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Edited & compiled by

Mr. Hamza Nasir

Supervised by

Dr. Siraj Bashir

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About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled monthly.

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Whispering trade winds

Muneeb Ur Rahman

November 06, 2024

The world is evolving rapidly. Resultantly, new world order and modern state ideas are emerging. The traditional divisions are diminishing. Politics, demography, economy, security, geography, and peace all together form an organic mix. Today, the world is the centre of major powers' rivalries and new readjustments are taking place in response to rising traditional and non-traditional threats and challenges, particularly in the economic and security realms. Africa is considered as an important territory and it is the centre of focus, particularly that of middle and major powers. It is a continent comprising 1.3 billion people and 54 sovereign states. Most African countries are expected to reach the middle-income status by 2025 as per the World Bank estimates. The African region has a vast import market, and rich mineral resources, and has observed positive growth patterns in recent years in terms of its economy. The world has seen remarkable development in Africa in terms of combating climate change, alleviating poverty, building infrastructure, developing agriculture, and fighting terrorism. Six out of the ten fastest growing economies of the world are from Africa. Apart from the global economic slowdown, the African economies have been seen making progress and would continue doing so in the near future. Hence, it is rightly seen as the continent of the future. The UN sub-region of North Africa is a dynamic region that comprises seven countries, that is, Algeria, Sudan, Western Sahara, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Geographically, the UN sub region of North Africa positions itself between the Mediterranean and Sahel region. This region has been the focus of numerous cultures, religions, and civilizations.

The Romans, Greeks, Christians, Turks, and Arabs all left significant marks in this region. This region has the commonality of a Muslim majority population, Arab lineage, and a progressive and liberal outlook. It is considered to be one of the wealthiest regions of the African continent both due to its natural resources and closeness to the European market and its proximity to international trade routes. It generates one-third of Africa's total GDP. Each region or country establishes its relations based on certain interests, and these interests are mainly economic and geopolitical in nature. Although Pakistan has been regularly interacting with African countries on a broad range of regional and global challenges, yet a vast potential of mutual trade remains mostly untapped. Particularly the bilateral trade and economic potential on both sides has not been fully explored. The level of trade and economic cooperation is far below the potential. The diverse economies of North African countries and Pakistan provides an opportunity to take full advantage of economic trade, and economic potential on both sides. Though each country has

its own unique economic features, there are numerous areas where joint collaboration can lead to valuable results. The diverse economies of North African countries, and Pakistan with particular strengths in textile, agriculture, services, infrastructure development, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, defence equipment and tourism, provide promising prospects for cooperation and its expansion can boost the economic growth on each side and can create mutually valuable outcomes for their economies. Pakistan has vast opportunities and potential in the investment, trade, import, and export areas with North African countries. There are also some challenges in this aspect as well. North Africa is economically, strategically, and politically closely linked to the EU. Therefore, it is difficult for exporters or investors of other countries and regions to establish a strong trade and economic presence in the region. The lack of political contact with these countries is another major challenge as Pakistani leaders have traditionally looked to North America, Western Europe, or the Gulf states for economic prospects. The North African region has not received comprehensive attention, and nor have other African regions. This lack of political will has led to weak political interaction which is affecting the level of trade and economic cooperation and has become a challenge. The territorial and unsolved boundary issues such as between Egypt and Sudan, Algeria and Morocco, the situation in Libya, and the Western Sahara/Sahrawi Republic issues are major obstacles and challenges to fully utilize the trade and potential on both sides. In addition, limited connectivity, complex customs procedures, differences in regulatory frameworks, currency exchange risks, lack of trade agreements, limited market information, cultural and language differences are major challenges that hinder the growth of trade relations on both sides.

Africa offers a lot of opportunities, but Pakistan's export potential cannot be utilized unless the issues of supply capacity, trade policy and facilitation are first addressed. It has been the norm to send uninvited and incapable diplomats, missions, and personnel to African countries. These diplomats then perform their duties with disinterest. Pakistan needs to send competent trade missions to these countries so that a profound representation and cooperation on both sides could be ensured up to the potential. It is essential for the North African countries and Pakistan, to strengthen institutional frameworks by reducing tariffs, simplifying customs procedures and harmonizing regulatory frameworks which can create a favorable environment for long-term trade and cooperation.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/11/06/whispering-trade-winds/>

Indian Artillery Shells in Ukraine – The Sign of an Irresponsible State

AsadUllah Raisani

November 07, 2024

In the midst of the Russia-Ukraine war, reports have surfaced linking India to the artillery shells being used by Ukraine in the conflict. Despite New Delhi's denial, the Indian aspirations to maintain ties with both the West and Russia using its arms industry are threatening global peace and security. Overlooking such irresponsible behavior could have serious consequences for the international community.

With its growing economy and arms industry, India has begun to pursue global objectives that are impacting global security. It is a rising state that allies with the United States to contain China but refuses to be accountable for its non-compliance with international standards, positioning itself as a country that avoids accountability and responsibility. This attitude reflects a reckless disregard for international peace. The irony is that it has also started to use its arms industry as a tool to gain geopolitical leverage.

More recently, it has been reported by [Reuters](#) that according to 11 Indian and European government and defense industry officials, as well as a Reuters analysis of commercially available customs data, artillery shells sold by Indian arms makers have been diverted by European customers to Ukraine, and New Delhi has not intervened to stop the trade despite protests from Moscow. The sources and the customs statistics indicate that the munitions movement to support Ukraine's defense against Russia has been going on for more than a year.

New Delhi's plain denial in this regard, calling the report "misleading" and "inaccurate," speaks about its irresponsible behavior. This situation raises important questions about India's role in global security dynamics and its commitment to responsible state behavior.

Although India has exhibited irresponsible behavior for a long time, the incident that exemplified its extreme irresponsibility occurred in [March 2022](#), when an Indian missile landed in Mian Channu. The explanation provided by Indian officials—that it was accidentally launched—seems implausible; if true, it poses a greater danger to global security than one can imagine. Such irresponsible behavior could trigger a nuclear war in the region, leading to casualties and chaos worldwide, all because a nuclear state is failing to act responsibly.

This adventurism undermines Pakistan's deterrent capability and compels it to consider a reaction. It was only Islamabad's pragmatism that prevented an escalation into nuclear conflict; otherwise, India had crossed all bounds of irresponsibility. Pakistan then also warned against underestimating the potential that India's nuclear weapons could end up in the hands of rogue

groups and raised concerns about signs that the country's nuclear thinking was in the hands of extremist elements. It also rightly claimed that this concern had been made worse by the security establishment's adoption of an aggressive and strategic mindset fostered by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Pakistan was left with the burden of upholding strategic stability in this difficult strategic environment, and it remained dedicated to accomplishing this goal.

The recent case of India's irresponsible behavior regarding the diversion of Indian artillery shells to Ukraine highlights its reckless actions and has multiple implications for global security. First, India has clearly disregarded the end-user obligations associated with its arms exports. This act causes an erosion of non-proliferation norms, non-compliance with international regulations, and deviations from liberal values, ultimately undermining the efforts of the international community to prevent the proliferation of arms, particularly among states with nuclear capabilities.

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, hypocritically attempting to convince Russia of its favorable alliance while simultaneously providing arms to Ukraine benefits no one but perhaps India alone, thereby diluting the global commitment to non-proliferation. Second, India's arms exports to conflict zones like Ukraine and Myanmar's military junta can exacerbate tensions not only in the Ukrainian and Russian regions but also in South Asia. As, New Delhi views China as a competitor that challenges its hegemonic ambitions and regards Pakistan as a historical rival, with all three countries being nuclear powers. India's global ambitions in arms exporting will ultimately lead Islamabad and Beijing to perceive a threat, prompting them to enhance their military capabilities to avoid a dilution of their deterrence. This situation could result in an arms race in South Asia, creating conditions conducive to conflict.

Third, the diversion of Indian artillery shells to Ukraine could strain India's longstanding relationship with Russia if it continues to play both sides. Russia has been a key supplier of military hardware to India. If India's irresponsible behavior persists, Moscow may reassess its strategic partnership with New Delhi, leading to a rift between the two countries. This would leave India recklessly challenging three nuclear states—Pakistan, China, and Russia—in addition to its domestic struggles to control uranium thefts. Globally, India seems to be on a path of confronting these three nuclear states, mistakenly believing it is in its interest to do so. The Kremlin must also realize that New Delhi is not a reliable partner and could not be highly relied upon in the ongoing East-West confrontation. Fourth, New Delhi's push to expand its arms exports amid the Russia-Ukraine War could alter the dynamics of the global arms market. This may encourage other nations to follow suit, ultimately leading to increased competition and potentially destabilizing

regions that are already fraught with conflict or in war-like situations. The situation sets a concerning precedent where a nuclear-capable state can supply arms to conflict zones with little or no accountability. This could also embolden other nations to engage in similar practices, increasing the likelihood of conflicts being fueled by external arms supplies. Fifth, this incident raises serious questions about the effectiveness and legitimacy of the existing international regulatory frameworks that govern arms sales and transfers. If major states like India can circumvent these norms without repercussions, it will pose a serious question on the effectiveness of arms control segments Sixth, India's irresponsible behavior in this case increases the risk of miscalculations and misunderstandings in an already volatile environment like Ukraine. Such ambitious moves can exacerbate ongoing conflicts, as any perceived support for one side in a conflict could provoke retaliatory actions from adversaries, increasing the risk of military confrontations.

To conclude, New Delhi's irresponsible behavior as a nuclear state has once again raised alarms about the possibility that one nation can challenge global peace if left unheeded. In their utter ignorance, the policymakers in India's security establishment believe their actions serve the national interest, while they are, in fact, posing threats to global security. They are rarely held accountable, which emboldens them to repeat such irresponsibility and adventurism whenever they deem fit, only to later deny their actions or label them as accidents. The international community should urge India to abide by international restraints and authorize the end-user obligations. Particularly, the US must realize that, even if it considers India as its "net security provider" against China, its violation of international norms will lead to strategic chain reactions that will incentivize other rogue nations to follow suit, which in large have fallouts for the US-led international order. They must also clearly discourage such actions before it is too late.

<https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/indian-artillery-shells-in-ukraine/>

The New Space Race

Shah Meer

November 07, 2024

“Astro politics” is defined as the political study of stars, celestial bodies, and activities in outer space. Astro politics is dedicated to the military and commercial use of outer space and celestial bodies to extract resources from space and utilize them for the national strength of nations on Earth. Like geopolitics, Astro politics also involves a scramble for power, competing strategies, and the delicate balancing of countless resources. Hence, the new space race. The outer space presents immense opportunities for the military field, research, technological advancement, navigation surveillance, and economy. It ensures secure communication; guides precision strikes and helps in the space-based reconnaissance. This has significantly dragged the attention of great powers. The US, China, and Russia are at the forefront of the race for dominance in outer space and intend to establish a strategic edge, marking the age of increased competition in outer space.

Just like the strategically important locations on the earth, the geography of space – though unmeasurable – has some highly relevant chokepoints. The Low Earth Orbit (LEO) is crucial for early warning systems, satellite communication, and other commercial activities where the competing states aim to outmaneuver the adversaries. Beyond LEO lies the Terra region, which is important for space exploration, space debris management, and GPS navigation. One of the leading theorists of Astro politics Everett Dolman coins, “Who Controls LEO, controls Near-Earth Space; who controls Near-Earth Space will control Terra; and whosoever dominates Terra will determine the destiny of mankind”. The race for dominance in outer space began between the United States and the former USSR during the Cold War period. Over the decades, China has taken a sheer interest in space exploration. China believes that its space ambitions aim to improve life on Earth by utilizing space resources. However, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) controls all of China’s space activities to serve the needs of national defense, military forces, and the national economy – a step indicating the extreme militarization of space.

Beijing has its space station which is fully owned, funded, and operated by China, unlike the International Space Station which is a multilateral project owned and operated by the US, Japan, Russia, Europe, and Canada. China’s growing space program is widely supplemented by Russia’s prior experience of the space race with the US. Both countries are cooperating on various issues including rocket engines, spaceplanes, satellite navigation and monitoring space debris. Both countries have also announced a Sino-Russo lunar nuclear plant, signaling Russia’s eastward alignment and defection from the US-established norms of space exploration.

The Kremlin has been also noticed of space coercion especially after the Russia-Ukraine war and subsequent sanctions on Moscow: it stopped selling rocket engines to the US; it ceased working with Germany on a joint space program; the Kremlin destroyed one of its obsolete satellites sending space debris to ISS. The increasing footprints of China and Russia in space have revived the US space ambitions. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the Americans assumed their self-proclaimed victory in the space domain against the communist threat. But the growing footprints of China and Russia have prevailed in an urge for counterbalancing strategies. President Trump announced the Artemis program in 2017 to put the man and women on Mars again. However, President Biden tilted the program towards more commercial and military initiatives.

The race in space has already begun and it is further fueled by the absence of any legally binding instrument. The conduct of geopolitics is governed by international standards, yet it is gruesome and lethal. An outlawed space will be more destructive. The space standards set during the Cold War in the shape of the Outer Space Treaty (1967), Rescue Agreement (1968) or Moon Agreement (1984) are no longer fit for the current space race and are open to several interpretational fallacies that can allow states to exceed the bounds of legal limits. Another problem with space laws is that their geography has no certain boundaries which makes it more difficult to be implemented. Thus, the space race has begun among the great powers and has unveiled new strategic realities. To control the extreme militarization of space in tandem with its use for peaceful purposes, there is a need of an internationally recognized binding instrument that should set standards for peaceful use of the space. It should also establish practical protocols for arms control in outer space and introduce transparency standards to curtail strategic ambiguities. The instrument has to make relevant proposals for challenges such as space debris which can cause harm to satellites and other human activities. All these efforts are contingent on the cooperation among the great powers. Only through sustained cooperation, space will remain a domain of progress and security, not conflict and uncertainties.

<https://stratheia.com/the-new-space-race/>

The FMCT Debate

Sher Ali

November 08, 2024

Efforts to curb the spread of nuclear material and technology began soon after the invention of the nuclear bomb. However, these efforts only began after five states including the United States, the United Kingdom, the ex-USSR, France, and China carried out their nuclear tests and became recognized states under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Signed in July 1967, the NPT is the first major step which aims to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons without impeding peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Over the years, states have agreed and proposed initiatives to stem the spread of nuclear weapons technology. However, the challenge lies in the fact that states tend to support or negotiate treaties only when they align with their interests, often at the expense of broader regional and global peace and stability. The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is one such proposed initiative.

The FMCT is a proposed treaty which seeks to address the increasing concerns over nuclear proliferation and control fissile materials which are the key components of nuclear weapons. The FMCT aims to place new restrictions on the recognized nuclear weapon states and on the four states that are not members of the NPT (Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea). Recurrently, it started with the UN resolution 78/57 L, passed unanimously in 1993, calling for a “non-discriminatory, multi-lateral and internationally and effectively verifiable” treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. In 1995, the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva established a committee to discuss the FMCT. In 2000, during the NPT Review and Extension Conference, the parties agreed to begin negotiations to complete an FMCT within five years. However, progress has remained stalled due to disagreements over verification and parallel negotiations on outer space arms control. The treaty is subject to debate and faces serious challenges. One of the most critical issues is addressing the existing stockpile of fissile materials; without which, the FMCT cannot achieve its principal goal. The treaty fails to ensure that there is no discrimination among nuclear-armed states. Discriminatory and ineffective practices raise concerns about the integrity of global non-proliferation efforts, as they can create disparities that undermine the objectives of global security and stability. Over the years, the NPT, which serves as a cornerstone of global non-proliferation, has experienced upheavals mainly due to the geopolitical interests of a few states. Notably, the AUKUS security pact has been the subject of debate and criticism and is one such example which dents the non-proliferation efforts. One more case is the discriminatory policies of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which provides fissile material to India. India, despite being outside the NPT, benefits from the waiver provided

by the US. These violations highlight the challenges inherent in enforcing compliance and the need for robust verification mechanisms in any new treaty. Curtailing the production of new fissile material and ignoring the existing stockpile would exacerbate security concerns by creating strategic imbalances and intensifying threat perceptions as countries with larger stockpiles would seek strategic advantages, potentially undermining the goal of promoting disarmament. States that feel threatened by these imbalances would not engage or support such disarmament initiatives, fearing that their security is compromised. Notably, Pakistan has been the strongest advocate for requiring an agreement to include existing stocks in any fissile materials treaty as a prerequisite for commencing formal negotiations on an FMCT. Certainly, it is a manifestation of Pakistan's concerns emanating from India's much larger stockpile of weapon-grade nuclear material which the country is receiving through a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US. Under the agreement, India is importing fissile material for energy purposes, thereby freeing up fissile material produced indigenously to potentially use for military purposes.

To sum up, a comprehensive and unbiased approach is needed to promote global non-proliferation goals. Without addressing the asymmetries, any initiative would create an environment of mistrust and uncertainty, eventually failing to ensure global security. Any self-serving approach undermines collective efforts to achieve disarmament as it leads to strategic imbalances and intensifies existing tensions and rivalries, ultimately hindering meaningful progress toward global security. The international community should prioritize resolving long-standing territorial disputes, prevent arms races, and promote nuclear restraint. Finally, only through sincere and non-discriminatory efforts the goal of global security and stability can be achieved.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2024/the-fmct-debate>

Failure of the Global Peace Efforts

Pairman Bazai

November 09, 2024

As the world wobbles on the brink of conflict, it is essential to assess the state of global peace efforts and their glaring shortcomings. Despite decades of diplomacy and international cooperation, the current geopolitical landscape is marred by unrest, violence, and instability, suggesting that we are on the precipice of another major war. The failures of global peace efforts are starkly evident in the ongoing conflicts that dominate our headlines. In Gaza, the cycle of violence shows no signs of abating in fact directly or indirectly engaging the whole middle east since decades and has currently turned into Iranian retaliation against Israel, despite countless attempts at ceasefire negotiations. Back in 2022, the war in Ukraine escalates, threatening to draw in larger powers and destabilize Europe. These examples highlight not just a lack of effective diplomacy but a systemic breakdown in the mechanisms designed to foster peace. Furthermore, the major contributors to this failure include regional conflicts, regional and global powers acting as facilitators rather than mediators, evolving nature of warfare (including digital attacks and hybrid warfare), and the failure of regional and international organizations.

Currently, regional conflicts are escalating, especially in the Middle East. The ongoing tensions between Israel and Hamas threaten to spill over into a broader regional war, with Hezbollah and Iran's lurk as potential aggressors till April 2024. On 14 April Hossein Salami announced Iran's new strategic doctrine of acting directly rather than through proxies, stated that "From now on, if the Zionist regime attacks our interests, assets, people or citizens at any point we will counter attack from the Islamic Republic of Iran." Thereafter, it was followed by numerous high-profile assassinations of political and military leaders of Iranian proxy groups and resulted in full-fledged missile attacks on Israel on 1 October 2024 by Iran. Consequently, the death toll of the Palestinians had been increased to 41431 and 95818 injuries (more than 50% were women and children) since 7 October 2023 (Hamas attack on Southern Israel) to 22 September 2024 as estimated by Palestinian News & Information Agency (WAFA). Each miscalculation in this already volatile region could lead to disastrous consequences, not just locally but globally. As geopolitical stakes rise, the potential for a major conflict looms larger than ever. Another contributor in peace building efforts is the role of the regional and international powers acting as facilitators rather than mediators. In the current Iran-Israel conflict, peace negotiations can yield different outcomes depending on whether powers act as facilitators or mediators.

Additionally, the evolving nature of warfare like digital attacks and hybrid warfare poses new challenges to traditional peacekeeping efforts. States like the US, Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and Israel are increasingly involved in digital attacks and hybrid warfare. The US has conducted cyber operations against ISIS and employed hybrid tactics in Ukraine, while Russia exemplifies hybrid warfare through its annexation of Crimea and cyberattacks on Ukraine. China combines military expansion in the South China Sea with economic coercion and cyber-espionage. While, Iran has executed cyberattacks, including the 2012 assault on Saudi Aramco, and supports regional proxies. North Korea's cyber operations, such as the 2014 Sony Pictures hack, highlight its hybrid tactics. On top of all, Israel's use of exploding pager devices against Hezbollah in September 2024, resulted in the deaths of at least nine people and injured thousands, showcasing the lethal potential of digital warfare. The involvement of these states in complex conflicts poses significant challenges to traditional peacekeeping missions, which struggle to address non-conventional tactics and require new strategies and technologies to maintain peace and security effectively.

Subsequently, the failure of regional and international organizations to effectively manage conflicts further exacerbates the situation. For instance, regional organizations like the African Union and the ASEAN have struggled to manage conflicts effectively despite their initial capabilities and slogans such as "African Solutions to African Problems." These challenges stem from limited resources, the complexities of international dimensions in conflicts, and the UN Security Council's paralysis due to competing interests among its permanent members, which has contributed to ongoing crises.

The UN, originally created to prevent conflict and promote peace, has faced criticism for its ineffectiveness in addressing wars, particularly following contentious decisions like the 1947 resolution to partition Palestine, which led to lasting tensions with Israel and its Arab neighbors. As seen in crises in Gaza and Ukraine, the limitations of international organizations hinder their ability to implement effective peace initiatives in an increasingly fragmented global landscape.

As reflecting on the above-mentioned challenges, it is vital to rethink the approach of international diplomacy. First, there is a need for genuine mediation efforts that engage conflicting parties in constructive dialogue, rather than allowing regional and global powers to merely facilitate limited agreements. Second, investing in resources and capacities for regional organizations can enhance their ability to manage conflicts effectively. Third, the UN Security Council needs to prioritize collective action over individual national interests, adopt clearer guidelines for

intervention, and foster collaboration with regional organizations and civil society to address conflicts more holistically. Last, but not least, adopting peacekeeping strategies to address the evolving nature of warfare, including cyber and hybrid threats, will be essential to maintaining stability and promoting lasting peace.

<https://southasiajournal.net/failure-of-the-global-peace-efforts/>

India's Engagement with Global South

Shah Meer

November 14, 2024

The rise of China and the resurgence of great power competition has created a new strategic environment where, unlike the Cold War era where rigid alliances prevailed, post-Cold War politics has opened more inclusive relations where partnerships took precedence over alliances. Marked by historical neglect and resource-rich trajectory, the countries of Global South – mainly located in economically less developed and historically marginalized Latin America, Africa, Oceania and Asia – are now getting greater attention. Major powers are now rushing to these nations to widen their sphere of influence and global presence. India, a relatively new competitor in the race, intends to expand its global presence while engaging with Global South as a part of its grand strategy to wield more influence across the developing regions to strengthen its diplomatic bargain for demanding more say in international affairs. This marks a pivotal moment in New Delhi's aspirations for a greater role on the global stage.

India's engagement with Global South is significantly increasing. Under the presidency of India, New Delhi convened and hosted three Voice for Global South Summits (VGSS) and assured 125 attending countries that their profound challenges will be made central to G20 summits. New Delhi has introduced several initiatives for Global South ranging from solar alliances to South-South Trade, from the formation of BRICS to convening VGSS, and from pharmaceuticals and vaccine sharing to infrastructure development. Particularly with Africa, New Delhi declares it "India's top priority". It is widely believed that due to Indian lobbying, the African Union was included as a full member of G20. It has unveiled a new conceptual framework for South-South engagement by the name of 'Development Compact' where it intends to offer an alternative path of development primarily focusing on technology sharing, capacity building, trade for development, grants and concessional finance. India is also among the countries offering quota-free and duty-free access to least developed countries to its markets.

Particularly with Africa, New Delhi declares it "India's top priority". It is widely believed that due to Indian lobbying, the African Union was included as a full member of G20 in September 2023. The India-Africa trade volume has grown 18 percent annually since 2003, reaching the benchmark of \$103 in 2023. India's engagement with Central American countries has also gained much attention. The policy community in New Delhi believes that it has long ignored and neglected this region. They also strongly believe that to emerge as a global power, India has to exhibit an

international presence in such regions. In the past two years, Jai Shankar has visited eight Latin American countries, marking a burst of Indian diplomatic activities in the region.

Arguably, India's engagement with developing countries is part of its broader grand strategy primarily set to achieve three strategic objectives. First, New Delhi aims to play a more influential role in the emerging multilateral order. Through such partnerships, New Delhi aims to increase its say in global institutions. India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar vocally speaks that New Delhi's engagement with GS can strengthen its position in international governance and multilateral institutions, and it could also help it forge new strategic alliances with powerful nations like the US and Europe. "New Delhi sees the Global South as a massive export market that will help it consolidate its "Made in India" initiative.

Second, India also aspires to replace China in the Global South. Beijing is said to be the legitimate leader of the developing world, as legitimated by the Bandung Conference in 1955 and later by its efforts to transform the Global South through investment in the context of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India since then, has tried to be prominent through Non-Aligned Movement. Presently, in the ongoing power transition from the Western Hemisphere to the Eastern, India aims to balance the influence of China in the Global South. India criticizes China for promoting projects that do not meet international quality and transparency standards and propagates to offer more fair practices in political and economic relations.

Third, New Delhi sees the Global South as a massive export market that will help it consolidate its "Made in India" initiative. The resource-rich nations of the developing world not only boost exports of India but also supply resources that help develop indigenous industry. In 2022 alone, India imported 1.672 billion barrels of oil and 29.116 billion cubic meters of natural gas, while exporting \$10.3 billion worth of telecom equipment and \$18 billion worth of pharmaceuticals to the Global South.

Finally, India's engagement with the Global South is in its infancy stage and is dwarfed by China's substantial investments. Its financial constraints, inefficient bureaucracy and slow-moving government will definitely hinder its aspirations. So far, the US has supported India's endeavors in the Global South as counter-balancing strategy to outweigh China's influence which it has established through historical ties and massive investments through BRI.

However, India will not serve the American interests as expected and would demand strategic autonomy. The US must realize that the ongoing tug of war in the Global South is not bilateral but trilateral. India will pursue its own ambitions that is to leverage American support to oust China and compete with the US where possible.

<https://stratheaia.com/indias-engagement-with-global-south/>

Pakistan-ASEAN Diplomatic Relations: Current State and Future Prospects

Harsa Kakar

November 16, 2024

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has emerged as a symbol of peace, security, and stability across Asia. Pakistan has maintained cordial relations with this regional organization for over three decades, which reflects the success of Pakistan's "Vision East Asia" policy. Sharing various common interests, cooperative agreements, and strong diplomatic exchanges, Pakistan-ASEAN relations with each passing day are growing. Pakistan became its Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1993. A year later, in 1994, the Pakistan-ASEAN Cooperation Fund (APCF) was established with \$ 1 million as its initial amount. The dialogue partnership was further institutionalized with the first official meeting of the ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (APJSCC) on February 05, 1999. In recent years, relations between Pakistan and ASEAN have been elevated by expanding cooperation in areas such as violent extremism, cross border crimes, counterterrorism, food and agriculture, information technology, tourism, and disaster management. Moreover, to further solidify ties with ASEAN members, Pakistan offers 13 seats annually to students belonging to ASEAN states in medical and engineering fields, under the Pakistan Technical Assistance Program. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a key platform for security dialogue in Asia, complementing various bilateral alliances and dialogues formed under the Treaty of Amity of 1976. Established in 1994, the ARF aims to discuss security issues and measures, develop cooperation through confidence-building measures, and engage in preventive diplomacy to strengthen peace and security in Southeast Asia. On July 02, 2004, Pakistan endorsed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and joined the ARF as its 24th member. Pakistan is notably the only ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partner that is also a member of ARF and has actively participated from the outset. Pakistan also hosted a gathering of all ASEAN defense universities in 2021, further cementing its expanding relationships with the region. Pakistan's Diplomatic Relations with ASEAN Countries

1. Malaysia Following Malaysia's independence, diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Malaysia were established in 1957. Despite some tense moments during the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1965, ties between the two states improved partly due to the Iranian diplomacy. In the 2000s, the Malaysia and Pakistan Closer Economic Engagement Agreement was concluded, initiating bilateral discussions that helped uncover mutually beneficial collaborations as well as led to Malaysia supporting greater engagement between Pakistan and ASEAN members. Moreover,

both nations are the members of Commonwealth of Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). These platforms not only help strengthen the bond between the two states but also provide avenues to foster collaboration. Pakistan should focus on improving its economic ties with Malaysia, as it will help create “absolute gains” creating a win-win situation.

2. Indonesia and Pakistan have long maintained diplomatic relations with a focus on multifaceted cooperation, commercial partnerships, and tourism. In 2005, the two countries ratified an extensive economic alliance, including the Indonesia Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (IPPTA). They have also conducted bilateral consultations to strengthen relations and encourage exchanges in politics, economy, defense, and security. In 2022, both states hosted a third round Viewpoint By Harsa Kakar 32 of discussions on Palestine and Kashmir, showcasing their shared commitment to addressing global issues of mutual concern.

3. Singapore Pakistan and Singapore established diplomatic ties in 1968, based on shared views on regional and global concerns. Both countries provide mutual support in multilateral forums such as the United Nations (UN), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Commonwealth, and G- However, there have been few significant bilateral leadership visits since 2004. A key moment in bilateral relations were the meeting between the two Prime Minister’s in January 2020, where both states decided enhancing economic cooperation and exploring new avenues for trade and investment.

4. Vietnam Pakistan and Vietnam have maintained cordial diplomatic relations since 1972. There here have been several high-level meetings and visits between the two countries, including a visit by President of Pakistan to Vietnam in 2001. During the 29th ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Conference held in Phnom Penh, both nations reviewed their bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction with the progress, while emphasizing the potential for further development and cooperation in various sectors.

5. Thailand Since 1951, Pakistan and Thailand have maintained diplomatic ties with an emphasis on mutual economic and cultural understanding. Thailand’s “Look West Policy” and Pakistan’s “Vision East Asia Policy” complement each other, strengthening their relations. Broad communication exists between the two nations, with 600 Thai students studying in Pakistan and 75,000 Pakistani tourists visiting Thailand annually.

6. Philippines Pakistan and the Philippines have enjoyed cordial relations since 1949, marking 75 years of collaboration. They have established a framework for Policy Consultations Talks and have exchanged high-level visits. The two countries have 25 cooperative agreements and are both members of the ARF, ASEAN, and UN.

7. Myanmar Pakistan and Myanmar have maintained diplomatic relations since 1948, exchanging high-level visits and engaging in economic transactions. Under its CLMV Program and Technical Assistance Programme (PTAP), Pakistan exports electronic equipment to Myanmar. Both nations recently engaged at the 29th AFR and committed to further strengthen their ties. On July 02, 2004, Pakistan endorsed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and joined the ARF as its 24th member. Pakistan is notably the only ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partner that is also a member of ARF and has actively participated from the outset. Pakistan also hosted a gathering of all ASEAN defense universities in 2021, further cementing its expanding relationships with the region

8. Cambodia Since 1952, Pakistan and Cambodia have maintained diplomatic relations, with a \$40 million trade surplus under their CLMV and PTAP Assistance Programs. Both states recently met at the 29th ARF summit to reinforce their diplomatic ties for mutual benefit.

9. Brunei Darussalam Since Brunei's independence in 1984, both states have enjoyed cordial relations. They have established institutional frameworks such as the Pakistan-Brunei Joint Economic Commission and the Pakistan-Brunei Joint Working Committee on Defence Cooperation to further solidify their ties.

10. Lao PDR Pakistan and Lao PDR established diplomatic relations in 1965, engaging in bilateral political consultations and trade. In 2021, the bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$948,734, with key exports including electronics and medical supplies. Recommendations to Improve Relations with ASEAN Countries

1. Under the "Vision East Policy," Pakistan should focus diplomatically on this region, recognizing its true geoeconomic and geopolitical potential.

2. Pakistan should prioritize increasing its trade with rapidly growing ASEAN economies, especially with Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.
3. Pakistan should increase security and strategic agreements within the ASEAN forum to enhance the fight against terrorism.
4. Both ASEAN countries and Pakistan should expand their relations by prioritizing cultural exchanges and educational programs, such as semester exchange programs and scholarships. In a nutshell, Pakistan must build on its relations with ASEAN members to further strengthen its ties with the bloc. Deepening these relationships can provide Pakistan with valuable opportunities for economic growth, trade diversification, and regional cooperation.

https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/Pivot-Magazine/Pivot_Magazine_Nov_2024.pdf

Trump Returns: Three Key Challenges For US Foreign Policy

Ali Abbas

November 17, 2024

Donald Trump has been elected as the 47th President of the United States. It must not be too surprising, however, as the policies adopted by the Democrats in the last four years haven't served the US well diplomatically, militarily and economically. Today, the US finds itself relatively weaker than how Trump left it in 2020. On the foreign policy front, the Trump administration will continue to face three immediate challenges. The raging conflict in the Middle East involving Hezbollah, Hamas, Iran, and Israel as well as the Russia-Ukraine war and the perceived increase in global influence of China. American presidents have historically complied with Israeli demands. The Israeli lobby, as highlighted by Prof Mearsheimer in his book "The Israeli Lobby & The US Foreign Policy," exerts unparalleled influence over the American policy circles. This circle includes the branches of the government, civil society, think tanks, academia, and the military industrial complex. The American deep state is well funded and taken care of by the Israeli lobby.

Structural factors aside, President-elect Trump's temperament and his term as president from 2016-20 show he has been an ardent supporter of the Israeli cause, arguably more than any other president in modern US history. His endorsement of Jerusalem as Israeli capital, his support for the peace deal between a few Arab nations and Israel, which provided Israel with much-needed diplomatic space and support, and his approval of direct military actions against Israel's adversaries in the Middle East region — particularly the assassination of Qasem Suleimani in January 2020. These are some of the instances one must consider before putting forth optimistic estimations about peace prevailing in the Middle East region. Netanyahu, sensing an imminent Trump victory, found it convenient to dismiss his defense minister Yoav Gallant just one day before the results of the US elections. This indicates Israeli optimism towards a shift in American policies in the coming weeks and months. It must be noted that Gallant was less hawkish than most of the Israeli war cabinet members and harbored serious reservations against Netanyahu on his postwar strategy.

Another factor to bear in mind is the deep role political and campaign financiers play in shaping American foreign policy. Miriam Adelson, a Jew and billionaire, has been one of the strongest supporters and financiers of Trump's recent campaign. It is likely that Trump's policy on the Middle East and Israel will be influenced by her and the interests she represents. Lastly, Trump's cabinet can be labeled an "aerie of hawks." Following on this precedence, Trump has named Marco Rubio as the Secretary of State who is an ardent supporter of Israel and staunch opponent of

Iran. His hawkish views on Russia, however, may as well be overridden by Trump and he is unlikely to take a harsh stance against Russia if he leads as a 'peace-envoy' to Ukraine. Another nomination, Mike Waltz, a Republican representative, who is also a critic of China has been nominated for the position of National Security Adviser. Elise Stefanik has been nominated for the position of the United States' ambassador to the UN – she too has been pro-Israel and an ardent supporter of the Zionist cause. These indicators suggest that Israel's actions will receive increased support in its genocidal war against civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.

These are possibilities that will obviously come at a cost, which will most likely be paid by Ukraine. Donald Trump, unlike his support for Israel, has been in flagrant opposition to the NATO expansion in the Eastern Europe. Trump has reservations about NATO's overdependence on the US finances and military support; he sees little or no value in NATO expansion, especially when it irks Russia. Trump has had a relatively mellow relationship with Vladimir Putin, whom he does not see as a threat, unlike the Democrats. Given the likelihood of further escalation into a potential nuclear war and Trump's dismissal of Russia as an existential threat to the US, a reduction in support for Ukraine and NATO against Russia will be on the cards, which may result in a ceasefire sooner or later.

Unfortunately, Trump does not share a similar view about Iran and China. Trump considers them threats to the United States' Middle East and Asia-Pacific strategies, respectively. Building on his previous policies, Trump will likely increase American and Western pressure on Iran, focusing on its nuclear program and ballistic missile program – which was the precise reason why Trump shelved the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. These two agendas possess existential importance for the US and Israel. Highly suspicious of Iranian intentions, Trump will take relatively more proactive measures to contain Iran and protect Israel's interests in the Middle East. In his recent campaign, Trump categorically opposed Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The US under Trump will pose serious challenges to China in the realms of diplomacy, trade, war, and military, and most importantly, its bid for economic expansion and cooperation in Asia and other regions of the world. With some estimates that China may surpass the US in economic power by the end of this decade, Trump's 2024–28 regime will have to fight an existential contest with the rising dragon. It must be noted that Trump started a trade war with China when he was the president (2016-20) and sought to limit China's growing upper hand vis-à-vis the US. America's China policy undoubtedly has effects on America's policy towards Pakistan and India. It is unlikely that Trump will appease Pakistan, provide it with diplomatic support, or resume

the military aid that he himself suspended during his last tenure. All this stems from the fact that the US sees Pakistan as an indispensable ally of China and the key state in China's BRI initiative. CPEC's operationalization means China's reduced dependency on maritime trade and resultantly reduced vulnerability to US maritime blackmail. Currently, terrorism and insurgency and a struggling economy are the greatest hurdles to CPEC in Pakistan. As such, US support for Pakistan in counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and military support appears to be unlikely, and relations are expected to remain cold. On the other hand, India, which is 'the frontline state' in America's 'War on China,' will likely enjoy an increased American support diplomatically, financially, and militarily. The alliances and agreements, such as the QUAD, which had been out of the limelight since the Biden administration came to power, will be back on the headlines again. The Republican presidents have historically been supportive of India, especially as a hedge against China. The nuclear deal, the NSG waiver, the COMCASA, the ISA, the BECA, and numerous other defense and strategic agreements have bolstered India. These agreements were reached whenever a Republican president was in the White House, and there will be one for the next four years.

In conclusion, America's three-pronged strategy will test Donald Trump's political maneuverability and his competence. A businessman at heart yet rash and unforgiving make up for a highly unpredictable personality. Yet Trump has proved, notwithstanding other factors, that he is decisive. America will not be in an ambiguous state, as was the case during the Biden administration. Trump will take sides and be decisive in his policies. It is possible that the Russia-Ukraine war will be resolved after Trump takes office and it will spell the end of NATO's expansion. Regarding China and Iran, the Trump administration will pursue aggressive policies in the Middle East and the Asia Pacific primarily aiming to contain both threats. This will be marked by the increased assistance to Israel and India. Pakistan on the other hand owing to its strategic importance to China and India's growing importance against China, may not expect any significant improvement in its relations with the US in the short run.

<https://stratheaia.com/trump-returns-three-key-challenges-for-us-foreign-policy/>

Indus Water Treaty: Continuity or Renegotiation

Nomeen Kassi

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Scholars believe future conflict between Pakistan and India could revolve around water disputes. The situation is very alarming because both countries are nuclear states. Pakistan has faced water crises and distribution challenges with its adversary since independence. The dispute was settled in 1960 through the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), negotiated by the World Bank (WB). However, today both the states have concerns regarding the terms of the agreement.

Pakistan is an agrarian economy. It uses the water of the mighty Indus Rivers for agriculture, providing 65% of employment in the sector. The IWT divides the Indus Rivers between the two rival countries. India gets 53% of the water, while Pakistan receives 47%. The eastern rivers: Beas, Sutlej, and Ravi, are Indian-controlled. Whereas, Pakistan controls the western rivers: Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. India primarily controls and manipulates the water flow of the western rivers.

The IWT allows India to build small-size projects on these rivers. However, they should not exceed 1 million cubic meters (m³) or alter the river courses. In case of any dispute, the treaty allows WB to arbitrate or water experts will hear the case if both states consent. India has always violated the treaty agreements. Pakistan tried several times to stop India. However, India continues to build mega projects against the treaty agreement. Pakistan is concerned that India's planned hydropower dams will cut flows on the river, which feeds 80% of its irrigated agriculture.

To illustrate, the Kishanganga hydroelectric project has an installed capacity of 330 megawatts (MW), in the Jhelum River basin, in illegally Indian-occupied Kashmir. The dam gives India control over a river that flows into Indian-held Kashmir and back into Pakistan. It will transfer the water from the Gurez Valley back into occupied Kashmir, instead of allowing it to flow into Pakistan. In 2007, Pakistan objected, but WB refused to mediate. India did not give consent to the water experts to solve the dispute. In 2013, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCOA) ordered India to change the design. In 2017, India proceeded with the project, making minor design modifications and incorporating underground water storage tunnels into the system. Pakistan repeatedly approached the PCOA, but India refused to comply.

Similarly, the Baglihar Dam is located on the Chenab River, in the Indian-occupied Kashmir. It is a 900 MW project and the pond size was 32 million m³ in 1999. A series of dialogues continued from 1999-2004 but were a failure. Experts suggested reducing the pond size up to 13.9%.

However, it's still more than the agreed-upon 1million m³ size. This suggestion was rejected by Pakistan while India accepted it. Since 2010, Pakistan has made no official statements regarding the project.

The IWT is a flashpoint in the fragile relations between the two rivals. Both states believe that the treaty is outdated. It does not regard the recent challenges which intensify the tension. Indian media reports say that on September 18, India sent a formal notice to Pakistan, citing various concerns, and asking for a reassessment of the treaty. Meanwhile, Pakistan too has concerns over the implementation of the treaty in recent years.

India falsely claims that Pakistan receives a larger share of the water. According to Anuttama Banerji, a political analyst in India, the current terms of the treaty go against them. The rivers Pakistan is entitled to use, have much more water than rivers India control. In effect, India has access to 20% of the total water covered by the treaty, while Pakistan has access to the remaining 80%. However, his claims overlook India's mega projects, which violate the treaty and reduce or divert water flow to Pakistan.”.

Banerji believes that the treaty does not take into account the newer threats of climate change and population growth, therefore, demanding renegotiation. However, this is a planned strategy that seeks terms to make it easier to develop hydropower and other infrastructure on the western rivers whose water Pakistan is entitled to use. Braham Chellaney in his book “Water, peace and War: Confronting Water Crisis”, states that the water crisis is a significant source of tension between the two. He predicts that the crisis further increases over time, exacerbating political tension between the two, and making water security a critical issue in the geopolitical context.

Renegotiating the IWT is a topic of debate due to growing water security concerns and rising tensions.

The treaty no longer reflects today's realities and has failed to prevent India's control and manipulation. However, it could also destabilize the fragile peace between the two nuclear states. Such renegotiation would require careful diplomacy. Regardless of the situation, renegotiation is a better option for India and Pakistan. Pakistan faces an acute water shortage. Pakistan needs to plan a careful counter-strategy address India's water control as well as the terms and define terms for renegotiation.

<https://strafasia.com/indus-water-treaty-continuity-or-renegotiation/>

Trump's Return: Opportunities for Pakistan

Sadia Zahra

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A warm breeze swept through Islamabad as news spread: Donald Trump has won the US election and was heading back to the White House. His return brought a mix of excitement and worry. Pakistan still remembered Trump's first term, a time of tense relations, unpredictable decisions, and difficult negotiations. The relationship often felt unstable, like navigating a risky deal. But this time, could Pakistan see Trump's presidency as a chance rather than a problem? With his "America First" policies and unexpected moves, Trump is likely to shake up the world once again. However, this could also give Pakistan an opportunity to find its place in the changing global order and build a stronger strategy. Pakistan can learn from past lessons and confidently navigate the future. By being proactive and planning, Pakistan can safeguard its interests and take charge of shaping its future. Let's explore some possibilities.

Let's start by reviewing some key lessons from the past; Pakistan's primary concern and a lesson during Donald Trump's first term was relying too heavily on its security relationship with the USA, focusing almost exclusively on military ties. This narrow approach left Islamabad vulnerable when Trump shifted his attention to cutting foreign aid and prioritizing his "America First" agenda. When Trump suspended \$300 million security aid to Pakistan in 2018, it was a wake-up call about the fragility of our reliance on military ties alone. Another key lesson was Pakistan's lack of engagement with US institutions outside the White House. When Trump suspended security aid in 2018, it became clear that Pakistan had underestimated the role of Congress and think tanks in shaping foreign policy. While Pakistan focused on the White House, it largely ignored Congress, which holds power over aid allocations, creating a gap in understanding and influence, especially during the moments of tension.

To avoid these past inconveniences, Pakistan should shift its focus beyond defense and prioritize economic diplomacy, building stronger ties with US businesses, innovation sectors, and trade representatives. Pakistan also needs to understand that the key to a more robust US-Pakistan relationship lies in diversification. Engaging with Congress, think tanks, and even the US public is critical. By broadening its diplomatic approach, Pakistan can ensure a more resilient presence in US policy debates, regardless of who holds the presidency. In short, to thrive under a second Trump Administration, Pakistan must move beyond a one-dimensional relationship with the USA and adopt a multi-faceted diplomatic strategy that considers the broader geopolitical dynamics. With countries like India gaining more support to counter China's rise, Pakistan faces the

challenge of balancing its relationships with both the USA and China. By engaging with the full spectrum of US political and economic life while navigating global power shifts, Pakistan can establish a resilient, long-term diplomatic approach. Furthermore, with Trump's return to the White House, Pakistan is likely to face more challenges. Imagine standing at the crossroads of two colossal forces, the USA and China, each pulling in opposite directions. Under Trump's previous leadership, the USA took a firm stance against China, and his next Administration may push for an even sharper divide. This puts Pakistan in a difficult position by balancing its growing economic ties with China and its long-standing security relationship with the USA.

The danger lies in being forced to choose sides, risking isolation from one of the global powers. Though there is no overt demand to choose but covert pressure may exist in future, in which case Pakistan may instead adopt a strategy of neutrality, managing its relationships with both the leading powers to protect its national interest without compromising it. Pakistan can serve as a bridge, engaging China through projects like CPEC while cooperating with the USA on shared security issues like counterterrorism. By highlighting its strategic importance in regional and global security, Pakistan can remain indispensable to both the nations, potentially avoiding conflict.

Considering Trump's agenda for reshaping global trade, and with protectionism on the rise, Pakistan can no longer rely heavily on US trade and aid alone. For example, under Trump's protectionist policies, Pakistan faced a slowdown in textile exports to the USA, while countries like Bangladesh benefited from GSP trade terms. Additionally, US military aid to Pakistan was reduced in 2018. To navigate Trump's policies, Pakistan must seize this as a key opportunity to shift its economic strategy, building resilience by diversifying trade partnerships and reducing dependence on the U.S. as relying on the US market alone is risky, especially with Trump's past rigid policies and Agenda 47 of tariffs and isolationist policies. Exploring alternatives like CPEC and RCEP can help Pakistan build resilience against global shifts. Pakistan should diversify its economic partnerships, tapping into opportunities in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Strengthening agriculture, textiles, and investing in technology and green energy can drive growth independent of U.S. influence. More importantly, Pakistan needs to shift from relying on aid to building stronger, more diverse economic partnerships. By forming new trade agreements and aligning with emerging markets, it can secure its economic future and reduce dependence on U.S. policies.

Pakistan's foreign policy needs to be proactive, especially with Trump back in office. Learning from the past, Pakistan needs to develop a broad diplomatic strategy, balance relations with global powers, and diversify its economic ties with other leading countries.

Pakistan needs to act quickly and embrace strategic adaptability. It is not enough to simply react to a Trump-led Administration; Pakistan needs to proactively shape its future. To become strong in a turbulent world, Pakistan first needs to be strong at home. The real question is not whether Pakistan can navigate this shift, but whether it is prepared to seize the opportunity for resilience and growth. The time to act is now.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/11/24/trumps-return-opportunities-for-pakistan/>

Nuclear Saber-Rattling In Europe

Zafar Khan

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Ever since the start of Russian-Ukraine war, the understrength conventional power capability of Russia against the US-led NATO bolstering Ukraine often comes up with the nuclear saber-rattling. More recently, the Russian President Vladimir Putin while addressing the world community on November 21 argued that Russia launched ballistic missile strikes against Dnipro City in response to the recent attacks by Ukraine which used ATACMS (supersonic tactical ballistic missile) and Storm Shadow (air-launched cruise missile) provided by the US and UK against the military objects in Russia.

Putin warned the US-led NATO countries that Russia may strike the military facilities of the Western countries that supported Ukraine to use western missiles directly against Russia. Russia terms this as one of its “red lines” Russia perceives that the West is crossing, risking a large-scale military escalation to a nuclear level. Russia has already threatened to use nuclear weapons after Ukraine is largely supported by the US-led NATO members. It has stationed its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus for deterrence and nuclear signaling purposes against the Western countries in Europe. Scholars contend that in the nuclear war, there are no victors. This goes back to the Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev 1985 statement on nuclear war: “a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought.”

Why does Russia often come up with nuclear saber-rattling? What does it want to achieve? Are the US-led NATO members deterred? How much is the Russia-Ukraine war boiling for a nuclear use engulfing the entire Europe? Is the world considering nuclear risk reduction and the possible end of this war when Europe is turning into one of the world’s nuclear flash points? These are some of the overarching questions the serious contemporary scholarship is focusing upon underpinned by various combinations of academic framework to understand the growing risk of nuclear escalation, the cost of which may be too high than the benefit each side may perceive. Scholars contend that in the nuclear war, there are no victors. This goes back to the Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev 1985 statement on nuclear war: “a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought.” Based on the conceptual logic of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), this remains valid in a nuclear environment where each side will end up destroying each other. This primarily reflects from the 1958 seminal work of Albert James Wohl Stetter on “the Delicate Balance of Terror” where he argued that the presence of thermonuclear weapons between the

US and the Soviet Union had produced a “presumed automatic balance” of power which in turn makes nuclear war “extremely unlikely”.

From an academic point of view, the Russian threats of the use of nuclear weapons against the US-led NATO military support for Ukraine could be 1) to let the Western countries become serious while getting on board for resolving the Russia-Ukraine war to the best Russian terms, 2) to give deterrence signaling to the Western countries so that they stop supplying sophisticated defensive and offensive missile capability that undermine the Russian conventional force capability in its war against Ukraine and 3) to prevent the US from making Ukraine part of NATO. Although Russia appears to be succeeding on these strategic imperatives, many consider that most of the European including some sections in the US consider the Russian nuclear saber-rattling as mere rhetoric. Presumably, if nuclear weapons exist and thereby deter the potential adversary from major offensive strikes, nuclear deterrence should have the value addition by serving its purpose. However, the leading scholars such as John J Mearshiermer from a realist security paradigm consider that the people in the Pentagon must be taking Putin’s nuclear threats seriously. A nuclear threat from the state leadership becomes credible especially when it has the capability and the political will to use nuclear weapons in the worst-case scenario. This reminds us of the seminal work on Guarding the Guardians by Peter D Feaver conceptual framework on the always/never dichotomy that nuclear weapons should always be used when they are absolutely needed and should never be used when they are not required. Presumably, if nuclear weapons exist and thereby deter the potential adversary from major offensive strikes, nuclear deterrence should have the value addition by serving its purpose.

Nuclear saber-rattling may fall in such a conceptualized category of deterrence for Russia. Despite the understrength conventional force capability of Russia compared with the US-NATO allies, the credible Russia nuclear forces both at the tactical and strategic level remain one of the fundamental deterrents preventing the US-led NATO allies from crossing the red-lines that may not be acceptable to the Russian security leadership. The recent tactics of Ukraine by striking Russia with the Western supported missiles might accidentally increase the chances of escalation to a nuclear level. As Europe is becoming the nuclear flash point, world leaders should mutually work for nuclear risk reduction, urge the Russian and the US-led NATO allies to demonstrate maximum restraint, and eventually negotiate to end the Russia-Ukraine war on the terms acceptable to all the stakeholders. Such measures can only help reduce the chances of a nuclear war emitting out of saber-rattling in Europe. <https://stratheia.com/nuclear-saber-rattling-in-europe/>

Pakistan Bids to Join BRICS and a Rising Global South

Naseem Sabzal

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The Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, Alexie Overchuk, recently visited Islamabad with a bucket of bilateral interests. Among defense, trade, and other joint talks, backing Pakistan's bid for BRICS membership was the foremost and most noteworthy support from the Russian Deputy PM. With the rising multipolar system, the role of regional arrangements and organization has become vital in the foreign policy of states to ensure a backup in any international fiasco. BRICS is an opportunity at the doorstep for Pakistan, which offers economic, political, and diplomatic interests and will bolster Pakistan's diplomatic standing in the region by maintaining relations with emerging powers.

BRICS Offers a Diplomatic Platform to engage with member states. Since Pakistan and India have many disputes to sort out diplomatically, including water disputes and border issues, trade and security concerns are also on the list to resolve. BRICS can help both states improve relations and strengthen regionalism only if Modi's Hindutva regime does not create hurdles for Pakistan's bid to join BRICS. This will serve as a test case for New Delhi's intentions to improve ties with Pakistan and put an end to the blame game against Pakistan in other international forums.

But what can BRICS really bring to Pakistan? An average Pakistani may ponder this question, considering their personal economic status within society and the nation's declining economy. Pakistan is going through many economic challenges on a micro and macro level. Our economy has become overly dependent on the IMF, foreign aid, and loans. BRICS has developed its own banking system "The New Development Bank" which is a green light for underdeveloped and developing economies like Pakistan, taking into account the international financial system is dominated by the West.

Economic relations always thrive in the light of beneficial political relations. Diplomatic engagement opens the doors of other opportunities for the protection of national interests, and alliances are the most trusted forums states can exploit for such purposes. BRICS is expanding with the addition of Iran, Egypt, the UAE, and Ethiopia; some countries may join in the near future. It is always trust that brings states close. Pakistan can enjoy this environment of trust between BRICS members by engaging emerging powers from their respective regions to boost its exports, explore their markets, and incentivize its economy. BRICS membership could address, such as energy, infrastructure, and debt relief issues. Keeping in mind that BRICS comprises 35% of global GDP with 60 trillion dollars' worth.

While tracking down the other options of joining BRICS, the geopolitical importance of Pakistan allows it to win the trust of major powers due to its significant geographical location on the map. Two of the most important BRICS members, Russia and China, are also permanent members of the Security Council. As the alliances in the west and the Asia-Pacific are emerging in the era of multi-polarity. It affects the strategic interests of Pakistan if it is left out of any alliance or strategic partnership, noting that the Indian presence in the BRICS and the QUAD and strong relations with the US, Japan, and Russia have extended the options of sustaining its foreign policy. The changing power structure of international politics is redefining the geopolitics of the world, where states seek shelter in alliances.

From the historical experiences of the SEATO and the CENTO, Pakistan may not be certain to join security alliances, but BRICS has Economic, Social and Diplomatic interests a core priority for Uplift of Global South in the wake of Competing environment in the international political arena. To challenge Western-dominated alliances, BRICS must establish a robust organizational structure and achieve financial independence.

Pakistan's ties with Russia and China are becoming more robust. But geopolitical challenges for CPEC and South Asia can be addressed from regional platforms like BRICS to pave the way for the emergence of regions through mutual understanding and interests. The South Asian region holds immense significance in the geopolitical discourse of international politics. BRICS can help Global South and South Asia to cope with collective issues of Economy, Climate, Energy and development from a strong regional platform.

<https://www.wgi.world/pakistan-bids-to-join-brics-and-a-rising-global-south/>