, Kenya, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola, and Tajikistan. It also says the PLA's military logistics network could interfere with U.S. operations and help support offensive operations against America.

The Belt and Road Initiative [which the report refers to by its former name, the One Belt, One

Road initiative, or OBOR] will result in a greater overseas military presence for China, the report says.

“The PRC’s [China] overseas development and security interests under OBOR will drive the PRC towards expanding its overseas military footprint to protect those interests.” China uses the economic influence it gets via the project to get participating countries to support it on a range of other issues, the report says.

Since the report is retrospective and looks at 2019, this year’s clashes and tension along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are not discussed.

Instead, the report says: “ Chinese and Indian forces both continued construction and patrols in contested regions along the disputed border, but generally kept tensions from escalating in 2019.” It describes the October meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Chennai and the August 2019 “early harvest” border proposals that China submitted to India.

“Although India was not pleased with the proposals, the 22nd meeting of the Special Representatives of India and China occurred in December 2019 and reinforced both sides’ shared intent to manage tensions in the border region,” the report says.

Limiting criticism

On multilateral forums and international organisations, the report says China uses these “to generate new opportunities to expand its influence, strengthen its political influence, promotes strategic messaging that portrays it as a responsible global actor, advance its development interests, and limit outside interference in and criticism of its initiatives.”

The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are among those cited as examples of this alleged phenomenon.

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INDIA SENDS REINFORCEMENTS TO TACKLE CHINESE AGGRESSION ALONG ITS BORDER

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

NEW DELHI : India has sent in additional troops to secure the northern bank of Pangong lake in Ladakh as well as its eastern borders with China, digging into positions it controls along the undemarcated border while bracing for more possible Chinese intrusions.

At the same time, a person familiar with the development said India was keeping a close eye on Chinese troops along its eastern periphery, given the multiple intrusions in Ladakh to the west.

In Ladakh itself, the scene of fresh tensions over the weekend after repeated attempts by Chinese troops to open a new front on the southern banks of [Pangong Tso](#), India has bolstered its positions, a second person familiar with the matter said.

"As part of the precautionary deployment carried out on 30 August, some readjustments of our positions on the north bank of Pangong lake on our side of LAC (Line of Actual Control) was also carried out," the person said without elaborating.

Tensions have been running high since May when India first detected intrusions at multiple points by Chinese soldiers. Ties hit a dangerous low on 15 June when soldiers clashed for the first time in 45 years, with India reporting the deaths of 20 soldiers. China did not reveal its casualties.

On Monday, the Indian army said it had taken pre-emptive steps to ensure Chinese troops did not make inroads into the southern bank of the lake that India has always controlled and had remained undisputed.

Chinese soldiers made repeated attempts to intrude into Indian territory, including at a time when senior military commanders were in talks to resolve the matter, the Indian foreign ministry said on Tuesday. This was seen as the most serious incident since the Galwan valley clash in June.

The negotiations at the brigade commander-level continued for the third day on Wednesday after an inconclusive round on Tuesday.

With India reinforcing its positions and taking strategic heights on the southern bank, soldiers of the two sides were seen to be just 300-500 metres apart with a high possibility of a localized conflict, analysts said. The situation on the southern bank was "quite seriously" tense, the second person cited above said.

Meanwhile, officials in New Delhi ruled out the possibility of a meeting between defence minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart, Wei Fenghe, on the margins of the regional Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow this week.

Singh left for Moscow on Wednesday on a three-day visit. The defence ministers of all SCO member-nations are expected to discuss regional security challenges in Moscow on Friday.

Singh will also have a separate meeting with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Shoigu, during which Singh is expected to push for the speedy delivery of a number of weapons systems,

ammunition and spares to India under earlier contracts.

One of the key systems that India has purchased from Russia is an S-400 missile air defence system.

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CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND FINLAND FOR COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Europe, European Union (EU) and India

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of geology and mineral resources between Geological Survey of India, Ministry of Mines, the Government of the Republic of India and Geological Survey of Finland (Geologiantutkimuskeskus), Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Government of Finland.

The MoU facilitates cooperation in the field of geology, training, mineral prognostication and suitability analysis, 3/4D modeling, Seismic and other Geophysical surveys finalised with the intent of reinforcing and strengthening scientific links between the two Organisations.

This MoU aims to provide with a framework and a platform to promote and foster cooperation in the fields of geology, and mineral resources between the Participants for mutual economic, social and environmental benefit; and share experiences on geological data management and information dissemination to promote exploration and mining, in the areas of geology and mineral resources.

Geological Survey of India (GSI) is a premier geo-scientific organisation of the Government of India of international repute for creation and updation of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment. These objectives are achieved through, ground surveys, air-borne and marine surveys, mineral prospecting and investigations, multi-disciplinary geoscientific, geo-technical, geo-environmental and natural hazards studies, glaciology, seismotectonic study, and carrying out fundamental research.

Geological Survey of Finland has expertise in multi-thematic data integration and analysis using spatial platform with special emphasis on 3/4D modeling for mineral prognostication, hazard management, environmental impact assessment, and other areas of socio-economic significance and developing Decision Support System which can be used by users with minimal knowledge of GIS based modelling.

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INDIA, RUSSIA TO HOLD NAVAL DRILLS IN ANDAMAN SEA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Russia

Amid high operational alert by the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) due to the ongoing stand-off with China in Ladakh, India and Russia are scheduled to hold the bilateral naval exercise, *Indra 2020*, in the Andaman Sea, close to the strategic Strait of Malacca later this week.

“Three Russian Navy ships will take part in the exercise on September 4 and 5 along with an equal number from the Indian Navy, along with some aircraft,” a defence source said.

This is also the first bilateral naval exercise since all such engagements were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The timing of the exercise coincides with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s visit to Russia for the Shanghai Cooperation organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers meet. It also comes just after India withdrew from the Kavkaz-2020 multinational exercise in Russia that is scheduled for later this month.

While the stated reason for the withdrawal was the COVID-19 pandemic, defence sources had said that it was due to the participation of Chinese troops.

“So instead of exercising with Chinese troops in Kavkaz 2020, we would exercise with Russian Navy near the mouth of Malacca,” another source observed.

Exercise with U.S.

In July, frontline warships of the Indian Navy conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the U.S. aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz* strike group in the same area near the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) islands as it was transiting the Indian Ocean.

USS Nimitz was returning from the South China Sea through the Malacca Strait where it undertook freedom of navigation operations.

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INDIA MUST EXERCISE HARD POWER IN RESPONSE TO CHINESE HOSTILITY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Our ambivalence towards such power persists but it's time to play hardball with China on trade

India's ambivalent attitude towards the pursuit of hard power—military, economic and political—has made it difficult for us to tackle the current 3Cs challenge we face: on Covid, China and the (Great Economic) Contraction.

On covid, we have at least stumbled on to the right balance between saving lives and livelihoods. Even though total cases are headed for the 10 million mark over the next two or three months, our fatality rates are dropping steadily. So, we are coping.

On the economy, despite the jaw-dropping 23.9% gross domestic product (GDP) contraction in the first quarter of 2020-21, we should see a steady reversal of fortunes over this quarter and the next as covid lockdowns ease and the government starts priming the growth pump. A big fiscal stimulus is due any time now as the festive season nears.

It is on China that we are sorely in a fix. Our army has said that on the night of 29-30 August, the Chinese tried to change the status quo on the southern bank of Pangong Tso, a lake in Ladakh, but pre-emptive action by Indian soldiers prevented this incursion.

This incident, along with the more violent clashes that took place in Galwan Valley on 15 June, underline a new reality: China has decided to unilaterally change the status quo, and is willing to risk a war to achieve its strategic goals. This could be for two reasons. It may be an opportunistic move based on the Chinese leadership's assessment that a world fighting covid and economic contraction will not have any appetite to resist ever-expanding Chinese ambitions on every front, from Hong Kong to Taiwan, the South China Sea and Indian territory. Or it could be that its Communist party faces internal dissent over its own economic and covid failures, and needs an external distraction to stoke nationalist fervour.

But whatever the reasons behind China's new belligerence on multiple fronts, India has demonstrated a weak hand by stressing diplomacy and talks as the way out of this border crisis. New Delhi has also sought to buy more arms and ammunition at the eleventh hour before a military confrontation. Both these signal a simple reality: we think of hard power only after a crisis forces us to. At other times, we are happy diverting resources to other areas that are deemed politically more rewarding.

Democracies always find it hard to balance the classic guns-versus-butter challenge at the best of times, but India, with its huge backlog on social sector investments, has been particularly unwilling to invest in hard power, both militarily and economically. We opened up the economy in 1991, but till date we have not unambiguously committed ourselves to basic factor market reforms, especially at the state and municipal levels.

We have an additional handicap in terms of our civilizational attitudes towards the acquisition of power. The yogi seeks the power to change from within; the commissar seeks change by wielding power over the masses. Remember Mao's dictum, that power flows from the barrel of a gun? Add maudlin Gandhian values like ahimsa, or non-violence, and you have a perfect mix of ingrained attitudes that hamper our drive to acquire hard military power. We tend to start

planning for defence only after it's too late.

We also suffer from the additional handicap of assuming that our enemies and rivals are "people like us". They are not. We have not invested enough resources to understand what drives a China or even a Nepal towards confrontation, and then appear hurt and angry when our assumptions about them turn out to be wrong.

Last, we want to believe that hard power acquisition needs no sacrifices. It does. You cannot build hard power without major diversions of resources to defence and border infrastructure. This is also true of economic hard power. You cannot reform the economy without taking political risks and addressing social anxieties. China succeeded in both tasks—military and economic—precisely because it repressed its own people, both financially and otherwise, to generate resources for investment in the economy and military capabilities. As an authoritarian state, it could squash any revolt against the regime that these sacrifices may have engendered.

Indians also like to talk about soft power—yoga, meditation, Indian cuisine, etc—when the reality is that soft power cannot deter hard power. Soft power is useful only when you have the hard power needed to push it. Coca-Cola and McDonald's don't constitute American soft power independent of its hard power status as the world's No 1 economic and military superpower.

In our current eyeball-to-eyeball with China, the immediate sacrifice we have to make is on trade benefits. As we can't afford a prolonged military confrontation, it's the only way we can hit China. While trade theorists will try to confuse us on the issue, the truth is we cannot afford to gift China an annual \$50-odd billion in US dollars through trade deficits while it is trying to capture Indian territory. We have to start placing harder restrictions on trade with China, even at some cost to our own economy.

Banning or curtailing Chinese imports is a hard power move. We must use this weapon effectively.

R. Jagannathan is editorial director, 'Swarajya' magazine

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A NEW DIMENSION: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA-U.S.-AUSTRALIA-JAPAN QUADRILATERAL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: QUAD and India

In what will be seen as a significant shift of the government's posture towards the [India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quadrilateral \(Quad\)](#), Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat stated on Thursday that India believes the Quad would be a "good mechanism" to "[ensure Freedom of Navigation Operations](#)" (FONOPs) in the Indian Ocean and surrounding oceans including the Indo-Pacific. Unless he misspoke, the suggestion is that India is now prepared to join Quad military patrols, which marks a departure from its earlier reticence and public statements by the leadership. The Indian Navy has not taken part in any joint patrols outside of the Indian Ocean, and even within it, held its first one, with France, only recently. In terms of the engagement with the Quad, India has not yet formally announced a decision to include Australia in the annual [Malabar exercises](#) with the U.S. and Japan, although it is expected to do so. However, the move from conducting exercises together to joint operations would take time, something that makes the CDS's assertion significant. It is easy to surmise that his contention that the Quad operations are needed to ensure there is no "fear of any other nation singularly trying to dominate the oceans", is a veiled reference to China. It is also clear that the LAC tensions and clashes, as well as the PLA's refusal to implement border agreements, have convinced New Delhi that new strategies will be required to deal with Beijing. While India continues to engage China diplomatically, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh have spoken of the importance of a resolution through talks, there is no doubt that an outcome of the tensions will be a strengthening of India's ties with global powers such as the U.S., as well as formations like the Quad. An indication of this is the government's plans to host a ministerial-level meeting of the Quad in the next month, possibly when the India-US "2+2" meet of Foreign and Defence Ministers is held.

While India considers its options, it is necessary to remember some of the reasons for its reticence in terms of militarising the Quad in any way. Prime Minister Modi said in 2018 that India sees the Indo-Pacific as a "geographical concept", not a "strategy or a club of limited members", and it would be important to know whether that formulation has changed. India is the only Quad member not already tied in a treaty alliance with the others, and Mr. Jaishankar's statement that India would never be part of any "alliance system" would run counter to what the CDS suggests. Finally, India is the only country in the Quad that shares a land boundary with China, and it is unclear how the militarisation of the Quad in Indo-Pacific waters would alleviate the territorial threat it faces. If, however, New Delhi's view of its Quad engagement has shifted, clarity and an expansion of Gen. Rawat's statement are essential.

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RAKSHA MANTRI SHRI RAJNATH SINGH ADDRESSES COMBINED MEETING OF DEFENCE MINISTERS OF SCO, CSTO & CIS MEMBER STATES IN MOSCOW;

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: SCO and India

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has emphasised that, "Peaceful, stable and secure region of SCO member states – which is home to over 40 per cent of global population, demands a climate of trust and cooperation, non-aggression, respect for international rules and norms, sensitivity to each other's interest and peaceful resolution of differences." He was addressing the Combined Meeting of Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States in Moscow today. "If I may borrow an idea articulated by our Prime Minister in a different context, our goal should be 'Security and Growth for all in the Region'." he added.

Referring to the threats faced by the world today, Shri Rajnath Singh said, "We need institutional capacity to deal with both traditional and non-traditional threats – above all, terrorism, drug-trafficking and transnational crime. As you all are aware, India unequivocally condemns terrorism in all forms and manifestations, and condemns its proponents. India values the works of SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS). We laud RATS' recent work in the cyber domain to prevent the spread of radicalism and extremism. The adoption of anti-terror measures by the SCO Council to counter extremist propaganda and de-radicalisation is a significant decision."

Raksha Mantri expressed his deep concern about the situation in the Persian Gulf Region. He said, "India has vital interests and links of civilisation and culture with all States in the Gulf. We call upon countries in the region – all of which are dear and friendly to India, to resolve differences by dialogue based on mutual respect, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of each other."

Speaking about the situation in Afghanistan, Shri Rajnath Singh said, "Security situation in Afghanistan remains a concern. India will continue to support the efforts of the people and Government of Afghanistan for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled inclusive peace process. The SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan is useful for exchanging notes among SCO member States."

Raksha Mantri reaffirmed India's commitment to evolution of a global security architecture which will be open, transparent, inclusive, rules-based and anchored in international laws. Raksha Mantri thanked Russian Federation for organising the annual anti-terror exercise 'Peace Mission', which has contributed to building trust and sharing of experience among Defence Forces.

Shri Rajnath Singh is on an official visit to Moscow from September 3-5 at the invitation of Defence Minister of Russian Federation General Sergei Shoigu.

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INDRA 2020: INDIAN AND RUSSIAN NAVY TO HOLD NAVAL DRILLS IN BAY OF BENGAL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Russia

The 11th edition of exercise INDRA NAVY, a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy and Russian Navy is scheduled in the Bay of Bengal from 04 and 05 September 2020.

Started in 2003, Ex INDRA NAVY epitomises the long-term strategic relationship between the Indian and the Russian Navy.

Whilst the exercise is being undertaken in the Bay of Bengal, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, is on a visit to Moscow from 03 September 2020 on the invitation of Defence Minister of the Russian Federation, General Sergei Shoigu to discuss bilateral cooperation and issues of mutual interest and commemoration of the 75th anniversary of victory in World War II.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Defence, "The primary aim of exercise INDRA NAVY-20 is to further consolidate inter-operability built up by the two Navies over the years and also to enhance understanding and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations." "The scope of this edition includes wide-ranging and diverse activities across the spectrum of maritime operations. Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, INDRA NAVY-20 would be undertaken in a 'non-contact, at sea only' format," it added.

The Indian Navy will be represented by guided missile destroyer Ranvijay, indigenous frigate Sahyadri and fleet tanker Shakti, along with their integral helicopters. Sahyadri has been presently redeployed to provide assistance to MT New Diamond, which has caught fire off the coast of Sri Lanka.

The Russian Federation Navy will be represented by destroyer Admiral Vinogradov, destroyer Admiral Tributs and fleet tanker Boris Butoma of the Pacific Fleet, based at Vladivostok.

The exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability, improving understanding and imbibing best practices between the two navies, and would involve surface and anti-aircraft drills, firing exercises, helicopter operations, seamanship evolutions etc. The last edition of the exercise was conducted off Visakhapatnam in December 2018.

Exercise INDRA NAVY-20 will help to further boost mutual confidence and cooperation between the two Navies and would reinforce the long-standing bond of friendship between the two countries.

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JAPAN TO OFFER INCENTIVES TO COMPANIES SHIFTING BASE FROM CHINA TO INDIA: REPORT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Japan

The government has allocated 23.5 billion yen in 2020 supplemental budget for the subsidy to encourage companies to disperse their manufacturing sites across ASEAN region.

Japanese manufacturers will now be eligible for subsidies if they shift production out of China to India or Bangladesh, in an expansion of a government program aimed at diversifying the country's supply chains.

By expanding the scope of the subsidy programme, Japan aims to reduce its dependence on a particular region and to build a system which is able to provide a stable supply of medical materials and electronic components even in an emergency, reports Nikkei Asian Review.

The government has allocated 23.5 billion yen (\$221 million) in 2020 supplemental budget for the subsidy to encourage companies to disperse their manufacturing sites across ASEAN region.

In conjunction with the second round of applications which began on September 3, projects that will contribute to the resilience of the ASEAN-Japan supply chain were added to the list, assuming relocation plans to India and Bangladesh.

The second round of application targets feasibility studies on decentralising manufacturing sites, the experimental introduction of facilities and implementation of model projects. The total amount of subsidies which will be provided is reported to reach several billion yen, said Nikkei.

The supply chain of Japanese companies currently heavily relies on China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the supplies were cut off.

In the first round of application which closed in June, the Japanese government approved 30 manufacturing projects, including Hoya's manufacturing of electronic components project in Vietnam and Laos, and provided subsidies of 10 billion yen.

Inputs from agencies

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INDRA NAVY – 20

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Russia

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This exercise has matured over the years with increase in scope, complexity of operations, and level of participation. The primary aim of exercise INDRA NAVY-20 is to further consolidate **inter-operability** built up by the two Navies over the years and also to enhance understanding and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations. The scope of this edition includes wide-ranging and diverse activities across the spectrum of maritime operations. Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, INDRA NAVY-20 would be undertaken in a 'non-contact, at sea only' format.

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VM/ MS

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IN DEALING WITH CHINESE POWER, DELHI NEEDS AN INTERNATIONALISM THAT IS ROOTED IN REALISM

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

A forgotten international conference, a hundred years ago this week, offers enduring insights into the perennial tension between globalism and localism. Three current developments reveal the inevitable clash between grandiose internationalism and the intractable nationalism.

One is Delhi's decision to pull out of this month's military exercise of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which was to herald a new era of Eurasian unity. But the ambition to unite a large geopolitical space, however, is being trumped by the sharpening contradictions between India and [China](#). Second, is the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's claim to leadership of the Muslim world that has run into resistance from a large section of the Arab rulers who have not forgotten the Ottoman imperial rule. Third, is the tension between the globalism of the US foreign policy establishment and Donald Trump's "America First" nationalism. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's promise to restore America's "global leadership" is struggling to overcome Trump's argument that the US must rather take care of itself.

But first to the international conference a century ago. In early September 1920, the newly-minted Revolutionary Russia and the Communist International (Comintern) backed by Moscow convened the "Congress of the Peoples of the East" in Baku (now in Azerbaijan). Its agenda was to spread the revolution to Asia amidst the setbacks to left forces in Europe.

Opinion | [India must leverage its market to force China to settle border issue amicably](#)

But the promised "new dawn" in Asia was as elusive as the European revolution. Although the framework of the Baku congress was about the East as a whole, the focus was on the Muslim populations on the periphery of Russia. Grigory Zinoviev, the head of the Comintern, which convened the congress called on the 2,000 odd delegates to wage a "holy war" against the imperialist forces, especially the British Raj.

But Communists in Russia ran into a problem that all future revolutionary forces would inevitably confront — the need to balance national interest against declared ideological commitments. As the prospects for trade with Britain opened up, the Soviet Union agreed to scale down its jihad against the British empire in the East. The Comintern also found Muslim nationalism and conservatism as impossible allies in promoting the Asian revolution.

National purpose, in some cases at least, may well be baked into the framing of a universal ideology. Some scholars argue Moscow's internationalism is very much part of Russian religious tradition and its self-perception as a redeemer of both the West and the East. Critics of liberalism have long pointed to the difficulty of separating the geopolitical interests of the West and its internationalist ideology. China's claim that the Belt and Road Initiative is about "international public goods" is part of a hoary tradition in which great powers present their own interests in universalist terms.

Opinion | [While seeking equilibrium with China, diplomatic adjustments through give-and-take must be explored](#)

Although the Baku Congress was planned as the first of a series, it would be the last. Communist internationalism, however, did have some successes. Within a few weeks of the

Baku Congress, the [Communist Party of India](#) was launched at Tashkent. A separate track saw the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921.

But the communists in both countries and their supporters in Russia and the Comintern had the unending problem of how to deal with nationalist forces. The CCP's success in winning state power and the CPI's failure have not ended their continuing difficulties with Chinese and Indian nationalism.

The inability of the Baku Congress to set the east ablaze has not stopped the frequent re-emergence over the last century of messianic claims for liberating the world. China's [Mao Zedong](#) accused Russia of abandoning the revolutionary spirit and embarked on an adventurism of his own.

The Islamic world has long been vulnerable to sweeping ideas of internationalism. Erdogan's Islamist politics has a long lineage. The Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic revolution in Iran, al Qaeda, and the Islamic State have all sought to liberate the Islamic world. But none of them has been able to transcend the nation-state system of the Middle East.

Opinion | [Anxiety in China stems from the CPC's insecurity](#)

Marxists and Muslims are not the only ones who are in the thrall of expansive internationalism. Western liberalism has had more power than anyone else to promote internationalism. But the liberal internationalist effort at constructing supra-national institutions that seek to rearrange the political and economic structures of other societies, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, now faces big setbacks.

The greatest resistance to the liberal internationalist vision has not come from Iraq or Afghanistan, but from within the US. It was Trump who channelled the American resentments against the globalist excesses of the Wall Street, Washington and the Silicon Valley.

The Indian elite has not been immune to messianic temptations. As Indian nationalism came of age between the two world wars, it was inevitably influenced by liberal internationalism, socialism, communism, pan-Islamism, pan-Asianism and Third-Worldism to name a few. It has been hard to shake off those impulses despite the repeated knocks from real-life experience.

Pakistan can't discard pan-Islamic ideology despite its growing problems with important sections of the Muslim world. On top of it, Pakistan has struggled to cope with its relative economic decline vis-a-vis India and the growing economic linkages between India and much of the Islamic world.

Notwithstanding the Indian romanticism, both the Asian Relations Conference (Delhi 1947) and the Afro-Asian Conference (Bandung 1955) showed up the deep differences among the Asian elites. India then turned its back on Asianism to claim the leadership of the broader Non-Aligned Movement, that never acquired the needed strategic coherence.

After the Cold War, India re-embraced Asianism in the 1990s when it unveiled the Look East Policy and joined the Asian regional institutions led by the Association of South East Asian Nations. But few could have anticipated that Delhi would eventually walk out of one of the most consequential agreements negotiated by the [ASEAN](#) — the [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\)](#) — that sought Asia-wide economic integration. Delhi believed that the contradiction between India's domestic commercial interests and a China-led Asian economic regionalism was irreconcilable.

Opinion | [How India responds to China's 'expansionistic tendencies' will have ramifications for the world](#)

Even more difficult has been the tension between Eurasian regionalism led by Moscow and Beijing and the deepening conflict between Indian and Chinese interests. India's diplomatic finesse on the SCO has become increasingly unsustainable after Chinese aggression in eastern Ladakh.

Delhi's pursuit of economic regionalism in East Asia and a multi-polar world in partnership with China and Russia had severely underestimated the economic and political consequences of China's rapid rise. As in the 1950s, so in the 1990s, India took a benign view of Chinese power and has been shocked to discover otherwise in 1962 and in 2020.

On both occasions, fanciful tropes of messianic internationalism — pan-Asianism in the 1950s and the quest for a multipolar world since the 1990s — prevented Delhi from recognising the problems with Chinese power.

India today needs more internationalism, than less, in dealing with the Chinese power. But it must be an internationalism that is rooted in realism and tethered to India's economic and national security priorities.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 1, 2020 under the title 'A different view of the world'. The writer is Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for [The Indian Express](#)

Opinion | [Sanctions by India alone will hardly sting China. There's a need to think beyond trade barriers](#)

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TIBET, A RESOURCE AND A SOLUTION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Written by Tenzin Tsundue and Sandeep Pandey

India has had a wound around its Himalayan neck since the Chinese invasion in 1962. The recent Galwan Valley massacre only added salt to the wound. It has come to this because when [China](#) invaded a neighbouring country, Tibet, in 1950, India was in the thrall of the newly-communist country established by [Mao Zedong](#) after a bloody revolution. Ignoring its civilisational relationship with Tibet, India hoped to gain from the emerging People's Republic of China and thus celebrated "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai".

If Tibet had remained a free country, it would today have been the 10th largest country in the world in terms of area, with 25 lakh square km of land. The Tibetan Plateau hosts 46,000 glaciers, one-fourth of the world's total. It is a major source of many rivers and is dotted by thousands of lakes, which serve as the origins of some of the biggest and longest rivers in Asia. Rivers like the Indus, Satluj, Brahmaputra, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow River flow in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and China, catering to a population larger than that of China. It is shocking that such a reservoir of water and natural resources in Asia has been occupied by China and there has been not a word of protest.

Ancient Buddhist culture is preserved in Tibet because of the shared history and culture between India and Tibet. In the public psyche, Kailash Mansarovar was part of India. Tibetans used to visit Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India at Sarnath, Bodhgaya, [Nalanda](#) and Amravati. The border was irrelevant between India and Tibet. People used to freely crossover. Today, there are two armies and there is no point of crossover. Indians have to go to Tibet through Nepal. After the Galwan Valley clash, the armies of the two countries are standing eyeball-to-eyeball, armed to the teeth.

After the Dalai Lama took refuge in India almost one lakh Tibetans have come to the country, most of them living in Karnataka and the Indian Himalayan regions. But the Tibetan seat of power is in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh where the Dalai Lama lives. The Tibetan parliament and government are based there. Although many Tibetans still dream of a free Tibet, India's desire to become close to China in the past has made the possibility of independence for Tibet remote.

Tibetans practise love and compassion and believe in sacrificing their lives rather than taking somebody else's. They believe that they would give their lives for freedom but not cause harm to the Chinese. There have been so far 155 self-immolations, mostly by teenagers, under Chinese occupation. Instead of holding China responsible for 70 years of occupation, the act of self-immolation has often been questioned. Over 160 countries trade with China, directly benefiting at the cost of suffering Tibetans, and never speak up for Tibet. In Tibet, even a simple act such as possessing the Dalai Lama's photo is a crime. Anyone found with the Tibetan national flag in Tibet can be charged with the highest crime of separatism.

Younger Tibetans take inspiration from India's freedom struggle. Even up to 1942, most Indians couldn't believe their country would be free soon. The Quit India movement had difficulty garnering mass support. But the situation in London was such that the British could not rule their own country properly and the empire was collapsing under its weight. Similarly, Tibetans believe that a day will come when China will have to free Tibet.

To begin with, Tibet must get Observer status, like Palestine, at the UN. India, being the country culturally closest to Tibet and having given refuge to Tibetans, can take up the cause of Tibet. This will change the dynamics within Asia and the world. Other countries will be slowly compelled to come out in support of Tibet, just as had happened with South Africa during Apartheid. That the Tibetans are thoroughly committed to the philosophy of non-violence and compassion will easily get them world support. India has supported Tibet tacitly so far, the need is to come out in the open and show the way.

The first step every Indian must take is to start calling the “China border” as the Tibet border. After all, we have formed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to safeguard our Himalayan borders with Tibet. India must recognise the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the leader of all Tibet. Being the most important symbol of peace and a leader of a nonviolent movement, India must recognise this 85-year-old with the Bharat Ratna.

Tsundue is a poet and activist and Pandey is vice president of the Socialist Party (India)

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SITUATION IN LADAKH 'VERY SERIOUS', SAYS EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

New Delhi: Ahead of his expected talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Moscow, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said the state of the border with China cannot be de-linked from the state of the overall relationship with the neighbouring country.

The external affairs minister also described the situation in eastern Ladakh as "very serious" which he said calls for "very very deep conversation" between the two sides at a political level.

[Jaishankar](#) was speaking at an interactive session by The Indian Express newspaper.

"The state of the border cannot be de-linked from the state of the relationship. I wrote it before that unfortunate incident happened in Galwan," Jaishankar said referring to his newly published book 'The India Way'.

Tensions escalated manifold along the [Line of Actual Control](#) (LAC) in eastern Ladakh after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the [Chinese side](#) was 35.

"If peace and tranquility on the border is not a given, then it cannot be that the rest of the relationship continues on the same basis, because clearly peace and tranquility is the basis for the relationship," the External Affairs Minister said.

Jaishankar is set to meet Wang on September 10 in Moscow on the sidelines of the meeting of the foreign ministers of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

"Exactly what I will tell him, obviously I am not going to tell you," Jaishankar said when asked what message he will deliver to his Chinese counterpart.

He, however, said the broad principle around which his position would be constructed would be about the importance of maintaining peace and tranquility along the border for the overall development of ties which has been reflected in the last 30 years of the relationship.

The minister also talked about the number of pacts between the two countries on the border management since 1993, saying they clearly stipulate keeping forces at a minimum level along the border and largely shaped the behaviour of the armed forces.

"If these are not observed, then it raises very very important questions.... I note that this very serious situation has been going on since the beginning of May, this calls for very very deep conversation between the two sides at a political level," he added.

Jaishankar said there were problems left over from history as well. "We have problems left over from history which continue to be an overhang on the relationship," he said, calling the current standoff as of "a very different order".

This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

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AN ALL-POWERFUL PRESIDENT AND A 'RUBBER STAMP' PARLIAMENT?

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Gotabaya Rajapaksa

When the Sri Lankan government recently gazetted the draft 20th Amendment (20 A) to the Constitution, it was merely keeping an election promise — to repeal the 19th Amendment of 2015 that clipped the Executive President's unfettered powers, in turn empowering Parliament. With the necessary two-third majority on their side, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's government is now closer to enacting it.

However, Opposition parties are strongly opposing the move that, they fear, will take the country back by a decade, to the days of the 18th Amendment. Brought in by former President and current Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2010, it added wide-ranging powers and sweeping immunity to the President's office, while removing its term limit. Among the very few key features that the 20th Amendment Bill retains from the 19th Amendment are the five-year terms for the President and Parliament, and the two-term limit to presidency.

Following its parliamentary group meeting on Monday, the main Opposition party Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB, or United People's Front) resolved to challenge the government's move. "The [proposed] 20th Amendment will lead to concentration of all power in the President's office, whereas Parliament will be a rubber stamp with no powers. The President is trying to do away with the legislature and judiciary," said Harsha de Silva, the party's Colombo MP.

'Virulent form'

In addition to reducing judicial review and curbing citizens' right to challenge Bills, the proposed amendment allows the President to dissolve Parliament after one year. Further, it discards the Constitutional Council that vetted appointments to the judiciary and independent commissions, instead opting for a Parliamentary Council whose approval the President will not require while making key appointments.

The prospect of significantly greater presidential powers without restraint has raised alarm within Sri Lankan civil society. The Colombo-based Centre for Policy Alternatives noted that denying the citizen the opportunity to challenge the Executive's actions through fundamental rights applications suggested that "the President is above the law". The amendment Bill underscores a "particularly virulent form of Presidentialism", said senior constitutional lawyer Kishali Pinto Jayawardene in the *Sunday Times* recently.

Ceremonial PM

While on the one hand, the Bill explicitly seeks to make the President way more powerful, it also drastically reduces the authority and functions of the Prime Minister, sparking speculation over the power dynamic between the ruling Rajapaksa brothers in such a scenario. The PM "has been reduced to a mere functionary consulted in most cases only "if necessary", the *Sunday Times* noted in its editorial.

Despite growing opposition from many quarters, the government, assured of the required

numbers in the 225-member legislature, is likely to go ahead with its pledge. Asked how the SJB might oppose it, with only 54 members in the House, Mr. de Silva said the party would mobilise other parties and seek public support. “We will oppose the move inside and outside Parliament,” he said.

Meanwhile, Jaffna legislator and Tamil National Alliance spokesman M.A. Sumanthiran cautioned against getting trapped in the technicalities of the 19th Amendment or its likely replacement, for it might take the focus away from the historic promise to abolish Executive Presidency.

Ever since the 1978 Constitution — under the United National Party (UNP) government — was enacted with a 5/6th majority in Parliament, there has been consistent opposition to Executive Presidency, from the then Opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and all other opposition parties. Even the UNP, which initially brought in such a powerful presidency, in 1996 resolved to abolish it, paying heed to the growing public opinion against the system.

Since the 1990s, almost every presidential election — including when Mahinda Rajapaksa ran in 2005 — was won on the promise of abolishing Executive Presidency, except that none of the leaders kept their word. “The 2015 election too was fought on the same assurance by the Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe coalition. The 19th Amendment that imposed substantial curbs on presidential powers was the first step in that direction,” said Mr. Sumanthiran, a senior constitutional lawyer.

Power struggle

The Rajapaksa camp — most of whom voted in favour of the 2015 legislation — subsequently blamed the 19th Amendment for the power struggle between the President and the PM in the last government, which, they argue, led to the grave lapses in the intelligence apparatus, leading to the Easter terror blasts in April 2019.

The Rajapaksas made the abolition of the 19th Amendment a key poll pledge in the November 2019 presidential race, and the August general election this year, seeking a super majority for the same. “While it is true that the draft 20th Amendment seeks to enhance executive powers, just as the 18th Amendment did, we should not lose sight of the need to abolish the extremely problematic Executive Presidency system itself. The Opposition to the draft Amendment should be centred on this,” Mr. Sumanthiran said, adding: “By focussing on the technicalities of the 19th Amendment, the Rajapaksas are trying to quietly erase the historic pledge from public discourse.”

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UAE-ISRAELI BREAKTHROUGH MUST BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF MOVES TO CONTAIN IRAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The August 13 announcement that the United Arab Emirates and Israel would begin the process of fully normalising their relations is a significant blow to the geostrategic position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region. How the agreement impacts the Iranian political and strategic positioning in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon will, however, be determined by the broader context in which it plays out in the coming year.

Though the normalisation agreement between the UAE and Israel has elicited a frenzy of media coverage, its impact on Iranian politics will depend on two other factors, which are the result of the presidential election in the [United States](#) and the outcome of Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial. Undoubtedly, other Gulf and Arab candidates are waiting to follow the UAE in normalising relations with Israel. Each country has specific strategic calculations for being willing to consider such a step, but altogether their anxiety about Iran as a hegemonic power with a nuclear bomb is singularly intense.

Oman and Bahrain may be further along the path of normalisation with Israel than Saudi Arabia. It is highly doubtful that King Salman bin Abdulaziz would take such a step while he remains on the throne. Beyond the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Sudan has clear reasons for developing formal ties with Israel. The Sudanese-Israeli dialogue will certainly take place, because, since the February 2019 ouster of former President Omar al-Bashir, the new Sudanese government led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has shown interest in having political and economic relations with the United States, while trying to move into the regional orbit of the UAE. In addition to solidifying its partnership with Israel, Khartoum would be hoping to finally be removed from the US Department of State's list of state sponsors of terrorism. Many of the new political and strategic partners of Israel share a deep distrust of Iran among themselves. And with many other Middle Eastern and North African countries, they are also keen on building strong ties with the Trump administration.

By building close political and military links with the US and Israel, these Islamic countries are hoping to keep at bay an ideological power such as Iran and its Shiite and Sunni proxies. Let us not forget that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had heavily criticised the Emirati government for normalising relations with Israel. The Ayatollah said: "The UAE committed treason against the Islamic world, the regional nations and Palestine." Ayatollah Khamenei's attitude is understandable when we know that the UAE-Israeli deal has, by and large, put an end to the rapprochement of Iran with any of the Persian Gulf Emirates, especially on two issues — the war in Yemen and the key Iranian foreign policy tenet of refusal to recognise Israel.

Iran, however, continues to pursue an ideologically determined, universalist foreign policy in the region. Also, with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) in total charge, it is unlikely that Iran will alter its uncompromising position regarding the question of Israeli statehood. As a result, with Israel's new normalisation with some Arab governments, and with key Persian Gulf states maintaining their hostility towards Iran, no one is rushing to support Tehran. Meanwhile, a failed economy, alongside socially and politically conservative measures and the use of extreme violence during the turmoil of November 2019, have led to the flight of people and capital from Iran. Unfortunately, the financial and economic strangulation of Iran by American sanctions is not helping either. If things continue in the same vein, Iran will be heading directly towards a

major social and political crisis.

Yet, despite all the regional and international pressures on the Islamic Republic of Iran, the IRGC is preparing to win the upcoming presidential elections in Iran in 2021. This simply means a return to a more zealous commitment to regional militancy and militarisation, which would be unacceptable in the eyes of the Arab Emirs of the Persian Gulf, Israel and the US. It goes without saying that while the Iranian ultra-conservatives are hoping to consolidate their domestic and regional powers, Israel and its new friends will be thinking in terms of containing Iran.

The danger, of course, is that these provocations could escalate into an all-out war between Iran and Israel, which both countries are trying to avoid. But the likelihood of war will continue to increase if either Netanyahu or Trump sees a political opportunity in confronting the Iranian regime. It is doubtful that such a confrontation would actually help Trump to win the next presidential elections in the US or to save Netanyahu from his corruption trial. But unfortunately, nobody can rule out the possibility of relations worsening in the Middle East.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 8, 2020 under the title 'Degrees of distrust'. The writer is Noor-York Chair in Islamic Studies, York University, Toronto and professor-vice dean and director, [Mahatma Gandhi](#) Centre for Peace, Jindal Global University

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AMENDING TO DESTROY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

It is not surprising that the Rajapaksa government in Sri Lanka is bringing in the 20th Amendment Bill, which seeks to make the office of the executive president even more powerful than envisaged in the original 1978 constitution. The amendment is likely to go through because Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has a two-thirds majority in Parliament. But it is bound to have detrimental consequences for the internal stability of Sri Lanka, where presidential authoritarianism has in the past played dangerously with ethnic and religious faultlines. Five years ago, the United National Front led by then president Maithripala Sirisena and then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe ushered in progressive constitutional reforms through the 19th Amendment, whittling down the president's powers, empowering the prime minister, and making both more accountable. It also strengthened other institutions. For instance, the reason the Sri Lanka Election Commission is taken more seriously now is because its top officials are appointed through a broad-based Constitutional Council. The 20th is aimed at undoing all this and more.

Worryingly, a campaign is picking up speed for similarly getting rid of the 13th Amendment, which came about through India's intervention in the 1980s, and was aimed at providing a modicum of devolution of political power to the Tamil minority. There was violent opposition to the amendment when it was adopted in 1987, leading to an insurrection by a Sinhalese nationalist group in which thousands were killed and many more disappeared. The 13th gained acceptance later even among those opposed to it, even as, from its inception, it has fallen short of Tamil expectations.

Doing away with it would be to remove the only concession to devolution to Tamils that the Sri Lankan polity has made. Indeed, India has repeatedly stressed that implementing the 13th Amendment in letter and spirit is the way forward for addressing Tamil political aspirations. The answer to Sri Lanka's political and other breakdowns has always been obvious and promised by many — the abolition of the executive presidency. But that promise is forgotten immediately after gaining power. President Sirisena could not summon the will to fulfill this promise, despite having the opportunity and the parliamentary majority to do so. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, see the presidency as their key to continuing in power. But they must think through any move to do away with the 13th amendment, before giving in to the short term euphoria induced by their brute strength in parliament.

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WHAT IS IN A NAM AND INDIA'S ALIGNMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: NAM and its relevance

India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, said recently that non-alignment was a concept of relevance in a specific era and a particular context, though the independence of action enshrined in it remains a factor of continuity in India's foreign policy. This is about as explicit an assertion as one is likely to get from our political leadership of an obvious post-Cold War fact: that non-alignment, as a foreign policy concept, is dead.

Non-alignment was a policy fashioned during the Cold War, to retain an autonomy of policy (not equidistance) between two politico-military blocs. [The Non-Aligned Movement \(NAM\)](#) provided a platform for newly independent developing nations to join together to protect this autonomy. It was a disparate group from many continents, with varying degrees of proximity to, and dependence on, one or the other bloc; and broadly united around NAM's flagship campaigns for de-colonisation, universal nuclear disarmament and against apartheid.

One of the blocs was disbanded at the end of the Cold War. De-colonisation was largely complete by then, the apartheid regime in South Africa was being dismantled and the campaign for universal nuclear disarmament was going nowhere. Freed from the shackles of the Cold War, the NAM countries were able to diversify their network of relationships across the erstwhile east-west divide. Non-alignment lost its relevance, and NAM its original *raison d'être*.

For a few years now, non-alignment has not been projected by our policymakers as a tenet of India's foreign policy. However, we have not yet found a universally accepted successor as a signature tune for our foreign policy. Successive formulations have been coined and rejected. Strategic autonomy was one, which soon acquired a connotation similar to non-alignment, with an anti-U.S. tint. Multi-alignment has not found universal favour, since (as the External Affairs Minister said elsewhere) it may convey the impression of opportunism, whereas we seek strategic convergences. Seeking issue-based partnerships or coalitions is a description that has not stuck. "Advancing prosperity and influence" was a description Dr. Jaishankar settled for, to describe the aspirations that our network of international partnerships seeks to further.

In the wake of the current stand-off with China, there have been calls for India's foreign policy to shed its inhibitions and make a decisive shift towards the United States, as the only viable option to counter China. The government has been more nuanced in its approach. The External Affairs Minister clarified that a rejection of non-alignment does not mean a rush to alignment: India will not join an alliance system.

The fact is that 'alliance' is as much a Cold War concept as non-alignment. During the Cold War, the glue that held countries of an alliance together was composed (in varying proportions) of ideological convergence and an existential military threat. With the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Warsaw Pact, this glue dissolved and the international options of alliance partners widened, just like those of NAM countries. The strategic interests of alliance partners are no longer congruent. This is evident in the Euro-Atlantic alliance. U.S. President Donald Trump's words and deeds have highlighted divergences within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and even widened them, but strains have periodically surfaced even earlier — over the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, for example, or on policy towards Russia or West Asia. Turkey is constantly exploring the limits of NATO discipline.

Alliances in the Asia-Pacific face a bigger definitional dilemma. They were originally forged to deter the USSR. The threat to the alliance partners today is from an assertive China, which they

are reluctant to define as a strategic adversary, because of their economic engagement with it and the huge military asymmetry.

It is often overlooked that geostrategy derives from both geography and politics. While politics is dynamic, geography is immutable. Two major imperatives flow from India's geography: economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific space and the strategic importance of the continental landmass to its north and west. The former has inspired the Act East policy of bilateral and multilateral engagements in Southeast Asia and East Asia and the Pacific. Shared India-U.S. interests in dealing with the challenge from China in the maritime domain have been a strategic underpinning of the bilateral partnership since the early 2000s.

In the immediate-term, Indian and U.S. perspectives are less convergent in India's continental neighbourhood. Connectivity and cooperation with Afghanistan and Central Asia need engagement with Iran and Russia, as well as with the Russia-China dynamics in the region. Russia bestrides the Eurasian landmass bordering India's near and extended neighbourhood. Seemingly paradoxically, a close Russia-China partnership should move India to broad-base relations with Russia (beyond the traditional defence and energy pillars). A strong stake in relations with India could reinforce Russia's reluctance (which still persists) to be a junior partner of China.

As the U.S. confronts the challenge to its dominance from China, classical balance of power considerations would dictate a modicum of accommodation with Russia. There was an analogous logic in the Richard Nixon-Henry Kissinger outreach to China in 1971, when the Soviet Union was the more formidable rival. The political lessons from the current pandemic could help reawaken that historical memory. Equally, the U.S. could acknowledge that India's development of trade routes through Iran would also serve its strategic interest of finding routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan and Russia, respectively.

Five years ago, a group of U.S. strategic analysts had suggested (in a report for the Council on Foreign Relations), that the U.S. should see ties with India as a joint venture (not an alliance), in which they could pursue shared objectives to mutual benefit and accept that differences of perspectives will have to be addressed.

This template could have wider applicability for bilateral relations in today's world order, which former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon has described as militarily unipolar, economically multipolar and politically confused. COVID-19 may scramble the economics and deepen the confusion further.

India will acquire a larger global profile next year, when it commences a two-year term on the UN Security Council. The strategic choices that it makes in its bilateral partnerships will be closely watched.

P.S. Raghavan, a former diplomat, is Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board. The views expressed are personal

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THE BREAKDOWN WITH CHINA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

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On Monday night, India repelled — yet again — a possible attempt by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) to intrude into Indian territory across the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This comes a week after India successfully resisted such attempts, and held on to strategic positions on the southern banks of the Pangong Tso. The escalation in tensions in eastern Ladakh is not surprising. With both armies, mobilised in large numbers and staring at each other in close proximity, it is but natural that skirmishes will happen — especially when one army, PLA, wants to change the facts on the ground and force India to accept a new reality. It is also natural because over the past fortnight, there has been a sharp uptick in rhetoric on both sides.

All of this indicates that the India-China relationship has broken down at two levels. The first is with regard to the border management framework that has been in place for close to three decades. It is clear that China no longer sees the advantage of maintaining peace and tranquility on the border — and is keen to maintain this peace only on its terms, after wresting territory over which it has no legitimate claim. This is unacceptable to India, and rightly so. The second is with regard to the broader framework of the relationship. For years, India has convinced itself that the dynamic with China has both a cooperative and competitive element — and while this was true, it is also now clear that the competitive dynamic is on the ascendant, and is becoming sharply adversarial.

With external affairs minister S Jaishankar scheduled to meet his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, in Moscow on Thursday, it is this breakdown that must be the focus of the discussion. Is it the case that China has decided that it is comfortable with a hot LAC, and an outright adversarial relationship with India? If that is so — and the conversation will give the Indian establishment a sense of Beijing's mood — India has no choice but to prepare itself in the military, economic, diplomatic domains and respond accordingly. Or is it the case that China has read Indian motivations wrong, that apprehensions can be allayed, and Beijing can be persuaded to disengage and de-escalate? If that is so, it will help tackle the immediate crisis — even though the long-term orientation of the relationship will still be troubled.

India must hope for accommodation, even as it prepares for confrontation.

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INDO-PACIFIC TRILATERAL DIALOGUE HELD

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Australia

With a focus on enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, India, Australia and France on Wednesday held the first trilateral dialogue where they discussed “economic and geostrategic challenges and cooperation” in the region, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic responses to it.

“The three countries also had an exchange on the priorities, challenges and trends in regional and global multilateral institutions, including the best ways to strengthen and reform multilateralism,” the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement here.

The three sides expressed their shared will “to successfully conclude concrete cooperation projects in the maritime sector and those promoting global commons (climate, environment and biodiversity, health),” France added.

French Defence Minister Florence Parly is visiting India on Thursday.

She will join Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for the formal induction ceremony of Rafale fighter jets into the Indian Air Force at Ambala. She is also scheduled to meet National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.

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REALISM AND THE UNDEMARCATED BORDER

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The “deep conversation” with China that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has indicated must be informed by the past but should be based on the changed global context as festering problems left over from colonialism tend to get re-framed (West Asia is an example), as new trade-offs emerge, and leadership matters.

As civilisational states, neighbours and rising powers, India and China have a unique continuing process of diplomatic engagement, even as their militaries face off against each other, which is very different to the international relations theory developed in the West to explain something that had never happened before, the 200 year global colonial and post-colonial world and inapplicable to differences arising from colonial ambiguity.

Comment | [China's LAC aggression, India's obfuscation](#)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that “this is the age of development”, and former Generals of the Leh-based Corps pointing to the undemarcated border, suggesting a ‘practical’ boundary along the Karakoram watershed reframes the national interest. Combined with the recent shift by China from Line of Actual Control (LAC) to Claim Line, a new national debate on demarcating the border is needed.

The origin of different interpretations of the boundary is poorly surveyed ancient maps of uninhabited areas, visited only by traders and nomads, with even passes at an altitude above 13,000 feet. Commerce dominated economic activity and several trade routes converged on Leh. With settled agriculture limited to strips along the Indus in the west, Aksai Chin was a kind of no-man's land, as there was no need for an administration.

With the Treaty of Amritsar, in 1846, the British granted Gulab Singh Kashmir without specifying its eastern boundary in Aksai Chin. According to Article 2 of the Treaty, the boundary was to be “defined by a separate engagement after survey”. The first one, the Johnson-Ardagh Line surveyed in 1865, ran along the Kunlun Mountain, included Aksai Chin in Kashmir and was not communicated to China. Another survey, the McCartney-MacDonald Line, ran closer to the Karakoram Range, treating the Indus watershed as the border. The later survey, officially sent by the British to China in 1899, was not followed up, and the border remained ‘undefined’.

Also read | [Diplomacy is the solution to India-China tensions, says External Affairs Minister Jaishankar](#)

The dispute continues to be which watershed defines the boundary. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, according to the official transcript of the boundary talks with Premier Chou-en-lai [Zhou Enlai] in April 1960, argued that ‘it is true that the boundary is not marked on the ground; but if delimitation can take place by definition of high mountain areas and watershed and if it is a normally accepted principle of demarcation, then it is precisely defined in the past’, his reference was to the Kun Lun range. Premier Chou's position was ‘we do not recognise the McMahon line but that we were willing to take a realistic view with Burma and India. It is easy to see that the national boundary between China and India is the Karakoram watershed. This extends from Kilik Pass, passes through the Karakoram Pass to Kongka Pass. Broadly speaking, rivers and streams to the south and west of this belong to India while those to the north and east of it are on China's side’. Both sides could only agree there was no demarcation on the ground.

Three missteps by both countries have resulted in the current stalemate. First, two civilisational states establishing their identity were ill-advised by poorly informed experts. India issued new maps in 1954 removing the 'un-demarcated territory' tag and China in 1957 also showed Aksai Chin with the only traffic artery between Tibet and Xinjiang in its new map. A cartographic ambiguity was converted into clashing sovereignty, with unwarranted inherent notions of 'concession' and 'aggression'.

Second, further reliance placed on experts to assist the diplomatic process in reconciling records and custom obfuscated the political nature of the settlement. In 1960, the history and tradition of the area were to be examined by a joint expert group which could not produce an agreed report as earlier maps considered basin boundaries, and not who had exercised control over territory. These deliberations only confirmed that trust, the essential element of a negotiation, was missing.

Comment | [Despite the messaging, it is still advantage China](#)

Third, despite the system of engagement from 1993 for "meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustments to their respective positions on the boundary question", militaries remain tasked with defending borders where 'grey areas' and maximum restraint in 'face to face' situations have inherent limitations. Infrastructure development increases the potential for action and then reflection, and that process has outlived its utility. The Special Representatives of India and China, set up to resolve the boundary issue and diplomats have had to step in on border management.

The missteps extended into the operational sphere. China constructed its strategic highway unhindered, as regular patrolling till all the border passes was not undertaken between 1954 and 1959, when a clash took place near the Kongka Pass, south of the Galwan valley, galvanising hectic diplomatic activity. On the Chinese side also, in 1960, their experts showed Indian experts a new map of the Chinese-claimed 'traditional customary line' which was at points well to the west of the alignment of the same area which Premier Chou en-lai had earlier described to Jawaharlal Nehru.

Then, as now, public opinion had a disproportionate role and a furore arose when the term territory "administered" by India was used. The Soviet Union (Russia), as in the case of the Galwan face-off, resorted to quiet diplomacy, with a tilt towards India impacting on the disengagement.

Also read | [Realism should shape India's China policy: Jaishankar](#)

The context is no longer newly independent countries unsure of themselves, but neighbours confident in their national power seeking 'accommodation'. Lt. General P.J.S. Pannu, who commanded the Leh-based Corps, has advocated a boundary settlement laying stress on the difficulties in holding ground 'divided by this history', with military clashes inevitable as the LAC is not marked on the ground (<https://bit.ly/35jNEfj>). Lt. General N.S. Brar, a former chief of staff of the Leh-based Corps, has advocated a 'sober handling of national security issues' by 'accepting Chou-en-lai's proposal as 'a practical and honourable accommodation with China' (<https://bit.ly/32eZ42h>). National security is more than the military posture.

Wedded to the questionable line of 1865, on the Kunlun Range, India has not claimed the more legitimate line of 1899 on the Karakoram watershed (communicated by the British to the Chinese) and which China has accepted as the boundary with Pakistan, and fully covers our patrolling points and strategic heights we now occupy. This translates to the Indus watershed lying within India, with the area to its east in China, including its strategic highway G219.

Also read | [China's leadership provoking conflict with India as diversion, says former Communist Party school professor Cai Xia](#)

Another new development is the guidance from the Modi-Xi summit, held in Wuhan in 2018, that the boundary question should be considered from the 'strategic perspective of India-China relations'. The debate should really be whether the Wuhan Spirit, expected to create conditions for the Asian century, Asia with two poles, is still relevant. This marks a shift from India's earlier stand agreeing with China that problems left over from history be left for another generation.

There are indications that Jawaharlal Nehru was inclined towards negotiation but feared his Home Minister, Govind Ballabh Pant, would play the national card to oust him. Prime Minister Modi is secure, within the party and the national trust in him. He should audit the past, explain colonial ambiguity, establish the Himalayan watershed as border, and take a giant step for the \$5-trillion economy.

Mukul Sanwal is a former civil servant and UN diplomat

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Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Middle East

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India's external affairs and defence ministers recently dropped by Iran and talked to their counterparts, the first such talks since the pandemic began. Afghanistan, rather than oil supplies, tops the agenda, reflecting the new contours of the bilateral relationship. New Delhi and Tehran have reason to worry about the slow-but-steady withdrawal of United States (US) troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban resurgence that will follow. While Iran has its own problems with the US, and won't be unhappy that the US troop presence along its northern border is winding down, it has reason to be concerned at the prospect of the present Kabul regime weakening. Tehran is known to have engaged with some Taliban leaders, but remains suspicious of its more hardcore factions, which are often intertwined with the Islamic State Khorasan Province and both are deeply anti-Shia.

New Delhi's views converge as these same Taliban factions are also the closest to Rawalpindi. At a time when Iran's economy is stressed by sanctions and low oil prices, and its military stretched by deployments in Iraq and Syria, an unstable Afghanistan would not be welcome. The two countries need to coordinate their support for the Kabul regime. The partly India-funded freight corridor from Chabahar to Herat is the most tangible symbol of Afghan-related cooperation. The next few years will require such cooperation to expand into other spheres. As India's energy ambitions revolve around weaning itself off oil and gas usage, there will be less traction to be gained in the energy sphere. But there will be more work to be done in the realm of regional security.

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INDIA AND JAPAN SIGN LOGISTICS AGREEMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Japan

India and Japan signed a logistics agreement that will allow the Armed Forces of both sides to coordinate closely in services and supplies. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his outgoing Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, who held a telephone discussion on Thursday, welcomed the pact that was signed by Defence Secretary Dr. Ajay Kumar and Ambassador of Japan Suzuki Satoshi.

Closer cooperation

A statement from the government informed that the agreement on 'Reciprocal Provision Supplies and Services' will "increase interoperability between the Armed Forces of India and Japan" and assist in maintaining regional security.

"The agreement establishes the enabling framework for closer cooperation between the Armed Forces of India and Japan in reciprocal provision of supplies and services while engaged in bilateral training activities, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian International Relief and other mutually agreed activities," the statement said.

The Prime Ministers of Japan and India welcomed the signing of the agreement, which will help both sides coordinate on medical requirements, supplies, maintenance, airlifting and communication.

Naval exercises

Significantly, the agreement signed on Wednesday is mainly aimed at greater maritime cooperation and can dramatically upgrade India-Japan naval exercises as the participants are expected to share maritime facilities for mutual benefit.

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LADAKH: INDIA, CHINA AGREE ON 5-POINT PLAN FOR RESOLVING BORDER STANDOFF BY BY 3

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The two countries agreed to the plan during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow

India and China have agreed on a five-point plan for resolving the prolonged border face-off in eastern Ladakh that included abiding by all existing agreements and protocol on management of the frontier, maintaining peace and tranquility and avoiding any action that could escalate matters.

The two countries agreed to the plan during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow on Thursday evening on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet.

The Indian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army(PLA) have been locked in a tense standoff in multiple areas along the Line of Actual Control(LAC) in eastern Ladakh since early May.

The Ministry of External Affairs(MEA) issued a joint press statement early on Friday featuring five points which were agreed by both the sides at the "frank and constructive" discussions by the two ministers.

"The two foreign ministers agreed that the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side. They agreed, therefore, that the border troops of both sides should continue their dialogue, quickly disengage, maintain proper distance and ease tensions," it said.

The joint statement said Jaishankar and Wang agreed that both sides should take guidance from the series of consensus reached between leaders of the two countries on developing India-China relations, including not allowing differences to become disputes.

This assessment was a clear reference to decisions taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at their two informal summits in 2018 and 2019.

"The two ministers agreed that both sides shall abide by all the existing agreements and protocol on China-India boundary affairs, maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas and avoid any action that could escalate matters," the joint statement said.

At the talks, Jaishankar and Wang agreed that as the situation eases on the border, the two sides should expedite work to conclude new confidence building measures to maintain and enhance peace and tranquility in the border areas.

The joint statement said the two sides also agreed to continue to have dialogue and communication through the Special Representative(SR) mechanism on the India-China boundary question.

"They also agreed in this context that the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs (WMCC) should also continue at its meetings," it added.

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DRAWDOWN IN IRAQ: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON U.S. TROOP REDUCTION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The [U.S.'s decision to cut troops in Iraq](#) is both a relief and a challenge to the Iraqi government. It is a relief because public opinion in Iraq is increasingly against the continuing presence of U.S. troops in the country, particularly after the [assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani](#) in Baghdad in January. Iraqi lawmakers passed a non-binding resolution after the assassination, asking the government to oust the Americans. The new government of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has stated that it does not want U.S. troops in combat operations. But he has asked for training services and other assistance. Now that the U.S. is cutting troops from 5,200 to 3,000, Mr. Kadhimi could argue that his government is committed to seeing the full withdrawal of the U.S. troops. It is a challenge because the U.S. troops had played a key role in the war against the Islamic State (IS), and with the drawdown, the Iraqi forces would have to share a greater burden in the fight against jihadists. The American political leadership has long wanted to pull troops out of Iraq. President Barack Obama had set a timetable for the pull back and withdrew most troops by 2011, but he had to send thousands of soldiers back to Iraq after the rise of the IS. President Trump promised to end the "endless wars" during his campaign. Now that the IS has been driven out of the major population centres of Iraq, he could claim victory and draw down troops.

While the U.S.'s decision is part of the Trump administration's larger policy of bringing back American troops home, the local factors cannot be overlooked. The U.S. found it increasingly difficult to station a large number of troops in Iraq. At the height of the war, the U.S. had over 1,50,000 troops in Iraq. But in recent years, it found stationing even 10,000 troops risky. This is partly because of the hostile political environment and partly due to the growing influence of Iran and Shia militias in Iraq. In January, the U.S. killed Soleimani after Shia militias attacked American troops. Iran retaliated by launching ballistic missile attacks on a U.S. air base in Iraq, injuring some 100 American soldiers, while the Shia militias continued attacking U.S. troops. In March, three of the coalition troops, two of them Americans, were killed in such an attack. Since then, the U.S. has repositioned troops, and the drawdown will reduce risks of such confrontations in the future. While the Americans leave, the Iraqi government should be careful of not letting any security vacuum being filled by jihadist groups. Though the IS has been driven underground, at least 10,000 IS fighters are still active in Iraq, according to UN assessments. The sectarian policies of the Nouri Al-Maliki government, coupled with the security vacuum left by the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, allowed Al-Qaeda in Iraq, with battle experience from the civil war-stricken Syria, to exploit Sunni resentment in northern Iraq and build the IS. The Iraqi government should not allow history to repeat itself.

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INDIA AND JAPAN SIGN AGREEMENT ON RECIPROCAL PROVISION OF SUPPLIES AND SERVICES BETWEEN FORCES OF BOTH COUNTRIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Japan

India and Japan signed an Agreement between the two countries concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Armed Forces of India and The Self-Defense Forces of Japan. The agreement was signed here yesterday by Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar and Ambassador of Japan Mr Suzuki Satoshi.

This agreement establishes the enabling framework for closer cooperation between the Armed Forces of India and Japan in reciprocal provision of supplies and services while engaged in bilateral training activities, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian International Relief and other mutually agreed activities.

The agreement will also enhance the interoperability between the Armed Force of India and Japan thereby further increasing the bilateral defence engagements under the Special Strategic & Global Partnership between the two countries.

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INDIA, CHINA AGREE ON 5-POINT ACTION PLAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Mr. Wang reportedly maintained “China’s stern position” on the situation in the border areas, “emphasising that the imperative is to immediately stop provocations such as firing and other dangerous actions that violate the commitments made by the two sides”, the Chinese note added.

Countering the Chinese claims, government sources here said the events of the past few months have “inevitably impacted the bilateral relationship”. In particular, India had made the point that the mobilisation of a large number of PLA troops was responsible for the “flashpoints along the LAC”.

“The Chinese side has not provided a credible explanation for this deployment,” the sources said, blaming the “provocative behaviour of Chinese front-line troops at numerous incidents” for the violence, while Indian troops had “scrupulously” adhered to protocols. Military commanders’ meetings in the next few days will chalk out the steps for disengagement more clearly, which the Foreign Ministers will review before deciding on the course ahead. While border commanders agreed to disengagement procedures in June as well (which made little headway), the government feels that they now have concrete proposals and commitments from Mr. Wang, who is also the State Councillor, thus indicating a “policy decision” by Beijing to disengage.

The meeting between the Foreign Ministers was facilitated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Later, a Russia-India-China lunch set the stage for the bilateral talks on Thursday. It is expected to be followed by Special Representatives’ talks and another meeting of the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs.

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JAISHANKAR-WANG TALKS RAISE HOPES FOR DEFUSING INDIA-CHINA TENSION AT LAC

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The five-point framework that emerged out of a “frank and constructive” conversation between External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on the margins of an international conference in Moscow has certainly raised hopes, if tentative, for defusing the extended military crisis on the Ladakh frontier. But Delhi must keep its fingers crossed amidst the badly shaken trust in Beijing since the People’s Liberation Army’s surprise aggression during April-May. Jaishankar and Wang agreed that the two armies, now staring at each other at many points in Ladakh, must “quickly disengage” and “ease tensions”. Sceptics in South Block will note that this is not the first time in the last few months that Beijing has promised to stand down. In various telephonic conversations between the foreign ministers, Special Representatives on border negotiations, senior diplomats as well as in direct and continuous dialogue between military commanders on the ground, [China](#) raised expectations only to dash them quickly.

The context for the talks between Jaishankar and Wang, however, has been somewhat different. In the first few months of the crisis, China appeared to have convinced itself that India had no option but to accept the new facts on the ground. This confidence was reflected in Beijing’s refusal to pull back its forces to peacetime locations, its dismissive diplomatic tone and the aggressive military actions to consolidate its territorial gains from the aggression. India’s repeated demand for restoration of the status quo ante on the frontier seemed empty rhetoric, until the Indian army ramped up its mobilisation and boldly seized some high ground to challenge Chinese military positions. These moves on the frontier were matched by a series of economic measures against China unveiled by Delhi. India’s demonstration of the political resolve to escalate the conflict and the military capability to back it may have probably convinced Beijing that it needs to rethink its approach to the current crisis.

Although the change in China’s political tone is welcome, there is no missing the deep differences that continue to complicate the path towards comprehensive military disengagement and de-escalation. If the joint statement issued after the Jaishankar-Wang talks is a bare-bones agreement, the separate explanatory comments from Delhi and Beijing reveal the challenges ahead. While India insists that the objective of the exercise is to “restore” the status quo ante, there is no explicit Chinese commitment to that goal. While Beijing wants to separate the border conflict from the rest of the relationship, Delhi says the two are inextricably interlinked. As the military commanders and diplomats try and turn the five-point consensus on principles into tangible outcomes on the ground, there will be problems — including over the nature of the steps and their sequencing. While Delhi must negotiate in good faith, it cannot again mistake Beijing’s diplomatic words for the PLA’s deeds.

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A GAME OF CHESS IN THE HIMALAYAS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

With the [tensions along the Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) refusing to die down, despite the marathon military and diplomatic-level talks, the obvious question that stares at every stakeholder is this: is 2020 another 1962? While the future is uncertain, the present is undoubtedly tense. As stated by India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, this is "surely the most serious situation" along the India-China border "after 1962".

The parallels are hard to ignore. In August 1959, after the first border clash between Indian and Chinese troops in Longju, in the eastern sector, China said Indian troops had crossed the McMahon Line and opened fire, and the Chinese border guards had fired back. The next day, New Delhi protested against the Chinese statement, saying it was Chinese troops that had moved into Indian territory and opened fire. Sixty-one years later, the statements issued by India and China after the border clashes are eerily similar. Both sides accuse each other of transgressing across the LAC. Both sides accuse each other of opening fire. Both sides blame each other for the current standoff.

Comment | [The unlearned lesson of 1962](#)

What led to the war? To understand the current tensions, one has to go back in history. When the Longju incident happened, not many in India might have thought the border tensions would lead to a full-scale Chinese invasion. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon were absolutely certain that China would not attack India. Nehru had bet big on India's friendship with China. He saw both countries as victims of imperialism and the natural leaders of Asia. The realist in Nehru believed that peace on India's northern border was an imperative for the newly-born republic's rise and material development. So in the 1950s, Nehru continued to defend China in international fora. India accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and signed an agreement with Peking over trade with Tibet. But what Nehru hoped in return for India's friendship was China respecting its bequeathed boundaries — the McMahon Line in the east and the frontier (based on the 1842 Tibet-Kashmir agreement) in the west. Nehru was wrong.

The first setback to this position was the Longju incident. Within two months, an Indian police patrol team in Kongla Pass in Ladakh came under Chinese attack. This was a wake-up call for Nehru. He asked Chinese troops to withdraw from Longju in return for an assurance from India not to reoccupy the area and proposed that both sides pull back from the disputed Aksai Chin, where China had already built (unilaterally) a strategic highway. China rejected this proposal and made a counter offer — to recognise the McMahon Line in the east in return for India's recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Aksai Chin. Nehru, having checked the historical maps, documents, including revenue records and land surveys, which he got from the India Office in London, rejected the Chinese offer because he thought it would mean India abandoning its legitimate claims over Aksai Chin. After the collapse of the Nehru-Zhou Enlai [Chou en Lai] talks in 1960 in Delhi, tensions escalated fast. China intensified patrolling along the border. In November 1961, Nehru ordered his Forward Policy as part of which India set up patrol posts along the LAC, which was seen as a provocation in Beijing. In October 1962, Mao Zedong ordered the invasion.

Comment | [China's LAC aggression, India's obfuscation](#)

The situation today is not exactly the same as 1962. Back then, the Tibet factor was looming

over India-China ties. As soon as the Dalai Lama took refuge in India, Chinese leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, had threatened “to settle accounts” with the Indians “when time comes”. China also feared that India was providing help to Tibetan rebels, after the 1959 rebellion. Today, both sides have managed to sidestep the Tibetan question in their bilateral engagement. And unlike in 1962, when India was not politically and militarily prepared for a war with China, today’s conflict is between two nuclear powers. But the problem is this; while the overall situation is different, the border conflict looks similar to what it was in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The boundary has still not been delimited and demarcated. China has not recognised the McMahon Line and India has not accepted China’s control over Aksai Chin.

Despite the volatile situation, an uneasy truce prevailed on the border at least since 1975 and both sides have made improvements in ties since Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Beijing in 1988. This period of truce allowed both countries to focus on their development. But that truce has now been disrupted with China first moving to block Indian patrolling in the Finger area of Pangong Tso and the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh during the summer. India then made a forward move on the southern banks of Pangong Tso last month, similar to Nehru’s Forward Policy in 1961, taking over the heights of the Kailash Range. When Nehru ordered the Forward Policy, his aim was to secure the vast border and prevent further incursions. He never thought China would attack. Now, despite the experience of 1962, India appears to be taking a calculated risk by making forward movements. This led to the opening of fire in the region, for the first time in 45 years. So, practically, the border situation is back to what it was in 1961.

Also read | [Diplomacy is the solution to India-China tensions, says External Affairs Minister Jaishankar](#)

In the run-up to the 1962 war, Mao had taken a “unity and struggle” policy towards India. This meant, laying emphasis on unity with India on mutually agreeable matters while continuing the struggle over the border issue. Nehru failed to understand the gravity of this approach. He first saw only unity, and, after the Longju and Kongla clashes, he saw only struggle. China, on the other side, consistently played what game theorists call the game of “strategic dominance”—the strategy which would yield positive outcomes, irrespective of the strategies of the rival player. Back then, China saw itself as the most powerful force in Asia. Japan had been devastated by the war. The British withdrawal and the partition of the subcontinent had changed the geopolitical balance in the continent. Mao was facing challenges to his leadership within the party after the disastrous Great Leap Forward. Globally, there were cracks in the Sino-Soviet alliance, especially after the Soviet intervention in Hungary. When it set the ball of border tensions rolling, it knew that the ultimate risk would be a limited war and it was ready to take that risk because even in the event of a war, China calculated that it could retain its strategic dominance. And it did so in 1962.

Editorial | [Too close for comfort: On India-China border row](#)

The Chinese strategy today is not very different from that of the 1960s. Now, China considers that it has arrived on the global stage as a military and economic superpower. The COVID-19 outbreak has battered its economy, but it is recovering fast. India, on the other side, is in a prisoner’s dilemma on how to tackle China. India is a big, rising power, but is going through short-term challenges. Its economy is weak. Its geopolitical standing in the neighbourhood is not in its best days. Unlike in the 1960s, when Nehru’s non-alignment was blamed for Chinese aggression, today’s India has cautiously moved toward the United States. But still, there is no guarantee that it would deter China or if the U.S. would come to India’s help in the event of a war. A combination of all these factors might have led China to believe that it can play the game of strategic dominance once again. If India plays it on China’s terms, there will be war. The question is whether it should walk into the trap laid in the Himalayas, or learn from the

experiences of 1962.

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GLIMMER OF HOPE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA-CHINA FIVE-POINT CONSENSUS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The “[five-point consensus](#)” reached by the Foreign Ministers of India and China in Moscow on Thursday provides a glimmer of hope of a diplomatic solution, while [thousands of troops from both countries remain deployed](#) along the border. It is, however, only a glimmer. Each point, outlined in a joint statement, has been affirmed previously by the two neighbours, both in past boundary agreements and in talks held since June that have failed to de-escalate tensions. The [LAC remains tense](#), facing its worst crisis since 1962. Both sides have agreed to take guidance from previous understandings, including on “[not allowing differences to become disputes](#)”, a formulation of 2017 that has not lived up to its promise. They agreed the current situation suits neither side, troops should quickly disengage, maintain proper distance, and ease tensions. Both sides said they would abide by all existing agreements, continue dialogue, and expedite work on finding confidence building measures to maintain peace.

At the same time, stark differences remain, including on the key question of whether both sides will return to the *status quo ante* prior to China’s transgressions. The issuing of the [joint statement](#) was somewhat unusually accompanied by separate press statements, which [struck discordant notes](#) on key issues. India stressed that peace on the boundary was essential for ties, and that recent incidents had impacted the broader relationship. The Chinese statement, on the other hand, sought to emphasise the importance of “moving the relationship in the right direction” and to put the border “in a proper context”. China’s statement also quoted India’s Foreign Minister as saying India believed China’s policy toward India had not changed and that it did not consider relations to be dependent on the settlement of the boundary question. This characterisation of India’s stand was a sharp contrast from Delhi’s recent public statements, which have emphasised border peace as a prerequisite to taking forward the broader relationship. Moreover, a day before the talks, China’s official news agency issued a commentary placing the onus entirely on India to defuse tensions, accusing India of “reckless provocations”, telling India “to learn from history”, and reiterating that China “will not lose an inch of territory”. It is welcome that India and China have finally found something to agree on. Thursday’s consensus, however, is only the first step of a long road ahead. The continuing rounds of talks should be aimed sincerely at disengagement, and not at presenting a veneer of diplomatic engagement even while China strengthens its hold along the LAC. India will need to verify before it can trust each of China’s steps from now on.

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A COUNTER-COALITION OF EURASIAN POWERS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: SCO and India

As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi negotiated a five-point agreement which they hoped will lead to a disengagement process between Indian and Chinese troops ranged against each other at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), it wasn't just the host, Russia, that played a part behind the scenes. In fact, the occasion for their presence in Moscow, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), had as much of a role to play.

The SCO was founded in June 2001, built on the 'Shanghai Five' grouping of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz Republic) and Tajikistan, which had come together in the post-Soviet era in 1996, in order to work on regional security, reduction of border troops, and terrorism. A particular goal all these years has been "conflict resolution", given its early successes between China and Russia, and then within the Central Asian Republics. The 1996 meeting of the Shanghai Five, for example, resulted in an 'Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field Along the Border Areas' between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which led to an agreement on the mutual reduction of military forces on their common borders in 1997. Subsequently, it helped push the Central Asian countries to resolve some of their boundary disputes as well.

In 2001, the Shanghai Five inducted Uzbekistan into the group and named it the SCO, outlining its principles in a charter that promoted what was called the "Shanghai spirit" of cooperation.

According to its rules, the organisation has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent. The SCO Secretary-General and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of three years. However, the venue of the SCO council meetings moves between the eight members (including India and Pakistan). The SCO also has four observer states — Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia — which may be inducted at a later date.

Main goals

The SCO describes its main goals, part of its Charter that was adopted in St. Petersburg in 2002, as: "strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research and technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order."

No doubt, the SCO was eyed with some misgivings by the U.S. and Europe as a result of this, not the least by its desire to build a "new international political and economic order", and it was even dubbed the "Anti-NATO" for proposing military cooperation. In 2005, the Astana declaration called for SCO countries to work on a "joint SCO response to situations that threaten peace, security and stability in the region", indicating the group's strategic ambitions

Western and NATO concerns were heightened a decade later, when they placed heavy sanctions against Russia for its actions in Crimea, but China came to its aid, signing a 30-year, \$400 billion gas pipeline framework agreement. Since then, helped by the personal bond

between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the SCO has become a platform for Eurasian cooperation in a region rich with energy resources. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which Russia is not a part of but supports, and is joined by all members of the SCO (with the exception of India), has also become a part of the SCO declarations.

Contradictions

India and Pakistan joined the SCO as observers in 2005, and were admitted as full members in 2015. Joining the SCO has been seen as one of the Modi government's more significant yet puzzling foreign policy choices, as it came at a time that New Delhi was looking more keenly at the West, and in particular at the maritime 'Quadrilateral' with the U.S., Japan and Australia. India has explained its membership in both ostensibly clashing groups as a part of its principles of "strategic autonomy and multi-alignment".

Other contradictions have also been noted. Since 2014, India and Pakistan have cut all ties, talks and trade with each other, and India has refused to attend the SAARC summit due to tensions with Pakistan, but both their leaderships have consistently attended all meetings of the SCO's three councils: the Heads of State, Heads of Government, Council of Foreign Ministers, as well as other meetings.

Despite the fact that India accuses Pakistan of perpetrating cross-border terrorism at every other multilateral forum, at the SCO, Indian and Pakistani armed forces even take part in military and anti-terrorism exercises together, as part of the SCO-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. In addition, the two countries are part of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, to discuss the course of Afghanistan's future, an issue New Delhi and Islamabad are bitterly divided over.

Bilateral meetings

Through the years, SCO hosts have encouraged members to use the platform to discuss differences on the sidelines. In 2009, India and Pakistan held the first talks after the Mumbai attacks on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Astana, where then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari met, and in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met then Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif at the SCO summit in Ufa, for a meeting that even resulted in a joint statement. There have been no bilateral meetings between Indian and Pakistani leaders on the sidelines of the SCO since then, and both sides have pointedly ignored the other in recent years, although the SCO secretary general has often expressed the hope they will resolve their issues through dialogue, including last year after the Pulwama attack.

Thus, it should not have come as a surprise that the SCO host, Russia, encouraged and facilitated meetings between the Defence Ministers of India and China (September 4) and Foreign Ministers of India and China (September 10) to discuss the stand-off at the LAC that has seen violent clashes, killings of soldiers and gun fire exchanges for the first time in 45 years.

"The SCO Charter doesn't allow any bilateral dispute to be taken up, but it provides a comfortable platform for building mutual trust, expanding cooperation, finding common ground and eventually, creating conditions for dialogue between countries," said Russian Deputy Ambassador to India Roman Babushkin in a press conference this week.

It remains to be seen whether the Moscow meeting between the Indian and Chinese Foreign Minister results in a real breakthrough on the ground at the Line of Actual control, where armies remain entrenched, and the PLA has mobilised both troops and heavy equipment. If it does, that would be a feather in the cap for the SCO, and if fails to do so, the SCO will no doubt continue to provide other venues for its disputing members to meet, as it seeks to build a continental

coalition that, its founders hope, may one day be as strong as some of the other coalitions that exist to its west and south.

In focus

The SCO was founded in June 2001, built on the 'Shanghai Five' grouping of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

The platform played a key role in conflict resolution between China and Russia, and among Central Asian republics

India and Pakistan joined the SCO as observers in 2005, and were admitted as full members in 2015

The SCO describes its main goals as: strengthen mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states and promote their cooperation in various fields

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SINGAPORE CONVENTION ON MEDIATION COMES INTO FORCE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: International Treaties & Agreements, and other important organizations

The Singapore Convention on Mediation came into force on Saturday and will provide a more effective way for enforcing mediated settlements of corporate disputes involving businesses in India and other countries that are signatories to the Convention.

Also known as the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, this is also the first UN treaty to be named after Singapore.

“With the Convention in force, businesses seeking enforcement of a mediated settlement agreement across borders can do so by applying directly to the courts of countries that have signed and ratified the treaty, instead of having to enforce the settlement agreement as a contract in accordance with each country’s domestic process,” an official statement said on Saturday.

The harmonised and simplified enforcement framework under the Convention translates to savings in time and legal costs, which is important for businesses in times of uncertainty, such as during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the statement issued by Singapore’s Ministry of Law said.

As on September 1, the Convention has 53 signatories, including India, China and the U.S. According to the statement, the Convention, which entered into force on Saturday, would boost India’s ‘ease of doing business’ credentials by enabling swift mediated settlements of corporate disputes.

‘Cross-border disputes’

“Businesses in India and around the world will now have greater certainty in resolving cross-border disputes through mediation, as the Convention provides a more effective means for mediated outcomes to be enforced,” it said.

Singapore had worked with the UN Commission on International Trade Law, other UN member states and non-governmental organisations for the Convention.

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US, MALDIVES INK DEFENCE DEAL AMID CHINA'S GROWING PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

US signs defence cooperation deal with Maldives amidst China's growing presence in Indian Ocean

WASHINGTON : The US has signed a framework for defence cooperation with the Maldives to deepen engagement in support of maintaining peace and security in the strategic Indian Ocean, the Pentagon has announced, as the Trump administration looks for strengthening alliances in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's growing presence in the region.

The framework for defence and security relationship was signed in Philadelphia on September 10 between Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asia Reed Werner and Maldivian Minister of Defence Mariya Didi. .

"The framework sets forth both countries' intent to deepen engagement and cooperation in support of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean, and marks an important step forward in the defence partnership," the Pentagon said.

The Indo-Pacific is a biogeographic region of Earth's seas, comprising the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean.

During discussions after signing the agreement, Mariya said the framework will strengthen defence and security cooperation between the two countries, Maldivian portal Sun Online reported.

Mariya said that peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean region is tied to the best interests of both countries.

She stressed the importance of bilateral dialogue and engagement, against a backdrop of growing transnational threats such as piracy, violent extremism, terrorism, and illicit trade, which she said remained relevant, even amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

According to a statement released by the Defence Ministry, the framework outlines a number of bilateral activities, including senior-level dialogues, discussions, engagements, and opportunities in areas such as maritime domain awareness, natural disasters, and humanitarian relief operations, the report said.

Mariya said that the Maldivian government sees the framework as an "important milestone" in defence and security cooperation between the Maldives and the US.

Werner and Didi also discussed US support for the island nation in its response to COVID-19 and areas for future cooperation, and agreed to work toward scheduling the first Defense and Security Dialogue, the Pentagon said.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that promotes the security and prosperity of all nations in the region, the Pentagon said.

The Central Indo-Pacific includes the numerous seas and straits connecting the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The resource-rich Indo-Pacific region is where China has been trying to spread its influence. The US has also been pushing for a broader role by India in the strategically important region. China is eyeing to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean region. China has already taken control of Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea.

China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and with Japan in the East China Sea. Both the areas are said to be rich in minerals, oil and other natural resources.

Beijing claims almost all of the South China Sea. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims in the waterway.

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JAISHANKAR ATTENDS MEETING ON AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Afghanistan

NEW DELHI : External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said the Afghan peace process must respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

In a virtual address on Afghan peace negotiations at Doha, Jaishankar said the peace process must promote human rights and democracy, ensure interest of minorities, women and the vulnerable sections, and "effectively" address violence across the country.

Giving a gist of his address in a series of tweets, Jaishankar also reaffirmed India's long-held position that the peace process should be "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled".

"The friendship of our peoples is a testimony to our history with Afghanistan. No part of Afghanistan is untouched by our 400-plus development projects. Confident that this civilizational relationship will continue to grow," he said.

Last month, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani agreed to release 400 Taliban prisoners, paving the way for beginning of the long-awaited peace process aimed at ending nearly two-decades of conflict in the war-torn country.

India has been a major stakeholder in peace and stability of Afghanistan. It has already invested USD two billion in aid and reconstruction activities in the country.

India has been supporting a national peace and reconciliation process which is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.

India has been keenly following the evolving political situation after the US inked a peace deal with the Taliban in February. The deal provided for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, effectively drawing curtains to Washington's 18-year war in the country.

The US has lost over 2,400 soldiers in Afghanistan since late 2001.

India has also been maintaining that care should be taken to ensure that any such process does not lead to any "ungoverned spaces" where terrorists and their proxies can relocate.

India has been calling upon all sections of the political spectrum in Afghanistan to work together to meet the aspirations of all people in that country including those from the minority community for a prosperous and safe future.

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XI JINPING'S AGGRESSIVE MOVES AGAINST INDIA 'UNEXPECTEDLY FLOPPED': REPORT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The Indian Army and the PLA have been locked in a tense standoff in multiple areas along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since early May.

Washington: Describing Xi Jinping as the "architect" of the PLA's recent aggressive moves against India, a leading US magazine has reported that the Chinese President has risked his future with the high-profile incursions into Indian territory that "unexpectedly flopped" in the face of ferocious fightback by the Indian Army.

Xi, 67, already roiling the Communist Party with a "rectification" campaign and mass persecution of foes, will launch "another brutal purge" following the Chinese army's failures on the Indian border, the Newsweek said in an opinion piece.

"Unfortunately for Xi, he is the "architect" of these aggressive moves into India and his People's Liberation Army (PLA) has unexpectedly flopped. The Chinese army's failures on the Indian border will have consequences," it said, adding that the recent developments give Xi an excuse to pick up the pace of replacing adversaries in the armed forces with loyal elements.

"More important, the failures motivate China's aggressive ruler- who as chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission, is the leader of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the ruling Communist Party of China - to launch another offensive against Indian positions," the magazine warned.

Tensions escalated manifold along the LAC in eastern Ladakh after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed. The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details.

"[China](#) is thought to have suffered at least 43 deaths in the Galwan clash," the magazine said.

Citing Cleo Paskal of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, it said the number of Chinese killed could exceed 60.

"Indian troops fought back ferociously. Beijing won't admit the extent of the debacle," it said.

It said that late last month, for the first time in a half-century, India carried out an offensive against China, taking back high ground the Chinese recently grabbed.

"China's forces were surprised when Indian troops mounted their attempt to retake strategic high points. Stunned Chinese soldiers retreated," it said.

"China's subsequent efforts to counter the Indian moves proved ineffective. At least for the moment, India's troops, in the southernmost of the three areas of conflict, are in control of territory once in Chinese hands," it added.

It said the PLA Ground Force can move against undefended targets. However, it is not clear how effective it is in battle.

"The Ground Force does not have a track record of success in contested situations. Its last major engagement was in 1979 when, in the effort to 'teach Vietnam a lesson,' the Chinese troops were repelled and humiliated by their much smaller neighbour," the magazine noted.

"India is not giving the invaders the opportunity to improve," it said, adding that India's troops are displaying "newfound boldness".

"The game has changed," Paskal said. "You can say the Indians are more aggressive or more aggressively defensive, but they are in fact bolder and better."

"The setback in the Himalayas poses problems for Xi, which means it poses a problem for everyone else," it added.

It said that in China's highly politicised system, the setbacks in Ladakh cannot be perceived as Xi's fault, so he will almost surely purge elements of the military.

"PLA leaders begin to see little choice but to undertake offensive military actions to avoid becoming a victim of Xi's internal terror," said Richard Fisher of the Virginia-based International Assessment and Strategy Center.

The Indian Army and the PLA have been locked in a tense standoff in multiple areas along the [LAC](#) in eastern Ladakh since early May.

Following fresh confrontation around the southern bank of the Pangong lake, India further bolstered its military presence in the region by sending additional troops, battle tanks and other weaponry.

Amidst the very tense situation in eastern Ladakh, India and China reached an agreement to resolve their border row at a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow on September 10 on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meet.

The agreement included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC.

It also mentioned that the two sides should expedite work to conclude "new confidence building measures" to enhance peace and tranquillity in the border areas. However, the agreement has not mentioned any timeline for disengagement of troops.

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ROAD FROM DOHA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

There was no shortage of irony when the Taliban and the Afghan delegation took their place at the table for the “intra-Afghan talks” in a palatial setting in Doha, Qatar on September 12. It was a coincidence that the talks began a day after the 19th anniversary of 9/11, the day of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York that shook the world, and ended Taliban rule in Afghanistan as the US angrily declared a UN Security Council-backed “war on terror”. The US is now hurrying to end that war with a forced marriage between two incompatibles — a western-style presidential Islamic democracy backed by the international community, and medieval fundamentalist Islamist militants — in time for President Donald Trump to take home most American troops in Afghanistan just before the presidential elections. After two decades, the Taliban see themselves as having won this war. The Taliban delegation at the talks calls itself the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the name of its 1996-2001 government. It does not recognise the Afghan government, whose negotiators are referred to as the Islamic Republic delegation. In any case, the Taliban delegation seems more government-like than the government's, whose composition reflects the pulls and pressures on President Ashraf Ghani.

The government delegation has said it wants a ceasefire first, but the Taliban would hardly want to surrender their most powerful card at the get-go. Just in the first week of September, Taliban fighters were busy making forays into territory that is not under their control, for instance in the Panjshir province in the north. With all these elements swirling in the mix, the uncertainties ahead are unfortunately easier to foresee than any outcome that can herald real peace.

India, which has a long relationship with Afghanistan and its people, has been an onlooker in the process. The reason is that Pakistan, its ability to deliver the Taliban to the talks table, was more valuable to the US than anything India, with its suspicion of Taliban as a proxy of the Pakistan Army and ISI, could offer. India has so far said it will not engage with the Taliban until they enter the political mainstream. But with his virtual participation in the opening ceremony of the talks, and his remarks reiterating Delhi's backing for an “Afghan-owned, Afghan-led” settlement, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has sought to signal that India remains an important regional player. But at the moment Delhi has little choice but to wait and watch, see how far the process goes, and how it might reshape the region.

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IT IS TIME INDIA GAVE ITS POLICY ON TIBET SOME STRATEGIC COHERENCE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Beijing is in a strong position but New Delhi should resist China's efforts to consolidate its current hold on Tibetan politics

In a development that attracted relatively little international attention, Xi Jinping unveiled the Communist Party of China's (CPC's) new policy towards Tibet at a conclave in late August. As my colleague Manoj Kewalramani explained in the *Hindustan Times* last week, Xi's new strategy "entails a mix of persuasion, development, connectivity, indoctrination and coercion". Beijing intends to construct an "ironclad shield to safeguard stability" against separatists and hostile foreign interests by sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism, stepping up ideological education, manufacturing a favourable historical narrative, strengthening border defence, deepening surveillance and enhancing connectivity to neighbouring Chinese provinces. The new policy continues to betray the CPC's insecurities vis-a-vis Tibet, but it also indicates that Xi believes Beijing occupies the dominating heights of its relationship with Tibet.

He is not wrong in thinking so. Over the past two decades, Beijing has used its growing power to limit the Dalai Lama's global outreach, severely constrain protests in Tibet, and change the demography of the region. Transforming the Tibetan landscape and economy, it has created vested interests in favour of Beijing's rule among Tibetans and Han Chinese alike. It has found numerous ways to put pressure on New Delhi to limit formal interactions with the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Administration. Even as the PLA has increased transgressions across the length of the India-Tibet border, Beijing has become more forceful in pressing its claims to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which it claims as "South Tibet".

There is one major inescapable event that stands in the way of China having its way—that of identifying the next Dalai Lama once the ageing Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, passes away. Beijing's plan to manage this is by invoking the so-called Golden Urn process—a bureaucratic device used by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty to manage the politics of reincarnation in the late-18th century by drawing lots. Just in case the lottery doesn't go the way Beijing wants it to, it has declared that all reincarnations require the approval of the Chinese government. With the Panchen Lama, who by tradition is the preceptor of the Dalai Lama, already under Chinese control, Beijing has decided to wait out the Dalai Lama rather than negotiate with him. If things go by China's plan, its problem with the institution of the Dalai Lama will end with Tenzin Gyatso's departure.

Once it has Tibet completely in its bag, there is nothing to stop Beijing from asserting territorial claims all along the Himalayas, from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. It is in this context that we must see Xi's desire to shape a historical narrative that retrospectively legitimises the People Republic of China's (PRC) annexation of Tibet. There was a time when Zhou Enlai and even Deng Xiaoping were amenable to a settlement where Beijing would accept Arunachal Pradesh as part of India were New Delhi to surrender claims to Aksai Chin. Now, and presumably in the future, with the balance of power shifting massively in favour of China, Beijing believes it can realize its claims without conceding anything to India, Nepal, Bhutan or Pakistan.

It is for this unsentimental reason that it is in India's interests to ensure that China does not consolidate its hold over Tibet. To the extent that Beijing is insecure about the loyalties of ethnic Tibetans under its rule and about the external legitimacy of its annexation, it will find it harder to

actively pursue territorial ambitions in the Himalayas. India's interests with regard to Tibet are thus subtler than mere support for Tibetan aspirations for autonomy or freedom from Chinese rule. The Kautilyan logic of the rajamandala, after all, is structural.

There is no doubt that China is in as strong a position in Tibet than it ever was. It does not mean that the future it desires is a foregone conclusion. Beijing still does not control two important factors: how the Tibetan people conduct politics; and the existence of credible, legitimate spiritual and political leadership outside China's control. India's Tibet policy should concern itself with shaping these to our advantage. On the latter, New Delhi should ensure that senior lamas of all sects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Dalai and Karmapa, remain free to pursue their religion and politics. With India hosting the largest population of ethnic Tibetans outside their homeland, there is no reason why the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama cannot be from, say, Karnataka.

The Indian government must neither accept the legitimacy of the Golden Urn process nor Beijing's self-arrogated authority to recognize religious reincarnations. Even if the patron-priest relationship that Chinese emperors had with Tibetan high lamas might sometimes have given them privileges in religious matters, by no stretch of imagination can the atheist leaders of today's PRC claim any.

India's own policy on Tibet suffered a lack of focus over the past decade because New Delhi did not want to offend Beijing. This led to a degree of incoherence in the way different government departments and political actors approached the matter. There have been periodic, isolated acts of symbolism. However, unless backed by purposeful policy and substantive actions, symbolism alone is dangerous and can be counterproductive. The time has come for India to review its approach towards Tibet.

Nitin Pai is co-founder and director of The Takshashila Institution, an independent centre for research and education in public policy

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR PALESTINE AFTER UAE, BAHRAIN DEALS WITH ISRAEL?

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

No quick fix:Palestinians carrying placards to protest against the normalisation of Israel-Bahrain ties.AFPMAHMUD HAMS

It took more than three decades for the first Arab country to recognise Israel. Egypt signed a peace treaty with its Jewish neighbour in 1979, a year after the Camp David summit between President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Jordan, the second Arab country that established peace with Israel, took 15 more years to do so. There was a gap of 26 years between Jordan's peace treaty and that of the UAE with Israel. And then, it took less than 30 days for the fourth agreement — between Bahrain and Israel that was announced on Friday by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Arab Peace Initiative

The new-found readiness of Arab countries to have peace with Israel, under the mediation of the Trump administration, appears to be transforming one of the oldest conflicts in modern West Asia. There are speculations that more Arab countries, from Morocco to Sudan and Oman, might follow the footsteps of the UAE and Bahrain. These deals, which have formalised years of back-room contacts between the Gulf kingdoms and Israel, suggest that the pan-Arab-Israel conflict is turning the page. Where does it leave the Palestinians?

Till the UAE-Israel deal was announced on August 13, the official Arab position on the question of Palestine was rooted in the Arab Peace Initiative, proposed by Saudi Arabia in 2002, and endorsed by the Arab League in the same year. The proposal calls for normalising relations between the Arab world and Israel, in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories it captured in the 1967 war, including the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, a “just settlement” of the Palestinian refugee issue and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“Since 2002, both the UAE and Bahrain have supported the Arab Peace Initiative. However, the recent agreements made by Bahrain and the UAE break with this consensus. The Abraham Accords [Israel-UAE deal] require Israel only to ‘temporarily halt’ its formal annexation of the West Bank [settlements]. The agreement between Bahrain and Israel dispenses with the pretence altogether, making no mention of Palestinian land,” said Elham Fakhro, senior Gulf analyst at the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG).

This has angered the Palestinians, who have “strongly rejected” the agreements. “The Palestinian leadership considers this step to blow up the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the Arab and Islamic summits, and international legitimacy, as an aggression against the Palestinian people, and as neglecting Palestinian rights and sacred things, especially Jerusalem and the independent Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967,” the Palestinian leadership said in a statement issued after the UAE deal was announced.

The Palestinians have further called for “an immediate emergency session” of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation “to reject this declaration”.

The Palestinians Liberation Organization (PLO) has rejected the Bahrain-Israel deal as well. “If you really wish to ‘advance the cause of peace, dignity, & economic opportunity for the Palestinian people’ how about ending Israel’s ruthless occupation and its theft of our land and resources? Coercing and cajoling Arabs to normalise with Israel will not bring you peace or dignity,” tweeted Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, after the Bahrain agreement was announced.

‘Bleak future’

The Palestinians got nothing in return from these agreements, said A.K. Pasha, a professor of West Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. “[Former Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat wanted an autonomous West Bank and Gaza and removal of the settlements [in 1978-79], but he could get only a freeze on the settlements for three months. The same scenario is now being repeated. The Israelis say they have postponed the annexation. After the U.S. election, whether Trump wins or not, [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu will go ahead with his annexation plan,” he told *The Hindu*, adding that the future of the Palestinians “looks quite bleak”.

Agrees Ms. Fakhro of the ICG. “By normalising relations outside this framework of ‘land for peace’, the two states have broken with a decades-old Arab consensus on the Palestinian issue, and effectively endorsed Israel’s military occupation over the Palestinians. This leaves the Palestinians more isolated than ever, and further weakens the already-dim prospect of a two-state solution,” Ms. Fakhro told *The Hindu*. “For the Palestinians, solidarity will need to be recast in broader terms, knowing full well that many Arab states — but not their unrepresented populations — have all but abandoned the Palestinian cause.”

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TWO THEATRES OF PEACEMAKING

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

As the threat of conflict on India's China frontier looms large and tensions with Pakistan simmer on our western borders, hopes for peace and reconciliation have risen in Afghanistan and the Middle East. The first direct talks between Kabul and the Taliban insurgents began last week at Doha, in Qatar. Today, the leaders of UAE will sign a formal peace agreement with Israel at the White House. Bahrain, the second Gulf country to announce the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in the last few weeks, will join the ceremony.

Sceptics caution against raising hopes too high. The chances of failure in Afghanistan are real. And the momentum behind the normalisation of ties between Israel and the Gulf kingdoms, may not necessarily lead to broader peace in the Middle East. Cynics say the US initiatives in Afghanistan and Arabia are driven by President Donald Trump's quest for diplomatic victories weeks before the election. To be fair though, President Trump has been eager, through the last four years, to redeem his pledge in the 2016 presidential elections to put an end to America's "endless wars" in the greater Middle East.

Talks between Kabul and the Taliban to generate an early ceasefire and a new framework for political reconciliation are part of the agreement between the US and the Taliban signed earlier this year, under which the US has pledged to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban has promised not to attack the US and its allies.

The Middle East has always been far more intimately tied to US domestic politics. Supporters hail Trump as the first US president in decades not to drag America into a new war in the Middle East. Joe Biden, his Democratic rival, is unlikely to oppose Trump's deal-making in Afghanistan and the Middle East. But he will certainly find ways to diminish the president's success.

It does not really matter if the motivations of Trump's policy are wise or not. His actions create new facts on the ground and have political consequences for other states. The developments in Afghanistan and the Middle East will have implications for a large number of actors, including India. Five broad trends emerge from the current peace efforts in Afghanistan and the Middle East. All of them demand a significant rethink of Indian positions.

First is the strategic nature of the two sets of developments. Given the difficulty of reconciling the competing interests in Afghanistan and the Middle East, both the peace processes remain quite vulnerable. But the unfolding dynamic will alter the geopolitical landscape in both places. Whether peace breaks out in Afghanistan or not, the Taliban is here to stay.

The Afghan peace process is rooted in the recognition that the Taliban could not be defeated on the battlefield and must be accepted as a legitimate political force. As UAE and Bahrain join Egypt and Jordan in having formal relationships with Israel, there is no escaping the fact that the contradiction between Arabs and Israelis is no longer the dominant one in the region.

Second is Arabia's enduring importance for the Subcontinent's geopolitics. India's strategic community tends to take too narrow a view of the Arabian salience; the focus is mostly on ensuring oil supplies, promoting manpower exports, and limiting the region's impact on India's Pakistan problem. But there is more to the Gulf.

Consider, for example, the fact that the Afghan peace talks are taking place in Qatar, a tiny Gulf

Kingdom. It might be worth recalling that the Gulf Arabs played a key role in the 1980s defeating the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The UAE and Saudi Arabia were the only countries to recognise the Taliban government in the late 1990s. This time around, they appear to have taken a backseat. But they will not forever cede the lead in Afghanistan to their Gulf rival, Qatar.

Delhi will need to pay more attention to the unfolding realignments in the Middle East, especially between the Arabs and non-Arab states like Iran, Turkey and Israel. The current peace deals mark a historic change in the structure of those relations. They are about a reconciliation between a critical section of the Arabs with Israel and their growing confrontation with Turkey and Iran.

Third is the paradox of American power. Trump's moves in Afghanistan and the Middle East are widely seen as part of the inevitable decline of US power. But the reality remains that the US is the one forcing change in both the theatres. There were a whole lot of attempts over the last decade from Russia, China, Europe and the region for a peace settlement in Afghanistan. In the end, it was the US political and diplomatic weight that facilitated the formal dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban. In the Middle East, it is the US that has led the efforts for a reconciliation between Israel and Gulf Arabs.

Fourth, as the US steps back from the region, at least for now, the resulting strategic vacuum is likely to be filled by other powers. Russia and China are quite active in both the Middle East and Afghanistan. China has traditionally avoided being drawn into the region's political conflicts. But in recent years, it has stepped forward, if tentatively. China's future role in Afghanistan, in partnership with Pakistan, could be quite significant and will be of some concern for India.

But the Greater Middle East is no longer the exclusive preserve of great powers. Regional powers have already acquired much say in the new geopolitics of the Middle East. If Qatar and UAE punch way above their weight, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are locked in a major contest for regional influence. All of them are involved in the proxy wars in other countries. Meanwhile, Egypt and Iraq are trying to regain their once privileged places in the regional hierarchy.

Finally, domestic turbulence in most countries is intensifying. Religious radicalism, sectarian and ethnic divisions, and the clamour for more representative governments are sharpening conflicts within and between countries. The collapse of the oil market is undermining the region's economic fortunes and making it harder for political elites to address the emerging political challenges.

India's engagement with the Middle East has traditionally been focused on maintaining good relations with all the major powers in the region and avoiding involvement in their internal and intra-regional conflicts. Even in Afghanistan, where India's security stakes have been visibly high, Delhi has resisted being drawn too deep.

India's framework of non-involvement, however, is unlikely to survive the present wave of structural change in Afghanistan and Arabia. As the old order begins to crumble in the greater Middle East, the question is no longer whether India should join the geopolitical jousting there; but when, how and in partnership with whom.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for [The Indian Express](#)

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FOR CHINA, MARITIME AWAKENING CAME IN LAST CENTURY. IN INDIA, IT IS LONG OVERDUE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

In the September 2020 edition of its annual report on China, the US Department of Defence (DoD) makes the stunning announcement that the PLA Navy (PLAN) is the largest in the world. With an overall battle-force of 350 ships and submarines, including 130 major surface combatants, PLAN has overtaken the US Navy, with its strength of 293 ships. China has never bothered to provide a rationale for its ever-increasing military muscle, and a bewildered neighbourhood wonders what it portends, especially in the light of its recent adventurism in the Himalayas.

The PLA Navy has not grown overnight, and remains the clearest manifestation of the grand-strategic vision of China's political leadership. Factors that bear on its growing strength may include China's 14,500 km littoral, which is more than double India's, its objective of "reunifying" Taiwan and its irredentist maritime claims, in the South and East China Seas. An expansionist state which seeks eventual parity with the US, China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative and the Maritime Silk Route also provide the perfect camouflage for its grandiose maritime strategy.

Opinion | [While seeking equilibrium with China, diplomatic adjustments through give-and-take must be explored](#)

India, on the other hand, remains a quintessential "status quo" power and has sought military force-levels adequate only to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Notwithstanding the low budgetary priority accorded to it, the Indian Navy (IN), has built itself into a modern and capable three-dimensional force, rated by other navies as professionally "up to NATO standards" and eagerly sought as a partner, both for exercises, and for maintaining "good order at sea."

Although technology and professional competence are the yardsticks for combat-effectiveness, numbers do matter, and with the IN at sixth or seventh in the international pecking order, there is obviously a significant disparity between the PLAN and IN. Given the growing gap between the two economies, it would be foolhardy for India to attempt an arms-race with China, but investing in maritime power would pay dividends in the long-run.

Faced with a difficult situation today, it is incumbent upon India, as a significant regional power and a democracy, to stand up to its hegemonic neighbour. Regardless of economic asymmetry, India does have the military capability to inflict unacceptable pain in retaliation for any Chinese adventurism; certainly in the mountains, but also at sea.

Opinion | [How India responds to China's 'expansionistic tendencies' will have ramifications for the world](#)

However, as the nation cheers the army's tactical moves in Ladakh, there are misgivings about a strategic void in New Delhi. In this context, the above US DoD report deserves close examination by our "decision-making elite" as well as military leadership; because it shows that politicians — as much in a democracy like the US, as in a totalitarian state like China — accord the highest importance to national security. It bears reflection as to why India has remained an exception to this rule.

The US Congress believes that effective strategy-making defines national interests, objectives, and policies, along with the defence capabilities (and budgetary support) necessary to deter threats. The process provides a shared vision for all agencies and a common playbook to react in times of crisis. Starting with the US National Security Strategy, to be rendered by the president, US Congress demands quadrennial reviews — matching the presidential tenure — by the Departments of Defence, State, Homeland Security and the Intelligence Community.

Where China is concerned, its political leadership has, since 1995, been issuing a defence white paper (DWP) every two years. The 11 DWPs issued so far — all public documents — clearly articulate China's vital interests as well as national security aims, objectives and challenges. Topics of discussion include force-levels and defence expenditure, the PLA's progressively changing roles and re-organisation as well as its newly inducted equipment and platforms.

While the US template may be an “overkill”, India has erred egregiously by its disregard for national security. No government has formulated a strategy or doctrine so far; nor has Parliament ever demanded a defence review or sought a white paper. As a direct consequence, “surprise” and “intelligence failure” have become a leitmotif in most of India's post-independence conflicts. Our defence-planning has remained ad-hoc and under-funded and every crisis evokes confused and fumbling responses, including panic arms purchases.

Opinion | [India's trade agreement with China was one-sided to begin with](#)

Another important lesson that emerges from the US DoD document relates to China's “maritime awakening” in the latter part of the last century. While the PLAN owes much to visionary Admiral Liu Huaqing, its commander during the 1980s, it could not have achieved its present status without the Communist Party providing steadfast political support. Every Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) from Deng Xiaoping onwards, has backed the phased growth of China's navy, from an inconsequential coastal-force, to a substantive blue-water navy. The CMC leadership having astutely grasped the reality that “maritime power” is much more than just a “fighting-navy”, China is, today, the world leader in ship-building and its merchant marine ranks No 1 in the world. It also fields the largest coast-guard that protects the world's biggest fishing fleet. Chinese ports rank amongst the best world-wide.

As we watch the situation in Ladakh unfold, it becomes increasingly obvious that not only is a military resolution improbable, but a “hot-war” may be unaffordable for both nuclear-armed countries. The answer lies in extended negotiations at the highest political and diplomatic levels. As the weaker power, India also needs to resort to “power-balancing” and seeking like-minded friends and partners to send out a message of deterrence. India's attraction as a partner for the US, Japan or Australia, lies, not in its powerful army or professional air force, but in its navy's reach and ability to project maritime power.

In the approaching era of fiscal stringency, a sharper focus on its neglected maritime domain would garner immense benefits for India, and not just in terms of enhanced maritime-security. Giving a boost to shipbuilding, expanding the merchant fleet, modernising ports and mechanising fisheries would have a long-term impact on the economy, through growth of ancillary industries, skilling of youth and massive generation of employment — all contributing to “Atma Nirbharta”.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 15, 2020 under the title ‘A Maritime Awakening’. The writer is a retired chief of naval staff

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U.S. WELCOMES INDIA'S ROLE IN AFGHAN PEACE TALKS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

"The two sides discussed future steps and possible cooperation between India and the U.S. in furthering the Afghan peace process," the sources said.

During the talks, both sides stressed on the need for regional support for the Afghan peace process, that could see the Taliban being brought into the political mainstream in Kabul, and on the importance of ending transnational terrorism from Afghan soil.

"The United States and India share the view that the peace process must continue until there is agreement on a political roadmap and a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire. The Afghan sides should ensure their territory must not be used by any terrorist group against any other country," said a statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Delhi.

On Saturday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke via video-conference at the inaugural session of the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN) in Doha, the first time that an Indian official has addressed a gathering that included the Taliban (which India has thus far considered a terror group). New Delhi also sent a high-level official delegation, led by the MEA point person for Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, J.P. Singh.

The MEA did not respond to a question on whether the Indian officials had met with Taliban representatives directly. However, a senior government official said that "by participating in IAN at Doha, India has already engaged all parties," signalling a major shift in Indian policy.

This was Mr. Khalilzad's 5th visit to New Delhi since he was appointed the U.S. Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation by U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018. In an interview to *The Hindu* in May 2020, Mr. Khalilzad had advocated an official India-Taliban engagement, saying it would be "appropriate" given India's importance in Afghanistan. However, the government had refused to comment on the statement then.

Mr. Khalilzad flew into New Delhi on a special plane on Tuesday directly from Pakistan. With the Intra-Afghan negotiations under way in Qatar, the U.S. Special Envoy is pushing for a ceasefire, and during his meetings with the Pakistani army Chief General Bajwa and Pakistan's special envoy on Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadiq, he reportedly asked for Pakistan's support in convincing the Taliban to commit to a reduction or cessation of violence.

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INDIA BEATS CHINA TO WIN CRUCIAL ELECTION TO UN COMMISSION ON WOMEN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes

UNITED NATIONS : In a significant victory, India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The 54-member ECOSOC, holding the first plenary meeting of its 2021 session in the General Assembly Hall on Monday, held elections for two seats in the Asia-Pacific States category with Afghanistan, India and China in the fray.

Afghanistan, which is led by Ambassador Adela Raz at the UN, garnered 39 votes and India got 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, got only 27 votes and could not even cross the half-way mark and also failed to get the required majority of 28 votes.

"India wins seat in prestigious #ECOSOC body! India elected Member of Commission on Status of Women #CSW. It's a ringing endorsement of our commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all our endeavours. We thank member states for their support," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti tweeted.

India beat China in the hotly-contested election to the prestigious UN body in the year when the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, that was held in Beijing in 1995, is being commemorated around the world.

It is highly notable and telling that China lost the election to the UN's principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment when the silver jubilee anniversary of the landmark Beijing conference on women is being commemorated and of which China takes a lot of ownership on.

The election result is being seen as sending a strong signal about China's own record of women's equality and empowerment.

India's Permanent Mission to the UN worked tirelessly for the hard-fought election, reaching out and sensitising all Member States, sources said.

India and Afghanistan will join Argentina, Austria, Dominican Republic, Israel, Latvia, Nigeria, Turkey and Zambia, which were elected by acclamation, to the Commission on the Status of Women for a four-year term beginning from 2021-2025.

India's election win at the CSW is highly significant as it comes on the eve of India gearing up to sit at the UN Security Council high table as non-permanent member for a two-year term

beginning January 1, 2021.

Former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women Lakshmi Puri congratulated the Indian Mission and Ambassador Tirumurti on the election win.

"Victory Earned! #CSW is an important normsetting organ for #Gender #Equality & #WomenEmpowerment & #India has made a significant contribution to evolving global women's human rights standards in UN including #SDG5 in Agenda 2030!," she tweeted, referring to the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The Commission on the Status of Women is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In 1996, ECOSOC expanded the Commission's mandate and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

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NICKS TO THE CHINESE STRONGMAN'S IMAGE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Domestic security constitutes an integral dimension within the strategic-security dynamics of states. However, for authoritarian regimes and political ideologies, where power flows from the barrel of the gun, the concept transcends this traditional role and becomes a tool of both political survival and power for the top leadership. As such, it becomes crucial for authoritarian leaders to exert absolute command over the domestic security apparatus of the state.

It is in this context that the recent downfall, in China, of top security officials on corruption charges and the creation of a new 'small leading group' assume significance. At the very outset, they reflect Chinese President Xi Jinping's perceived vulnerabilities and one of Beijing's primary socio-political dilemmas.

Comment | [The dimming of a Chinese strongman's aura](#)

In addition to sanctioning an aggressive foreign policy posture and military assertiveness in China's various sovereignty disputes, Mr. Xi announced his post-COVID-19 blitzkrieg at the domestic scene by once again launching an attack on the so-called 'tigers' through his anti-corruption campaign. Among others, one of the prominent officials facing corruption charges is the former Vice-Minister of Public Security, Sun Lijun. This makes Sun the third vice-ministerial level official belonging to China's Ministry of Public Security to have fallen in recent years since the arrests of Meng Hongwei and Li Dongsheng in 2018 and 2016, respectively. Notably, Meng was serving as the president of the Lyon-based Interpol at the time of his arrest.

In addition to his high-profile status, Sun's arrest is significant as he led the ministry's First Bureau which deals with the sensitive issues of domestic security and Hong Kong affairs. Other top security officials facing corruption charges are the police chiefs of major provinces such as Shanghai (Gong Daoan) and Chongqing (Deng Huilin).

The arrest of Deng Huilin once again highlights the challenge of Chongqing that Mr. Xi first dealt with in the form of the infamous Bo Xilai scandal which involved an alleged coup attempt against the Chinese President shortly after he had assumed office. Chongqing has become one of the primary targets of the anti-corruption campaign, with several high-ranking officials having fallen under the corruption net over the years.

Comment | [For China's Xi, the coronavirus challenge comes laden with economic costs and political risks](#)

The arrests of Meng, Sun and Deng follow Mr. Xi's struggles with the security establishment that began with the downfall of the former public security czar and Politburo Standing Committee member, Zhou Yongkang back in 2014. Though information remains sketchy, it is widely believed that Sun, Meng and Li were close to Zhou who himself was regarded as a prominent member of the 'Shanghai Clique'— the powerful faction of the Chinese Communist Party led by its patriarch and former President Jiang Zemin. Analysed from this perspective, Mr. Xi seems to continue to face challenges from the fragments of a faction that had once catapulted him to the helm of China's politics, but has since then become one of his primary targets in the quest for supremacy.

At one level, these cases serve to highlight the depth of the corruption malice within the Chinese Communist Party; they also point towards the ever-increasing efforts by Mr. Xi to exercise

absolute authority over China's domestic security apparatus; hence, they reveal a possible challenge facing his meticulously crafted and deftly marketed 'all powerful' image. In fact, as has been noted by prominent China watchers, a 2015 article (by Xinhua) listed the domestic security forces as one of the 12 most frequently used phrases by Mr. Xi during his first two years in office.

Also read | [The rise and rise of Xi Jinping](#)

Another move that underscores Mr. Xi's renewed efforts to control the domestic security machinery is the launch of a nationwide campaign to "rectify education" for politicians and law enforcement officials. The aim is to "scrape the poison of the bones" of the country's political and legal systems under the aegis of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLC), China's apex body dealing with law enforcement and public security. This campaign will run from next year to the first quarter of 2022. A pilot programme will be tried in select regions between July and October this year. Interestingly, 2022 is the year when the CPC is slated to hold its 20th Party Congress. This will perhaps be one of the most important political events in China's recent history as it will decide Mr. Xi's political fate and the continuation of his direct or indirect influence (via an all loyalist politburo) over the country. Additionally, the commission has announced plans to use technological advancements such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and big data to help monitor its police officers and judges.

In conjunction with this campaign, a new body called the Safe China Construction Coordinating Small Group has been established with the CPLC Secretary, Guo Shengkun, serving at its helm. This group has been tasked with tackling the emerging challenges to the country's social and political stability. It is worth noting that during a Politburo Standing Committee meeting in February, Mr. Xi had characterised the coronavirus pandemic as a major test for China's governance system, with implications for the country's social stability.

Also read | [Chinese Communist Party declares Xi 'core' leader: Xinhua](#)

In fact, these new measures have come amid growing international chorus against China's policies in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, the South China Sea, and in China's territorial dispute with India. On the domestic front, Mr. Xi has faced rare public criticism from individuals such as Xu Zhangrun, a (now former) professor at Tsinghua University (incidentally, the President's alma mater) and fellow 'princelings' or the "second generations reds" such as Ren Zhiqiang and Cai Xia. Confronted with an increasingly complex international and domestic scenario, it is no coincidence that Mr. Xi wants to keep a tight rein on the security establishment of the Chinese Party-state.

While these latest moves are to a great extent governed by Mr. Xi's assessment of China's (and his own) present vulnerabilities, they nevertheless complement his efforts since assuming power to bring the domestic security front under his supreme control. A key initiative in this regard was the restructuring of the People's Armed Police (PAP) command structure in 2017-18. Prior to 2018, the PAP had a dual command structure wherein it used to report both to the state Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC). With the restructuring, the PAP now operates under the sole command of the CMC, and thereby its Chairman, Mr. Xi. Furthermore, Mr. Xi has created at least two new institutions to streamline, better integrate and oversee China's domestic security apparatus in the form of the Central National Security Commission and the National Supervision Commission. These bodies were established in 2013 and 2018, respectively. However, not much information is available regarding the exact nature, role and activities of these institutions.

Also read | [Xi's obsession to look strong amid domestic discontent likely reasons for China's](#)

[rogue behaviour, say experts](#)

On closer scrutiny, the recent developments within China's domestic security landscape may not point towards a significant threat to Mr. Xi's authority. They nonetheless provide a glimpse into the existing fissures within the Chinese system.

Shikha Aggarwal is a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan Fellow at the National Chengchi University

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NEW ORDER IN WEST ASIA: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON ABRAHAM ACCORDS BETWEEN UAE, BAHRAIN AND ISRAEL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The so-called [Abraham Accords](#), signed in the White House on Tuesday by the UAE, Bahrain and Israel, under U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation, clearly mark a new beginning in the relations between the Sunni-ruled Gulf kingdoms and the Jewish state. Under the agreement, the UAE and Bahrain would normalise ties with Israel, heralding better economic, political and security engagement. More Arab countries are expected to follow suit, say U.S. and Israeli officials. The agreements have the backing of Saudi Arabia, arguably the most influential Arab power and a close ally of the UAE and Bahrain. The ailing, octogenarian ruler of the Kingdom, Salman bin Abdulaziz, is treading cautiously for now, but Riyadh has opened its airspace for commercial flights between the UAE and Israel. The accords, the first between Israel and Arab countries since the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty, also offer a rare diplomatic win to Mr. Trump, whose other foreign policy bets, be it Iran or North Korea, were either disastrous or stagnant. With less than 50 days to go before his re-election bid, he has called the agreements "the new dawn of a new Middle East".

Though of historical and geopolitical significance, it is too early to say whether the accords will have any meaningful impact on West Asia's myriad conflicts. Unlike Egypt and Jordan, which signed peace treaties with Israel in 1979 and 1994, respectively, the Gulf countries are not frontline states in the Arab-Israeli conflict. They had established backroom contacts with Israel years ago; what is happening now is their normalisation. Second, the [agreements leave the Palestinian question largely unaddressed](#). With Arab countries signing diplomatic agreements with Israel bilaterally, the Arab collective support for the Palestinian movement for nationhood, which has been the basis of the [2002 Arab Peace Initiative](#), is crumbling. But it does not mean that the Palestinian question would fade away. The vacuum left by the retreat of the Arab powers from the Israel-Palestine conflict is being filled by the non-Arab Muslim powers — Iran, Turkey and their allies. The geopolitical sands may be shifting but the core issue concerning Israel is unresolved. Three, the UAE-Bahrain agreements are in fact endorsing the region's emerging order. With the U.S. in retreat and Turkey and Iran pursuing more aggressive foreign policies, there is a three-way contest taking shape, in which Sunni-ruled Arab kingdoms, all American allies, are realigning their geopolitical interests with Israel. The Abraham Accords are likely to sharpen this contest. If Mr. Trump and the signatories to the accords want to bring peace here as they have claimed, they should address the more structural issues, which include the unresolved question of Palestine.

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U.S. KEEN ON FINALISING BECA AT 2+2 DIALOGUE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - USA

The U.S. is keen that India sign the last foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA), at the next India-U.S. 2+2 ministerial dialogue likely to be held in October end, a defence source said on Thursday.

A meeting of the Quad Foreign Ministers is scheduled to take place in Tokyo in October, the source said. Earlier, the meeting was expected to be held in New Delhi.

“The U.S. wants BECA to be signed at the ministerial 2+2 in October. Indian draft with our suggestions has been sent to them,” the source said stating negotiations are far from over and it is unlikely to be signed by October. The timing of the 2+2 comes just before the U.S. elections in November and there is still no clarity on the dates.

A maritime information agreement is also under active deliberation between India and the U.S., the source said. Once concluded, India will have such arrangements with all Quad countries — Australia, Japan and the U.S.

Beginning 2016, India has signed three foundational agreements: the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) while the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed a long time ago. An extension to the GSOMIA, the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), was signed at the last 2+2 dialogue.

There has been a sharp increase in India's maritime interactions with the Quad countries on a bilateral basis centred around information sharing for improved Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific.

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A PUSH FOR REFORM: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON UN REFORMS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

As the United Nations commences the 75th session of the General Assembly, the need for internal reforms to suit the 21st century could not be starker. Volkan Bozkir, the Turkish diplomat and politician who is the incoming president of the UNGA, has [voiced concern that the structure of the 15-member Security Council ought to be more democratic and representative](#). But action has been long overdue on the demand, especially from the so-called Group of 4 (G4) countries — Brazil, Germany, India and Japan — which advocate a permanent seat for all of them. Meanwhile, the veto powers that the UNSC's five permanent members enjoy is an anachronism in this age. This instrument is often wielded as a blunt weapon to shore up their geopolitical interests, regardless of the disastrous consequences for the victims of armed conflict. The push for reform gathered momentum following the unilateral declaration of war by the United States and the United Kingdom, against Iraq, in 2003. The General Assembly's 122nd plenary meeting in 2008 decided to facilitate the reform process through the Inter-Governmental Negotiations framework (IGN) on equitable representation as well as expansion of the UNSC. Though the General Assembly's adoption of a 2015 resolution to allow the IGN on the basis of a framework document generated some enthusiasm, it was dampened by the U.S., Russia and China being opposed to serious reform of the Council. The G4 bemoaned earlier this year that the IGN process might have outlived its purpose given the absence of a negotiating document which alone could provide a structure to the deliberations. In any case, the exercise has been deferred in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

India's election in June as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, obtaining 184 votes, was a diplomatic triumph, notwithstanding that it was the lone contestant for the Asia-Pacific seat. But in a sign of the difficulties ahead to achieve New Delhi's ultimate objective, reforms to the UN figured no more than as part of a broader vision in the declaration to commemorate the organisation's 75th anniversary. The political and economic architecture of the emerging global order that the allied powers shaped at the end of World War II has been altered since then. The UN remains unreflective of the current trajectory, especially in the strategic and economic arenas. The multilateral framework now faces an unprecedented challenge — to fashion a collective response to humanity's biggest problems, which include global warming and the pandemic. Paradoxically though, the post-war order faces an existential threat to its stability from the revival of nationalism across the globe, with some of the powers that enshrined common principles and rules willing to discard them. All countries must have the voice to influence policy.

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ANOTHER AFGHAN PEACE PUSH AND A ROLE FOR INDIA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Afghanistan

Last week, on September 12, the much awaited [intra-Afghan talks](#) between the Taliban and the Afghan High Council for National Reconciliation opened in Doha, Qatar, 19 years after the [9/11 attacks on the U.S.](#) that stunned the world and marked the [beginning of the U.S. war in Afghanistan](#) against al Qaeda and the Taliban, its local sponsors. The initiation of intra-Afghan talks was a key element in the [U.S.-Taliban peace deal signed in Doha](#) on February 29 between the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, and the Taliban deputy leader, Mullah Abdul Ghani Barader. Originally planned to begin on March 10, the process had to overcome many hurdles along the way providing a small glimpse of the difficult road that lies ahead.

The Trump administration soon realised that its 2017 policy of breaking the military stalemate by a small increase in U.S. troops was not working and reverted to seeking a managed exit. As the former Defence Secretary James Mattis put it, "The U.S. doesn't lose wars, it loses interest." Political optics demanded a relabelling of the withdrawal.

Comment | [The sum and substance of the Afghan deal](#)

Direct negotiations with the Taliban began two years ago with Ambassador Khalilzad's appointment as Special Envoy. Actually, it became a three-way negotiation. The Doha track was with the Taliban, a second track was with Islamabad/Rawalpindi to cajole the Pakistan Army to lean on the Taliban to get them to the negotiating table, and the third was with Kabul to ensure that the Afghan government would accept the Doha outcome.

Originally Ambassador Khalilzad had spelt out four objectives: an end to violence by declaring a ceasefire; an intra-Afghan dialogue for a lasting peace; the Taliban cutting ties with terrorist organisations such as al Qaeda, and U.S. troop withdrawal. Within months, the Taliban had whittled these down to just the last one with some palliatives regarding the third. Instead of an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled reconciliation, it had become a U.S.-led and Taliban-controlled process with nobody claiming ownership or responsibility. Timelines were fixed for the U.S. drawdown by mid-June (followed by complete withdrawal by April 2021) and for removal of Taliban from the UN Security Council sanctions list by end-May. The Taliban have released 1,000 members of Afghan security forces and the Afghan authorities have freed over 5,000 Taliban from their custody. This process took longer than originally foreseen but has now been completed. The two elements that remained open ended in the U.S.-Taliban deal are the ceasefire declaration and the intra-Afghan talks.

By end-June, the U.S. had reduced its troop presence to 8,600 as promised and in early September, Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Gen Kenneth McKenzie indicated that by November, the numbers would be down to 4,500. Despite two brief day truces in May and August for Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha, the levels of violence showed no respite.

Also read | [India's presence at talks with Taliban an important step, says Zalmay Khalilzad](#)

Speaking the Doha at the opening session, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council regretted that more than 12,000 Afghans had been killed and another 15,000 injured since end-February. The number of attacks on government security forces and installations averaged over

80 a week.

A [report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction \(SIGAR\)](#) issued in July covering the second quarter of 2020 assessed that “The Taliban is calibrating its use of violence to harass and undermine the ANDSF [Afghan National Defense and Security Forces] and [the Afghan government], but remain at a level it perceives is within the bounds of the agreement, probably to encourage a U.S. troop withdrawal and set favorable conditions for a post-withdrawal Afghanistan.” The report expressed scepticism about whether the Taliban had cut ties with al Qaeda and stated that “the Islamic State-Khorasan maintains the ability to conduct mass casualty attacks”. A [UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team report](#) concerning the Islamic State and al Qaeda (also issued in July) concluded that “Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent continues to operate under the Taliban umbrella in Nimroz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces” with reportedly 400-600 fighters in the country.

Perhaps nothing reflects the challenges facing the intra-Afghan negotiations more starkly than the title of the [U.S.-Taliban Doha deal](#) – “Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan Between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Which Is Not Recognized by the United States as a State and Is Known as the Taliban and the United States of America”. This awkward phrase is repeated more than a dozen times in the Agreement. The leader of the Haqqani Network, Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is also the second-in-command of the Taliban happens to be on the U.S. wanted list with a reward of \$10 million for information leading to his capture or death. All this is difficult to reconcile with the notion that the U.S. considers the Taliban a partner in counter-terrorism operations against the IS and other terrorist groups.

Editorial | [The cost of peace: on intra-Afghan talks](#)

In an op-ed in *The Washington Post* on August 14, [Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani wrote](#) that “the Afghan people want peace” and that is why the government “made the decision to take another risk for peace”. Calling on the Taliban to sit across from Afghan representatives to arrive at a political resolution, he added that “we acknowledge the Taliban as part of our reality” and urged that “the Taliban must, in turn, acknowledge the changed reality of today’s Afghanistan”.

The current reality is that 74% of Afghan population is below 30 and has lived, for most part, in a conservative but open society. However, the Taliban continue to maintain the Kabul administration as an imported western structure for continued American occupation. Senior members of the Afghan government continue to be targeted including Vice President Amrullah Saleh who narrowly escaped an IED attack on his motorcade on September 9, even as 10 innocent Afghans lost their lives.

Addressing the opening session of the Doha meeting, [India’s External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reiterated](#) that the peace process must be “Afghan led, Afghan owned and Afghan controlled” but Indian policy has evolved from its earlier hands-off approach to the Taliban. Speaking to Indian media a few months ago on separate occasions, both Ambassador Khalilzad and Russian Special Envoy to Afghanistan Ambassador Zamir Kabulov bluntly pointed out that if India had concerns regarding anti-India activities of terrorist groups, it must engage directly with the Taliban. In other words, if India wanted to be invited to the party, it must be prepared to get up and dance.

Also read | [Last Indian hostage returns from Afghanistan, as intra-Afghan talks with Taliban begin in Doha](#)

The reality is major powers have limited interests. For the U.S., the peace talks provide U.S. President Donald Trump an exit opportunity weeks before his re-election bid. The European

Union has made it clear that its financial contribution will depend on the security environment and the human rights record. China can always lean on Pakistan to preserve its security and connectivity interests. For Russia, blocking the drug supply and keeping its southern periphery secure from extremist influences is key. That is why no major power is taking ownership for the reconciliation talks, but merely content with being facilitators.

Also read | [U.S. welcomes India's role in Afghan talks](#)

A report issued last month by the Heart of Asia Society, a Kabul-based think tank observes that “the prospect for peace in Afghanistan depends on regional consensus to support the peace process as much as it depends on actual progress in the intra-Afghan talks”. India’s vision of a sovereign, united, stable, plural and democratic Afghanistan is one that is shared by a large constituency in Afghanistan, cutting across ethnic and provincial lines. A more active engagement will enable India to work with like-minded forces in the region to ensure that the vacuum created by the U.S. withdrawal does not lead to an unravelling of the gains registered during the last two decades.

Rakesh Sood is a former Ambassador to Afghanistan and currently Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

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INDIA HANDS OVER TWO MODERN TRAINS TO NEPAL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Nepal

KATHMANDU : India has handed over two modern trains to Nepal that would run between Jaynagar in Bihar and Kurtha in Dhanusa district from mid-December, marking the beginning of the first broad-gauge railway service in the Himalayan nation, officials said on Saturday.

The Konkan Railway delivered two modern Diesel-Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) trains to the Nepal Railway for Jaynagar-Kurtha broad gauge line on Friday. These trains are manufactured by Integrated Coach Factory, Chennai with modern amenities and latest AC-AC propulsion technology.

The Indian technicians and the Nepal Railway staff were welcomed at various locations when the trains arrived in the country from India on Friday. Thousands of people gathered to see the new trains despite the coronavirus pandemic that has killed 390 people and infected over 60,000 others in Nepal.

The train operations from Kurtha to Jaynagar, covering a distance of 35-km, will benefit citizens of both the countries, according to Indian Embassy sources.

The trial run of the new trains started from Friday on the broad gauge tracks whose construction was completed last year, according to Nepal Railway Company Director General Guru Bhattarai.

Since the border is unlikely to open soon due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the train services would not start immediately and the trains would be parked at the Nepal Railway Station in Jaynagar for the maintenance and safety, according to Senior Divisional Engineer Devendra Shah.

"The trains are expected to go into regular operation around the Ram-Janaki marriage ceremony in mid-December when the situation is likely to improve," said Nepal Railway Company Engineer Binod Ojha.

The Jaynagar-Kurtha rail line was originally built during the British Raj to transport logs from forests at Mahottari, Nepal to India.

At that time, the line from Jaynagar in Bihar to Bijulpura in Mahottari was 52 kms long.

The 69-km Jaynagar-Janakpur-Bardibas railway is being built at a cost of Rs10 billion with support from the Indian government.

According to the Nepali media reports, the railway track is being built in three phases. The 35-km-long first section of the rail line links Jaynagar and Kurtha in Mahottari district. The 17-km-long second section will link Kurtha and Bhangaha while the third phase is 17-km-long and will extend from Bhangaha to Bardibas.

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SEARCH FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN WILL NOT SUCCEED UNLESS ALL PARTIES RELINQUISH ENTRENCHED THINKING

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Afghanistan

The enormity of the challenges confronting intra-Afghan talks that commenced in Doha on August 12 can only be appreciated if they are placed in the context of the turmoil that has continued in Afghanistan for over four and a half decades. For the first time, far-reaching changes involving the polity are being attempted through dialogue without the gun being the sole arbiter.

The country has witnessed the overthrow of the monarchy, a nationalist dictatorship, communist rule, the mujahideen era, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate and the current Islamic Republic. It has also experienced almost three decades of the presence of foreign forces and outside interference, especially from Pakistan. The balance of Afghan society and polity, shaken in 1973 with the monarchy's departure, has never been restored. Instead, sharpening ethnic divides, extremist ideologies and theologies, large migration to foreign lands, internal displacement, spread of narcotics and violence have become endemic. At the same time, over the past 15 years, a section of Afghan urban youth linked to the world through the social media wants more open systems within an Islamic framework.

Negotiators representing the Taliban and the rest of the Afghan political establishment and their masters bear in large or small measure the psychological and, in some cases, physical scars of this painful history. Hence, the search for durable peace and stability will not succeed unless all parties and, in some cases their foreign patrons, especially Pakistan, are willing to substantially relinquish entrenched thinking. If they fail to do so, the talks will fail too. This may result in a collapse of existing political structures, splintering of the Afghan armed forces and higher levels of violence and criminality.

Opinion | [India should play an active role in articulating and promoting a peace process in Afghanistan](#)

As the talks begin, the Taliban is in a position of strength. If the Kabul-based Afghan political class had succeeded in consolidating the republic and had kept the Taliban confined to a small area, it would have had the upper hand. That has not been so. Indeed, the Taliban with Pakistani support has shown remarkable resilience and has gained great confidence. It has inflicted a strategic defeat on the world's pre-eminent power. To effectively tackle them, American troops would have had to enter Pakistan territory and carry out a sustained operation. That, none of the three presidents who had to deal with the Taliban after 9/11 were willing to do.

While the Taliban is largely cohesive, the Kabul political class is not. The 2019 presidential election was deeply flawed. The declaration of the incumbent president, Ashraf Ghani, as victor was dubious. Ghani was forced to accept his rival Dr Abdullah as the head of the Peace and Reconciliation Council, implying that he would have to share authority in decision-making in the peace negotiations. Also, other members of the Kabul team represent civil society and other political forces including the Hizb-e-Islami. This will give opportunities to the Taliban and others to create disunity in their ranks.

The most significant issue in these negotiations will relate to the nature of Islam in Afghanistan. The constitution of the Islamic Republic, adopted in 2004, begins with the Islamic shahada and

commits the state to the “Holy religion of Islam”. It also seeks to uphold the universal declaration of human rights. The Taliban accept Hanafi jurisprudence like the majority of Afghans but believe that the Islamic sharia in its extreme Deobandi interpretation along with distorted Pashtun social codes must be uncompromisingly followed. That manifests itself in the approach to other faiths, other Islamic mazhabs, gender issues, social conduct and apparel and even facial hair.

Opinion | [As it ponders talks with Taliban, Delhi should focus on complex geopolitics of the Pashtun lands](#)

It is almost impossible to predict how common ground can be found to accommodate fiercely held beliefs on all sides on the issues of religious interpretation and social codes. Goodwill among the negotiators and leaders buttressed with creative Islamic jurisprudence and scholarship would be needed. At the same time the Taliban leadership and Pakistan would be aware that despite its strategic defeat and desperation to withdraw, the US retains the capacity to deny them the fruits of “victory”. Also, the third decade of this century is not the last decade of the last millennium; the world has been transformed. To what extent will all this make the Taliban flexible is an imponderable. The Kabul elite would also have to make concessions on political issues and social codes.

However laudable it may be, it would be unrealistic to expect the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire though they may calibrate violence as the talks progress. The Taliban would fear that if cadres are not used, they may just fritter away. Also, Kabul would not take them seriously if it lost the ability to inflict damage. For the movement, power sharing, especially at the Centre, while significant, may not be as important as gaining charge of some provinces, a prospect Kabul will be chary about, irrespective of the facts on the ground.

At its core the Taliban is Pushtun. Its treatment of non-Pushtun Afghan ethnicities during its rule generated hatred and fear among them. Since then it has tried to put forward a pan-Afghan image and has succeeded in making some headway in a few non-Pushtun areas. However, old fears remain strong among many non-Pushtun especially in the cities. It will have to address these concerns.

Opinion | [US-Taliban deal puts the onus of ending the Afghanistan war on Asian forces](#)

How is India placed in Afghanistan as this dialogue begins? Clearly, Indian policy-makers refused to modify their Afghan approaches even as it became increasingly evident that the Taliban had gained ground in the country and was getting international legitimacy. Even while the Kabul authorities were trying to persuade the Taliban to the negotiating table, India continued to shun it. It saw the situation in black and white terms because of the Taliban connection and dependence on Pakistan. This resulted in India putting itself into a corner. It could have continued to strengthen its ties with Kabul and at the same time opened links with the Taliban. Diplomatic contradictions have to be managed. All other major powers were doing so. In India’s case, this was especially needed because the Taliban was signalling that it was not a Pakistani proxy. That assertion should have been tested.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar correctly emphasised that the talks should be Afghan owned and led. In addition, India should also stress that in the interests of Afghanistan and the region the talks must succeed, that their failure would be catastrophic for the Afghan people and the region. Finally, that India would continue with its traditional policy of fostering close ties with any legitimate Afghan government.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 21, 2020 under the title ‘The

opening in Doha'. The writer is former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan

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CHINA'S NATIONALIST TURN UNDER XI JINPING

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

As a reporter for The Hindu and then India Today from 2009 to 2018, Ananth Krishnan travelled the length and breadth of China. His new book, India's China Challenge: A Journey through China's Rise and What It Means for India, provides an on-the-ground perspective of China's political, economic and social transformations over the past decade, and what they mean for India. An excerpt:

Xi Jinping had to apply no less than eight times before getting into the Communist Youth League — an organisation for young Party members. He then had to again apply ten times before the Communist Party accepted him — all because of his family's history.

Comment | [The princeling from the grass roots](#)

Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, was [Red royalty](#) — a hero of the Communist revolution. But he would later fall out with Mao Zedong, and had to endure humiliating public 'struggle sessions' at the hands of Mao's Red Guards.

'Where is the verdict against my father?' Xi once asked. 'When a fault is committed, there is a verdict. But where is the one against my father? What have I done? Have I written or chanted counter-revolutionary slogans? I am a young man who wants to build a career. What is the problem with that?'

Yet the lesson Xi seems to have learnt from his father's story may seem counterintuitive. Institutionalising the exercise of political power is not seen as the answer to curbing its excesses. Wielding it is.

Also read | [The road from Yan'an](#)

Since [taking over as the General Secretary of the Party in November 2012](#), Xi has proved far more adept and skilful than his predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, in exercising power. Within five years of taking over from Hu, [Xi established himself in the Party lexicon as its third great leader](#), after Mao and Deng Xiaoping. In a short span of time, he has dismantled the collective leadership system that restrained both Jiang and Hu.

Indeed, it was this model of collective leadership put in place by Deng that arguably allowed China to escape the fate of other authoritarian countries ruled by the whims and fancies of a single dictator.

Xi has dramatically restructured the Party-state apparatus, giving the Party a greater say in running the country, and breaking down the walls between the Party set-up and the state machinery that had, in the past, given China's bureaucrats a veneer of insulation in running government and policy.

Now, the Party is back. This has reversed a two-decade-long shift that saw a somewhat diminished role for Party bodies. Xi has centralised power by setting up a number of Leading Small Groups (LSGs) that now decide policy on everything from national security to economic reforms. Xi heads the LSG for comprehensively deepening reform, which is now the most important body in setting policy, as well as LSGs for national defence and internet security.

This extends to foreign policy as well. Xi even heads an LSG on matters related to the South China Sea, underlining how he is now dictating policy directly on matters previously handled by the bureaucrats. If in the past questions were being asked on whether Chinese moves on the border — such as an incursion that took the spotlight away from [Xi's 2014 visit to India](#) — were being directed by PLA commanders and not the leadership in Beijing, the evidence now strongly suggests nothing happens today without Xi's approval. That likely includes this summer's [massive mobilisation by the Chinese military](#) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

Also read | [The rise and rise of Xi Jinping](#)

What explains Xi's rise, and how was he able to grab power and redefine China's political landscape? For one, Xi knows the ins-and-outs of the Party like few others. He was born Red. Like other [princelings](#), Xi grew up in the heart of Beijing, in the elite compounds reserved for top leaders.

With his father's purge, he was sent away from this privileged upbringing to a world that was unrecognizable – a small, dusty village called Liangjiahe in northwestern Shaanxi. Xi Zhongxun was a Shaanxi native, but the younger Xi was a Beijing boy.

In Liangjiahe, he learnt both hardship and the ruthlessness of politics. A few years ago, I followed the road to Liangjiahe that young Xi would have taken. Today, it's National Highway 211, a wide expressway full of trucks, and it runs from the old communist base of Yan'an, which is now the centre of the oil industry in Shaanxi.

The highway takes you through cornfields, winding through red loess mountains and past small villages. Liangjiahe is located in a narrow valley sandwiched between sandstone-coloured mountains. Its residents live, as they did four decades ago, in cave homes that have been carved out of the hills. They make a living tending the cornfields. The only major difference, forty years after Xi's time there, is that there are no young hands in sight – only farmers in their sixties and seventies, who watch over the fields, while their children are away working in the booming urban centres of Xian and Yan'an.

The few villagers I spoke to recalled Xi's time in Liangjiahe and Yan'an fondly. 'He was like any one of us,' said one lady in her eighties. 'He could eat bitterness,' she said, using a very popular phrase – chi ku, meaning 'eating the bitter' – that describes the tolerance Chinese people have for hardship.

It's been mostly forgotten that the year of Xi's ascension, 2012, was an extraordinarily tumultuous one in Chinese politics. The [Bo Xilai scandal](#) had exposed a split in the leadership, while there were grumblings among the Party elite that Hu Jintao's staid style had led to a drift, both in policy and leadership. There was a yearning for change.

Xi made the most of it. In one sense, as the scholar Cheng Li argues, Xi was 'lucky enough to arrive at just the moment in history when his consolidation of power — to upset the inertia and possibly even prevent a split of the CPC leadership — was appealing to the Chinese public and most other Chinese leaders'.

Comment | [Nicks to the Chinese strongman's image](#)

What helped him in this quest was his 'assembly of strong loyalist networks' in the Party, particularly among his fellow '[second Red generation](#)', or [Hongerdai](#). This gave Xi the space to carry out 'bold political moves...endorsed by the political establishment, but only as urgent, ad hoc measures to safeguard Communist Party rule.'

Xi was the right man, at the right place, at the right time, Zhang Lifan, a historian and follower of elite Party politics who lives in Beijing, told me. Zhang outlined how Xi was able to skilfully master the system. 'Before he came to power, there were many negative feelings about the collective leadership system inside the Party. Every member of the Politburo Standing Committee had their own power, their own opinion, and no one was taking responsibility. They wanted a strongman to take charge and change this situation.' They perhaps got more than they bargained for.

If Xi's accumulation of power was seen by many in the Party as necessary to counter growing challenges, in Zhang's view the solution to the problem may itself pose the biggest risk. Leaving aside the question of political succession, which had been given some stability through the collective leadership model and through the imposition of term limits – both of which have been consigned to the dustbin of Chinese politics by Xi – there is now the problem of personal accountability.

This is something Xi will be acutely aware of at a time of unprecedented threats facing the Party at the helm - both at home, where it is confronting a slowing economy and numerous challenges after the pandemic, and abroad, where it is dealing with multiple challenges, from tensions with America to the crisis on the India border.

'The consequence of centralization is that all responsibilities fall on you too,' Zhang told me. 'If you do well, everyone will support you.' However, the reverse, of course, is also true. Fall at any of the hurdles, and there will be no shortage of people ensuring there is no second chance. And in China's system, failure is unforgiving. Ask Bo Xilai.

Xi knows he has to succeed at any cost. The Chinese legal scholar Jiang Shigong, who has emerged as one of the influential intellectuals in the Xi era, argues one key asset in Xi's favour is the Party's turn to nationalism, captured in Xi's signature political campaign, which is '[The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation](#)'. Jiang says this is why the Party has declared the start of a 'new era' under Xi, which he sees as the fourth phase of the Communist Party's evolution.

The first was the twenty-eight-year period as a revolutionary party until the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The second phase was from 1949 until 1978, which he rather generously describes as the period of 'standing up' – despite the calamitous Maoist turmoil – leading to the period of 'getting rich', which marked the start of the third phase of the reform era. Now, Jiang says, is the transition from 'getting rich' to 'becoming powerful', a phase he expects to last until the 100-year anniversary of the PRC in 2049. This is by when, according to Xi, China would have accomplished its 'Great Rejuvenation', including establishing what the president calls a 'world-class' military force.

Comment | [The dimming of a Chinese strongman's aura](#)

In Jiang's view, the Party under Xi is turning to 'the brilliant political imagination of thousands of years of Chinese civilisation [to] successfully fill the spiritual vacuum left by the weakening of the Communist vision', something he blames on Xi's predecessors.

A sense of 'national self-confidence and feeling of pride' are the Party's biggest asset, in his view, which would lead Xi to adopt a strong nationalist governing philosophy. This explains why Xi's first big campaign was selling the 'Chinese Dream' of rejuvenation.

One compelling reason for Xi's emphasis on ideology and nationalism is the awareness that the basic post-Tiananmen compact has a shelf life. The Party is turning to nationalism as an important source of legitimacy and unity, having come to one key realisation: economic growth

cannot forever remain the source of its legitimacy.

Excerpted with permission from HarperCollins. The book will be published on September 30

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CURRENT POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESTRUCTURE INDIA'S TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO THE UN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

This week ought to have been a moment of celebration for the United Nations — [the 75th anniversary of its founding](#). But the [pandemic](#) has robbed the UN of all cheer. In a normal September, world leaders would be zipping through New York city creating innumerable traffic jams and running into each other in the UN lobby.

Thanks to the corona crisis, hardly any president or prime minister is showing up this year in New York, which is also one of the worst-affected cities in the United States. Even President Donald Trump, a native of New York, is not travelling in from nearby Washington. He will address the UN, like many other world leaders including Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), through pre-recorded video statements.

The missing buzz at the UN is arguably less important than the fact that the [coronavirus](#) has exposed the structural weakness of the system that was set up amidst the ruins of the Second World War. Put simply, the UN has been unable to respond effectively to the once-in-a-century global crisis triggered by the coronavirus.

At the UN Security Council, China blocked a serious discussion on the origin and sources of the crisis. While the World Health Organisation did move a bit in that direction, the US was not satisfied with the outcome and walked out of the forum.

Those who view the UN through the realist prism are not surprised. If you cut through the collectivist rhetoric of the UN, it was meant, by design, to be a concert of great powers who had a permanent seat in the Security Council. In other words, cooperation among the great powers was the precondition for its success in the security arena.

Barring a brief decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, collective security has been hard to come by. During the Cold War, Washington and Moscow were at each other's throats and the UNSC was deadlocked. During the brief unipolar moment of the 1990s, post-Soviet Russia was willing to acquiesce to the sweeping US agenda for global security. China, which was getting its internal act together after the Tiananmen uprising of 1989, was feeling its way around multilateral institutions and avoided any challenge to the US and West.

Opinion | [When India challenged the UN Charter](#)

All that began to change in the first decade of the millennium, when Russia and China began to offer resistance to US dominance. By the dawn of the third decade, the conflict between the US on the one hand and China and Russia on the other has become full-blown. To make matters more complicated, the West itself is divided. Despite the enduring post-War alliances, there is a growing divergence between Washington and its European partners on many global issues.

Some of the differences between the US and the other powers will be very visible this week on the Iran question. Although he has walked out of the nuclear deal with Iran, Trump wants to continue the UN sanctions on Iran. Other powers, including the US's allies in Europe, are not willing to follow the American lead on this.

The discord between the US and its European partners underlines the problem with viewing the world through the traditional East-West prism. Nor is it useful to think of the debates in the UN as a contest between the US and the rest. The US has never been more divided within itself on global issues as it is today. Rejection of post-War multilateralism and post-Cold War globalism is at the heart of Trump's "America First" foreign policy. Trump's Democratic rival in this year's presidential election, Joe Biden, wants to put multilateralism at the very heart of his administration's foreign policy. If Trump argues that multilateral institutions have not served America's interests, Biden insists that multilateralism is the most sensible means to pursue US interests. Biden has promised to re-join the nuclear agreement with Iran, albeit with new conditions, put the US back in the global coalition to limit climate change, and return to the WHO.

If you are a pessimist, the current political fragmentation augurs poorly for India's two-year tenure at the UNSC starting next January. If you are an optimist, this is an opportunity to restructure India's traditional approach to the UN. And if you are an activist, there are huge possibilities for enhancing India's multilateral standing.

To succeed, though, Delhi must come to terms with a number of propositions. First, it should shed the illusion, cultivated since the 50th anniversary of the UN in 1995, that the expansion of the permanent membership of UNSC, with or without veto, is within reach. UNSC reform is unlikely to happen soon.

Second, India's own experience during the Cold War points to the fact that the UN is a lot more than the Security Council. While the UNSC was dysfunctional, India developed a multilateral agenda of its own — from decolonisation and disarmament to a new international economic order — and mobilised considerable political support for it. Not all of India's efforts were successful during the Cold war, but the past underlines the possibilities for shaping the global discourse in the present.

Opinion | [Pandemic accentuates challenges to global order. New framework is needed, India must be rule-shaper](#)

Third, while promoting big ideas is exciting, Delhi can't lose sight of the basic relationship between national interest and multilateralism. The primary objective of India's present multilateralism must be to ensure its territorial integrity, especially at a time when China and Pakistan have mounted a massive effort to internationalise the Kashmir question.

The question is not merely about playing defence, but also leveraging multilateralism to serve India's interests. In the last few years, Delhi has worked mechanisms like FATF to mount pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting cross-border terrorism in India.

On both the issues of terrorism and Kashmir, China, once viewed as India's natural partner in the multilateral arena, has turned out to be the problem. The US and the West, traditionally viewed as part of the problem, are now helping India fend off the security challenges in the multilateral arena.

Fourth, beyond the issues of peace, there is the big challenge of protecting India's prosperity amidst the unfolding economic, technological and environmental disruptions. The rules governing all these areas are now up for a significant overhaul. As India learnt from its 1970s experience with the nuclear non-proliferation regime, once the rules are set, it is rather hard to change them.

Fifth, in writing the new rules and reshaping the global order, India needs to strengthen its recent

turn to a more dynamic coalition building. While reclaiming its role in the Non-Aligned Movement, Delhi has also joined the European alliance for multilateralism. India also knows that much of the new rule-making is likely to take place outside the UN. That is where India's new engagement with the US on building like-minded coalitions acquires much significance.

Finally, Delhi can't hope to expand its international influence on the cheap. India's share in the UN [budget](#) stands at 0.7 per cent. The shares of China, Japan and the US are at 8, 10 and 22 per cent respectively. Raising Delhi's contribution to at least one per cent might convince its partners that India is serious about pursuing a more vigorous multilateralism.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 22, 2020 under the title 'UN and the new multilateralism'.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for [The Indian Express](#)

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INTERPRETING THE INDIA-CHINA CONVERSATIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The ground situation in Eastern Ladakh shows little change; other than that, towards the end of August, [India effectively thwarted an attempt by China](#) to alter the *status quo* and take control of areas on the South Bank of the Pangong Tso. China's reaction was sharp, [accusing the Indian Army of having "undermined the consensus reached"](#) at the diplomatic and military talks. Several thousand troops of the People's Liberation Army, in the meantime, [remain mobilised across the entire region](#).

In the first statement made in Parliament (on September 15) on the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, [Defence Minister Rajnath Singh](#) lambasted China, stating that China was attempting to unilaterally alter the *status quo*, and that while India wanted to peacefully resolve the ongoing military confrontation, it was fully prepared to deal with any situation. [China immediately rebutted the charge](#), blaming India for "violating" existing border agreements, and alleging that India bore responsibility for the recent situation. China observed that the most important task for India is to disengage on the ground as soon as possible, and take concrete action to ease the situation.

Earlier, on the sidelines of the Russia, India, China Trilateral meeting (RIC) in Moscow in early September, the Indian and Chinese Defence and Foreign Ministers had met to try and sort out matters. Mr. Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart, Gen. Wei Fenghe [on September 4](#), while the Indian and Chinese Foreign Ministers (S. Jaishankar-Wang Yi) [held a meeting on September 10](#). Given the precarious military situation in Eastern Ladakh, both meetings had been invested with considerable significance.

According to reports, Mr. Rajnath Singh, in his meeting, did not mince matters, putting the blame entirely on the PLA for its "aggressive actions and behaviour" in seeking to "unilaterally alter the status quo" in violation of all bilateral agreements. According to Xinhua, Gen. Wei is believed to have said "China's territory cannot be lost and the Chinese military is fully determined, capable and confident to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity". The blunt exchanges between the Defence Ministers did little to assuage ongoing concerns.

There was considerably great anticipation about a possible breakthrough during the September 10 meeting. On the eve of the talks, India's External Affairs Minister had even been quoted as saying that the situation called for "deep conversation between the two sides at the political level", and India and China "needed to find an accommodation".

What emerged from the talks, however, fell well short of expectations. Some preferred to see in the outcome an illusion of forward movement where none existed. [The 'Five Point Consensus'](#) limited itself to urging the two sides to take guidance from "the consensus of their leaders on developing India-China relations, including not allowing differences to become disputes". The remaining points were confined to urging both sides to abide by all existing agreements and protocols on China-India boundary affairs and maintain peace and tranquillity; avoid any action that could escalate matters; reiterated the importance of the Special Representative Mechanism to maintain communications; and calling for the continuance of meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). Work to conclude new Confidence-Building Measures to maintain and enhance border peace and tranquillity were shelved, to be considered after the situation eases. Neither the Joint Statement, (nor the respective notes issued subsequently) specifically or obliquely mentioned a return to "the status quo" or to positions prior to the stand-off.

Confirmation of the wide divergence in views existing between the two sides were to be found in the contents of the separate notes circulated by the two sides following the meeting. China, for instance, claimed that the Indian side “does not consider relations to be dependent on the settlement of the boundary question”. This, according to the Indian side, was very different from what the Indian External Affairs Minister had said at the meeting. The Chinese side was again dismissive of the tensions prevailing in India, claiming that the “Indian side believes that China’s policy towards India has not changed”. It, thereafter, goes on to pontificate that what China and India need now is cooperation not confrontation, mutual trust and not suspicion. It is evident that for China, despite all that had happened, and the ongoing tensions, it was “business as usual”, ignoring the huge trust deficit that existed between the two countries.

It is tempting to view the Jaishankar-Wang Yi interaction, as reflecting implicitly the contrasting strategic thought processes that are to be found in Kautilya’s Arthashastra and Sun Tzu’s The Art of War. The two Foreign Ministers seem — separately and in their own way — to reflect the influence exerted on their thinking by these two texts; on how to deal with paradoxes and on the prosecution of seemingly contradictory approaches to ensure success. While restraint and moderation, as well as a balanced attitude to the use of force, are recurring themes in both texts, there are clear divergences when it comes to methodologies to be employed. For Sun Tzu, strategic positioning is critical to obtain a strategic advantage. All warfare, according to Sun Tzu is based on deception, and deceiving the opponent. While Kautilya emphasises the significance of both power and morality, Sun Tzu seeks to subdue the enemy without fighting and resorting to attacking the enemy’s strategy as the best option. For generations, China’s leaders have imbibed and adhered to Sun Tzu’s maxims, and Wang Yi seemed to have employed this tactic.

Also read: [India, China begin military talks to end Ladakh standoff](#)

In the extant circumstances, the dilemma that India’s External Affairs Minister probably faced was how best to achieve a *modus vivendi*, without compromising India’s position and foreclosing all options with China, short of war. Unlike his opposite number, Mr. Jaishankar was possibly a prisoner of a separate set of beliefs, for in his own words, the challenge India faced is to “manage a more powerful neighbour while ensuring its own rise”. To him, the bottom line for the relationship seemed clear: peace and tranquillity must prevail on the border, if progress made in the last three decades was not to be jeopardised. One could well ponder over the fact whether this dictated his approach during the two-hour-long discussion with his Chinese counterpart, in which the most conspicuous omission was the lack of any mention of restoration of the status quo as of April, as the starting point for any new round of diplomatic negotiations.

Understanding Chinese motives are difficult at any time. At present under Chinese President Xi Jinping, it has become still more convoluted. Driven by his notion of the “Community with a shared future for Mankind” Mr. Xi’s, and Chinese intent today, is to achieve great power status, and still more to ensure acknowledgement of its status by other countries. Unstated, but obvious, is that countries such as India should accommodate China’s rise, and not cavil at this or pose a challenge to it.

Increasing resort to confrontational politics, in substance as well as in style, aggravates this situation further. Combined with constant references to superior capabilities, it creates a psychological impact on China’s thinking, *viz.*, an exaggerated respect for their own strengths — including military — and a willingness to go to any extent to ensure its self-respect. Defusing tensions demands patient diplomacy, but it is not a character trait that Mr. Xi demonstrates. Even less, he shows a willingness to moderate ambition or take a step backward.

India needs a carefully drawn-up plan as also an effective strategy to deny Beijing its immediate objectives, including its determination to establish regional dominance. In this context, India

must reach out to its neighbours, and even countries beyond, warning them about falling into the trap of allowing alluring prospects of both economic cooperation and military support for the maintenance of peace, to cloud their thinking. It might well be the case that the current regime in China may be manufacturing crises to play to a domestic audience, in part due to economic compulsions, but India must be on its guard. For this purpose, India must be prepared militarily and otherwise to keep a check on China's burgeoning ambitions. It also needs to take care to see that China does not exploit the present pandemic to deepen its influence in India's neighbourhood, as is patently evident from reports of China's plans to provide access to China's [coronavirus](#) vaccine to several countries of Asia and Africa.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

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INDIA AND THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed display their copies of signed agreements while U.S. President Donald Trump looks on as they participate in the signing ceremony of the Abraham Accords, on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, U.S., September 15, 2020. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

The [White House ceremony on September 15](#) marking the formal [normalisation of Israel's ties with the United Arab Emirates](#) (UAE) and [the Kingdom of Bahrain](#) has created a significant inflection point in regional history and geopolitics. Indeed, it helped ring in the Jewish new year (Rosh Hashanah 5781) last weekend with some extra cheers!

The two Gulf states have, thus, joined Egypt and Jordan which had their peace treaties with Israel in 1979 and 1994, respectively. Still, several nuances make the September 15 reconciliation different. For one, the UAE and Bahrain do not have any territorial dispute with Israel, nor have they ever been at war with it. Although formally committed to an Arab consensus over a two-state resolution of the Palestine cause, these two countries have steadily, albeit furtively, moved towards having substantive links with Israel in recent years. Hence, the 'Abraham Accords' entered with the UAE and Bahrain are 'peace-for-peace' deals without any physical quid pro quo by Israel. Multiple drivers are likely to spur the two new friendships to grow faster and deeper than the 'cold peace' Israel has had with its two Arab neighbours. Externally, Israel, the UAE and Bahrain share the common threat perception of Iran against the backdrop of the ongoing diminution of Pax Americana in the region. Internally, while all three have their respective hotheads opposing this reconciliation, these seem manageable. They are relatively more modern societies which share the overarching and immediate priority of post-pandemic economic resuscitation. They have lost no time to set up logistics such as Internet connectivity and direct flights to pave the way for more active economic engagement. If these sinews evolve, other moderate Arab countries are likely to join the Israel fan club.

Also read: [The Hindu Explains: Why has UAE signed a peace deal with Israel?](#)

Israel's detente with Egypt and Jordan did not have any major impact on India as our ties with them were relatively insignificant. However, now India has stronger, multifaceted and growing socioeconomic engagements with Israel and the Gulf countries. With over eight million Indian diaspora in the Gulf remitting annually nearly \$50 billion, annual merchandise trade of over \$150 billion, sourcing of nearly two-thirds of India's hydrocarbon imports, major investments, etc., it is natural to ask how the new regional dynamic would affect India.

Geopolitically, [India has welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations](#) between the UAE and Israel, calling both its strategic partners. In general, the Israel-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) breakthrough widens the moderate constituency for peaceful resolution of the Palestine dispute, easing India's diplomatic balancing act. However, nothing in West Asia is monochromatic: The Israel-GCC ties may provoke new polarisations between the Jihadi fringe and the mainstream. The possibility of the southern Gulf becoming the new arena of the proxy war between Iran and Israel cannot be ruled out, particularly in Shia pockets. India would have to be on its guard to monitor and even pre-empt any threat to its interests in the Gulf.

Also read: [UN chief welcomes Israel, UAE agreement](#)

Even more important for India is to manage the economic fallout of the Israel-GCC synergy. With defence and security cooperation as a strong impetus, both sides are ready to realise the full potential of their economic complementarity. The UAE and Bahrain can become the entrepôts to Israeli exports of goods and services to diverse geographies. Israel has niche strengths in defence, security and surveillance equipment, arid farming, solar power, horticultural products, high-tech, gem and jewellery, and pharmaceuticals. Tourism, real estate and financial service sectors on both sides have suffered due to the pandemic and hope for a positive spin-off from the peer-to-peer interactions. Further, Israel has the potential to supply skilled and semi-skilled manpower to the GCC states, particularly from the Sephardim and Mizrahim ethnicities, many of whom speak Arabic. Even the Israeli Arabs may find career opportunities to bridge the cultural divide. Israel is known as the start-up nation and its stakeholders could easily fit in the various duty-free incubators in the UAE.

Israeli foray into the Gulf has the potential to disrupt the existing politico-economic architecture India has carefully built with the GCC states. India has acquired a large and rewarding regional footprint, particularly as the preferred source of manpower, food products, pharmaceuticals, gem and jewellery, light engineering items, etc. Indians are also the biggest stakeholders in Dubai's real estate, tourism and Free Economic Zones. In the evolving scenario, there may be scope for a profitable trilateral synergy, but India cannot take its preponderance as a given. It needs to keep its powder as dry as the shifting sands of the Empty Quarter.

Mahesh Sachdev, a former Indian Ambassador, is President, Eco-Diplomacy and Strategies, New Delhi

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THE CHINA-INDIA-US TRIANGLE: CHANGING BALANCE OF POWER AND A NEW COLD WAR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

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China's ascent to great power status during the last 30 years has altered the power equation that had existed in the 1990s between China and India and China and the United States (US). In 1990, China's GDP of US\$ 360 billion was roughly equivalent to that of India's; today, it is some five times larger at \$14-plus trillion. With respect to the United States, China's GDP in 1990 was 20 times smaller, whereas today that gap stands narrowed to 1.5 times smaller.¹ The remarkable increase in the size of China's economy enabled it to step up allocations for its armed forces and enhance their technological capabilities. At an estimated US\$ 266.5 billion, China's defence expenditure is some four times larger than India's and nearly a third of America's. This has enabled the People's Liberation Army-Army (PLA Army) to embark upon a sustained modernisation programme aimed at transforming itself into a "modern, mobile, and lethal ground force"; the PLA Navy to emerge as the largest in the world with 350 ships and submarines; and the PLA Air Force to field some 2,000 combat aircraft, increase the number of 4th generation aircraft in its inventory, and recently test fly a new fifth-generation stealth fighter.²

This alteration in the power equation has pushed China's relationships with India and the United States into a state of disequilibrium. In international politics, where there is no world government and international law and institutions are like cobwebs at the mouth of a cannon, it is the relative power between any two states that determines the type and pattern of their relationship. China is no longer interested in maintaining the previous patterns of its relationships with India and the United States, which were forged when China's power was more or less equal to that of India's and greatly inferior to that of the United States. Instead, China wishes to forge, peacefully if possible and by force if necessary, new types of relationships with India and the United States that are reflective of the extant balance of power.

In the wake of the power gap that has yawned between China and India during the last decade or so, China is keen to transform the erstwhile co-equal relationship into a hierarchical one. Whereas China's objective until recently was to tie India down within South Asia through support for Pakistan, it is now determined to supplant India as the leading power in the Indian subcontinent as well as become a predominant power in the Indian Ocean Region. Evidence in this regard include:

Given its emergence as a rich and strong country with vital interests spanning the globe, China expects India to demonstrate awed subservience by accepting China's emergence as the leading power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, embracing and benefiting from Chinese geopolitical projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, and refraining from security cooperation with the United States. In effect, China would prefer India adopting a policy of short-term appeasement and long-term bandwagoning.

With respect to the United States, the changed power equation has led China to articulate the need for a new type of great power relations entailing respect for the other state's core interests in its home region: China respecting American interests in the Americas and the Eastern Pacific, and the United States respecting Chinese interests in the Western Pacific and Asia. In effect,

China would refrain from intervening in the Americas and the Eastern Pacific in return for America abandoning its security commitments to East and Southeast Asian countries as well as accepting Chinese sovereignty over some 80 per cent of the South China Sea. In other words, in return for China acknowledging American primacy in the Western Hemisphere and Eastern Pacific, the United States should concede to China a sphere of influence in the Asia-Pacific, which, in the words of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, “has been the home and root of the Chinese nation for thousands of years.”⁴

With a view to generate broader diplomatic support for building such a sphere of influence as well as to couch China’s quest for Asian hegemony, President Xi Jinping had issued the call of “Asia for Asians” early in his term, which envisages the people of Asia themselves running the continent’s affairs, solving its problems and upholding Asian security.⁵ Finally, to ensure that America is discouraged from even contemplating a military intervention in Asian contingencies, such as China’s conquest of Taiwan, China has developed the Anti-Access Area Denial strategy based on a network of missiles, sensors, and guidance technologies.

The net effect of America withdrawing East of Guam and India accepting Chinese leadership in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region would be Chinese hegemony in the region stretching between the Western Pacific and the eastern seaboard of Africa, i.e., the Indo-Pacific – a term that China ironically opposes, viewing it as a geopolitical construct aimed at containing Chinese power and influence. If Russia were to concede politico-military leadership in Central Asia to China, which appears probable given the growing power asymmetry between the two countries, then Chinese hegemony would descend upon both continental Eurasia and maritime Indo-Pacific.

India and America are, however, not willing to accept a redefinition of their relationships with China entailing the abandonment of their respective long-held national interests. The international political system does not have a legal or institutional mechanism to effect such a redefinition of inter-state relations in tandem with changes in the balance of power between them. Such redefinitions, when not voluntary, are brought about through victory and defeat in war – the final argument of kings. War is, however, not a rational, cost-effective means to settle disputes between nuclear weapon states because nuclear weapons have, as Martin van Creveld observed, severed the link between victory and self-preservation.

What does this stalemate mean for India-China and China-United States relations and more broadly to the Asian international order? The only historical experience we have in this regard is the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. That conflict ended when the Soviet leadership realised the relative inferiority of its politico-economic system in mobilising moral and material resources for the global ideological-cum-power struggle. A new Cold War may be said to be emerging between China and the United States driven by the irreconcilable interests detailed above.

Over the last 10 years or so, America has been gearing itself up to tackle the China challenge. It has rebalanced the military posture towards the Indo-Pacific, reaffirmed security commitments to Asian allies, forged new strategic partnerships including with India, Indonesia and Vietnam, declared its intent to preserve freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea and the airspace above it, recognised China as a great power rival that poses a geopolitical challenge to its interests and an ideological challenge to its values, and, in the wake of the COVID pandemic, America has initiated measures to decouple its economy from the Chinese economy thereby reducing dependence and vulnerability.

Some sections of Indian political and intellectual opinion warn against India taking sides in this new Cold War. They advocate the virtues of nonalignment and highlight the wisdom of reprising

another version of the policy. What they overlook, however, is the fact that one of the adversaries in the new Cold War, namely, China, is a neighbour that has been in occupation of Indian territory for 50-plus years, lays claim to other large portions of Indian territory, and whose expanding power and influence in the neighbourhood threatens India's security, interests and influence. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, the progenitor of nonalignment, came to understand this when he declared after the 1962 War that there is no nonalignment vis-à-vis China. Not only did Nehru seek American military aid during that war, but subsequently came to view the Soviet Union as India's second front and India as the Soviet Union's second front in the event of either country finding itself at war with China. Within a decade of his statements, India entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union in order to constrain China from intervening in the 1971 India-Pakistan War.

With Russia viewing China as a partner and therefore likely to at best exert friendly persuasion on China to refrain from an open conflict with India, it is but inevitable that India is forging security cooperation with the United States and its Asian allies so as to be in a better position to deal with the challenges posed by China. China's brazen and unprovoked military occupation of territory along the border with India since April is likely to accelerate such cooperation as well as initiate the process of decoupling the Indian from the Chinese economy.

To sum up, the change in the balance of power between India and China has introduced a disequilibrium in India-China relations. The series of crises since 2013 is a result of this disequilibrium. More such crises are likely to arise not only over the boundary issue but also over China's and India's conflicting interests in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. In a similar vein, when China's power becomes equal to or surpasses that of America during the course of the 2020s, Sino-American relations are likely to be buffeted by crises in the East and South China Seas and the Western Pacific. The rival actions and reactions of China, India and the United States – the three main actors in the Indo-Pacific – are likely to determine the pattern of the new Cold War. The key to success in this power struggle would be a strategy that mobilises national resources, fosters diplomatic and military coordination, and rallies international opinion against China's pursuit of socialist imperialism.

Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Manohar Parrikar IDSA or of the Government of India.

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CHINA, INDIA AGREE TO STOP SENDING TROOPS TO HIMALAYAN BORDER

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

China and India have agreed to stop sending troops to the front line of their disputed Himalayan border as the powerful neighbors bid to de-escalate tensions.

China and India have agreed to stop sending troops to the front line of their disputed Himalayan border as the powerful [neighbors](#) bid to de-escalate tensions.

The two governments will refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground and avoid any actions that may cause complications, they said in statements Tuesday, a day after holding a commander-level meeting. The talks produced a "candid and in-depth exchanges of views" on stabilizing the situation along the border, they said.

The latest move to back down from open confrontation on the disputed frontier comes after the nations started to increase their troop strength in May along the 3,488-kilometer (2,167-mile) border known as the Line of Actual Control.

The military standoff, in which gunshots were fired for the first time since 1975, triggered multiple rounds of negotiations between commanders and diplomats, with Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and his [Chinese](#) counterpart, Wang Yi, agreeing this month that "the current situation in the border area is not in the interests of both sides."

In Monday's meeting, the nations also agreed to implement consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen communication on the ground, and avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments. They will hold the seventh round of military commander-level meeting as soon as possible, they said.

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XI DEFENDS CHINA'S AMBITIONS, WARNS OF 'CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

Xi Jinping

President Xi Jinping gave a robust defence of China's ambitions on Tuesday in a speech to the UN, warning against the perils of a "clash of civilizations" during a pandemic that has ripped through the world.

In an opening address presaged by a demand by his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump for China to be held "accountable" for the coronavirus outbreak, Mr. Xi said global unity was the only way to overcome the crisis.

The world must "oppose politicisation and stigmatisation" over COVID-19, Mr. Xi said in the pre-recorded address, urging world leaders to embrace the "concept of a big family... and avoid falling into the trap of a clash of civilizations".

The U.S. and China are eyeballing each other over a raft of issues: the origins of the coronavirus, trade and tech dominance, security and disputed seas.

The U.S. has called China out over its ambitions to control the strategically pivotal South China Sea as well as for its bid to crush democracy movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

'No Cold War'

But Mr. Xi reassured world leaders his country had no desire for "hegemony, expansion or sphere of influence".

"China has no intention to enter a Cold War with any country," he said, insisting that Beijing is instead a bulwark of international systems such as the World Trade Organization and a willing partner in the face of diplomatic spats.

"We insist on dialogue to bridge differences and negotiation to resolve disputes," he added.

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INDIA, CHINA AGREE NOT TO SEND MORE TROOPS TO THE FRONTLINE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

This is the first time that India and China have issued a joint statement after military level talks to ease tensions between the two countries that had spiked in May

NEW DELHI: India and China on Tuesday said they had agreed to strengthen communication, refrain from sending more troops to the border and avoid actions that would worsen tensions between the two countries.

The points of agreement, put out in a joint statement, after the sixth round of talks between senior military commanders on Monday, struck all the right notes but analysts warned that it would be actions on the ground that would show whether the situation was stabilising or not.

According to the statement issued by the Indian side, the two sides agreed to “avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments, stop sending more troops to the frontline, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground, and avoid taking any actions that may complicate the situation.”

“The two sides also agreed to hold the 7th round of Military Commander-Level Meeting as soon as possible, take practical measures to properly solve problems on the ground, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border area.”

This is the first time that India and China have issued a joint statement after military level talks to ease tensions between the two countries that had spiked after India in May detected multiple intrusions by Chinese troops in Ladakh along their undermarked Line of Actual Control.

The sixth round of senior military commander level talks on Monday lasted almost 15 hours and focused on ways to defuse tensions along the high-altitude friction points in eastern Ladakh. The current levels of tensions are seen as unprecedented in recent times. A violent clash between the two countries on 15 June, left 20 dead on the Indian side and unknown number of Chinese casualties.

The commander level talks came after a meeting on 10 September between the foreign ministers of India and China in Moscow. That paved the way for a temporary truce that still holds though the tens of thousands of soldiers are ranged against each other with tanks, missiles and air support. At some points, the troops are less than a kilometre apart.

At the talks, the Indian delegation conveyed its position that the onus was on China to move back from the positions it was occupying. The agenda for the meeting was to chart out a specific timeline for the implementation of the five-point agreement reached between India and China on 10 September when foreign ministers of India and China -- S Jaishankar and Wang Yi – met in Moscow. India also insisted on a time-bound implementation of the agreement finalised the talks between India’s S Jaishankar and China’s Wang Yi in Moscow.

“The points in the joint statement are general --the reference to peace and tranquility, refrain from unilaterally changing the situation on the ground, and avoid taking any actions that may complicate the situation,” said Srikanth Kondapalli, a professor of Chinese Studies at the New Delhi based Jawaharlal Nehru University.

"The proof of the pudding is in the implementation. We have had previous agreements but then we had the 15 June incident" which was a violent clash between India and China in which 20 Indian troops and an unknown number of Chinese troops were killed. "So we need to be careful. The question is the implementation at the local level and whether India's bottom line -- that the status quo ante is restored -- is met or not," he added.

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FRIENDS & NEIGHBOURS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Indian Ocean Island nations

The signing of a defence agreement between the Maldives and the United States earlier this month showed how geopolitical tensions are manifesting themselves in several strategic spaces, and how Delhi's own responses have changed in the new environment. The "Framework for U.S. Department of Defence-Maldives Ministry of Defence and Security Relationship" agreement is emblematic. In 2013, a year after Maldivian Democratic Party leader Mohammed Nasheed had been ousted, a US proposal for a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Indian Ocean nation met with stiff opposition in Delhi. The plan was shelved, but Delhi, despite the heightened awareness of China's growing influence in its neighbourhood, was not enthused by the Obama "pivot to Asia". Not any more.

Delhi has made it clear that the broad framework agreement, which includes a security dialogue and "sets forth both countries' intent to deepen engagement and co-operation in support of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean", is "in line" with India's overall interests and regional stability. After watching Male in a tight embrace with Beijing under the 2014-18 Abdulla Yameen government, Delhi's response is one of quiet relief. It has also ramped up its bilateral engagement.

Last month, India committed to providing \$250 million in budgetary support to the Maldives to help it tide over the [pandemic](#)-induced economic crisis that has crippled tourism. Delhi is also providing a \$400 m line of credit for the construction of what is billed as the single-argest infrastructure project in the Maldives, the Greater Male Connectivity project, which aims to provide streamlined connectivity between Male and three other islands. Maldives is also the only neighbouring country with whom India has a travel bubble. Most significant is the cargo ferry service between the two countries inaugurated earlier this week. Three years ago, the Maldives government had entered into a Free Trade Agreement with China in response to European trade sanctions against the authoritarian Yameen government. But the successor government of President Ibrahim Solih decided not to bring in the enabling legislation because it was heavily loaded against the import dependent economy. There is a lesson in this for Delhi: For the cargo service to be useful to both sides, India must take care to ensure that it is not perceived to be dumping goods on that country. There is bound to be asymmetry, but if that is what making friends of neighbours entails, so be it.

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THE UN MUST REFORM TO STAY RELEVANT

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The United Nations (UN) has always struggled when its most powerful members are disunited. On the 75th anniversary of the UN's foundation, not only is great power rivalry rising to Cold War levels, but the world is under enormous forces of change, whether technological or environmental. The organisation recognises it needs to make major adjustments, but it can only reform if there is a sufficient consensus among its members to that effect. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking at the supplementary high-level meeting, stressed the need for reformed multilateralism to ensure UN's continued relevance.

India has long called for the Security Council to be expanded to provide permanent seats for emerging powers like itself. That a draft text for such reforms has made it to the UN General Assembly is an accomplishment. While New Delhi must continue to iterate this requirement, it should be recognised this is an aspiration and comes with a long and unpredictable timeline. It is not merely China which will be a barrier, neither the United States or Russia is eager to see their positions diluted.

There are three obvious multilateral issues in which the UN needs to become much more active. The most obvious is the pandemics. No government can claim there is not a case for much more transparent and intrusive global preventive health system. Then there is climate. The UN hosts the world's primary climate change conference, but this role needs to be institutionalised. In addition, climate policy now affects other areas such as trade and immigration and urgent multi-disciplinary discussions are needed at the highest level. Finally, terrorism remains a global threat. The collapse of the Islamic State has taken the wind out of the terrorists' sail, but no one believes this is not a temporary situation.

Cynics will say the UN will be hampered by a de-globalising world, superpowers at daggers drawn and rising protectionism. The debate over a reformed multilateralism and more relevant UN needs to begin sooner rather than later. The speeches have now been made, but India and other governments now need to find ways to convert these into action on the ground. The UN is imperfect because the cohesion of its member-states is imperfect. But no one can deny, as Mr Modi said, "Our world today is a better place because of the United Nations."

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INDIA, JAPAN NAVIES MATCH SKILLS IN NORTHERN ARABIAN SEA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Japan

Steady progress: Indian and Japanese ships conducting operations in close formation at JIMEX-2020. ANIANI

The 4th edition of the biennial India and Japan naval exercise is under way in the northern Arabian Sea, the Navy said. This is the first exercise following the conclusion of the mutual logistics support agreement early this month.

The maritime cooperation has significantly increased between the two sides with focus on information sharing and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Indo-Pacific.

“JIMEX-20 will showcase high degree of inter-operability and joint operational skills through conduct of a multitude of advanced exercises, across the spectrum of maritime operations,” the Navy said in a statement. Multi-faceted tactical exercises involving weapon firings, cross-deck helicopter operations and complex surface, anti-submarine and air warfare drills will consolidate coordination developed by the two navies, it said.

Stating that naval cooperation has increased in scope and complexity over the years, the Navy said advanced level of operations and exercises planned during JIMEX-20 are indicative of “the continued upswing in Indo-Japanese defence relations and continued efforts by both governments to work closely for a more secure, open and inclusive global commons, in accordance with international regulations.”

The three-day war games which began on Saturday are being conducted in a “non-contact at-sea-only format”, in view of the COVID-19 restrictions.

The Navy has deployed indigenous stealth destroyer INS Chennai, stealth frigate INS Tarkash and fleet Tanker Deepak while the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) has deployed Kaga, an Izumo Class Helicopter Destroyer and Ikazuchi, a guided missile destroyer. The P8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft, integral helicopters and fighter aircraft will also participate, the Navy said.

The two countries have made steady progress in MDA based on the implementing arrangement for deeper cooperation signed between the two navies.

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DON'T DENY INDIA A SEAT AT THE UN'S HIGH TABLE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

India's case for veto authority isn't just a matter of what's just, as our PM said, but also of the UN's relevance as global power shifts eastward. An empowered India is in the world's interest

This should be self-evident even to those who are not Indian. With influence over the world order this century expected to tilt from west to east, it is not just a travesty of the United Nations' (UN) ideals to deny India an equal voice at its highest level, it could actually worsen the odds of global peace. That the world's largest democracy, home to every sixth individual alive, must have a vote no less than any other country has been obvious all along. The realities of this era, however, dictate that an institution built on the rubble of World War II must either reform itself to face the future, or risk turning into a relic of the past. A permanent seat at the UN Security Council would not be a favour to India, but to all. Addressing the UN's general assembly on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked how long we must wait for one. The global body may or may not have been reduced to a "talk shop", as its critics call it, but reform could raise its prospects of relevance as China begins to exert its clout beyond its borders.

Modi offered a sharp review of the UN's record, one that is riddled with failures. For all its achievements, he pointed out, too much blood has been spilt through acts of war or terror, with the UN unable to contain either menace. The Prime Minister made no overt reference to China, nor to our Himalayan stand-off, but no one could miss the allusion when he said India's friendships were never at the cost of a third country, and that New Delhi was not in the business of using diplomacy to create dependency. His rhetorical question that should have made all countries collectively squirm, though, was about the world's current crisis. Where, he wondered, was the UN in our global fight against the covid pandemic? India, he assured the world, was ready to aid its efforts as a vaccine supplier. He left unsaid Beijing's bizarre behaviour since the viral outbreak, from its opacity in its early days to brazen displays of disregard for the sovereignty of others.

A Chinese veto has long held a Sword of Damocles over India's quest for a weighty role in world affairs, though New Delhi's nuclear policy had no doubt complicated matters. Today, it seems, China fancies itself as a fully paid-up hegemon, ready to bend the world's future to its will. It has violated India's borders, muzzled Hong Kong, and glowered at Taiwan. Beijing has some reason to be smug. It is set to be the only major economy that will expand this year, even as India's contracts by what might be double digits. By the latest estimate, put out by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, our output may shrink by 12.6% this fiscal year. While China quelled its epidemic months ago, India's corona curve has only just begun to flatten, though actual infections could be multiples higher and our official count just a function of the tests done. Unless our economy recovers soon, the gap between Asia's big two will widen further. We must not let that happen. But the job of keeping the planet in harmony is the UN's. If the challenges on this front stiffen, the world may come to rue letting Beijing hold the East's sole veto. For the sake of peace in Asia and beyond, India must have equal authority at the high table.

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INDIA CALLS IMRAN KHAN'S UN SPEECH AN 'INCESSANT RANT'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

Mijito Vinito

In exercising India's 'Right of Reply' to Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's remarks during the UN General Assembly debate on Friday, Indian diplomat Mijito Vinito called Mr. Khan's remarks "an incessant rant". India also said the only dispute in Kashmir is related to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and called on Pakistan to vacate it.

The response said Mr. Khan had "no reasonable suggestion to offer the world" and his speech was about "lies, misinformation, war mongering and malice."

"The words used today at this great Assembly by the leader of Pakistan demean the very essence of the UN. For a nation that is deeply buried in medievalism, it is understandable that the tenets of a modern civilized society such as peace, dialogue and diplomacy are far-fetched," Mr. Vinito, First Secretary at India's UN mission, said.

Mr. Khan, in his speech earlier on Friday, had talked about India's treatment of its minorities, legislative changes to Jammu and Kashmir, Indian troop presence there, etc. Mr. Vinito had left the General Assembly hall as Mr. Khan's video address began, as a gesture of India's protestations against it.

"There will be no durable peace and stability in South Asia until the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is resolved on the basis of international legitimacy. Kashmir has been rightly described as a nuclear flashpoint," Mr. Khan had said. "The Security Council must prevent a disaster conflict and secure the implementation of its own resolutions, as it did in the case of East Timor," he had said.

"I want to make it clear that any attempt by the fascist, totalitarian, RSS-led Indian Government to aggress against Pakistan will be met by a nation that that will fight for its freedom to the end," Mr. Khan had said.

Integral part

Mr. Vinito said in India's response: "Let me assert here loud and clear. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral and inalienable part of India. The rules and legislations brought in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir are strictly internal affairs of India."

"The only dispute left in Kashmir relates to that part of Kashmir that is still under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. We call upon Pakistan to vacate all those areas that it is in illegal occupation of." [In September 2019, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had said India expects to have physical jurisdiction over PoK].

"This is the country that has systematically cleansed its minorities, including Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and others, through the abuse of its blasphemy laws and through forced religious conversions," Mr. Vinito said.

During his speech, Mr. Khan had talked about Islamophobia around the world, but also made a

specific reference to India having “state-sponsored” Islamophobia. “The RSS founding fathers were inspired by the Nazis and they adopted their concepts of racial purity and supremacy. While the Nazis hate was directed at the Jews, the RSS directs it towards the Muslims and to a lesser extent, the Christians. They believe that India is exclusively for Hindus and others are not equal citizens. The secularism of Gandhi and Nehru has been replaced by the dream of creating a Hindu rashtra...” Mr. Khan had said in his speech.

He also referred to the fact that Muslims were killed in 2002 in Gujarat when Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s was the State’s Chief Minister.

“For someone who professes to be a champion of Islam, this is also a country that has encouraged killing of fellow Muslims merely because they belonged to a different sect, or to a different region in Pakistan, and through sponsoring terrorist attacks against its neighbours,” Mr. Vinito said, responding to Mr. Khan’s speech.

The Indian diplomat also highlighted the Pakistan deep state’s “unrelenting political and financial support” to terror organisations. He also referred to Mr. Khan referring to 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden as a martyr earlier this year.

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PM PITCHES FOR GREATER ROLE IN UNITED NATIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

“India will also help all the countries in enhancing their cold chain and storage capacities for the delivery of the vaccines.”

Mr. Modi highlighted some of India’s contribution to the UN and said that it was a basis for Indians wanting an “expanded role” in the organization.

“When we were strong, we were never a threat to the world; when we were weak, we never become a burden on the world,” Mr. Modi said.

He said the idea of *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* [the world as one family] was in resonance with the UN’s founding ideals and said Indian troops had participated in about 50 UN peacekeeping missions.

“Today every Indian, while seeing the contribution of India in the United Nations, aspires for India’s expanded role in the United Nations.”

He spoke of India’s foreign policy as being driven by the interests of “the whole [of] humankind and not about its own vested interests.” Mr. Modi specifically mentioned India’s “Neighbourhood First Policy”, the “Act East Policy” and its views towards the Indo-Pacific Region.

Presumably in a message to the United States as well as China, Mr. Modi said, “Any gesture of friendship by India towards one country is not directed against any third country.”

“When India strengthens its development partnership, it is not with any mala fide intent of making the partner country dependent or hapless,” he said. This was presumably an oblique reference to China’s model of infrastructure financing in the Indo-Pacific which has led to several countries falling into debt-traps with Beijing.

Mr. Modi thanked member states for trusting India with a non-permanent seat at the Security Council starting January 2020 and said India will bring its developmental experience to the job. He outlined his administration’s official record in areas such as financial inclusion, health care and targets to eradicate tuberculosis (by 2025) and other development goals. Mr. Modi also mentioned that India had 26 weeks of paid maternity leave and was promoting the rights of transgendered persons.

“In its journey towards progress, India wants to learn from the world as well as share its own experiences with the world,” he said.

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INDIA-SRI LANKA JOINT STATEMENT ON VIRTUAL BILATERAL SUMMIT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Sri Lanka

1. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa held a Virtual Summit today in which they discussed bilateral relations and regional & international issues of mutual concern.

2. Prime Minister Modi congratulated Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on his assumption of office of Prime Minister with a decisive mandate at the Parliamentary Elections held in Sri Lanka in August 2020. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa expressed his gratitude for the good wishes and conveyed his keenness to work together closely with Prime Minister Modi.

3. Both the leaders recalled the successful State Visits by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to India in November 2019 and February 2020, respectively. These visits gave clear political direction and vision for the future of the relationship.

4. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa commended the strong leadership shown by Prime Minister Modi in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic based on the vision of mutual support and assistance to the countries of the region. Both leaders agreed that the current situation presented a fresh opportunity to give added impetus to bilateral relations. Both the leaders expressed happiness that India and Sri Lanka worked very closely in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's continued commitment for all possible support to Sri Lanka for minimising the health and economic impact of the pandemic.

5. For imparting further impetus to the bilateral relationship, the two leaders agreed to:

(i) Enhance cooperation to combat terrorism and drug trafficking including in the fields of intelligence, information sharing, de-radicalization and capacity building.

(ii) Continue the fruitful and efficient development partnership in accordance with the priority areas identified by the Government and people of Sri Lanka and to further broad base the island wide engagement under the Memorandum of Understanding for Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) for the period 2020-2025.

(iii) Work together to expeditiously complete construction of 10,000 housing units in the plantation areas, which was announced during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Sri Lanka in May 2017.

(iv) Facilitate an enabling environment for trade and investment between the two countries and to deepen integration of supply chains in the backdrop of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

(v) Work towards early realization of infrastructure and connectivity projects including in the sectors of Ports and Energy through close consultations as per the Bilateral Agreements and MoUs, and strong commitment towards a mutually beneficial development cooperation partnership between the two countries.

(vi) Deepen cooperation in renewable energy with particular emphasis on solar projects under the US\$ 100 million Line of Credit from India.

(vii) Strengthen technical cooperation in the areas of agriculture, animal husbandry, science & technology, health care and AYUSH (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) as well as skill development by increased training of professionals thereby realizing the full potential of the demographic dividend in both the countries.

(viii) Further strengthen people-to-people ties by exploring opportunities in the field of civilizational linkages and common heritage such as Buddhism, Ayurveda and Yoga. Government of India will facilitate visit of a delegation of Buddhist pilgrims from Sri Lanka in the inaugural international flight to the sacred city of Kushinagar, which has recently been announced as an International Airport recognizing its significance in Buddhism.

(ix) Facilitate tourism by enhancing connectivity and by early establishment of an air bubble between the two countries to resume travel, bearing in mind threat posed by Covid-19 pandemic and to take all necessary preventative measures.

(x) Continue engagement to address the issues related to fishermen through regular consultation and bilateral channels according to the existing frameworks and shared goals including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

(xi) Strengthen cooperation between armed forces of the two sides including through mutual exchange of personnel visits, maritime security cooperation and support to Sri Lanka in the spheres of defence and security.

6. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa welcomed the announcement made by Prime Minister Modi of India's grant assistance of US\$ 15 million for promotion of Buddhist ties between the two countries. The grant will assist in deepening people-to-people linkages between the two countries in the sphere of Buddhism including inter alia through construction/renovation of Buddhist monasteries, capacity development, cultural exchanges, archaeological cooperation, reciprocal exposition of The Buddha's relics, strengthening engagement of Buddhist scholars and clergy etc.

7. Prime Minister Modi called on the Government of Sri Lanka to address the aspirations of the Tamil people for equality, justice, peace and respect within a united Sri Lanka, including by carrying forward the process of reconciliation with the implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa expressed the confidence that Sri Lanka will work towards realizing the expectations of all ethnic groups, including Tamils, by achieving reconciliation nurtured as per the mandate of the people of Sri Lanka and implementation of the Constitutional provisions.

8. Both leaders acknowledged the increasing convergence on regional and international issues of mutual engagement, including within the frameworks of SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA and the United Nations system.

9. Recognizing that BIMSTEC is an important platform for regional cooperation linking South Asia with South East Asia, both leaders agreed to work together to ensure a successful BIMSTEC Summit to be hosted under the Chairmanship of Sri Lanka.

10. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the strong support received from the international community for India's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2021-2022.

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'ONE-THIRD OF FUNDING BY AIIB HAS GONE TO INDIA'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: AIIB and India

*Out of the \$20 billion in loans issued by the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), about \$6 billion has gone to India, the bank's second-largest shareholder after China, says **D.J. Pandian**, who, as the lender's vice-president of Investment Operations, oversees all sovereign and non-sovereign lending in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Before moving to Beijing, Mr. Pandian spent 35 years in the Indian Administrative Service. Excerpts:*

How has the AIIB been involved in infrastructure projects in India so far?

As far as India is concerned, the pipeline of projects is very strong. We have supported around \$5 billion worth of projects in India.

The bank will complete 5 years in January 2021, and we may add another \$1 billion in India by then, and maybe it will be \$6 billion in total. The bank has just started, building up the team and policies. Out of the total \$20 billion of projects approved, \$6 billion has come to India, which is almost one-third.

We are supporting unique projects, including the Chennai Metro Corridors 4 and 5 and Chennai Peripheral Ring Road, which are at an advanced stage, and the Grand Anaicut scheme to modernise the canal system in the Cauvery delta region which we are preparing with the government of Tamil Nadu, which will help save almost 20% of water leakages.

The Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System is a high-speed rail that will reduce travel time from 3-4 hours to within one hour. This is being co-financed with the Asian Development Bank.

In June, the AIIB announced a \$750 million loan to India for COVID-19 assistance. Are there other projects being considered this year?

There are at least two regular investment projects which we can take up to the Board in the next 2-3 months. One is a power transmission line project in Assam which is around \$300 million, and the other is the Delhi-Meerut high speed rail which is \$500 million.

Also, we may look at two cities in Punjab, Amritsar and Ludhiana, for water supply municipal rejuvenation projects.

In July, President Jin Liqun said on current India-China tensions, that the bank's decision-making is only based on economic merits; will the problems between the two biggest shareholders impact the bank?

President Jin is absolutely right. We are apolitical. Our decisions are based on the merit of the project, not on what is happening, or on internal or external problems.

China is the largest shareholder; so some in India, including the Opposition, have criticised the government for taking loans in June, saying you're a Chinese bank...

This is a lesson for us, that we need to educate people about what the bank really is, and build our brand. We are very, very, apolitical. We are a multilateral bank of 103 members, of which 77

are active members. All of Europe are Bank members. Canada, Australia, New Zealand are also members.

The Vice President of Investment Operations is an Indian!

How has COVID-19 changed the projects for AIIB?

We have already been able to build up a pipeline of projects in Asia. Those conventional infrastructure projects that were already at an advanced stage, we were able to bring it to the Board for approval.

As soon as the COVID response facility was set up, when it began as an emergency response led by the World Bank, we have also committed almost \$13 billion, of which so far we have approved \$6 billion.

This is for both health preparedness and to provide liquidity to the governments so that they can buy equipment, particularly medical equipment, and enlarge hospital facilities to take care of their immediate requirement.

Initially, the idea of social infrastructure was not the focus of the bank, but we cannot avoid this any more; we are going to do that but we need to build up expertise within the bank to do health care and other social infrastructure projects.

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PAKISTAN MAY NOT BE INTELLECTUALLY FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH ARAB-ISRAEL THAW

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

After nearly 70 years of building a case in favour of conflict, the Middle East may be moving towards peace. On September 13, Bahrain recognised Israel in the presence of US President Donald Trump in Washington. The recognition by a country almost an appendage of Saudi Arabia, physically and politically, signals a tacit pledge of recognition by the Saudis as well. The Palestinian Authority, betrayed by these recognitions, tried to raise the subject at the Arab League but was ignored.

The Arabs feel threatened today, not by Israel, but from states within the Islamic world — by non-Arab, non-Semite Iran and Turkey.

Not comprehending what was unfolding, Pakistan joined Turkey and Malaysia, earlier this year, to hold a “separate” Islamic summit to signal to the Semites of the Middle East that it can go its own way. It was soon made to realise, however, that it had made a mistake although it is still unclear whether it will, under clerical pressure, denounce the Arabs getting together with Israel.

Israel already has diplomatic relations with Jordan from 1994 — after three wars and Egypt from 1979 — after four wars — and no one has minded. In fact, Egypt today has joined Saudi Arabia and the UAE to fight Turkey in Libya in the western Mediterranean, and Saudi Arabia now looks to Israel to defend it against Iran.

Pakistan, as a “nuclear power”, has always been loyal to Saudi Arabia and the UAE because four million of its expat manpower is located in the two countries. But it may find itself disadvantaged by its “big leader” [Imran Khan](#). Nuclear but economically bankrupt, Pakistan needs a lot of “flexibility” during this period of the grand split within the Muslim world but it may find itself stymied by its charismatic leader who is greatly attracted to the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Editorial | [An important moment: With other Gulf states expected to follow UAE's lead on Israel, stage is set for major realignment in region](#)

Perhaps responding to Pakistan's possible support to the anti-Arab and pro-Iran front, the offended clerics of Karachi took out the largest anti-Shia procession in Pakistan's history, calling the Shia apostates although the country's founder was a Shia. Will Turkey and Iran get together to oppose the Arab trend of “normalising” relations with Israel? Unlikely, because of Erdogan's puritan dislike of the Shia religion. In Lebanon, he has actively supported the Sunni community against the Iran-supported Shia militias, Hezbollah and Amal.

Will China step in after the US moves out? In Jerusalem, the analysis is that China, a dominant trader in the Gulf, is not really interested in being a guarantor of peace in the region. China is dependent on the region's oil and gas but this dependence is temporary as it moves rapidly to renewable energy. It may not enter the fray to defend an Iran currently engaged in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon.

The other regional power present in the region — through its good relations with the Arabs and Israel — is India. Close to the US under Trump, it is economically better integrated with the Gulf

States than Pakistan through its superior expat manpower and its relationship with Israel. It had involved itself in projects in Iran as well, funding the port of Chabahar to facilitate its trade routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia but suddenly pulled out – perhaps after a signal from Washington – while Pakistan, its regional rival, remained clueless about what was about to happen in the Gulf region.

Opinion | [Pakistan needs to grasp that pragmatism, strategic realities lie behind Arab-Israeli detente](#)

The “moral” hardening of Pakistan’s foreign policy has hampered its diplomacy and consequently its economic development. It was excluded from high-tech weaponry after the US embargo. India got out of this ban by reviving its relationship with Israel as an “alternative” supplier. India’s non-recognition of Israel was not based on any moral considerations but on the attitude of its Arab friends in the Gulf. Soon, it read the signs of approval that Pakistan couldn’t from its perch of moral high ground. Today, Pakistani military-history authors like Shuja Nawaz recommend recognising Israel but Pakistan is not flexible enough intellectually to change with the winds.

This article first appeared in the print edition on September 26, 2020 under the title ‘Clueless in West Asia’. The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan.

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SHADOW FORCE APART, INDIA NEEDS A CHINA PLAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The mystic, celestial snow lion, 'Gang Seng Ge' in local lore, derives its name from the Sanskrit *Simha*. It is the emblem of Tibet showcasing its eternally snow-covered mountains and glaciers, even as it symbolises power, strength, fearlessness and the joy of living. It is also the symbol and the flag of the intrepid, fearless warriors of the '[Special Frontier Force](#)', or the [SFF](#), which has figured so prominently in the recent clashes in eastern Ladakh.

Towards the end of April this year, 4 Motorised and 6 Mechanised Divisions of the Chinese Western Theatre Command, having completed their exercises on the edge of the Gobi Desert, took to the Xinjiang highway. In a well-planned and rehearsed move, they branched off onto a series of feeder roads on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Once the troops were in position, they initiated multiple incursions across the LAC into what had been "No Man's Land" patrolled by both sides (India and China). This included areas in the Depsang plains threatening the forward airstrip of Daulat Beg Oldie as also the north and the south of the expansive Pangong Tso salt water lake.

Special Frontier Force | [They came, they fought, they stayed](#)

The world watched in horror, as soldiers of two nuclear armed Asian giants engaged each other in a slug fest on the snowy summits of the Himalayas. In the melee that followed, they went at each other with clubs studded with barbed wire, machetes and rocks, resulting in serious injuries. Not a shot was fired, but the Indian Army which was initially surprised, reacted swiftly and with bravery and courage inflicted casualties to the Chinese side.

The inevitable fallout of these actions was both sides jostling for heights, leading to a stalemate. Suddenly, on the night of August 29-30, in a surprise move, the [Indian Army turned the tables on China](#) by occupying heights that were not only of great tactical importance north and south of the Pangong Tso lake as also dominating the Spangur Gap. It was now looking into the innards of the Chinese depth localities at Moldo including China's armour, guns and reserves. This amazing feat was accomplished primarily by a Ghost Army, the Special Frontier Force. Who are these super human troops? What are their antecedents? They are the dreaded shadow warriors of the SFF.

During the era of the "Great Game", the British employed natives to patrol their own lands, which included Tibetans. It was the Mustang Base in the Northern Border Range that escorted the 14th Dalai Lama to safety to India during the 1959 rebellion. As a consequence of the 1962 war, the Jawaharlal Nehru government ordered the raising of an elite Commando Force called the Special Frontier Force comprising among others, Tibetans who had sought refuge in India along with the Dalai Lama.

Also read | [With public funeral for Tibetan soldier, Delhi sends a signal to Beijing](#)

My father, Major General Sujan Singh Uban, was a natural choice for this based on sheer merit and his being a legendary war veteran of the British Army famous for his daring exploits with the Long Range Desert Group in the Middle East, and the Guerrilla Wars in Burma during World War II. He was tasked with raising, training and commanding this nascent Force; as also moulding them into a well-oiled fighting machine.

To enhance their inherent fighting capabilities its members were given airborne training in

addition to acquiring expertise in mountain and jungle warfare. Initially aided and equipped by the United States, they quickly indigenised and were soon on their own feet. The opportunity to display their mettle as also to repay their host country came during the India-Pakistan war of 1971. As the Indian Army moved in with its major thrust into East Pakistan, the SFF, while supporting the flank of the Indian Army, in a blitzkrieg cleared the Chittagong hill tracts, as also the Kaptai dam, and encircled and prevented the escape of the Pakistani 97 (Indep) Brigade and No 2 Commando Battalion, all of whom were taken prisoners. The SFF was poised for the capture of Chittagong port when a ceasefire was declared; a daring move which paid handsome dividends. This earned them the *nom de guerre*, the 'Phantoms of Chittagong'.

Also read | [India's secret war in Bangladesh](#)

It soon became my turn to serve the SFF, enabling me to fulfil a family commitment. Having performed exceedingly well in the Indian Army (including being awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) and based on my record of service) I was promoted as Inspector General to command the SFF and was privileged to command it during the Kargil war in battles fought at heights of 14,000 feet and above in subzero temperatures; actions which were lauded in the Ladakh and Kargil sectors. That year, the security for the Amarnath Yatra was provided by the SFF.

The strategic importance of Tibet cannot be overemphasised. It is the roof of the world, with vast mineral and natural resources. The mighty rivers that emanate from its expansive glaciers — such as the Brahmaputra, the Yangtse, the Yellow river, the Mekong, the Salween and the Indus — together with thousands of their tributaries have nurtured civilisations in peripheral countries for centuries. The Kailash Mansarovar, which is centered in this region and with its spiritual overtones, tugs at the heart strings of every Indian. In an act of naked aggression, China occupied Tibet in 1959.

A buffer was eliminated, and the de facto boundary of China became contiguous to that of India, a boundary deliberately left undemarcated to enable further expansion. Mao Zedong declared, "Tibet is the palm that we shall occupy and then go after the five fingers, Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh." Consequently, in 1959, China committed the naked act of aggression, to which India acquiesced, and our dream of "Hindi Chini *Bhai Bhai*" was rudely shaken in 1962.

Comment | [A phantom called the Line of Actual Control](#)

India is dealing with a bellicose neighbour, with its obsession for asserting its rights over land which its predecessors may have acquired through conquest or guile. China has land borders with 14 neighbours covering an estimated 22,100 kilometres. Post independence, and as its economic status burgeoned, so did its military muscle. China embarked on claims based on perceived imbalances of treaties forced on countries when they were weak.

Some of these have since been resolved after bloody clashes such as with Russia and Vietnam, while others have been resolved using a combination of lucrative offers of money, trade and guile. In most cases, the end result has been such that victory can be claimed by both sides.

Russia accepted half of China's claim, Kazakhstan was given lucrative economic deals, Kyrgyzstan retained 70% of the land, ceding just 30%, and so on.

The Hindu Explains | [What are the agreements that govern India and China's actions?](#)

It would be fallacious to surmise that there will be any resolution to the on-going stand-off

between India and China in the near future. Let us assume that both countries wish to avoid a full-scale war considering the nuclear backdrop, the COVID-19 pandemic and also the economic downturn. The road ahead will have to be evolved and based on a study of the manner in which China has negotiated its boundary disputes with 12 of its neighbours and the results achieved.

There can be little doubt that the [actions by the People's Liberation Army, or the PLA, in Ladakh were pre-meditated](#), planned and executed with precision. The Chinese were fully aware that they were transgressing into "No Man's Land". With a pre-determined aim in mind they proceeded to secure tactical heights and gained access to the areas which would forestall a counter-offensive by the Indian Army. To expect them to vacate these areas at this juncture would be naive. At the same time, the PLA, in its present configuration and posture, has immense weaknesses which they would be aware of, and which should make them uneasy.

Under the prevailing circumstances, it has become imperative to form a group of experts from among retired professionals, who have a proven track record with the Indian Army, the Indian Navy, the Indian Air Force, diplomats, the intelligence services, cyber technology and cartographic services, who will plan and prepare, short-, medium- and long-term goals to achieve them within a suggested time frame. Let us play down the rhetoric and adopt a pragmatic approach. It can no longer be a part-time issue to be addressed only when a crisis occurs. The crisis is upon us now.

Gurdip Singh Uban is former Inspector General, Special Frontier Force

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TENDING TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India's Foreign Policy evolution and changes

The idea that India is losing clout in the neighbourhood has recently become a special cause for anxiety among Delhi's commentariat. Is this concern really new? A longer look at India's regional diplomacy suggests that Delhi has been losing some and winning some at any time in the region.

The current chatter on India's regional diplomatic failures takes me back to the early 1980s, when I began to track India's neighbourhood diplomacy at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. I was drafted as a rapporteur for a major conference on "India and its neighbours", organised by India International Centre. The conference brought together the leading lights of India's foreign policy establishment — including current and former officials, newspaper editors and academics. The luminaries argued with each other on the sources of the problem and the remedies for it.

The divisions in the foreign policy elite only mirrored the fracture already evident in the political class. During the campaign for the 1977 general elections, the opposition Janata Party criticised Prime Minister [Indira Gandhi](#) for her costly pursuit of regional hegemony in South Asia and promised to build good neighbourly relations. Prime Minister Morarji Desai and his foreign minister [Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#) did bring about some important correctives. But it did not take long for them to face the same criticism as Indira Gandhi. No government since then has escaped the charge of mishandling the neighbours.

Was there a "golden age" in India's neighbourhood policy? Yes and no. If there ever was an extended period of India's regional primacy, it was before Independence. As the regional expression of the then sole superpower, Britain, the Raj exercised much sway not just over the neighbourhood but across the Indo-Pacific, if you will, during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Indian Ocean littoral was dominated by the Royal Navy and the Indian Army. Indian capital and labour moved across the Indo-Pacific. On the continental side, the Raj surrounded itself with a series of buffer states and protectorates and often projected military power beyond them. The Raj contributed to British efforts in developing new port cities (from Aden to Hong Kong) and constructing trans-regional connectivity through roads and railways. (You might call it the British Belt and Road Initiative!)

Even for the Raj, one of the mightiest powers in history, it was an unceasing struggle to sustain its primacy. It had to constantly fend off its European rivals from encroaching into the periphery of the Raj. The Great Game was about keeping the Dutch, French, Germans, Russians and Japanese at arm's length. Then there were the pesky local rulers who had to be continually disciplined, deposed or bought. Rebellions across the littoral — whether the Boers of Southern Africa or the Faqir of Ipi in Waziristan — had to be crushed. Keeping the Subcontinent safe resulted in frequent military and political disasters — from Afghanistan to Burma and Xinjiang to Singapore.

The notion of regional primacy certainly persisted in the Nehru era — recall the three security treaties that the first prime minister signed with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal during 1949-50. The newly-formed Ministry of External Affairs, the legatee of the Foreign and Political Department of the Raj, certainly retained some of the viceregal style of political agents in the neighbourhood. But beyond the region, Nehru had put India on a different diplomatic track that emphasised sovereign equality among nations.

Forget for a moment the schizophrenia this duality generated among the Indian diplomats; primacy was hard to sustain after Independence even within the immediate neighbourhood. Five reasons stand out.

One is the Partition of the Subcontinent. The problems generated by the great division of the Subcontinent on religious lines continue to animate the region. No amount of virtue-signalling in the name of good neighbourly policy can help fix the challenges of settling boundaries, sharing river-waters, protecting the rights of minorities, and easing the flow of goods and people. The burden of the Subcontinent's history is not easily discarded.

Second, the arrival of China at the Indo-Tibetan frontier during 1950-51. The unification of China amidst the Partition of India had profoundly transformed the geopolitical condition of India. Beyond the bilateral territorial dispute in the Himalayas, the emergence of a large and purposeful state on India's frontiers was going to be a problem given the ease with which it could constrain Delhi within the Subcontinent. If it was the Raj that advanced northwards across the Himalayas before 1950, it would be China's turn now for a relentless southward ingress into the Subcontinent.

Third was independent India's conscious choice in favour of de-globalisation, which led to a steady dissipation of commercial connectivity with the neighbours. For Delhi's new quest for autarky was not just from the global economy but also the regional one. India's economic reorientation since the 1990s and the rediscovery of regionalism did open possibilities for reconnecting with its neighbours. Delhi today is acutely aware of the need to revive regional connectivity.

There is much progress in recent years — note, for example, the recent launch of a ferry service to the Maldives or the reopening of inland waterways with Bangladesh. But India has a long way to go.

Consider the recent fiasco of onion exports to Bangladesh. The Foreign Office might see the neighbourhood as an integrated geopolitical space. But for the commerce ministry, there is no difference between Bangladesh, Bolivia, and Brunei. Integrating India's regional economic and foreign policy remains a major challenge.

Fourth is the persistent fallacy in Delhi that the neighbourhood is India's to will. It ignores the rise of political agency among neighbourhood elites and mass politics that they need to manage. Their imperatives don't always coincide with those of Delhi. On top of this, divisions within an elite easily intersect with their engagement with major powers, including India, China and the US. It is unlikely that Delhi can completely insure itself against the intra-elite conflicts in the neighbourhood.

That insurance is tied to a fifth factor — the role of domestic politics in India's regional policy. Here is an important question that Delhi's foreign policy debate avoids. Can India persistently champion Tamil minority rights in Sri Lanka without incurring any costs with the Sinhala majority? But asking that question takes us to India's own domestic politics. Can Delhi ignore sentiments in India's Tamil Nadu in making its Sri Lanka policy? [Manmohan Singh](#), for example, did not attend the Colombo Commonwealth Summit in 2013 because Congress leaders from Tamil Nadu opposed the visit by citing the impending elections. [Mamata Banerjee](#) pulled the plug at the very last minute on the Teesta Waters agreement that PM Singh was to sign in Dhaka in 2011.

There are no easy answers to the regional difficulties that trouble all governments in Delhi. The source of the problem lies in the deeply interconnected nature of South Asian societies

administered by multiple sovereigns. Contrary to the prevailing belief, India's domestic politics always had an impact on our regional policy. The same is true of our neighbours, whose domestic politics impact their engagement with India.

There is no happy end-state in India's relations with its neighbours. It will always be about carefully managing the inevitable difficulties that arise. Timely responses to emerging problems, preventing small issues from becoming big, and aligning Delhi's regional economic policy with India's natural geographic advantages are some important elements of any successful management of India's perennial neighbourhood challenges.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for [The Indian Express](#)

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TWO SPEECHES: ON MODI AND IMRAN SPEECHES AT UNGA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

The speeches at the UN General Assembly, by [Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan](#), and a day later by [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#), were a study in contrasts. Mr. Modi focused on India's own role on the world stage and the need to reform the UN and expand the Security Council to give India more representation. Mr. Khan focused less time on Pakistan, launching a broadside against India. Mr. Modi made no reference to Pakistan, and spoke about terrorism only in broader terms. A reply to Mr. Khan's speech was left to an Indian diplomat, who described it as an "incessant rant" and "lies, misinformation and warmongering". Mr. Khan's references to India, which formed more than a third of his text, repeated the vilification in his previous speeches: accusing the Modi government of "state sponsorship of Islamophobia", of following an "extremist ideology" of the RSS, which he claims is "inspired" by Nazi concepts of "racial purity and supremacy", and of planning to "cleanse" the country of minorities. Extreme comparisons were made between the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the Nuremberg laws, as well as between detention camps in Assam and the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Next, he launched into a diatribe on Jammu and Kashmir, more or less mirroring his speech of last year, which included accusations that the government's moves to dilute Article 370 and reorganise J&K State into Union Territories were akin to a "final solution" of "genocide" for the State, and contravenes UN laws. He concluded with a reference to LoC tensions, where ceasefire violations have risen, ending on an exaggerated note that referred to Kashmir as a "nuclear flashpoint".

Mr. Khan's speech can be easily countered, and dismissed, as the government has. Pakistan's own record on minorities, including its own laws that even prevent minorities from holding high office, completely demolish Pakistan's credentials to attack India, which is a constitutionally declared secular democracy. Mr. Khan's accusations of Indian "state terrorism" come even as his country faces a decisive moment at the Financial Action Task Force in October, where Pakistan has been kept on a "grey list" since June 2018. His accusations on the reorganisation of J&K, and of attempting "demographic changes" are equally strange, given Pakistan has itself just declared Gilgit Baltistan a province and has carried out the resettlement of non-Kashmiris in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for decades. Even if some of the concerns that were raised by Mr. Khan are also being debated inside India, sans the overdramatic characterisations, they are certainly not within the purview of another country, and not a legitimate subject for his address at the UN. While India can safely disregard his barbs, it must not underestimate their intent, as part of a larger strategy to consistently hurl these allegations against India, in the hope that some of it will stick.

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MAKING AMENDS: ON INDIA'S APPEAL TO SRI LANKA TO ADDRESS TAMIL ASPIRATIONS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Sri Lanka

India's appeal to Sri Lanka to address the aspirations of its Tamil minority will certainly find resonance among the Tamil-speaking populace on both sides of the Palk Strait, but it is doubtful if it will have any effect. A joint statement by both countries after a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart, Mahinda Rajapaksa, on September 26, not only reiterated India's stated policy of seeking to ensure "equality, justice, peace and respect within a united Sri Lanka" for Tamils, but explicitly mentioned the need to carry forward the reconciliation process through the implementation of the 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution. It said Mr. Rajapaksa expressed confidence that Sri Lanka would work towards "realising the expectations" of all ethnic groups, including Tamils. However, he appeared to qualify the commitment by linking it to "reconciliation nurtured as per the mandate of the people of Sri Lanka". Significantly, a separate statement by Mr. Rajapaksa's office issued later made no reference to the 13th Amendment, which envisaged power-sharing with the provinces based on the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987. The omission is unsurprising. Mr. Rajapaksa has the required two-thirds majority in Parliament to amend the Constitution as his party pleases, but the gulf between the sort of devolution that would fulfil Tamil aspirations and what his brother, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, would want to prioritise is quite large. India's interest in the matter is undoubtedly related to speculation that far from implementing the 13th Amendment, Sri Lanka may heed calls to roll back the provincial council system itself.

The trajectory of relations, in which India is keen on limiting Sri Lanka's exposure to China's sphere of influence, may not afford the country much leverage over its smaller neighbour. When India was backing Sri Lanka after the war resumed in 2005-06, it chose to ignore the de-merger of the northern and eastern provinces. Now, when there is little global interest in holding Sri Lanka to its past promises on ethnic reconciliation and justice for war-time excesses, there is room for considerable scepticism about how effectual any appeal to the Sri Lankan regime would be. The Rajapaksas are aware of their mandates and are unlikely to do anything that does not have the approbation of the majority Sinhala community. While announcing steps on bilateral cooperation and a \$15 million grant for Buddhist cultural exchanges, India held back its decision on Sri Lanka's request for a currency swap and a deferment of debt. It would be watching developments on the legislative front, as the Rajapaksa administration plans to undo legislation that had curbed the President's powers.

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UN AND THE RETREAT FROM MULTILATERALISM

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: UNO and its various Agencies

The [United Nations commemorated its 75th anniversary on September 21, 2020](#) by adopting a Declaration. The anniversary comes at a time when the world is witnessing a retreat from multilateralism. It also faces an unprecedented pandemic. In his address to the UN on September 22, the UN Secretary-General called the pandemic “the fifth horseman”. No one could have predicted it. It has also brought in its wake the deepest recession the world has seen since the 1930s. This has made it more difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the UN had adopted. The Secretary-General said the world is “careening off track” in achieving the SDGs.

Also read: [A new world order: On UN reforms](#)

The challenge to multilateralism is coming not from the have-nots, but the main stakeholders of the system. The U.S. is not alone in withdrawing from multilateralism. Brexit has shown that nationalism remains strong in Europe. It has delivered a blow to the idea of Europe, united and whole. Nevertheless, the most important development is the position of the U.S. As French President Emmanuel Macron remarked in his speech at the UN General Assembly, the U.S., which created the international system as we know today, is no longer willing to be its “guarantor of last resort”. U.S. President Donald Trump stressed “America First” in his speech, and suggested that others too should put their countries first.

Also read: [India calls Imran Khan’s speech at UNGA an “incessant rant”](#)

China has stepped in to take advantage of the West’s retreat from multilateralism. But China’s assertion of a role on the world stage is not an embrace of the idea of multilateralism. Its flagship Belt and Road Initiative consists of a series of bilateral credit agreements with recipient countries with no mechanism for multilateral consultation or oversight. Curiously, President Xi Jinping’s speech at the UN General Assembly did not mention it. The European Union’s and U.S.’s sanctions against Russia have driven it closer to China. The rift between the permanent members of the Security Council has already started affecting the work of the UN Security Council.

The speeches at the regular session of the UN General Assembly on September 22 brought out the clashing perspectives of the U.S. and China. President Trump highlighted China’s culpability in the spread of the pandemic. He pointed out that China had banned internal flights but allowed international flights from Wuhan to continue. This set the stage for the spread of COVID-19. The World Health Organization also failed to provide early warnings. President Xi’s speech sought to project the fight against COVID-19 as a matter of collective responsibility of the international community. He said China will “honour” its commitment to provide \$2 billion assistance to the developing countries over two years. This was clearly a reference to existing pledges without bringing additional resources to tackle a crisis which has tipped the world economy into recession. This is not a large amount considering the scale. The actual assistance committed to the UN COVID-19 response fund was a paltry \$50 million in addition to a similar amount pledged earlier.

Also read: [Modi pitches for larger role for India at UN](#)

President Macron pointed out that while the U.S. is withdrawing, the world faces China’s projection beyond its frontiers. He also highlighted problems nearer home posed by Turkey’s

intervention in Syria, Libya, and the Eastern Mediterranean, which is a breach of international law. The last was a reference to Turkey sending a drilling ship in Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a detailed reference to the Jammu and Kashmir issue. Though otherwise Mr. Erdogan's statements may not matter, Turkey has assumed the position of UN General Assembly President.

Also read: [PM Modi delivers virtual speech at United Nations General Assembly | September 26, 2020](#)

The UN Secretary-General's report on the work of the organisation highlights some of the achievements and challenges the world body faces. Over 40 UN political missions and peacekeeping operations engage 95,000 troops, police, and civil personnel. To be effective, they have to be put on a sound financial basis. The UN peacekeeping budget, a little over \$8 billion, is a small fraction of the \$1.9 trillion military expenditure governments made in 2019. Yet it suffers from a paucity of resources. There was an outstanding assessed contribution of \$1.7 billion for peacekeeping activities by the end of the financial year. Similarly, there was an outstanding \$711 million in the assessed contribution for the general budget. Most of the humanitarian assistance, developmental work, and budgets of the specialised agencies are based on voluntary contributions. There are calls for increasing public-private partnerships. This is not a satisfactory arrangement. The UN provides 'public goods' in terms of peace and development often in remote parts of the world. There may not be enough appetite on the part of corporations. The UN remains an inter-governmental body.

Also read: [News Analysis | U.N. draft declaration for 75th anniversary goes soft on India's demand for reform](#)

Most world leaders spoke of climate change. President Trump mentioned that China's emissions are nearly twice of those of the U.S., and despite its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the U.S. has reduced its carbon emissions by more than any country in the world. President Xi said that after peaking emissions by 2030, China will achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. President Macron said that he was determined to see the EU agree on a target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, in his speech made an extensive reference to Jammu and Kashmir. Though this is customary for Pakistani leaders, he brought a particularly uncivil tone to the discourse. Meanwhile, his country has slid to the 134th rank in the UN SDG index, the lowest for any country in South Asia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on UN reforms and India's contribution to UN Peacekeeping for which we can be justly proud. What does the UN bring to the developing countries? It gives them greater political space. We need to support reform not only to expand the permanent members' category of the Security Council but also to revitalise the role of the General Assembly. The retreat from multilateralism would undermine the UN's capacity to face diverse challenges.

D.P. Srivastava is former Ambassador to Iran. He dealt with United Nations issues for eight years in the Ministry of External Affairs

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JOINT STATEMENT FOR INDIA-DENMARK GREEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Europe, European Union (EU) and India

Her Excellency Ms. Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark and His Excellency, Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, co-chaired a Virtual Summit between India and Denmark on 28 September 2020.

2. Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Frederiksen held an in-depth exchange of views in a warm and friendly atmosphere on bilateral relations, discussed the Covid-19 pandemic and global matters of interest to both sides, including climate change and green transition and reached common understanding with a view to accelerating sustainable economies and societies.

3. They further noted with satisfaction the continued development of bilateral relations based on historical links, common democratic traditions and shared desire for regional, as well as international peace and stability.

4. Given the shared desire to remain trusted partners, the two Prime Ministers agreed to elevate India-Denmark relations to a Green Strategic Partnership. This partnership would build on and consolidate the existing agreement establishing a Joint Commission for Cooperation (signed 6 February 2009) between India and Denmark which envisaged cooperation within the political field; economic and commercial field; science and technology; environment; energy; education and culture. In addition, it builds on and complements the existing Joint Working Groups on Renewable Energy, Urban Development, Environment, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, Food Processing, Science, Technology and Innovation, Shipping, Labour Mobility and Digitization.

5. The Green Strategic Partnership is a mutually beneficial arrangement to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges and opportunities; with focus on an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged the importance of establishing the Green Strategic Partnership, under which India and Denmark will cooperate through relevant Ministries, institutions and stakeholders.

Energy and Climate Change

7. The two Prime Ministers confirmed the close partnership in addressing global challenges and solutions on green energy transition and climate change. The Strategic Sector Cooperation on offshore wind and renewable energy, as well as the India-Denmark Energy Partnership (INDEP) on capacity building, knowledge-sharing and technology transfer on wind energy; energy modeling and integration of renewable energy illustrate the shared commitment to address some of the common global challenges on the path towards global energy transition, green growth and sustainable development. The two sides envisage the energy partnership to be further strengthened over the coming years.

8. India and Denmark agree to be at the forefront in the global fight against climate change. Both countries have set very ambitious national targets on climate and energy that will contribute to an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement. Together, the two countries will show the

world that delivering on ambitious climate and sustainable energy goals is possible.

9. The two countries agreed to hold regular consultations and dialogue on climate change and renewable energy at various levels.

Environment/Water and Circular Economy

10. The two Prime Ministers agreed to work towards further expanding and strengthening the existing Government-to-Government cooperation on environment/water and circular economy. They further agreed to cooperate in water efficiency and non-revenue water (water loss) and in this context tasked the Indian Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Danish Environmental Protection Agency and the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food to develop a Work Plan for an initial period of three years (2021-23).

11. The two Prime Ministers expressed their joint wish to enhance cooperation in the specific areas of water supply, water distribution, wastewater treatment, sewerage systems, re-use of treated wastewater, water management and energy optimization in the water sector through the Indo-Danish Water Technology Alliance.

Sustainable Urban Development including Smart Cities

12. Both sides noted the holding of 2nd India-Denmark JWG on Sustainable Urban Development virtually on 26 June, 2020 and agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in sustainable urban development, including in smart cities through the Urban Living Lab in Goa.

13. Both sides also agreed to strengthen existing City-to-City cooperation between Udaipur and Aarhus and Tumakuru and Aalborg.

14. They noted that Danish companies are contributing to designing infrastructure projects in India and welcomed greater engagement of Danish side in all fields of sustainable urban development.

Business, Trade and Shipping

15. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the idea of developing partnerships between Governments, institutions and businesses of the two countries with special focus on green and climate-friendly technologies. They recognized the importance of regulatory framework conditions to support public and private investments in green energy.

16. Both leaders appreciated the deep cooperation on maritime affairs and noted the potential for enhancing cooperation in ship-building and design, maritime services and Green shipping, as well as port development.

17. The two Prime Ministers underlined that they would encourage business delegations, market access activities for SMEs and enhance ease of doing business.

18. India and Denmark confirmed the emerging cooperation in Intellectual Property Rights, which will help to modernize and strengthen their national intellectual property systems to promote innovation, creativity and technological advancement.

Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitization

19. India and Denmark recognize the importance of promoting and facilitating investments in

science, technology and innovation (STI) via strong public-private partnerships as an important way to accelerate technology development and the implementation of new solutions. Collaboration in STI supports the Green Strategic Partnership by promoting and strengthening relations between authorities, small and large companies and research and higher education institutions in India and Denmark. The two sides agree to build on existing strong bilateral STI partnerships with joint calls for projects in areas such as energy, water, bio-resources and ICT.

20. The two leaders recognized their shared interest in digitization and digital solutions and business models in the green transition and decided to collaborate for enhancement of development, innovation and demonstration in the field of digital technologies to support green sustainable growth.

Food and Agriculture

21. Given the immense potential to collaborate in the agricultural sector, the two Prime Ministers encouraged fostering deeper and closer cooperation between authorities, businesses and research institutions in the sectors of food processing and food safety, as well as animal husbandry and dairying.

Health and Life Science

22. Both sides emphasized the potential and their common desire to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation in the health sector. They confirmed their interest in expanding dialogue and sharing best practices on health policy issues, including on epidemics and vaccines, especially to combat Covid-19 and future pandemics. They agreed to work on expanding commercial opportunities for businesses by creating more favorable environments for the life science sector, including research collaborations.

Cultural Cooperation, People-to-People contacts and Labour Mobility

23. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged that the richness of the relationship between India and Denmark is a result of the long standing people-to-people contacts and agreed to further promote greater awareness and mutual understanding between the peoples of the two countries through cultural cooperation.

24. Both sides agreed to examine the possibilities for labour mobility, as well as to consider ease of travel between the two countries to facilitate greater people-to-people interaction and strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector

Multilateral Cooperation

25. The two Prime Ministers agree to join efforts and initiatives to support and promote a rule-based multilateral system. This includes strong multilateral cooperation to face the urgency to step up global efforts to combat the global challenges on energy and climate change and common commitment to the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency and the International Solar Alliance.

26. Both sides supported the need for cooperation on promotion of an open, inclusive and rule-based multilateral trading system under the WTO at its core to promote global growth and sustainable development.

27. Both sides expressed their support for the ongoing discussions to reform the WTO. Both sides reaffirmed their determination to strengthen cooperation and contribute for comprehensive

reforms of the WTO. Both sides agreed that the reforms need to be inclusive and to be carried out in a transparent manner, high priority being restoration of a full strength Appellate Body as part of the two-tiered Dispute Settlement System of the WTO.

28. Both sides expressed their commitment for working towards an ambitious, fair, and mutually beneficial Trade and Investment Agreement between EU and India to further strengthen and deepen the EU-India ties.

29. Both sides agreed that the Arctic Cooperation within the framework of Arctic Council has a global dimension and is essential for addressing the need of environmental protection and combating climate change. In this spirit, both sides expressed their willingness for collaboration within the framework of the Arctic Council in the area of climate change.

30. The two leaders acknowledged the shared values of human rights, democracy and rule of law and agreed to cooperate in multilateral fora to advance democracy and human rights.

CONCLUSION

31. The two leaders expressed their conviction that a decision of the two countries to establish Green Strategic Partnership between the Kingdom of Denmark and the Republic of India has opened a new chapter in the friendly and cooperative relations between them.

32. Ambitious goals and actions will be identified within the areas and outlined in an Action Plan that will be worked out and endorsed as soon as possible.

VRRK/SH

Her Excellency Ms. Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark and His Excellency, Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, co-chaired a Virtual Summit between India and Denmark on 28 September 2020.

2. Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Frederiksen held an in-depth exchange of views in a warm and friendly atmosphere on bilateral relations, discussed the Covid-19 pandemic and global matters of interest to both sides, including climate change and green transition and reached common understanding with a view to accelerating sustainable economies and societies.

3. They further noted with satisfaction the continued development of bilateral relations based on historical links, common democratic traditions and shared desire for regional, as well as international peace and stability.

4. Given the shared desire to remain trusted partners, the two Prime Ministers agreed to elevate India-Denmark relations to a Green Strategic Partnership. This partnership would build on and consolidate the existing agreement establishing a Joint Commission for Cooperation (signed 6 February 2009) between India and Denmark which envisaged cooperation within the political field; economic and commercial field; science and technology; environment; energy; education and culture. In addition, it builds on and complements the existing Joint Working Groups on Renewable Energy, Urban Development, Environment, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, Food Processing, Science, Technology and Innovation, Shipping, Labour Mobility and Digitization.

5. The Green Strategic Partnership is a mutually beneficial arrangement to advance political

cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges and opportunities; with focus on an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged the importance of establishing the Green Strategic Partnership, under which India and Denmark will cooperate through relevant Ministries, institutions and stakeholders.

Energy and Climate Change

7. The two Prime Ministers confirmed the close partnership in addressing global challenges and solutions on green energy transition and climate change. The Strategic Sector Cooperation on offshore wind and renewable energy, as well as the India-Denmark Energy Partnership (INDEP) on capacity building, knowledge-sharing and technology transfer on wind energy; energy modeling and integration of renewable energy illustrate the shared commitment to address some of the common global challenges on the path towards global energy transition, green growth and sustainable development. The two sides envisage the energy partnership to be further strengthened over the coming years.

8. India and Denmark agree to be at the forefront in the global fight against climate change. Both countries have set very ambitious national targets on climate and energy that will contribute to an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement. Together, the two countries will show the world that delivering on ambitious climate and sustainable energy goals is possible.

9. The two countries agreed to hold regular consultations and dialogue on climate change and renewable energy at various levels.

Environment/Water and Circular Economy

10. The two Prime Ministers agreed to work towards further expanding and strengthening the existing Government-to-Government cooperation on environment/water and circular economy. They further agreed to cooperate in water efficiency and non-revenue water (water loss) and in this context tasked the Indian Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Danish Environmental Protection Agency and the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food to develop a Work Plan for an initial period of three years (2021-23).

11. The two Prime Ministers expressed their joint wish to enhance cooperation in the specific areas of water supply, water distribution, wastewater treatment, sewerage systems, re-use of treated wastewater, water management and energy optimization in the water sector through the Indo-Danish Water Technology Alliance.

Sustainable Urban Development including Smart Cities

12. Both sides noted the holding of 2nd India-Denmark JWG on Sustainable Urban Development virtually on 26 June, 2020 and agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in sustainable urban development, including in smart cities through the Urban Living Lab in Goa.

13. Both sides also agreed to strengthen existing City-to-City cooperation between Udaipur and Aarhus and Tumakuru and Aalborg.

14. They noted that Danish companies are contributing to designing infrastructure projects in India and welcomed greater engagement of Danish side in all fields of sustainable urban development.

Business, Trade and Shipping

15. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the idea of developing partnerships between Governments, institutions and businesses of the two countries with special focus on green and climate-friendly technologies. They recognized the importance of regulatory framework conditions to support public and private investments in green energy.

16. Both leaders appreciated the deep cooperation on maritime affairs and noted the potential for enhancing cooperation in ship-building and design, maritime services and Green shipping, as well as port development.

17. The two Prime Ministers underlined that they would encourage business delegations, market access activities for SMEs and enhance ease of doing business.

18. India and Denmark confirmed the emerging cooperation in Intellectual Property Rights, which will help to modernize and strengthen their national intellectual property systems to promote innovation, creativity and technological advancement.

Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitization

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END

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