

## U.S. AND CHINA NEED EACH OTHER

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

U.S. President Joe Biden with Chinese President Xi Jinping. File photo | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

U.S. President Joe Biden has called Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean President Kim Jong-un “thugs”, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan an “autocrat” and Russian President Vladimir Putin a “killer”. Like individuals, nations too are prone to using epithets, but are vexed when paid back in similar coinage. Therefore, the U.S.-China Foreign Ministers' meeting in March at Alaska was instructive in many respects.

The public is accustomed to read-outs about conversations between international leaders. These often portray a righteous West instructing the world on how to behave by constructing a media narrative for the domestic audience. It cannot be assumed that foreign leaders who receive diatribes from western counterparts listen penitently without response. It is noteworthy that there are few read-outs of conversations between non-western leaders, who do not pontificate and have no global media at their disposal.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump accused China of unfair trade practices and pursued a dual policy of offering deals and threatening sanctions, but China continued to extend its influence and counter American increases in military funding by expanding its own military power. The U.S. and Europe have imposed sanctions against China, Russia and others. The U.S.-sponsored Quad with Japan, India and Australia will prove an uphill effort because even some of the U.S.'s formal allies have re-shaped their foreign and economic relations with China.

Confrontation and competition between the U.S. and China will dominate this century. Mr. Biden has censured China for human rights abuses in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, aggression in the South and East China Seas, intimidation of Taiwan, intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, and cyberattacks, but these homilies are incidental to U.S.-China tension, which is due to China's rise that is transforming power settings and the U.S.'s attempts to constrict China before it becomes a peer competitor. China will surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy, has established a worldwide network of economic ties and set up multilateral and financial institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to compete with the West-dominated International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Preliminaries for the Alaska meeting were not promising: Beijing saw it as the start of a strategic dialogue, while Washington diminished it as a one-off event. The U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, hoping to seize the initiative, opened the meeting with a charge sheet against China, comprising attacks on values; threats to a rules-based order that maintains global stability; China's actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan; cyberattacks on the U.S.; and economic coercion against U.S. allies. To this, Chinese Communist Party leader Yang Jiechi countered that China would strongly oppose interference in China's internal affairs, referred to the U.S.'s struggling democracy and poor treatment of minorities, and criticised U.S. policies as seeking military and financial hegemony to impose extra-territorial jurisdiction and suppress other countries. He concluded that the U.S. abuses definitions of national security to obstruct normal trade exchanges.

These sharp exchanges were intended for respective domestic audiences. The American media were bewildered about how to portray this accusation of their country's policies and resorted to

calling the Chinese position intemperate. Despite the bombast, the Americans require the Chinese to deal with certain issues, and the meeting ended with anodyne agreement to work together on issues like climate change, COVID-19, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and G-20, health, cyber-security, the Iran nuclear issue, Afghanistan, Korea and Myanmar.

The U.S.-China rhetoric masks the reality that both countries need each other not only for world stability but growth, supply chains, jobs, services, investments and market access. China's rise generated booms for numerous Asian and Western economies and accelerated the transition of the U.S. towards the lower end of manufacturing. Sanctions used indiscriminately against China are unlikely to engender any change of behaviour, and it is clear that hectoring will not be left unanswered. The U.S. deals for the first time with an economic and military rival it cannot browbeat, and economic interdependence today makes the war of words confined to words. Mr. Putin correctly summed up this situation: "They (the Americans) think that we are like them, but we are different. We have a different genetic, cultural and moral code." With the prevailing mistrust across regions, every possible solution becomes an insuperable problem.

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To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

**END**

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