

India, China home to 39% of young Internet users: UN report

United Nations: India and China are home to 39 per cent of the 830 million young people worldwide who use the Internet, according to a UN report.

The data released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations specialised agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), shows that of the 830 million young people online worldwide, 320 million, or 39%, are in China and India.

The ITU's ICT Facts and Figures 2017 also shows a significant increase in broadband access and subscriptions with China leading the way. The ICT data shows that youths (15-24 years old) are at the forefront of Internet adoption.

In Least Developed Countries (LDCs), up to 35% of individuals using the Internet are aged 15-24, compared with 13% in developed countries and 23% globally. "ITU's ICT Facts and Figures 2017 shows that great strides are being made in expanding Internet access through the increased availability of broadband networks.

Digital connectivity plays a critical role in bettering lives, as it opens the door to unprecedented knowledge, employment and financial opportunities for billions of people worldwide," said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao.

The report adds that mobile broadband subscriptions have grown more than 20% annually in the last five years and are expected to reach 4.3 billion globally by the end of 2017. Between 2012 and 2017, LDCs saw the highest growth-rate of mobile broadband subscriptions.

Despite this, the number of mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in LDCs is the lowest globally at 23%. The number of fixed-broadband subscriptions has increased by 9% annually in the last five years with up to 330 million subscriptions added.

There has been an increase in high-speed fixed broadband subscriptions parallel to the growth in the number of fibre connections.

Most of the increase in high-speed fixed broadband subscriptions in developing countries can be attributed to China, which accounts for 80% of all fixed-broadband subscriptions at 10 Mbit/s or above in the developing world, the report said.

Mobile broadband prices, as a percentage of gross national income per capita, dropped by half between 2013 and 2016.

Mobile broadband is more affordable than fixed broadband in most developing countries. While the Internet user gender gap has narrowed in most regions since 2013, the proportion of men using the Internet remains slightly higher than the proportion of women using the Internet in two-thirds of countries worldwide.

In 2017, the global Internet penetration rate for men stands at 50.9% compared to 44.9% for women.

International Internet bandwidth grew by 32% between 2015 and 2016, with Africa registering an increase of 72% during this period, the highest of all regions.

Global telecommunication revenues declined by 4% from \$2.0 trillion in 2014 to \$1.9 trillion in

2015. Developing countries, which are home to 83% of the global population, generate 39% of the world's telecommunication revenues, it said. **PTI**

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ISARC to play a major role in harnessing and sustaining rice production in eastern India & similar ecologies in other South Asian and African countries: Shri Radha Mohan Singh
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Press Information Bureau
Government Of India

Ministry of Agriculture (02-August, 2017 17:29 IST)

ISARC to play a major role in harnessing and sustaining rice production in eastern India & similar ecologies in other South Asian and African countries: Shri Radha Mohan Singh

DAC&FW and IRRI sign Memorandum of Association (MOA) to establish the ISARC

In order to establish the ISARC, a Memorandum of Association (MOA) has been signed today between the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC & FW) represented by Secretary, DAC&FW and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines represented by Director General, IRRI. Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh graced the occasion.

Shri Singh said that the Center will be the first international Center in the eastern India and it will play a major role in harnessing and sustaining rice production in the region. It is expected to be a boon for food production and skill development in the eastern India and similar ecologies in other South Asian and African countries.

Agriculture Minister said this would be a Centre of Excellence in Rice Value Addition (CERVA) and will include a modern and sophisticated laboratory with the capacity to determine quality and status of heavy metals in grain and straw. The Centre will also undertake capacity-building exercises for stakeholders across the rice value chain.

ISARC will operate under the governance of the IRRI Board of Trustees who will appoint an appropriate IRRI staff member as Director. A Coordination Committee will be headed by Director General, IRRI as Chair and Secretary, Government of India, DACFW as Co-Chair. The other members of Coordination Committee are

Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences), ICAR; Director, NSRTC; IRRI representative in India, representative of Government of UP and representatives of Governments of Nepal & Bangladesh and Private Sector.

Shri Singh said that the rich biodiversity of India can be utilised to develop special rice varieties. This will help India to achieve higher per hectare yields and improved nutritional contents. India's food and nutritional security issues will also be addressed. The Centre will support in adopting value chain based production system in the country. This will reduce wastage, add value and generate higher income for the farmers. The farmers in Eastern India will benefit in particular, besides those in South Asian and African countries.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and BRICs countries to set up BRICS Agriculture Research Platform

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The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed among India and various BRICs countries for establishment of the BRICS Agriculture Research Platform (BRICS-ARP).

Background:

During the 7th BRICS Summit held on 9th July 2015 at Ufa in Russia, Prime Minister Shri Modi proposed to establish BRICS Agriculture Research Centre which will be a gift to the entire world. The Centre will promote sustainable agricultural development and poverty alleviation through strategic cooperation in agriculture to provide food security in the BRICS member countries.

In order to further intensify cooperation among BRICS countries in agricultural research policy, science and technology, innovation and capacity building, including technologies for small-holder farming in the BRICS countries, an MoU on establishment of the Agricultural Research Platform was signed by the foreign Ministers of BRICS countries in the 8th BRICS Summit held on 16th October, 2016 at Goa.

BRICS-ARP will be the natural global platform for science-led agriculture-based sustainable development for addressing the issues of world hunger, under-nutrition, poverty and inequality, particularly between farmers' and non-farmers' income, and enhancing agricultural trade, bio-security and climate resilient agriculture.

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israel: Israel launches first environmental research satellite

[Jerusalem](#), Aug 2 ([IANS](#)) [Israel](#) has successfully launched its first spatial environmental research vehicle designed for orbital monitoring of Earth's vegetation, the [Israel Space Agency](#) (ISA) said on Wednesday.

The [Venus](#) satellite (Vegetation and [Environment](#) Monitoring New Micro-Satellite) is an earth-observation micro-satellite designed jointly by Israel's agency and [France's National Centre for Space Studies](#) ([CNES](#)), Efe [news](#) reported.

Venus has a dual mission: one scientific and the other technological. The scientific mission will monitor Earth's vegetation using a camera capable of recording 12 narrow spectral bands.

The technological mission will [test](#) the operation of an innovative electric propulsion system based on the Israeli-designed Hall Effect Thrusters.

A Hall-effect thruster (HET) is a relatively low power device used to propel a spacecraft after entering orbit or farther out into space.

Venus' launch took [place](#) on board an Arianespace Vega launcher from Kourou, French Guyana, in a joint project between ISA and France's space agency CNES.

It will be inserted into a near polar sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 720 km with a two-day flyover revisiting time.

The microsatellite, which weighed 265 kg on launch, will send high-resolution photos to track climate change and aid efforts to tackle desertification, erosion, and pollution.

The first Israeli satellite will also be used for agricultural and environmental research with its innovative electric propulsion system allowing it to navigate more accurately than other satellites, according to ISA.

Venus will circle the planet 29 times every 48 hours and will remain in service for four and a half years, after which it will be parked into a lower orbit.

The first photos of the satellite are expected some five hours after the launch, but will only be available to researchers in November next year.

In addition, another Israeli-manufactured satellite was launched on Wednesday on a reconnaissance mission capable of taking very high-resolution images.

The ISA is part of the Israeli Ministry of Science and [Technology](#) which has invested around \$1.3 billion in research projects related to this satellite.

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India, ASEAN-5 more fetching to FDI than other emerging mkts - Times of India

New Delhi, Aug 2 () India along with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and [Vietnam](#) is more attractive to FDIs as compared to other emerging markets and flows to these nations are expected to surge to around USD 240 billion by 2025, says a [Nomura](#) report.

The Japanese financial services major has dubbed India and ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) as "Asia's tiger cubs", and said FDI inflows to these nations will increase from around USD 100 billion per year now to around USD 240 billion by 2025.

Moreover, sources of FDI to these nations are also witnessing a significant shift with more inflows expected from countries as China and [Japan](#).

"Unlike in the past, when the US and [EU](#) accounted for bulk of FDI flows into the 'cubs', we expect a growing regional bias as the source of FDI changes from the west to east, and especially from high-saving Japan and China," the report said.

Rising labour costs in China and an ageing population in Northeast Asia have disincentivised foreign direct investment (FDI) and they are in search of new destinations and "India and the ASEAN-5 are well placed to emerge as that destination," the report said.

Factors that are expected to encourage FDI into India and ASEAN-5 include - large and growing domestic markets; reforms focussed on improving infrastructure and the ease of doing business; a more open and liberal FDI regime; sound economic management and political stability; and availability of low-cost labour.

In terms of equity market implications, Nomura said in India, FDI is expected to flow into sectors that need growth capital (infrastructure, banks, e-commerce and hospitals) and those with strong long-term growth prospects (retail, automobiles, pharmaceuticals and diagnostics).

"While FDI inflows will be largely negative for listed companies in e-commerce due to increased competition, those in auto component, retail, hospital, infrastructure and capital goods segments should benefit," it said. DRR ANU

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Trump's 'merit-based' immigration system may benefit Indian professionals

President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced his support for a legislation that would cut in half the number legal immigrants allowed into the US while moving to a "merit-based" system favouring English-speaking skilled workers for residency cards.

If passed by the Congress and signed into law, the legislation titled the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act could benefit highly-educated and technology professionals from countries like India.

The RAISE Act would scrap the current lottery system to get into the US and instead institute a points-based system for earning a green card. Factors that would be taken into account include English language skills, education, high-paying job offers and age.

"The RAISE Act will reduce poverty, increase wages, and save taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. It will do this by changing the way the US issues Green Cards to nationals from other countries. Green Cards provide permanent residency, work authorisation, and fast track to citizenship," Trump said at a White House event to announce his support to the RAISE Act.

Standing along with two top authors of the bill -- Senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue -- Trump said the RAISE Act ends chain migration, and replaces the low-skilled system with a new points-based system for receiving a Green Card.

This competitive application process will favour applicants who can speak English, financially support themselves and their families, and demonstrate skills that will contribute to our economy, he said, adding that the RAISE Act prevents new migrants and new immigrants from collecting welfare, and protects US workers from being displaced.

"That's a very big thing. They're not going to come in and just immediately go and collect welfare. That doesn't happen under the RAISE Act. They can't do that. Crucially, the Green Card reforms in the RAISE Act will give American workers a pay raise by reducing unskilled immigration," he said.

Trump said this legislation will not only restore America's competitive edge in the 21st century, but it will restore the sacred bonds of trust between America and its citizens.

"This legislation demonstrates our compassion for struggling American families who deserve an immigration system that puts their needs first and that puts America first," he said.

Noting that the current over a half-century old system is "an obsolete disaster", Senator Cotton said that it is time for it to change.

"First, we bring over a million immigrants into this country a year. That's like adding the population of Montana every single year; adding the population of Arkansas every three years. The vast majority of those workers -- or those immigrants come here not because of their English-language abilities or their job skills, or their job offer, or their educational attainment," he said.

In fact, only one in 15 out of a million new immigrants come here because of their job skills and their ability to succeed in this economy, Cotton said.

The RAISE Act will be re-orienting Green Card system towards people who can speak English, who have high degrees of educational attainment, who have a job offer that pays more, and a

typical job in their local economy, who are going to create a new business, and who are outstanding in their field around the world, he added.

Senator Perdue said the current system does not work. "It keeps America from being competitive, and it does not meet the needs of the economy today," he said.

"Today we bring in 1.1 million legal immigrants a year. Over 50 per cent of our households of legal immigrants today participate in our social welfare system. Right now, only one 1 out of 15 immigrants who come into our country come in with skills that are employable. We've got to change that," he said.

Perdue said he looked at the at best practices. "We looked at countries like Canada, Australia, and others. What we're introducing today is modeled on the current Canadian and Australian systems. It's pro-worker, it's pro-growth, and it's been proven to work. Both have been extremely successful in attracting highly skilled workers to those countries," the Senator said.

"We can all agree that the goals of our nation's immigration system should be to protect the interests of working Americans, including immigrants, and to welcome talented individuals who come here legally and want to work and make a better life for themselves. Our current system makes it virtually impossible for them to do that," said the Senator.

According to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, the higher entry standards established in this proposal will allow authorities to do a more thorough job reviewing applicants for entry, therefore protecting the security of the US homeland.

The additional time spent on vetting each application as a result of this legislation will also ensure that each application serves the national interest, he observed.

"The American people deserve a lawful immigration system that promotes our national interest. The RAISE Act would give us a more merit-based immigration system that admits the best and the brightest around the world while making it harder for people to come here illegally," Sessions said.

"The bill would end programme known to be rife with fraud and abuse and finally improve the vetting process, making our country and working class wages much safer and stronger," said the Attorney General.

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Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Chinese daily cautions India, Japan over trade corridor

BEIJING: The [Asia Africa Growth Corridor](#) ([AAGC](#)) sponsored by [India](#) and [Japan](#) is welcome — as long as it does not try to trip China's [Belt](#) and Road initiative, a Chinese newspaper said on Wednesday.

Announced by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May, the AAGC, essentially a maritime corridor, was seen by some as a counterbalance to the Belt and Road initiative, the state-run Global Times said in a report.

"The new venture, jointly led by India and Japan - two countries that have so far opted not to join the B&R initiative - sets out a vision for the better integration of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia with Africa and Oceania," it said.

The Times said the India-Japan vision indicates an overlap between the AAGC and the [Belt and Road project](#) "and invites controversy over the actual intentions behind the growth corridor.

It goes without saying that India and Japan could feel free to embark on a new connectivity initiative and no one is begging them to join the B&R initiative.

"As long as the AAGC aims to embrace inclusive growth and promote joint prosperity, the corridor should be encouraged.

"But if India and Japan design the corridor to deliberately counterbalance China's B&R, they should think twice before rushing to it because the route of the AAGC has an extensive geographic overlap with the route of the B&R initiative," the report said.

"That's particularly the case, considering that China has already made huge commitments to developing Africa while the India-Japan partnership is only just taking shape.

"If the AAGC aims to squeeze out China's B&R initiative instead of serving as a complement, it actually divides what's supposed to be a united force to forge ahead with inclusive growth in dozens of countries and regions along the route of the B&R initiative.

"India, for its part, should be particularly level-headed and guard against any over-assertive plans that may go awry."

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Behind India's unease with a global child abduction law

A significant piece of legislation was introduced in the US Congress last week - the Bindu [Philips](#) and Devon Davenport International Child Abduction Return Act of 2017 seeks to punish countries that do not adhere to US court orders on the return of abducted children. The Bill is named after two women - an Indian American and a Brazilian American - who allege their children were abducted and taken to India and Brazil by their husbands.

Back home, India has been struggling for years with legislation on the custody of children caught in transnational marital discord. The central government decided last year to not ratify The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980), which would force Indian women who return with their children after conflict with their husbands, to go back to the foreign country for settlement of custody.

A Committee headed by Punjab and Haryana High Court Justice Rajesh Bindal subsequently studied the issue in depth. Last month, the committee released a concept note on its recommendations.

What is The Hague Convention on international child abduction?

It is an international treaty to ensure the prompt return of a child who has been "abducted" from the country of their "habitual residence". Ninety-seven countries are party to the Convention. Despite pressure from the US and European countries, India is yet to ratify it. Under the Convention, contracting countries must establish a central authority to trace unlawfully removed children and secure their return to the country of habitual residence, irrespective of the country's own laws on the issue. The Convention applies to children under age 16.

Where does India stand on this matter?

In 2009, the Law Commission of India recommended signing The Hague Convention, because it "will in turn bring the prospects of achieving the return to India of children who have their home in India". The Commission observed that in the absence of a law, Indian courts had not followed a pattern in such cases.

In February 2016, Punjab and Haryana High Court again referred the matter to the Law Commission and Ministry of Women and Child Development. In his interim order, Justice Rajive Bhalla (now retired) noted that "the removal or retention of a child in breach of custody rights is a wrong under The Hague Convention but for want [of] the Union of India acceding to The Hague Convention or enacting a domestic law, children will continue to be spirited away from and to India, with courts and authorities standing by in despair".

The court asked the Commission and the Ministry to "consider whether recommendations should be made for enacting a suitable law and for signing The Hague Convention...".

In June 2016, a draft Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction Bill, 2016, with provisions similar to The Hague Convention, was uploaded on the Ministry website for public comments. After examining the Bill and the issue, the Law Commission submitted a revised version of the Bill, called The International Child Removal and Retention Bill, 2016, in October, in line with The Hague Convention and legal precedents in the country.

What were the key recommendations?

The Commission noted that "women involved in cross-jurisdictional divorces, 'holiday marriages' or 'limping marriages' have to face additional challenges in the custody battle", and that "the woman must not be put in a situation where she has to make the impossible choice between her children and putting up with an abusive relationship in a foreign country".

In most cases of so-called "parental abduction", parents take away the child because "of the fear of losing his/her custody", the Commission said - "such an abduction... is out of overwhelming love and affection and not to harm the child or achieve any other ulterior purpose". The Commission, thus, dropped the word 'abduction' from the title of the revised Bill.

The report did not, however, remove the previous Bill's provisions on sending the child back to her habitual residence, as envisaged by The Hague Convention. It also retained the provision that gave the central authority the power "to secure the voluntary return of any such child to the country (of)... habitual residence, (and) to bring about an amicable resolution of the differences" between the parties in the dispute.

Given the draft Bill is largely in conformity with The Hague Convention, why is India still not keen to join the treaty?

Critics have argued that the legislation would affect the interests of Indian mothers fleeing from abusive or difficult marriages. The law, the critics said, would compel these women to return to the foreign country where the child was born, to fight for custody in possibly unfavourable conditions. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, wary of Indian women being charged or prosecuted in foreign countries, declined to back the law.

In February 2017, at a national consultation on signing the Convention chaired by WCD Minister Maneka Gandhi and attended by judges from the Delhi and Punjab and Haryana High Courts and a member of the Law Commission among others, it was again decided to constitute a committee to draft suitable legislation, and to advise on whether India should become a signatory. The committee was asked to submit its report in four months.

What has happened since then?

Last month, the committee, comprising two Punjab and Haryana HC judges, a Delhi HC judge, the chairman of the Punjab NRI Commission, a family law expert, and six representatives of various Ministries released a concept note for public suggestions. The committee is learnt to have received a large number of representations, and its major challenge is to reconcile contradictory views.

The foremost legal question is which court will have jurisdiction to decide custody - one in the country of habitual residence, or one where the child has been removed which, in most cases, is India. The committee has not met after the compilation of the feedback, and its report has been delayed.

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India's first private missile production facility unveiled

India's first private sector missile sub-systems manufacturing facility, a joint venture between the \$2.5 billion Kalyani Group and Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd., was inaugurated near Hyderabad on Thursday.

To begin with, the Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) plant will make anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) Spike and the production is expected to begin in a few weeks, Kalyani Group chairman Baba N. Kalyani said. Besides supplying to the Indian Army, the plan is to export to South East Asian countries, he added.

Advanced equipment

Formed in line with the 'Make in India' initiative of the Centre and the policy to encourage private sector participation in defence production, the 51:49 joint venture will develop a wide range of advanced capabilities.

These include command control and guidance, electro-optics, remote weapon systems, precision guided munitions and system engineering for system integration. The plant would employ more than 300 engineers and provide indirect employment to 1,000 people.

Addressing the media ahead of the inauguration, Mr. Kalyani said 60-70 crore had been invested in the plant.

Going forward, once orders start flowing, "we will invest more... also looking to [make] other products, he said, adding that Spice glider bombs used by the Air Force would be the next.

On the plant's ATGM capacity, Rafael Advanced Defence Systems president and CEO Maj. Gen. (retired) Yoav Har-Even said: "We are speaking in thousands of the air-to-surface missiles."

The localisation content is 90% and most of the vendors are in and around Hyderabad, Mr. Kalyani said and thanked the Telangana Government for "pulling out all stops" that led to the plant being set up in 10 months. The JV opted for Hyderabad in view of the defence eco-system it played host to and Telangana reigning on topping of the Ease of Doing Business rankings.

Telangana Industries and IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao, said that more than 30,000 researchers and scientists and 1,000 MSME units in and around the city were working in the areas of defence systems. "Hyderabad and Telangana have all the trappings to become the number one destination for defence investment and defence electronics in the country," he said.

KRAS, which aims to be a one-stop solution provider to locally re-design, develop, re-engineer and manufacture various land and airborne products and systems in India, has plans for expansion. The phase-II will be undertaken at another industrial location in Hyderabad, the company said.

Earlier, Mr. Rao inaugurated the 24,000 sq.ft. facility in the presence of Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon.

The service is available in Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai, operating 500 bicycles

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India signs loan agreement with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for Financing of US\$ 329 million for Gujarat Rural Roads Project

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The Loan and Project Agreements for Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) lending of US\$ 329 million for Gujarat Rural Roads Project have been signed between the Government of India/ Government of Gujarat and the AIIB today on 04.08.2017 at New Delhi.

The Loan Agreement was signed by Shri Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary (MI), Department of Economic Affairs(DEA), Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Government of India and Dr. D.J. Pandian, Vice President and Chief Investment Officer, AIIB, on behalf of the AIIB. The Project Agreement was signed between Shri A.K. Patel, Chief Engineer (Panchayat) and Additional Secretary, Roads & Building Department, Government of Gujarat on behalf of the Gujarat State Government and Dr. D.J. Pandian signed the Project Agreement on behalf of the AIIB.

The objective of the project is to improve the rural road connectivity and accessibility (by providing all weather road connectivity) to 1,060 villages in all the 33 districts in Gujarat state benefiting about 8 million people. The project will also benefit the service providers such as public transport operators, educational institutions, hospitals, local markets and traders.

The project consists of following two main components:

1. **Constructions and Up-gradation of Non-Plan Roads (NPRs):** A total of 5000 km of NPRs will be constructed under this component. Besides, it is also envisaged to construct – missing links (last mile connecting to the road network); missing structures (culverts and small bridges); approach roads to educational institutions; and upgrade/ construct roads passing through tribal areas.
2. **Up-gradation of Planned Roads:** It is envisaged to upgrade existing earthen and metal roads to black top roads, resurfacing of village roads and other district roads, up-gradation of bridges to prevent flooding and subsequent isolation of flooded villages during monsoon season and widening of village roads and other district roads to ease traffic congestion.

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ASEAN, China adopt framework for crafting code on South China Sea

4 Min Read

MANILA (Reuters) - Foreign ministers of Southeast Asia and China adopted on Sunday a negotiating framework for a code of conduct in the South China Sea, a move they hailed as progress but seen by critics as tactic to buy China time to consolidate its maritime power.

The framework seeks to advance a 2002 Declaration of Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea, which has mostly been ignored by claimant states, particularly China, which has built seven manmade islands in disputed waters, three of which are equipped with runways, surface-to-air missiles and radars.

All parties say the framework is only an outline for how the code will be established but critics say the failure to outline as an initial objective the need to make the code legally binding and enforceable, or have a dispute resolution mechanism, raises doubts about how effective the pact will be.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the adoption of the framework created a solid foundation for negotiations that could start this year, if “the situation in the South China Sea is generally stable and on the premise that there is no major interference from outside parties.”

He told reporters there had been “really tangible progress” so there was “a need to cherish momentum on the South China Sea”.

Signing China up to a legally binding and enforceable code for the strategic waterway has long been a goal for claimant members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), some of which have sparred for years over what they see as China’s disregard for their sovereign rights and its blocking of fishermen and energy exploration efforts.

Beijing insists its activities are for defense purposes, in areas it considers its waters. Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei, Vietnam and the Philippines, however, all claim some or all of the South China Sea and its myriad shoals, reefs and islands.

Some critics and diplomats believe China’s sudden interest in the code after 15 years of delays is to drag out the negotiating process to buy time to complete its strategic objectives in the South China Sea, through which more than \$3 billion of ship-borne trade passes annually.

Opponents also say it is being pushed through at a time when the United States, long seen as a crucial buffer against China’s maritime assertiveness, is distracted by other issues and providing no real clarity about its security strategy in Asia, thus weakening ASEAN’s bargaining position.

The framework has not been made public but a leaked two-page blueprint seen by Reuters is broad and leaves wide scope for disagreement.

It urges a commitment to the “purposes and principles” of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) but does not specify adherence to it, for example.

A separate ASEAN document, dated May and seen by Reuters, shows that Vietnam pushed for stronger, more specific text in the framework, wanting mention of a dispute resolution mechanism and respecting “sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction”.

Sovereign rights cover entitlements to fish and extraction of natural resources.

Several ASEAN countries, including Vietnam and the Philippines, have said they still favor making the code legally binding, something experts say China is unlikely to agree to.

Wang said he would not try to anticipate what the code will comprise, but said whatever is signed must be adhered to.

Robespierre Bolivar, foreign ministry spokesman of host Philippines, said the adoption of the framework symbolised the commitment to creating a “substantive and effective” code.

Additional reporting by Manolo Serapio Jr; Writing by Martin Petty; Editing by Muralikumar Anantharaman

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. See [here for a complete list](#) of exchanges and delays.

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China's RCEP push veils grand plan

.Wider horizon:

Community social media platform 'LocalCircles' recently did a survey on the Indian consumer's perception about items imported from China. The results gave a peek into the minds of Indian consumers. It showed 52% of participants were of the opinion that for the same product, the quality of a 'Made in India' version was superior to the one from China. However, 83% said they buy Chinese products as those items were the cheapest. On the issue of addressing 'quality concerns' about imported Chinese items, 98% said there should be better screening of such products before they enter the Indian market — including ensuring that only those imports meeting the Indian (BIS) standards are allowed.

The poll assumes significance as it comes amid ongoing negotiations for a mega-regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) among 16 Asia-Pacific nations, including China and India. Known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the proposed FTA, aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

The RCEP is billed as an FTA between the 10-member ASEAN bloc and its six FTA partners — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. When inked, it would become the world's biggest free trade pact. This is because the 16 nations account for a total GDP (Purchasing Power Parity, or PPP basis) of about \$50 trillion (or about 40% of the global GDP) and house close to 3.5 billion people (about half the world's population). India (GDP-PPP worth \$9.5 trillion and population of 1.3 billion) and China (GDP-PPP of \$23.2 trillion and population of 1.4 billion) together comprise the RCEP's biggest component in terms of market size.

The RCEP 'guiding principles and objectives' state that the "negotiations on trade in goods, trade in services, investment and other areas will be conducted in parallel to ensure a comprehensive and balanced outcome." However, it is learnt that China, using its influence as the global leader in goods exports, has been deploying quiet diplomacy to ensure consistent focus on attempts to obtain commitments on elimination of tariffs on most traded goods.

China is keen on an agreement on a 'high level' of tariff liberalisation — eliminating duties on as much as 92% of traded products. However, India's offer is to do away with duties on only 80% of the lines and that too, with a longer phase-out period for Chinese imports (ie, about 20 years, as against 15 for other RCEP nations).

A highly ambitious level of tariff elimination without enough flexibility would affect India the most on the goods side. This is because in the RCEP group (except Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR), India has the highest average 'Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff' level at 13.5%. MFN tariff, as per the WTO, refers to normal, non-discriminatory tariff charged on imports — excluding preferential tariffs under FTAs and other schemes or tariffs charged inside quotas.

A March 2017 discussion paper on RCEP by the think tank RIS also said, "India is the only participant that has a high level of merchandise trade deficit ... Its trade deficit with RCEP countries is also more than half its global trade deficit." The paper, by V.S. Seshadri, also showed that India's trade deficit with China "is over three times its exports to China (in 2014), a situation not matched by any other RCEP member except Cambodia..." It further said, "considering India's vulnerabilities and large bilateral trade deficits, India will need substantial flexibilities to deal with China... A longer phase out period with backloading of concessions, particularly on sensitive

products, will be essential.”

On the sidelines of the recently held RCEP talks in Hyderabad, representatives from the Indian industry laid out their apprehensions before the industry bodies of other RCEP nations and the trade negotiators. Their main worry was that the proposed FTA, owing to the possibility of elimination of duties across most sectors, could lead to a surge in inflow of low-priced goods, mainly from China. This, India Inc. feared, would result in their share in the domestic market contracting, and consequent downsizing/closure of operations, as well as job losses. This could lead to lower incomes and reduced consumer spending.

Also, since India already has separate FTAs with the 10-member ASEAN bloc, Japan and Korea, India Inc. feels that on account of the RCEP, India may not gain much on the goods side with existing FTA partners. India is also negotiating separate FTAs with Australia and New Zealand. However, be it through a separate FTA or via RCEP, India’s gains on the goods segment from Australia and New Zealand will be limited as MFN tariff levels of those two countries are already low. China is the only RCEP country with which India neither has an FTA, nor is in talks for one. Therefore, Indian industry sees RCEP as an indirect FTA with China, especially since, given the sensitivities involved, there could be a hue and cry if India opts for a direct FTA with that country.

Ajit Ranade, chief economist, Aditya Birla Group, said even without a bilateral FTA, India was already affected by China’s overhang of excess capacity in sectors including metals, chemicals and textiles. Goods imports from China have been far outpacing India’s shipments to that country (India’s exports are mainly troubled by China’s non-tariff barriers). This has led to goods trade deficit with China widening from just \$1.1 billion in 2003-04 to a whopping \$52.7 billion in 2015-16, though easing slightly to \$51.1 billion in 2016-17. Mr. Ranade said India’s FTA strategy has to be guided by the ‘Make In India’ initiative that aims to boost domestic manufacturing and job creation within India.

In return for greater market access in goods, India, with its large pool of skilled workers and professionals, might be trying to use the RCEP to gain on the services side, by securing commitments from the other nations to mutually ease norms on movement of such people across borders for short-term work.

However, the RCEP is just one element of China’s grander plans for global dominance. In February, its foreign minister Wang Yi said, “We hope to ... speed up the RCEP negotiation process and strive for an early agreement, so as to contribute to realising the greater common goal of building the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP).” The FTAAP spans 21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation countries, including the U.S. and China, but does not cover India (though it has sought to be a APEC member). With the U.S. withdrawing from the Trans Pacific Partnership — a mega-regional FTA not involving India and China — that similarly aimed to help establish the FTAAP, the path is clear for China to push ahead with this strategic initiative to its advantage through the RCEP.

In May, Chinese Commerce Minister Zhong Shan said the RCEP “highly echoes the Silk Road spirit.” The Silk Road Economic Belt (on land) and the Maritime Silk Road (via the ocean) comprise China’s Belt and Road Initiative, that India had opposed on strategic grounds.

Joshua P. Meltzer of the think-tank Brookings said in an article that the impact of the BRI — to which China has committed \$1.4 trillion — “on regional trade integration should also be seen in light of trade agreements such as the RCEP.”

“Once completed, RCEP will also provide preferential access to each country’s markets. BRI could help China address some of its excess capacity in industries such as steel and cement, since

infrastructure projects supported by the initiative would boost external demand for Chinese exports. The initiative could provide a means for Chinese industries with excess capacity to export equipment that is currently idle.” It is pertinent for India to note this larger picture even as it sees the RCEP as “a beacon of hope for free trade” and a pact offering “a positive and forward-looking alternative in the face of growing protectionism across the world.”

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CBEC: TFA implementation: Government formulates action plan with timelines

NEW DELHI: The government has formulated a detailed action plan with timelines for smooth implementation of [WTO](#)'s trade facilitation agreement (TFA), an official said.

Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) including India has ratified TFA, which aims at easing customs procedures, expediting movement, release and clearance of consignments.

For the implementation of the pact, the government has last year set up Cabinet Secretary-headed National Committee on Trade Facilitation ([NCTF](#)).

The official said recommendations made by four working groups on legislative changes, time release study, outreach programme and infrastructure augmentation are included in the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (2017-20).

Implementation of the plan, which also includes suggestions of the private sector, have been divided into short term (0-6 months), medium term (6-18 months) and long term (18-36 months).

The short term action plan includes augmentation of storage infrastructure for perishable goods and clearance of such goods within 12 hours of landing for import and 8 hours for export.

The plan for mid term includes updation of all regulatory information available on the internet on a single window portal; to put in place adequate bio-security measures for livestock imports and publication of all fees on a single window website.

Cargo release time, both for export and import purposes, would also be reduced within a time period.

For imports, sea and air cargo release time would be reduced to three and two days respectively. Similarly, for exports, sea cargo release time would be brought down to two days and air cargo the same day.

The [CBEC](#) and the [commerce ministry](#) would also work on streamlining policy for e-commerce which includes cutting documentation requirements and providing single submissions.

Further, as part of the action plan, legislative changes have been proposed in the Customs Act 1962 for processing of documents among other things.

The agencies and ministries involved in the implementation process includes Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), Directorate General of Foreign Trade and Animal & Plant Quarantine, textiles and environment ministries.

The 164-member Geneva-based WTO is engaged in making rules for free and fair trade across the globe.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations ([FIEO](#)), which is involved in the action making exercise, said that India is ahead in implementing provisions, which it has committed in the TFA.

"We have two years for implementing category A commitments. We are ahead in most of the things. TFA will help boost global trade," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said.

Category A contains those provisions which a developing member country designates for implementation upon entry into force of this agreement.

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India and Iran reiterate their commitment for early operationalization of Chabahar Port Shri Nitin Gadkari returns from a two day visit to Teheran

India and Iran reiterate their commitment for early operationalization of Chabahar Port Shri Nitin Gadkari returns from a two day visit to Teheran

Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Shipping and Road Transport & Highways returned to India yesterday after a two day visit to Tehran. He was there to represent the Indian Government at the inauguration and oath taking ceremony of HE Dr. Hassan Rouhani as the President of Iran for a second term, on 5th August, 2017.

In an interaction with Dr. Rouhani, Shri Gadkari conveyed the Indian Prime Minister's greetings and best wishes for a successful tenure to him. He also handed over the letter of felicitations from Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi extending an invitation to the President of Iran to visit India.

Shri Gadkari later held wide ranging discussions on many issues including India's cooperation in the development of Chabahar Port and proposed rail link between Chabahar & Zahedan. In the meetings, both sides positively assessed the progress in implementation of the decisions taken during the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Iran last year, including the progress of Chabahar Port. Both sides reiterated their commitment to complete and operationalize the Port at the earliest.

Shri Gadkari called on the first Vice President Dr. E. Jahangiri and highlighted the issue of activation of contract of Chabahar Port development and conveyed to him that India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) has finalized procurement of critical equipments such as Rail Mounted Gantry Crane (RMGC), and is close to finalizing orders relating to Rubber Tyre Mobile Crane (RTMC), MT Container Handlers(MTCH), Truck and Tractor Trailers Containers and related equipments. He also conveyed India's readiness to aid Iran in taking up operations in Chabahar Port during the interim period between the actual activation of contract. He requested the Iranian side for an early submission of loan application for Chabahar Port Development to EXIM Bank of India so that the contract agreement between the two countries can be activated. It may be recalled that the Iranian side had requested India to provide upto 150 million dollar credit and had made it a condition for activation of the Chabahar Port contract. The application for loan to EXIM Bank of India is still awaited.

Later Shri Gadkari met Dr. Abbas Akhoundi, the Iranian Minister for Roads and Urban Development, and conveyed to him the latest update on procurement of equipment for the two terminals - multipurpose and container - that are covered under Chabahar Port Agreement. He also requested Dr Akhoundi that in the interest of supporting operations of Chabahar Port, the Iranian side should consider waiving off the condition of submission of loan application as it was taking time. The Iranian side assured that the application shall be presented to EXIM Bank of India early.

The Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act (FIPPA) application was also presented by the MD, IPGL to the Iranian authorities in the presence of Shri Gadkari and

Dr Akhouni . India has opened an office of IPGL in Teheran.

In his meeting with Dr Abbas Akhouni Shri Gadkari stressed upon the need for marketing of the Chabahar Port to attract cargo. He said, Iran and India should jointly organize a workshop at Chabahar for this purpose at an early date. Shri Gadkari also emphasized the need to develop rail connectivity from Chabahar to Zahedan, and said that the MoU with India in this regard may be extended. The issue of ratification of the trilateral Transit Agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan was also discussed. While India and Afghanistan have the agreement, Iran is yet to do the same.

Besides the Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari , the Indian delegation comprised of Dr. Alok Srivastava, Special Secretary, Ministry of Shipping, Shri Saurabh Kumar, Indian Ambassador to Iran, Shri Deepak Mittal, Joint Secretary(PAI), MEA and Shri Raj Gopal Sharma, OSD to Shri Gadkari.

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Putting the sun to work

Solar power panels installed on a rooftop in Vijayawada. File | Photo Credit: [Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar](#)

A consortium of 12 Indian and British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, has received a £7 million grant from the U.K. government to build self-sufficient solar-powered buildings in remote Indian villages.

The grant is part of a new solar project called 'SUNRISE' aimed at developing printed photovoltaic cells and new manufacturing processes which can be used to make solar energy products in India.

These will then be integrated into buildings in at least five villages of India, allowing them to harness solar power to provide their own energy and go off-grid.

The programme is part of a project led by the Swansea University, which has plenty of experience in the field.

"The energy-positive classroom we built shows that this technology works, successfully turning buildings into power stations. This funding will enable us to export this model to support India's plans to boost solar energy," said Professor Dave Worsley of Swansea University, leader of the SUNRISE team.

Going off-grid

"Designed and built by the SPECIFIC project, the classroom can run off grid. Electricity is generated by a steel roof with integrated solar cells," the university said in a statement.

Prof. Worsley said, "The Swansea team will be working closely with our partner universities in the U.K. and in India. Our hope is that if we can show this works on five villages in India, then it could be rolled out to other buildings in India and around the world."

Swansea University says the project is in line with the Indian government's plans to turn the country into a solar energy leader, leap-frogging fossil fuels. Some of the other universities that are part of the consortium are Oxford, Cambridge, Brunel and Imperial College London. The £7 million award comes from the U.K. government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), which supports cutting-edge research that addresses issues faced by developing countries.

"From healthcare to green energy, the successful projects receiving funding highlight the strength of the U.K.'s research base and our leadership in helping developing countries tackle some of the greatest global issues of our time," said Jo Johnson, U.K. Minister for Universities and Science.

An industrial strategy

"At a time when the pace of scientific discovery and innovation is quickening, we are placing science and research at the heart of our industrial strategy to build on our strengths and maintain our status as science powerhouse," Mr. Johnson said.

One of the key aims of the SUNRISE project for India is to provide a real-life example which proves that this technology works and that it is appropriate within communities.

The plan is that it will encourage local industries to manufacture affordable prefabricated buildings, adapted for their environment, that can generate, store and release their own power.

Jaggi Vasudev's Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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India ratifies 2nd commitment period of Kyoto Protocol

India has ratified the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol that commits countries to contain the emission of greenhouse gases, reaffirming its stand on climate action.

In a brief statement, India's Permanent Mission to the UN said that India deposited its Instrument of Acceptance of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol under the UN Convention on Climate Change here yesterday. With this, India became the 80th country to accept the amendment relating to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, the international emissions reduction treaty.

"India's acceptance reaffirms our continued commitment to climate action," the Indian mission said in a statement. India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin—who handed over India's Instrument—tweeted, "Maintaining momentum on Climate Change. India submits instrument of acceptance of Doha Amendment to Kyoto Protocol".

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which commits its Parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets.

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997 and entered into force in February 2005.

The first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol was from 2008–2012. The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Qatar in December 2012. The amendment includes new commitments for parties to the Kyoto Protocol who agreed to take on commitments in a second commitment period from January 2013 to December 2020 and a revised list of greenhouse gases to be reported on by Parties in the second commitment period, according to the UNFCCC website.

The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in January given its approval to ratify the second commitment period of the international treaty.

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Anti Dumping Tax: Anti-dumping duty on 93 products from China: Nirmala Sitharaman

NEW DELHI: Commerce and industry minister [Nirmala Sitharaman](#) on Wednesday said anti-dumping duty is in force on 93 products imported from China

These products fall in the broad groups of chemicals and petrochemicals, products of [steel and other metals](#), fibres and yarn, machinery items, rubber or plastic products, electric and electronic items and consumer goods, among others.

“In addition, 40 cases concerning imports from China have been initiated by Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties,” she told Rajya Sabha in a written reply.

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China: China uses a quantum satellite to transmit potentially unhackable data

In a major step towards building a hack-proof global quantum communication network, [China](#) has sent an unbreakable code from its [quantum satellite](#) to the Earth, marking realization of [quantum key](#) distribution technology for the first time.

The achievement based on experiments conducted with the world's first quantum satellite, Quantum Experiments at Space Scale (QUESS), was published in the journal Nature on Thursday, Xinhua news agency reported.

China launched the world's first quantum satellite, nicknamed "Micius" after a 5th Century Chinese philosopher and scientist, on August 16, 2016.

Quantum key technology is used in quantum communications to make eavesdropping impossible and to perfectly secure the communication.

The satellite sent quantum keys to ground stations in Xinglong, in north China's Hebei province, and Nanshan, near Urumqi, capital of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur region, said Pan Jianwei, lead scientist of QUESS and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

The communication distance between the satellite and the ground station varies from 645 km to 1,200 km, and the quantum key transmission rate from satellite to ground is up to 20 orders of magnitude more efficient than that expected using an optical fiber of the same length, he said.

When the satellite flies over China, it provides an experiment window of about 10 minutes. During that time, the 300 kbit secure key can be generated and sent by the satellite, according to Pan. "That, for instance, can meet the demand of making an absolute safe phone call or transmitting a large amount of bank data," Pan said.

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It is almost two months since Indian and Chinese soldiers became locked in a standoff at Doklam in the Sikkim Sector. The faceoff was triggered when a team of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was prevented by Indian troops from extending a class-5 track in the Dolam Plateau area which is part of Bhutanese territory. The Indian Army acted in response to a request from the Royal Bhutan Army under the terms of the 2007 Bilateral Friendship Treaty. Moreover, the PLA's track building is in contravention of the 2012 Agreement between the Special Representatives of India and China, whereby the status quo was required to be maintained in the said area until the resolution of the trijunction in consultation with Bhutan.

Post 1962, there have been numerous border incidences between the Indian and Chinese militaries; Nathu La in 1967 and Sumdorong Chu two decades later. In the recent past too, the Depsang Plateau and the Chumar-Demchok area witnessed face-offs in April 2013 and September 2014, respectively, with the latter intriguingly coinciding with President Xi Jinping's visit to India. Incidentally, the current Chinese incursion in Bhutan happened around the time of Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States.

Given the opaque Chinese system, deciphering the intent of its Communist leadership poses a real challenge. According to the eminent scholar Derek Bodde, those who deal with China are often bewildered when the actions of its leadership send mixed signals, making clear interpretation extremely difficult. The People's Republic of China (PRC) draws from its ancient thinkers. Its actions are always deliberate, like the moves on a checker board. It is imperative to gain an insight into the Chinese psyche and decode China's strategic calculus in order to effectively cope with its grand designs.

The PRC's assertiveness around its periphery is attributable to its age old belief of a 'subdued neighbourhood' being an essential prerequisite for stability. In his book *On China*, Henry Kissinger has brought out that the PRC perceives itself to be a returning power and does not view exercising influence as unnatural. Alastair Johnson, an expert on Chinese strategic culture, has stated that there is no pacifist bias in the Chinese strategic tradition but only realpolitik. Nations are either friendly or hostile. This is why servile countries such as Pakistan and North Korea are generously rewarded, while those like India or Vietnam which counter China's aggressive behaviour invite its wrath.

Chinese thinking since ancient times advocates mitigating a threat by eliminating it. Thus, during the period 1950-85, the PRC opted to use force eight times. When confronted with a stronger adversary, non-coercive means may be adopted as an interim expedient.

China's grand strategy encompasses three concise objectives: safeguarding sovereignty, maintaining stability, and sustaining economic progress. Any danger to the Communist Party is perceived as an 'existential threat'. Sovereignty implies, besides external non-interference, safeguarding core interests, control of the South China Sea, unification of Taiwan, and integration of claimed territories with the mainland including South Tibet (Arunachal Pradesh). In the pursuit of these vital national interests, the use of force remains an option.

President Xi has emerged as an all-powerful leader. Designated as a 'Core' leader and addressed as 'Chairman' (*Zhuxi*), he is poised to join the league of Mao and Deng. During the forthcoming 19th Party Congress in November, Xi is set to consolidate his grip further. The earlier policy enunciated by Deng that China should "bide time, hide capability and not to claim leadership" has

undergone a visible shift under Xi. Xi's 'China Dream' envisions a 'prosperous and powerful' China restored to its past greatness.

In the Chinese concept of Comprehensive National Power (CNP), hard power is the key component. China's military culture lays immense emphasis on the 'strategic configuration of power', creating a favourable disposition of forces to obviate actual fighting. By exploiting its asymmetric edge to coerce smaller nations, China has effectively pursued the surreptitious strategy of 'fighting and talking concurrently' in order to extend its control over the South China Sea. China's military doctrine of "Local Wars under Informationalised Conditions" envisages short-swift engagements to achieve political objectives. Under President Xi, the PLA is in the process of path breaking transformation to emerge as a modern military in the coming decades.

Internationally, PRC remains a lonely power. It has used diplomacy effectively to exploit differences among the adversaries to its advantage. China's threat assessment perceives the US and Japan to be the prime security concerns, while India is seen as a potential threat. As US and Western countries yield space, China under Xi has pronounced itself as a champion of globalization and sustainable growth to fill the void. Major initiatives like the 'Belt-Road' and 'Maritime Silk Road' have been launched in a quest to shape a Sino-Centric global order.

The PRC's action at Doklam is in consonance with its policy of intimidating smaller neighbours. Apparently, China did not anticipate India to step in. The Communist leadership is infuriated with India for abstaining from its signature projects. New Delhi's growing proximity to Washington and Tokyo has also irked Beijing. Given its focus on the Western Pacific, the mounting tension on the Korean Peninsula, economic imperatives and internal stability concerns in the run-up to the forthcoming Party Congress, China will avoid an armed confrontation with India, despite its rhetoric. However, it will keep up the pressure militarily and pursue aggressive diplomacy to deal with the issue.

The PRC has pursued the policy of delinking complex political issues from economic ones. It enjoys strong trade linkages with the US, Japan and Taiwan, despite serious political differences. Beijing will continue with its policy of marginalising New Delhi politically in international forums, while seeking to avoid a negative economic fallout.

In its efforts to engage China, India has followed a policy of appeasement. And its responses to PRC's misadventures have been in the form of crisis management. To effectively cope with the PRC's hostile attitude, India needs to evolve a pragmatic China policy centred on core national interests. Some essential facets which merit serious consideration are summarised below.

Firstly, given the PRC's policy of asymmetric coercion, India has no option but to narrow the existing CNP gap between the two countries. Developing strategic partnerships, initiatives like 'Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor', 'Act East Policy' and counter balancing strategies are steps in the right direction.

Secondly, national security policy needs clear articulation, based on a realistic threat assessment. Apex organizational structures require streamlining to telescope the decision making process. The current format of military modernization demands a holistic review.

Thirdly, in an era of 'limited wars', a 'joint military doctrine' is a *sine qua non* and 'tri service theatre commands' are prerequisites for synergised application of the war waging potential. In the prevailing scenario, facing the PLA's Western Theatre Command are India's seven Army and Air Force commands, which is a serious lacuna. In short engagements, the timely application of requisite combat power at the point of decision is critical. This calls for creating essential infrastructure on highest priority.

Lastly, the border management mechanism needs to be revamped. A single nodal agency is required to coordinate the functions of the various organs. Operational control astride the Line of Actual Control ought to rest with the Army. A well calibrated response mechanism must be put in place, with disputed vulnerable areas effectively dominated and troops fully prepared to meet any eventuality. Paramilitary Forces deployed for manning the borders require urgent upgrade to match the PLA's Border Regiments.

While many seem to know China, few understand it. In the desperation to engage the PRC, there is a tendency to lose sight of the bigger picture. Given the conflicting interests coupled with unresolved issues, relations between India and China are bound to be marked by contradictions, leading to frequent confrontations. However, through deft diplomacy, differences can be managed. While solutions to vexed problems may not be on the horizon, disputes turning into conflict can be avoided in the larger interest of both nations.

The Chinese are shrewd negotiators with tremendous stamina and penchant to sit across the table, but with equals. India must, therefore, firmly stand its ground and forthrightly safeguard its strategic interests. To deal with China on a level footing, the Indian leadership needs to make pragmatic assessments, possess the courage to accept home truths and display audacity for bold decisions.

The writer has served as Defence Attaché in China, North Korea and Mongolia; commanded a Division in the Eastern Sector; and currently is Professor of International Studies, Aligarh Muslim University.

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

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Odisha govt and Facebook launches 'SheMeansBusiness' programme to train women entrepreneurs

BHUBANESWAR: [Chief minister Naveen Patnaik](#) on Thursday launched 'She Means Business' programme of Facebook for [women entrepreneurs](#) in Odisha. Under the scheme 25, 000 women entrepreneurs and self-help group (SHG) members will be given training on digital marketing skills within next one year.

"Odisha government's partnership with Facebook aimed to reduce the digital divide and empower nearly 25,000 women entrepreneurs and SHGs. It is the job of government to empower people to aspire high with the faith that their aspirations will be turned into reality," said Naveen congratulating the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) department, the directorate of [Mission Shakti and Facebook](#) for this joint initiative.

Twenty-nine year old Neelam's has been running a Biryani stall at [Sum Hospital Square](#) in the city. Every day she prepares 200 plates of biryani and her stock finishes within a couple of hours. Now she is planning to launch her food truck Me-Ma's. "Cooking is my passion. I cook when I am happy, when I am sad, stressed or angry or anxious or excited. So I started this business and could earn my break-even in two months. Now nine persons are working under me. This training on digital marketing skills will surely help a lot to spreading my customer base and business," said Neelam.

Like Neelam around 1100 women entrepreneurs and SHG members from across Odisha attended the training session where they learnt basic nuances of digital marketing like how to start your business in Facebook, how to make it real-time business, quick response to queries and timely delivery, quality assurance and so on.

Facebook will also make a database of entrepreneurs in the state and will monitor their growth, turnover and profit after one year. While success stories among them will be highlighted to inspire others, said MSME secretary L N Gupta.

"Women entrepreneurs will get hands on training on digital marketing free of cost and they need not create their website to promote their business. The platform will also facilitate vertical integration," said Gupta.

As many as 201 million monthly active people on Facebook in India on their mobile and 57% of people on Facebook in India are connected to at least one small business. Moreover, 1.99 billion interactions generated between businesses and people in India through Facebook. Number of new women-owned small and medium business pages on Facebook in India has increased approximately six-fold in the last four years (between 2012 and 2015), official sources said.

"We see amazing examples of how digital can be the equalizer on Facebook every day. How it gives women access to new opportunities, new markets, new ideas, all from their own home. Through Facebook's #SheMeansBusiness we hope to inspire more women across the country, including here in Odisha, to take the leap - and help close the gap on that untapped opportunity for

millions more women and in turn ensure our economy remains strong and thrives," said Ankhi Das, Public policy director of Facebook-India.

Among others MSME minister Prafulla Samal, chairman [Odisha Skill Development Authority Subroto Bagchi](#), chief secretary Aditya Padhi and director of Mission Shakti Sujata Kartikeyan were present on the occasion.

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India, China to join Indian Ocean exercise

PLA Navy ships, Zhenghe and Weifang, during their visit to Visakhapatnam in 2014. | Photo Credit: [PTI](#)

Despite growing tensions with China, official sources said the Indian Navy would join the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in a maiden maritime search and rescue exercise to be chaired by Bangladesh at the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in November this year.

"Bangladesh, the current Chair, is scheduling a maiden International Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) in November in the Bay of Bengal to be attended by ships and aircraft of the members and observers of the IONS," an official source said.

The IONS is a regional forum of Indian Ocean littoral states, represented by their Navy chiefs, launched by India in February 2008. It presently has 23 members and nine observers.

Conclave of chiefs

The exercise comes at a time of intensifying competition among regional navies for dominance in the Indian Ocean — navies of China and Japan, presently observers, in addition to member states like India, France, Iran and the U.K.

In addition, Bangladesh is also scheduling an "extraordinary conclave of Chiefs," a meeting of chiefs of Navy before it hands over the Chair to Iran next year, the source added.

Under the charter of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.

India has considerably expanded its engagement with countries to further its own interests as well as to check the rapid expansion of Chinese naval forays in the Indian Ocean. Other countries in the region are also engaged in rapid expansion of their military capabilities.

The working group's conferences are held annually and India had chaired the one on HADR in May this year and Pakistan had chaired the meeting on IS&I in July.

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In South Asia, be the Un-China

As the [stand-off between the Indian and Chinese militaries](#) enters its third month at Doklam, it is not just Bhutan that is keenly anticipating the potential fallout. The entire neighbourhood is watching. There is obvious interest in how the situation plays out and the consequent change in the balance of power between India and China in South Asia. India's other neighbours are likely to take away their own lessons about dealing with their respective "tri-junctions" both real and imagined, on land and in the sea. A Chinese defence official was hoping to press that nerve with India's neighbours when he told a visiting delegation of Indian journalists this week that China could well "enter Kalapani" — an area near Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand that lies along an undefined India-Nepal boundary and a tri-junction with China — or "even Kashmir" with a notional India-China-Pakistan trijunction.

Perhaps, it is for this reason that governments in the region have refused to show their hand in the Doklam conflict. "Nepal will not get dragged into this or that side in the border dispute," Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara said ahead of a meeting with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who had travelled to Kathmandu for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) regional summit. Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang will be in Kathmandu next week, and Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in Delhi the week after. Making a similar point while speaking at a conference on public relations this week, a Sri Lankan Minister in Colombo contended that India and China are "both important" to Sri Lanka. Bhutan's Foreign Ministry has stuck to its line, blaming China for violating agreements at Doklam, but not mentioning India. Columnists in the country too are increasingly advocating that Bhutan distance itself from both Indian and Chinese positions.

Is India a good neighbour?

A policy of 'equidistance' for our closest neighbours is a far cry from India's past primacy in the region and something South Block can hardly be sanguine about. Yet, it is a slow path each of the neighbours (minus Bhutan) has taken in the past few years. When the Maldives first turfed private infrastructure group GMR out of its contract to develop Male airport in 2012, few could have imagined the situation today with Chinese companies having bagged contracts to most infrastructure projects. This includes development of a key new island and its link to the capital Male and a 50-year lease to another island for a tourism project.

Similarly, when the then Prime Minister of Nepal K.P. Sharma Oli signed a transit trade treaty and agreement on infrastructure linkages with China in late 2015-2016, Ministry of External Affairs mandarins had brushed it off as a "bluff". Today, China is building a railway to Nepal, opening up Lhasa-Kathmandu road links, and has approved a soft loan of over \$200 million to construct an airport at Pokhara. According to the Investment Board Nepal, at a two-day investment summit in March this year, Chinese investors contributed \$8.2 billion, more than 60% of the foreign direct investment commitments made by the seven countries present.

Sri Lanka's Hambantota port construction project went to the Chinese in 2007 only after India rejected it. Today, China doesn't just own 80% of the port; it has also won practically every infrastructure contract from Hambantota to Colombo. Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Bangladesh last October was another such overture, with \$24 billion committed in infrastructure and energy projects. Earlier this year, the largely state-owned Chinese consortium, Himalaya Energy, won a bid for three gas fields in Bangladesh's north-east shoulder from the American company Chevron, which together account for more than half of the country's total gas output.

Even if Pakistan is not counted in this list, it is not hard to see which way India's immediate

neighbours, which are each a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), are headed in the next few years. More pointedly, once the investment flows in, it will be that much harder for them to stave off a more strategic presence which China is now more unabashed about.

The crossroads at the Doklam plateau

If one of the aims of the action in Doklam is to save Bhutan from the same fate, then what else must India do to ensure that China doesn't succeed in creating similar space for itself in a country that stood by India in its objections to BRI, and bring its other neighbours back?

To begin with, India must regain its role as a prime mover of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the organisation it abandoned a year ago over its problems with Pakistan. Despite sneers all around, SAARC has survived three decades in spite of its biggest challenge, India-Pakistan tensions. That New Delhi would cancel its attendance at the summit to be held in Pakistan in the wake of the Uri attack, winning support from other countries similarly affected by terrorism such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan, is understandable. But a year later, the fact that there have been no steps taken to restore the SAARC process is unfortunate. This will hurt the South Asian construct and further loosen the bonds that tie all the countries together, thereby making it easier for China to make inroads. It should be remembered that despite China's repeated requests, SAARC was one club it never gained admittance to. For all the Narendra Modi government's promotion of alternate groupings such as South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC), BIMSTEC, the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), none will come close to SAARC's comprehensive cogency.

Second, India must recognise that picking sides in the politics of its neighbours makes little difference to China's success there. In Sri Lanka, the Sirisena government hasn't changed course when it comes to China, and despite its protestations that it was saddled with debt by the Rajapaksa regime, it has made no moves to clear that debt while signing up for more. The United Progressive Alliance government made a similar mistake when President Mohamed Nasheed was ousted in the Maldives, only to find that subsequent governments did little to veer away from Chinese influence.

India made its concerns about the then Prime Minister Oli very clear, and was even accused of helping Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' to replace him in 2016, yet Nepal's eager embrace of Chinese infrastructure and trade to develop its difficult terrain has not eased. In Bangladesh too, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has overseen the closest ties with New Delhi over the past decade, has also forged ahead on ties with China. Should her Awami League lose next year's election, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party will most certainly strengthen the shift towards China. In Bhutan's election, also next year, it is necessary that India picks no side, for nothing could be worse than if the Doklam stand-off becomes an India-versus-China election issue.

Above all, India must recognise that doing better with its neighbours is not about investing more or undue favours. It is about following a policy of mutual interests and of respect, which India is more culturally attuned to than its large rival is. Each of India's neighbours shares more than a geographical context with India. They share history, language, tradition and even cuisine. With the exception of Pakistan, none of them sees itself as a rival to India, or India as inimical to its sovereignty. As an Indian diplomat put it, when dealing with Beijing bilaterally, New Delhi must match China's aggression, and counter its moves with its own. When dealing with China in South Asia, however, India must do exactly the opposite, and not allow itself to be outpaced. In short, India must "be the Un-China".

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India, Russia to hold mega war games in October

In the midst of evolving security situation in the region, India and Russia will hold a mega war game in October involving their armies, navies and the air forces for the first time to further ramp up military ties. The exercise Indra, which will be held in Russia from October 19 to 29, will primarily focus on achieving coordination between forces of the two countries in a tri-services integrated theatre command scenario, military sources said. It will be for the first time India will participate in a tri-services exercise with a foreign country with such a large scale participation by the Navy, the Army and the Air Force, they said.

A total of 350 Indian Army personnel will participate at the mega exercise and the contingent will be led by a major-general rank official. The contingents by the Navy and the IAF will also be sizeable in numbers, the sources said.

The exercise is taking place at a time when India's ties with China have nosedived due to the simmering border dispute and its ties with Pakistan have deteriorated over cross-border terrorism and number of other issues.

The sources said the exercise will take place in three locations in Russia including in mountainous Vladivostok region.

The armies, navies and air forces of Russia are holding bilateral exercises separately but this is for the first time, both the countries will carry out a tri-services exercise.

Russia has been a long-standing defence partner of India and both the countries are now eyeing to further deepen the ties.

During Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s visit to Russia in June, both countries had decided to "upgrade and intensify" defence cooperation through joint manufacture, co-production and co-development of key military hardware and equipment.

A vision document, issued then had said that both the countries also decided to work towards a qualitatively higher level of military-to-military cooperation.

India has already decided to significantly ramp up its defence capability and has lined up billions of dollars of procurement proposals as part of military modernisation.

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UN: UN chief concerned about India's plans to deport Rohingya refugees

UNITED NATIONS: [UN](#) Secretary General [Antonio Guterres](#) is concerned about India's plans to deport Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, his spokesperson has said, underlining that refugees should not be returned to countries where they fear persecution once they are registered.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren [Rijiju](#) had told Parliament last week that the central government had directed state authorities to identify and deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas, who face persecution in the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

"Obviously, we have our concerns about the treatment of refugees. Once refugees are registered, they are not to be returned back to countries where they fear persecution," Guterres' deputy spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters here yesterday.

Haq was responding to a question on India's plans to deport Rohingyas from Myanmar regardless of whether they are registered as UN refugees or not.

Haq said UN principles of non-refoulement applies in this case. According to these principles, no nation shall expel or return a refugee in any manner to territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

When asked which agency would convey this message to India, Haq said the first point of contact will be through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Rijiju had said that according to available data, more than 14,000 Rohingyas, registered with the UNHCR, are presently staying in India.

"However, some inputs indicate that around 40,000 Rohingyas are staying in India illegally and the Rohingyas are largely located in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan," he had said.

The Home Ministry had said that infiltration of (Rohingyas) from the Rakhine state of Myanmar into Indian territory, especially in recent years, besides being a burden on the limited resources of the country, also aggravates security challenges posed to India.

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India moves to revive TAPI gas pipeline

Power point: India wants to secure gas from Galkynysh in Turkmenistan | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

India will host the next steering committee meeting of the proposed 1,814 kilometre-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, senior officials on both sides confirmed.

The decision was made during the sixth joint Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) meeting on trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation.

The meeting was followed by a meeting between visiting Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov and Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan.

“I strongly believe in this project, and this is the position of Turkmenistan,” Mr. Meredov said at a small interaction.

“It is not just a commercial project, but one which will be a good foundation for providing peace and security in the region,” he added.

In Beijing's shadow

Mr. Pradhan said India's commitment to TAPI — first proposed in 1995 — “remains strong”, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made the proposal to hold the TAPI steering committee meet in Delhi when he met the Turkmenistan President in Ashgabad last year, which he has now accepted. The last steering committee meeting, scheduled to be held annually, which is supposed to be held took place in April 2016.

Officials told *The Hindu* that the pipeline, that had its ground-breaking ceremony in December 2015, has seen flagging interest since then for a number of reasons. India's effort is to tap Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gasfields, which are the fourth largest in the world.

The move is also an effort by the government to stave off any Chinese interest in the project, given that Turkmenistan is a close partner of China in its Belt and Road initiative across Central Asia, and Beijing is the largest buyer of its gas. Even the Galkynysh gas basin is being developed under a loan from the Chinese Development Bank (CDB).

When asked by *The Hindu* on apprehensions about China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which India has refused to join, affecting India's interests, Mr. Meredov said it was important to have a “united approach” on connectivity and economic cooperation in Eurasia.

“We must be practical in the implementation of strategic economic projects. China has the BRI, we have similar ideas, India has similar ideas,” he explained.

Responding to Indian sovereignty concerns about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Mr. Meredov said Turkmenistan was “open to all economic cooperation, which is how all such projects should be seen. India is and will be one of the most important countries for Turkmenistan.”

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work

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The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

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U.K. to seek 'temporary customs union'

The British government wants to remain part of the European Union customs union for a number of years, as part of transition arrangements, while still being able to negotiate trade deals with countries such as India.

A government paper published on Tuesday set out its ambitions around future relations with the customs union — the EU's tariff-free trading area — one of the trickiest issues in negotiations over Britain's exit from the EU. "As we leave the EU and therefore the customs union, the government seeks a new customs arrangement that facilitates the freest and most frictionless trade possible in goods between the U.K. and the EU, and allows us to forge new trade relationships with our partners in Europe and around the world," it states, arguing that it would push for a "highly streamlined" customs arrangement that would remove the need for a U.K.-EU customs border.

"One potential approach would involve the U.K. mirroring the EU's requirements for imports from the rest of the world where their final destination is the EU."

The report also outlines Britain's ambitions for an interim arrangement: a time-limited customs based on shared external tariffs and without customs processes and duties between Britain and the EU. It will also push for Britain to be able to begin negotiations with new trade partners, something that members of the customs union are not able to do.

New trade talks

"The U.K. has been clear that, once it has left the EU, it intends to pursue new trade negotiations with others. However, the U.K. would not bring into effect any new arrangements with third countries which were not consistent with the terms of the interim agreement while the interim agreement was in place," says the report.

"Our proposals are ambitious, and rightly so. They set out arrangements that would allow U.K. businesses to continue to trade with their European partners in the future, while expanding their markets beyond the EU," said Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond, who has long been pushing for a "softer" Brexit, and for whom Britain's spelling out of ambitions for interim arrangements to smooth the process will be seen as a political victory.

The proposals were welcomed by business, albeit with caution.

"It is encouraging to see that these papers propose a time-limited interim period and a customs system that is as barrier-free as possible... But the clock is ticking and what matters now is giving companies the confidence to continue investing as quickly as possible," said Confederation of British Industry deputy director general Josh Hardie.

The European Commission also made clear that its focus remained on settling outstanding issues on Brexit, before it could begin to discuss future relations. "The quicker #UK & EU27 agree on citizens, settling accounts and #Ireland, the quicker we can discuss customs & future relationship," tweeted Michel Barnier, the Commission's chief negotiator on Brexit, while the European Parliament's negotiator on Brexit Guy Verhofstadt described plans of being "in & out of the customs union" and "invisible borders".

A Bangladeshi auto-rickshaw driver is suing for damages after his phone number was used in a movie, leading to a barrage of calls from female fans

Nuclear disarmament campaign group ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to consign the atomic bomb to history, firing off a

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India signs Global Environment Facility (GEF) Grant Agreement with the World Bank for USD 24.64 Million for “Ecosystems Service Improvement Project”.

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A Grant Agreement from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank of USD 24.64 million for “Ecosystem Service Improvement Project” was signed here today by Shri Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary (MI), Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Government of India and Mr. Hisham Abdo Kahin, Acting Country Director for India on behalf of the World Bank. The Project Agreements were signed by Dr Neelu Gera, DDG (Research) on behalf of the Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Shri Amitabh Agnihotri, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests on behalf of Madhya Pradesh Government and Shri R.B.P. Sinha, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests on behalf of Chhattisgarh Government with the Acting Country Director for India, World Bank.

The size of Project is USD 24.64 million which entirely will be financed by the World Bank out of its GEF Trust Fund. The project’s duration is 05 years.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) will implement the Project in the States of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh through Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education under the National Mission for Green India. The objective of the Project is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Departments of Forestry and Community Organisations to enhance forest ecosystem services and improve the livelihoods of forest dependent communities in Central Indian Highlands.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Sweden on IPRs

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Sweden on IPRs

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today has given its approval to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Sweden on cooperation in the field of Intellectual Property (IPRs).

The MoU establishes a wide ranging and flexible mechanism through which both countries can exchange best practices and work together on training programs and technical exchanges to raise awareness on IPRs and better protect intellectual property rights.

Impact:

The MoU will enable India to exchange experiences in the innovation and IP ecosystems that will substantially benefit entrepreneurs, investors and businesses on both sides. The exchange of best practices between the two countries will lead to improved protection and awareness about India's range of Intellectual creations which are as diverse as its-people. It will be a landmark step forward in India's journey towards becoming a major player in global Innovation and will further the objectives of National IPR Policy, 2016.

Features:

A Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) with members from both sides will be formed to decide cooperation activities to be taken under the MoU in following areas:

- a) Exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge on IP awareness among the public, businesses and educational institutions of both countries;
- b) Collaboration in training programmes, exchange of experts, technical exchanges and outreach activities;
- c) Exchange and dissemination of best practices, experiences and knowledge on IP with the industry, universities, R & D organisations and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through participation in programs and events in the matter, organized singly or jointly by the Parties;
- d) Exchange of information and best practices for disposal of applications for patents, trademarks, industrial designs, copyrights and Geographical Indications, as also the protection, enforcement and use of IP rights;

- e) Cooperation in the development of automation and implementation of modernization projects, new documentation and information systems in IP and procedures for management of IP;
- f) Cooperation to understand how Traditional Knowledge is protected; and the exchange of best practices, including traditional knowledge related databases and awareness raising of existing IP systems;
- g) Exchange of information and best practices regarding Intellectual Property law infringements in the digital environment, especially regarding Copyright issues; and
- h) Other cooperation activities as may be decided by the Parties with mutual understanding.

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India China Trade War: Why India must take China's warning of a trade war seriously

NEW DELHI: [India](#) has not taken Chinese bullying over Doklam seriously. For the last several weeks, [China](#) has been warning of helping insurgents in India, invading border areas in Uttarakhand and Kashmir, and a war breaking out soon. It is clear China cannot afford a war over Doklam. That's why India has not responded to China's belligerence in equal measure.

However, there is one war which can break out and India cannot afford it—a [trade war](#) with China. Recently, India imposed anti-dumping duties on 93 Chinese products. China is not going to tolerate this measure and is likely to respond. State-owned Chinese media has urged Chinese firms to reconsider the risks of investing in India and warned New Delhi to be prepared for the "possible consequences for its ill-considered action".

An article in state-owned Global Times said that China could easily retaliate with restrictions on Indian products, but added that it "doesn't make much economic sense" for the country. But it warned that a trade war between China and India seemed to be looming after the imposition of anti-dumping duties on Chinese products.

Why India cannot afford to fight a trade war with China at this juncture? Consider the following:

India's trade deficit with China rose to \$46.56 billion last year. China's exports to India totaled \$58.33 billion, registering a meager increase of 0.2% compared to \$58.25 billion in 2015. India's exports to China dropped 12% from 2015 to \$11.76 billion.

India exports less to China (mainly raw materials) and imports more (mainly electronics and other manufactured goods which are in high demand). India's [pharma](#) sector has critical dependence on Chinese imports used in drugs manufacturing.

China's exports to India account for only 2 per cent of its total exports. So even if Indians boycott all the goods imported from China, it will not make as big an impact on China as to bring it to its knees before India.

Of course, China needs new markets for its manufactured goods, and India is one of those new markets where its electronic goods, especially smartphones, have found a large market. But China can find markets in other Asian countries and even in Africa. It is also trying to create a market for its goods in Europe. It is in no way dependent on India.

China is India's largest trading partner, but the trade is heavily skewed in favour of China. A trade war when Indian manufacturing ability is limited is not going to favour India. India's imports from China are crucial at this stage.

India today imports telecom gear worth over Rs 70,000 crore annually, much of it from Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE. Chinese companies dominate the telecom sector in India. In handsets, they control 51% of India's \$8 billion plus smartphone market with brands like Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo and OnePlus.

Power is another sector where India has come to be dependent on Chinese imports. In the 12th Plan alone, almost 30% of the generating capacity was imported from China. In the rapidly growing solar energy sector, between April 2016 and January 2017, solar equipment from China had a share of 87% in a market pegged at \$1.9 billion. According to consultancy firm Grant Thornton, in 2017, when inbound deals dipped, the Chinese shifted gears and accounted for 31% of the inbound deal value as against 27% from the US.

The popular impression is that China is dumping consumer goods into India. But the fact is that India depends on China for capital goods too. Reduction in import of cheaper capital goods will push up production costs.

India can fight trade wars with China only when it has removed the big skew in its trade with China, which can take a decade of manufacturing growth.

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India and US to co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Hyderabad in November 2017
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PM says, GES is a unique opportunity for bringing together entrepreneurs and start ups with global leaders

India and US will be co-hosting the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) at Hyderabad from 28-30 November, 2017.

In a series of tweets from his account the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi said:

"India and US will co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Hyderabad from 28-30 November 2017.

The Summit is a unique opportunity for bringing together entrepreneurs and start ups with global leaders.

Look forward to Ms. Ivanka Trump's presence at Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017-Hyderabad as the leader of the US delegation."

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New dialogue format to help shift India-US ties to a higher plane

New Delhi: India and the US are reworking a key dialogue framework in place since 2015 in a bid to shift bilateral ties to a higher strategic plane.

The India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue, once described by the US State Department as the “signature mechanism for advancing the United States’ and India’s shared priorities,” is to be replaced by a dialogue in which the foreign and defence ministers will participate.

The shared priorities include job creation, improving the business and investment climate and sustaining a rules-based global order.

The two countries will have a separate dialogue on commercial issues, which will not include the foreign ministers, two people familiar with the development said separately. Till last year, trade and commercial issues were discussed in the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue and the Trade Policy Forum.

The first Strategic and Commercial Dialogue was held in 2015 in Washington and the second in New Delhi last year. It was seen as an elevation of the US-India Strategic Dialogue in place since 2009 and which focused on regional security, economic cooperation, defence, trade and climate challenges.

The new “two plus two” ministerial dialogue was announced earlier this week in a White House readout of a telephone call between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the eve of India completing 70 years as an independent country on 15 August.

“The leaders resolved to enhance peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region by establishing a new 2-by-2 ministerial dialogue that will elevate their strategic consultations,” the readout said without elaborating.

One of the two people familiar with the matter cited above said the new dialogue format will involve the Indian foreign minister and the US secretary of state as well as the Indian defence minister and the US defence secretary.

“It helps us because our strategic and defence interests reinforce each other. So a combined dialogue would be useful for India. The previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government was not too keen on having a foreign and defence ministers’ dialogue,” said former Indian ambassador to the US Lalit Mansingh.

On the other hand, “balancing commercial and strategic issues could be difficult now”, Mansingh said, especially as the Trump administration has focussed on trade issues with India including reducing the US deficit that stands at some \$30 billion.

The US has strategic consultations in this format with key partners and allies including Australia, Japan and the Philippines.

India has had a dialogue in the two-plus-two format with Japan with secretaries or senior-most bureaucrats from the foreign and defence ministries engaging each other.

Interestingly, the announcement of the new two-plus-two dialogue to “enhance peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region” comes against the backdrop of a spike in tensions between India and China with the Asian giants engaged in a military face-off on the Doklam plateau in Bhutan. It

also comes amid reports of American disenchantment with China over its inability to rein in North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

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NASA's latest communications satellite arrives in orbit

[Washington](#), Aug 18 ([IANS](#)) [NASA](#) on Friday said its third and final in a series of next generation communications satellites has successfully been placed into orbit.

The Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M (TDRS-M), launched aboard a [United Launch Alliance](#) (ULA) Atlas V rocket with a liftoff at 8:29 a.m. EDT from [Cape Canaveral Air Force Station's](#) Space Launch Complex 41.

NASA said it will conduct additional tests before putting the Boeing-made TDRS-M into service early next year.

When ready, TDRS-M will become part of NASA's [Space Network](#) providing navigation and high-data-rate communications to the International Space Station, NASA's [Hubble Space Telescope](#), rockets and a host of other spacecraft.

"The [TDRS](#) fleet is a critical connection delivering science and human spaceflight data to those who can use it here on [Earth](#)," said [Dave Littmann](#), the TDRS project manager at NASA's [Goddard Space Flight Center](#) in Greenbelt, Maryland.

"TDRS-M will expand the capabilities and extend the lifespan of the Space Network, allowing us to continue receiving and transmitting mission data well into the next decade," Littmann said.

TDRS-M's predecessors, TDRS-K and TDRS-L, also launched on Atlas V rockets from the same launch complex in January 2013 and January 2014, respectively

More than an hour and a half after launch, the TDRS-M spacecraft separated from the rocket's Centaur upper stage, heralding the end of the launch effort and the mission's beginning.

Following several months of calibration and testing, TDRS-M will be renamed TDRS-13, and it will be eligible to begin supporting NASA's Space Network.

--IANS

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No data from China on Brahmaputra this year

Hinting at China's responsibility for the current spate of floods across the northeastern States, India on Friday said Beijing had not shared any water-related data about the Himalayan rivers in the current year. The Ministry of External Affairs said under an agreement, China had committed to share annual hydrological data with India but the same has not been shared this year.

"There is an existing mechanism named India-China Expert-Level mechanism... started in 2006 to share hydrological data during the flood season for Brahmaputra and Satluj rivers. Under the MoUs, the hydrological data is to be shared between May 15 to October 15 every year but from May 15 till now, we have no data from China. The last meeting of the mechanism was held in April 2016," said Raveesh Kumar, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Cooperation necessary

The spokesperson hinted at the necessity for regional cooperation to control floods and explained that the responsibility of sharing data is with China as it hosts the points of origin of the Brahmaputra and Satluj.

Mr. Kumar also flagged Nepal's role in controlling floods in Bihar, saying External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had discussed the issue with Nepal's Deputy PM.

The spokesperson also addressed the ongoing India-China standoff at Doklam and declined to give a timeline to the standoff adding, "I am not an astrologer and since I am not an astrologer so I will let it pass." He however noted a racially motivated skit that appeared in the Chinese official media earlier in the week and said, "I will not dignify this with an answer."

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Safeguarding the interests of farmers

“The PDS in Tamil Nadu is intact and continues to retain the feature of universal coverage even after implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013.” A PDS outlet in Coimbatore. | Photo Credit: [M. Periasamy](#)

Transformational changes are taking place in India currently, improving the way we live. These changes are impacting all our lives in small or significant ways. It is gratifying to know that the citizens at large are happy with these changes. However, for some who have fed themselves on the fodder that such changes are not for the near future, there is consternation. Even worse, these people find it difficult to comprehend that technology and policy are working together to remove discretion and opaqueness.

The ongoing discourse, particularly in Tamil Nadu, on the Public Distribution System (PDS), the procurement of grains/pulses from farmers, public storage in Food Corporation of India godowns, commitments made in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Direct Benefit Transfer, etc. is interesting. However, there are strands in this discourse which are impressionistic and not based on data. They create a populist narrative and distract from the core issues. It is necessary, therefore, to infuse facts into the discourse.

The PDS in Tamil Nadu is intact and continues to retain the feature of universal coverage even after implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). Although the guidelines under the NFSA prescribe identification of priority households, there is no denial of any benefit under the PDS. There is no reduction even in the total coverage from the earlier Targeted Public Distribution System, which was effective till Tamil Nadu joined the NFSA in November 2016. The average annual offtake or the annual allocation has remained 36.78 lakh tonnes. The major part of the subsidy for the distribution of foodgrains (90.81% for rice and 91.70% for wheat) is borne by the Government of India.

The implication of this subsidy allocation to Tamil Nadu alone on the Government of India is approximately 843 crore per month and approximately 10,120 crore per year. Since the central issue price under the NFSA is much lower compared to the erstwhile Targeted Public Distribution System, the burden on the State government has come down. On implementing the NFSA, the savings for the State exchequer on account of this subsidy, thanks to the lower central issue price, is approximately 436.44 crore per year.

Union Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on August 1 stated in a series of tweets the data for Tamil Nadu and also highlighted the fact that Tamil Nadu gets the highest allocation in the country as ‘tide over’ allocation of 12.52 lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains. The narrative in Tamil Nadu cannot be devoid of these facts.

Another disturbing strand in this narrative in Tamil Nadu is that the Indian government has callously sold away the interests of our farmers at the WTO by agreeing to the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Nothing can be further from the truth than this!

The Trade Facilitation Agreement was agreed on in 2013 in Bali and came into force from February 2017 after two-thirds of the WTO’s 164 members ratified it. Several trade-related issues such as transparency, predictability and efficiency at the ports, faster clearance procedures, and improved appeal rights for traders are to be addressed by countries. They shall notify various provisions to bring in the facilitation, over three years or more. Only the basic set of provisions will be implemented within one year. The Trade Facilitation Agreement allows for consultations before any new trade rules are notified. A WTO study indicated that when the Trade Facilitation

Agreement is fully implemented, trade costs for member countries will decrease by an average of 14.3%. It is also estimated that the time taken to export and import will come down drastically. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has made budgetary allocations for bringing in single-window clearance and improving customs clearance at the ports. A high-level committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary will monitor logistics and efficiency at ports and related issues.

Thus, it can be seen that the Trade Facilitation Agreement is not about market access but inter alia about facilitating and bringing trade transparency. By ratifying the Trade Facilitation Agreement, India has not forgotten the developmental agenda lying unfulfilled at the WTO.

The Public Stock Holding issue remains unresolved at the WTO. Although agreed on in Bali in 2013 and reiterated in Nairobi in 2015, that a permanent solution for Public Stock Holding be found by 2017, it is still a 'work-in-progress'. The existing WTO rules would have allowed a legal challenge to our Public Stock Holding and minimum support price-based procurement programme in case we breached 'the limit' on procurement. 'The limit' is defined as 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.

WTO rules classify procurement and holding of public stocks for food security purposes as 'Green Box' or non trade-distorting. However, if foodgrains for the public stocks are procured through an administered price/minimum support price and if this minimum support price is higher than the archaic fixed reference price (calculated on base period 1986-88), then it is considered as trade-distorting agriculture support. Such trade-distorting support should be within 'the limit', which is 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.

One of the first things that this government did in 2014 was to intensely engage with the WTO to obtain a 'peace clause' so that even if we did breach 'the limit', no one shall challenge our programme till such a time a permanent solution is found, agreed on, and adopted by the WTO membership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on this matter, personally engaged with global leaders, and by November 2014 we obtained an open-ended peace clause from the General Council of the WTO, which was later reaffirmed at the Nairobi Ministerial. So Prime Minister Modi has safeguarded the interests of the farmer and ensured that India's sovereign right to protect them is not diluted.

Providing food to the poor or targeted groups at subsidised prices is fully WTO-compatible. This does not figure at all in the WTO calculations. We have not undertaken any commitment in the WTO for any kind of limit on the food supplied under the NFSA .

An informed discourse based on facts is welcome and I believe such a discourse shall strengthen public policy.

Nirmala Sitharaman is Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Commerce and Industry, Government of India

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules from Central Indian Ocean Seabed Basin Extended by Five Years

India's Exclusive Rights to Explore Polymetallic Nodules from Central Indian Ocean Seabed Basin Extended by Five Years

India's exclusive rights to explore polymetallic nodules from seabed in Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) have been extended by five years. These rights are over 75000 sq. km of area in international waters allocated by International Seabed Authority for developmental activities for polymetallic nodules. The estimated polymetallic nodule resource potential is 380 million tonnes, containing 4.7 million tonnes of nickel, 4.29 million tonnes of copper and 0.55 million tonnes of cobalt and 92.59 million tonnes of manganese. This has been approved unanimously in the 23rd session of International Seabed Authority (ISA) concluded on August 18, 2017 at Kingston, Jamaica.

India is the first country to have received the status of a pioneer investor in 1987 and was allocated an exclusive area in Central Indian Ocean Basin by United Nations (UN) for exploration and utilization of nodules. India is one among the top 8-countries/ contractors and is implementing a long-term programme on exploration and utilization of Polymetallic Nodules through Ministry of Earth Sciences. This includes survey and exploration, environmental studies, technology development in mining and extractive metallurgy, in which significant contributions have been made.

While, the extraction of metals from the polymetallic nodules lying at the deep ocean floor is not yet found to be economically viable at this stage, an area of about 7860 square km has been identified in the CIOB for the First Generation Mine Site on the basis of detailed surveys and analysis. Environmental studies for mining of deep-sea polymetallic nodules were also carried out to evaluate the possible impacts of mining on deep-sea environment.

A Remotely Operable Submersible (ROSUB 6000), capable of operating at 6000 m water depth was also developed and tested successfully at a depth of 5289 m. A remotely operable in-situ soil testing equipment was also developed for obtaining detailed geotechnical properties of the mining area at CIOB and tested successfully at 5462 m water depth.

A mining system is under development which has been tested for 500m water depth. Metallurgical process routes for extracting copper, nickel and cobalt from polymetallic nodules have been developed and tested in a demonstration pilot plant set up on semi-continuous basis at Hindustan Zinc Limited, Udaipur with a capacity to process 500 kg nodules per day.

International Seabed Authority (ISA) is a UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters. India actively contributes to the work of International Seabed Authority. Last year, India was re-elected as a member of Council of ISA. India's nominees on Legal and Technical Commission and Finance Committee of the ISA were also elected last year.

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ICMR inks deal to promote vaccine development

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has signed an MoU with the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) for collaborating on vaccine research and development.

India will commit \$5,00,000 (3.20 crore) annually for a stake in IVI— an amount approved during a Cabinet meeting in January.

Boost to medicine

The MoU was signed between Soumya Swaminathan, the Director General of ICMR and Secretary, Department of Health Research, Manoj Jhalani, Additional Secretary and managing director, National Health Mission, and IVI Director General Jerome H. Kim.

Successful project

IVI has been partnering with Indian vaccine manufacturers, research institutes, government, and public health agencies on vaccine development, research, and training. One of the most successful collaborations was with Shantha Biotech on the development of Shanchol, the world's first low-cost oral cholera vaccine.

The vaccine was licensed in India in 2009 and WHO-prequalified in 2011.

Dr. Swaminathan said: "We have been working closely with IVI in India for more than a decade now. We are confident that this collaboration will elevate the vaccine R&D capacity at IVI as well as benefit Indian labs and the vaccine industry."

Affordable vaccines

Dr. Kim said the MoU was a step towards providing affordable vaccines across the globe.

"India is a vaccine industry powerhouse that supplies 60% of the world's vaccines. The signing of the MoU is a continuation of our partnership with India to provide safe, effective and affordable vaccines for people around the world," he said.

Despite the National Green Tribunal's orders on construction dust and open burning of waste, there is little compliance on the ground. Ashok Kumar talks to residents of the Millennium City who are getting fed up with the administration's apathy in implementing rules that help curb air pollution

Data reveal injuries were more common among children belonging to the age group of 1-5 years

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India, emerging as super economic power



*Rajeev Ranjan Roy

India's economic advancement in the past 70 years is one of the most fascinating success stories. Faced with multiple woes, ranging from near absence of infrastructure to almost everything needed for economic enhancement, India's odyssey towards economic independence was dotted with challenges. It was the determination of our founding fathers who did not give up and build the country brick by brick. The concept of Five-Year-Plan was a great beginning in the right direction, with an emphasis on eradication of poverty and woes of farmers.

There were multiple problems which had crept into the system over the years in the system and the ease of doing business was never encouraging. Foreign reserves were never assuring, while the flow of foreign direct investments (FDI) was minimal. As a result, the demand for the opening up economy began gaining momentum when Rajiv Gandhi was the country's Prime Minister. Due to political turmoil there was not much happening till PV Narasimha Rao became the country's Prime Minister and he opened the gate for foreign investors by liberalising norms, thus beginning the era of economic liberalisation. The pace of foreign as well as domestic investment remained sluggish during 1996 to 1999 due to political instability and Kargil War.

However, Indian economy bounced back post-Kargil War, thanks to the visionary leadership of the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In fact, the 'feel good factor' of liberalisation became explicit and the flow of investment and disinvestment of PSUs to fund major infrastructure projects including roads and power plants picked up momentum. Since then Indian economy has not looked back. In fact, even during the global economic crisis in 2008, Indian economy showed resurgence and maintained an upward growth rate, emerging as a bright spot for the world investors.

Now under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has become the fastest growing economy in the world, leaving behind China. A series of reforms initiated by Prime Minister Modi has significantly increased the ease of doing business in the country. That is why India is today one of the most sought after investment destination of world's leading firms. It is, perhaps, for the first time in the history of independent India that the world's top CEOs are committing huge investments in India on their own, a rare phenomenon indeed!

Prime Minister Modi's demonetisation decision has created a solid ground for the formalization of Indian economy. Indian economy has suffered a lot due to its over dependence on informal or unorganised sector, which could be a major source of employment but in the process end up causing huge losses to the economy by way of tax evasion and violation of labour laws, which have negative bearing on the final output of workforce. Similarly, the landmark Goods and

Services Tax (GST) is all set to give a new boost to the country's economy. It will have long term positive impact on investment and growth. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), "this tax reform and the elimination of targeted subsidies are needed to widen the revenue base and expand the fiscal envelope to support investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare."

Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies (Benefits and Services) Act 2016, rationalisation of subsidies, enactment of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 and operationalisation of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) for new corporate insolvency framework are some other measures which will add lot of resilience to the country's economy.

The World Bank has predicted India's growth at 7.7 per cent during 2017-18, which reinforces the fact that fundamentals of Indian economy remain quite strong and are capable of absorbing the aftershocks of policy 'disruptions'. India has all the potential to grow at a much higher pace if the Centre takes care of industrial and manufacturing sectors. IMF too has underlined the need for removing long-standing structural bottlenecks so that market efficiency improves. Indian economy had grown at 7.6 per cent in 2015-16. According to the World Bank, India's gross domestic product (GDP) could grow at 7.7 per cent in 2017, supported by "expectations of a rebound in agriculture, civil service pay reforms supporting consumption, increasingly positive contributions from exports and a recovery of private investment in the medium term." India's recent growth rate of more than 7 percent annually has been the strongest among G-20 countries.

The latest OECD Economic Survey of India 2017 finds that the acceleration of structural reforms and the move toward a rule-based macroeconomic policy framework are sustaining the country's longstanding rapid economic expansion. Liberalising norms for a wide range of FDIs will lead to a kind of surge in job and employment creation. Barring the small negative list, Prime Minister Modi has ensured that all sectors get FDIs through the automatic approval route. According to an estimate, net FDI inflows during April-December 2016-17 increased to US \$ 31.18 billion from US \$ 27.22 billion during the last corresponding period. India's foreign exchange reserves stood at US \$ 367.93 billion on March 24, 2017 with the current account deficit (CAD) at sustainable level of 1.3 percent and 1.1 percent in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

If we go by other economic indicators, there are many more things to cheer about. India's Gross Fiscal Deficit (GFD) was restricted at 3.5 percent in 2016-17. The GFD for the year 2017-18 has been pegged at 3.2 percent with a commitment to achieve three per cent next year. With the Central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed to enhance fiscal resilience through sustained focus on quality expenditure and higher tax realizations, India looks all set to script many more successes in the economic area, moving towards achieving the goal of economic supremacy.

**The author is a senior journalist, currently working with Daily Post, Chandigarh.*

Views expressed in the article are author's personal.

(The feature has been contributed by PIB Chandigarh)

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Festival of India being Organized in Cote D'ivoire, Liberia and Guinea from 15 August, 2017 – 28 January, 2018**Festival of India being Organized in Cote D'ivoire, Liberia and Guinea from 15 August, 2017 – 28 January, 2018**

A Festival of India is being organized in Cote d'Ivoire and concurrently accredited countries of Liberia and Guinea from 15 August, 2017 – 28 January, 2018. The Festival will showcase diverse Indian culture, i.e. classical and folk dances. The events will be held in four cities of Cote d'Ivoire, namely, Abidjan, Yamassoukro and Grand Bassam and Daloa and capital cities of Monrovia of Liberia and Conakry of Guinea. Following events will be showcased:-

1. Bharatnatyam Dance Group led by D. Bhavani Shankar (15-16 August, 2017).
2. Mohiniattam Dance Group led by Aswathy Nair (22-25 September, 2017) – The group will also perform in Morovia, Liberia.
3. Folk Dance of Arunachal Pradesh Rinchin Droma (27-30 October, 2017) – The group will also perform in Conakry, Guinea.
4. Manipuri Dance Group led by B. Sanjita Devi (26-28 January, 2018).

Sanjay Kumar/jk/

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India and Uzbekistan should work for increasing trade: Vice President**India and Uzbekistan should work for increasing trade: Vice President****Uzbekistan Foreign Minister calls on Vice President**

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India and Uzbekistan should work for increasing trade between these two nations to the tune of 1 bn USD by March 2018. He was interacting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uzbekistan, Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov who called on him, here today.

The Vice President said that India and Uzbekistan have close cultural and historical connections and our peoples have similar developmental aspirations. He further said that traders and travelers over centuries helped exchange of ideas between countries. He expressed his happiness over several cultural events which were held in Uzbekistan to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between these two nations.

The Uzbekistan Foreign Minister has expressed his happiness over visiting India which has strong cultural heritage. He hoped that discussions during the visit will help in identifying new areas of cooperation and take relationship to a higher level, he added.

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India welcomes Trump's new Afghanistan policy

Donald Trump

Hitting out at cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, India on Tuesday welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's new policy on Afghanistan and said his move would help target "safe havens" of terrorism in South Asia.

Senior diplomats said the American leader's call for an end to Pakistan's involvement in terrorism in Afghanistan and his support for Afghan-led peace process had addressed a core Indian concern.

"We welcome President Trump's determination to enhance efforts to overcome the challenges facing Afghanistan and confronting issues of safe havens and other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists," said the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in an official statement. Speaking to *The Hindu*, senior diplomats said Mr. Trump had supported long-held Indian foreign policy principles of non-intervention and non-interference and ended uncertainties regarding the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

Mr. Trump urged India to do more to help Afghanistan with its developmental needs and urged Pakistan to stop terror attacks that originate from its territory.

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Trump links India's Afghan role to trade surplus

President Donald Trump, who announced his new Afghan strategy on Monday night, linked a proposal for India playing a bigger role in the war-torn country to its trade surplus with the United States.

"We appreciate India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development," he said, echoing similar demands that he had made on South Korea, Japan and Germany, some of the closet allies of the U.S. India is the ninth biggest trading partner of the U.S. and India had a trade surplus of around \$26 billion with the U.S. in goods trade alone last year.

By inviting India to be a partner in Afghanistan, Mr. Trump has entirely overruled Pakistan's position that India's involvement to its west is part of the problem.

Nuclear flashpoint

The President, who repeatedly took potshots at his predecessor, Barack Obama, without naming him, however, appeared to follow the previous administration's understanding of South Asia as a nuclear flash point, where there is also a risk of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of Islamist terrorists.

"The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict," he said. "...and we must prevent nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the hands of terrorists and being used against us," he said.

Defense Secretary James Mattis had recently said America was "not winning" in Afghanistan. The President said America will fight the war to victory and defined victory in terms similar to his predecessors — to prevent a terrorist attack originating from the region, and to politically stabilise Afghanistan. In an effort to differentiate his policy from his two predecessors, George W. Bush and Mr. Obama, who oversaw this war earlier, Mr. Trump said: "We are not nation-building again. We are killing terrorists." The President called his new policy "Principled Realism."

Reverse Taliban gains

The new strategy in Afghanistan, which seeks troops increase in the country, is an effort to reverse the gains made by the Taliban in the last year or so. Once the Afghan government regains the upper hand, the U.S. will seek a political settlement, the President said. "Someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but nobody knows if or when that will ever happen," said Mr. Trump.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson explained the new U.S policy as an effort to force the Taliban to negotiation. "Our new strategy breaks from previous approaches that set artificial calendar-based deadlines. We are making clear to the Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield. The Taliban has a path to peace and political legitimacy through a negotiated political settlement to end the war," he said in a statement after the President's speech.

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Rebooting India-Nepal ties

Nepal is run by a revolving door of political leaders who have weakened the polity and economy over the years, but who did battle the odds to promulgate a new Constitution. India, meanwhile, has a Chief Minister-turned-Prime Minister who has had to learn geopolitics on the job. Prime Minister Narendra Modi would have realised the limits of optics in geopolitics, and Nepal serves as a marker of adventurism gone awry.

With global geopolitics on the boil, and the Hindi-Chini relationship in free fall, it should be in India's interest to secure its own neighbourhood, and that can only be through letting national politics and governance of the smaller neighbours evolve without interference.

New Delhi must use the visit of Nepal's newly anointed Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, on Wednesday as an opportunity to hit the reset button on Nepal-India relations. Such a rebooting requires a cold and hard look at how Nepal was handled over the past decade, exemplified by the impediments placed in the writing, adoption and implementation of the Constitution.

True, India played a valued role in ending the Maoist insurgency in 2006, but the period thereafter was marked by escalating micro-meddling in Nepal's internal affairs. In Constitution-writing, there were attempts to define the new provincial boundaries according to Indian dictates — pushing first an unwieldy and unworkable plains-only province, then a two-province formula.

The presence of India's heavy hand contributed in numerous ways to the distortion of consensual governance needed in transitional times. Kathmandu's civil society was preoccupied with managing the fallout, and much time has been spent rallying around the flag rather than stabilising the new republican democracy, trying to end 'bhagbanda' share-the-spoils politics, and working to ensure that the inclusion enshrined in the Constitution is observed in practice. (The scarcity of Madhesi faces in the recent appointment of ambassadors, judges and government appointments is a case in point.)

For reasons best known to South Block, India 'noted' rather than welcomed the Constitution. A society trying to emerge from the April 2015 Great Earthquake was slapped with the punitive Great Blockade. Even today, New Delhi seems uneasy with the recognition of Maithili, Bhojpuri and Avadhi in Nepal, and prefers the elevation of Hindi as in India.

While keeping silent for years on Nepal's post-conflict transitional justice process, in November 2015 India's representative in Geneva cynically utilised the forum of the Human Rights Council to influence government change in Kathmandu. A year ago, Indian interlocutors pushed the Nepali Congress to renege on its promise to continue in coalition with the mainstream left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), and engineered what is the implausible current embrace of the Congress with the Maoist party of Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

At the tactical level, New Delhi's motives behind the heavy-handedness of the recent past may have to do with electoral calculations related to the Bihar and Uttar Pradesh polls. On the Constitution, the idea of a 'buffer' province is thought to have been floated either to prevent third country militant infiltration or to control national-level politics in Kathmandu. Some point to an agenda to try to take Nepal back to 'Hindu state' constitutional status.

For the long term, Indian strategists may be seeking ways to get Kathmandu to allow the construction of high dams and deep reservoirs on Nepal's rivers — for flood control, navigation, urban use and irrigation in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A particular federal demarcation might make Kathmandu more amenable, goes this line of thinking.

In trying to push some or all of these goals, New Delhi made deep inroads into Nepal's political class, but none did it use more than the Madhesbaadi parties. Besides the fact that this has done great injustice to the plains-based Madhesi citizens of Nepal, the Madhesbaadi leadership is presently incensed that after all its goading New Delhi now seems to be backtracking — a recent example of this 'use and throw' policy is seen in how the Madhesbaadi leaders were made to stand against local government elections, followed by a volte-face of the Indian Embassy urging them to join.

As Mr. Deuba deplanes, indeed there are indications of a scaling back of Indian involvement. Hopefully this is a response to a growing realisation in New Delhi that a peaceful, stable Nepal that evolves of its own volition is good for India, and especially for the central Ganga plains.

From the Kathmandu perspective, politically micromanaging Nepal could not have but backfired. Take the Great Blockade, which forced the Kathmandu political leadership to reach out to Beijing and sign a slew of trade, transit and infrastructural agreements with it. Few know that Nepal is today better connected by air to Chinese cities than to India.

Once Nepal and India get past the era of interventionism as but a bad memory, the two can concentrate on the numerous matters that need concentration and resolution. An important issue is the open border itself, which is a unique joint heritage of the two countries. While it is Nepal's Left that has traditionally demanded restrictions on the border, the call now rises from the Indian security establishment.

As we speak, the Nepal plains are suffering from massive floods that have also affected downstream areas across the border. Besides the spread of settlements, a prime cause for the severity is that the Chure (Shivalik) hills have been gouged of rocks to build elevated roads and levees just south of the border, leading to inundation in Nepal. A permanent bilateral mechanism is required to save the plains population of Nepal from suffering, which is ongoing as this is written.

The Kosi Barrage and attendant embankments have the possibility of wreaking havoc because siltation of six decades has raised the riverbed within the levees far above the outlying tracts. The easy answer for the Indian politician is to demand a high dam in the hills of Nepal even as alternatives are not studied, such as redistribution of waters into various older channels of the Kosi in Bihar.

There are many other matters pending between Nepal and India, much of it due to neglect by the Kathmandu intelligentsia, such as regarding the impact of demonetisation and the application of Goods and Services Tax on Nepal's economy and citizenry. Similarly, Kathmandu prefers not to discuss the fact that the Nepali rupee is pegged to the Indian rupee and what it means for the long run. The rights of migrant Indian labour in Nepal and Nepali labour in India is a topic that rarely comes up. There are border disputes pending between the two countries — at Susta, Kalapani and the 'tri-junction' of Lipulekh — but Kathmandu has been timid in raising these matters.

Nepal has since long planned to sell electricity to India once it has a hydropower surplus, and the completion of the much-delayed Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line was supposed to facilitate that. But along comes an Indian government directive that it will not allow import of electricity other than from power companies with more than 51% Indian equity.

The arbitrary blockages and go-slow at Indian Customs at border points, the selective use of quarantine for the export of Nepali agricultural produce, the increasing high-handedness of the Sashastra Seema Bal (India's frontier force in this sector) in dealing with Nepalis crossing over — these are only some of the other challenges on the bilateral plane.

Due to domestic political instability more than anything else, over the years Kathmandu lost its confidence in dealing with the Dilli Durbar. With the self-assurance that comes from Nepal moving towards normalcy under its new Constitution, and with India seemingly changing gears on its Nepal policy, one hopes for a threshold of maturity in relations between South Asia's oldest nation-state and its largest democracy.

Kanak Mani Dixit, a writer and journalist based in Kathmandu, is founding editor of the magazine 'Himal Southasian'

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Why India should buy into Donald Trump's Afghanistan war

Will Donald Trump's new approach to South Asia work? Its success depends on whether India is convinced that Trump's America is a partner to be trusted—and whether India itself is willing to step up its engagement with Afghanistan as the US president has suggested.

Let's be clear: the Afghanistan strategy Trump has laid out looks more sensible than what Barack Obama promised in 2009, when he announced his "surge and exit" policy at West Point. There are two big differences, both of which give India reason to trust Trump's approach more than it did Obama's.

First, Trump didn't announce a timetable for withdrawal. Obama famously declared the war in Afghanistan would be over by 2014. As many in India—a country with an unfortunately extensive experience of counter-insurgency—pointed out at the time, it's vital to avoid giving insurgents a sense that they can wait out a war. (One Indian columnist quoted Jay Leno to bolster his point: "Obama announces he'll bring the troops home in 18 months; the Taliban says they will keep fighting for 19.") Your choice to become an insurgent depends not just on where you live, but on your evaluation of the chances of winning in a well-defined timeframe. Obama's deadline doomed his policy from day one.

Second, although both Obama and Trump mentioned "safe havens" for insurgents in Pakistan, Obama initially insisted that "mutual trust" was the basis of the US-Pakistan relationship and spoke only of targeting "groups that threaten our countries." This bought into Islamabad's distinction between Islamists that threaten Pakistan and those that threaten India and other countries. (The Obama administration's view of Pakistan grew harsher over time.)

Also read: [Trump administration wants to engage India more effectively in Afghanistan: Mike Pence](#)

Trump, on the other hand, immediately specified that he was focused on "groups that threaten the region and beyond." His administration has privately underlined this point to Pakistan. And it's demonstrated its resolve in public, when last week it included a major Kashmir-focused militant group on a State Department list of terrorist organizations.

Yes, it's worrisome that Trump's view of international relations is constantly transactional: He mentioned the "billions of dollars" that India "makes" in trade with the US as a reason it should help in Afghanistan. But one of the few times that view fits with reality is when it comes to dealing with the Pakistan military; that's precisely how Pakistani generals view their relationship with the outside world as well.

Some wonder if the US has any leverage with Pakistan that it hasn't already used. Congress has been adding more and more conditions to military aid to Pakistan. And when Obama made his speech in 2009, the US was investing \$870 million dollars a year in Pakistan; last year it invested only about \$70 million. (China has increased investment tenfold to compensate; it pumped in almost \$1.2 billion last year.) Plus, of course, the Pakistani military will always control the best land route to Kabul.

But India feels there are multiple ways in which the US could be tougher on the Pakistani establishment. Some are now being explored: A US government spokesman has already said sanctions on specific Pakistani officials might be introduced.

Let's accept for now that Trump's speech and his government's actions help address India's

general distrust of US commitment to the region. It's then India's turn to live up to its own aspirations; if it expects to be a "net provider of security" in its region, in the words of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, then it will have to commit to helping stabilize Afghanistan.

To be fair, India is already doing a great deal, as the Afghan ambassador in New Delhi pointed out recently. It has built roads, electricity lines, a dam and even the Afghan Parliament building. Thousands of Afghan officers are trained in India. It sponsors hundreds of schools.

But it is also true that India could do more. It spends less than 10% of its minuscule foreign aid budget on Afghanistan, while delays in New Delhi continue to hold up cooperation in infrastructure. Some Afghans complain that fear of Islamabad's reaction has kept India from selling arms that the Afghan Army badly needs.

Yes, Pakistan's military will bristle at any expanded Indian presence in Afghanistan. But, like any irrational belief, there's no real way to convince them that Indian actions can contribute to stability—and hence to Pakistan's own security. Such paranoia is hardly legitimate justification for Pakistani—or Indian— inaction.

If India wants to become a source of regional stability, then it must start acting like one—and spending like one. That's what makes sense for India, whatever Donald Trump may say or do in the years to come. **Bloomberg View**

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Nepal on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and precursor chemicals and related matters

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Nepal on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and precursor chemicals and related matters

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today has given its approval for signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Nepal on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and precursor chemicals and related matters.

The MoU lists out the areas of cooperation on drug matters between the two countries. It also indicates the mechanism of information exchange and the competent authorities in the two countries who are responsible for the implementation of the MoU and exchange of any information.

Cooperation on drug matters is expected to curb the illicit traffic of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals in the two countries.

The MoU provides that the Parties shall endeavour to: -

(i) develop mutual cooperation with a view to effectively resolving the issue of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, cooperate in drug demand reduction through prevention, awareness, education and community based programmes, treatment and rehabilitation; and

(ii) exchange information of operational, technical and general nature in drug matters, exchange literature on their existing laws, rules, procedures, best practices and methods of curbing illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors and any further amendments to the existing legislation.

Background:

India has always supported global efforts to counter drug trafficking and is party to several multilateral and bilateral initiatives in this regard as also United Nations (UN) led initiatives. In accordance with the spirit of UN Conventions on Narcotic Drugs, effort is made to enter into Bilateral Agreements/MoUs with neighbouring countries and the countries which have a direct bearing on the drug situation prevailing in our country. Such Bilateral Agreements/ MoUs have already been executed with various countries. The proposed MoU with Nepal is another such MoU which shall be entered for the purpose of bilateral cooperation on drug matters.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Nepal for laying down implementation arrangement for construction of a new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border**Cabinet approves MoU between India and Nepal for laying down implementation arrangement for construction of a new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between India and Nepal for laying down implementation arrangement on Cost sharing, Schedules and Safeguard issues for starting construction of a new Bridge over Mechi River at Indo-Nepal border.

The estimated cost of construction of the bridge is Rs. 158.65 crore, which would be funded by Government of India through ADB loan. The new bridge is part of up-gradation of the Kakarvitta (Nepal) to Panitanki Bypass (India) on NH 327B covering a length of 1500 meters including a 6 lane approach road of 825 meters. Mechi Bridge is the ending point of Asian Highway 02 in India leading to Nepal and provides critical connectivity to Nepal.

The construction of the bridge will improve regional connectivity and has potential to strengthen cross border trade between both the countries and cementing ties by strengthening industrial, social and cultural exchanges.

National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has been designated as the implementing agency for this project. DPR for this project has been prepared and alignment of bridge has been finalized in consultation with Government of Nepal.

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And the war goes on: On Trump's South Asia policy

U.S. President [Donald Trump's decision](#) to deepen the country's military engagement in war-torn [Afghanistan signals](#) a significant shift in the position he has held for years. Mr. Trump had campaigned to end American involvement in foreign conflicts and was particularly critical of the Afghan war, which he said was "wasting" American money. His announcement on Monday of the decision to send more troops to the country reflects a realisation that the U.S. does not have many options in dealing with its longest military conflict. This is also a grim reminder of the precarious security situation in Afghanistan. Sixteen years since George W. Bush ordered the American invasion of Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban regime, the insurgents are on the ascendent again. More than half the country's territory, mostly in rural, mountainous areas, is now controlled by the Taliban, while the Islamic State has set up base in eastern Afghanistan. In recent years, both the Taliban and the IS have carried out a number of terror attacks in the country, including at highly fortified military locations, raising questions about the very survival of the government in Kabul. This is a worry point for Mr. Trump's generals, who want to avoid the kind of vacuum left behind by the Soviet withdrawal in the late 1980s that plunged Afghanistan into a protracted civil war; the Taliban eventually took over.

But it is not going to be easy for Mr. Trump. He is the third consecutive American President to send troops to Afghanistan. Mr. Bush and Barack Obama failed to swing the situation sufficiently to ensure a long-lasting difference in Afghanistan's battleground. It is not clear if Mr. Trump can win a war they lost. His strategy can be summed up as Obama-plus — it builds on the premises of the Obama plan of additional troops and regional diplomacy. But unlike Mr. Obama, who set a timetable for the withdrawal of troops, Mr. Trump is ready for an open-ended engagement. He also said the focus of the American mission should narrow down to fighting terrorists, not rebuilding Afghanistan "in our own image". Third, Mr. Trump minced no words while calling Pakistan a country that shelters terrorists. He also wants India to play a greater role in providing economic and developmental assistance to Afghanistan. [India has welcomed Mr. Trump's strategy](#), as the U.S.'s objectives in building a stable Afghanistan and ending Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism are exactly in line with India's own goals for the region. It has, however, correctly reminded Mr. Trump that it does not need his request, never mind his coarse reference to "billions of dollars" made in bilateral trade with the U.S., in order to fulfil its commitment to Afghanistan's economic development. Such open transactionalism will not serve the U.S.'s efforts in winning allies for its new Afghanistan policy, nor indeed will it further its mission in a country that is not unfairly called the "graveyard of empires".

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Troubles of separation

The EU Customs Union is an association of countries and territories in Europe that applies uniform tariffs to imports and thus acts as a single trade area with no internal border checks. It accounts for approximately 16% of world trade, trading significantly with the United States, China, Russia and Switzerland. Customs Union member states cannot enter into independent trade deals with third parties.

As things stand, yes, so it can make trade deals with non-EU countries. How this exit will take place, and what will replace it, is unclear. The U.K.'s proposed approach was outlined in an August 15 government paper that suggests two possible approaches to a new customs arrangement.

First, a "highly streamlined" arrangement in which the U.K. and EU trade with each other as third parties but in a simplified regime that includes unilateral adjustments on the U.K.'s part; second, a new customs partnership with the EU, where the U.K. government has suggested the potential for setting standards and tariffs exactly in line with the EU, so goods destined for the EU market passing through the U.K. do not need to cross a customs border between the U.K. and EU. The British government, like the EU, does not want a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the absence of a customs union, it is not obvious how some form of border can be avoided, since the Republic of Ireland is a part of the EU Customs Union.

The government has proposed a temporary, "close association" with the EU after Brexit concludes until a new customs arrangement is in place to protect businesses in the EU and U.K. from experiencing a "cliff edge" on the day Brexit concludes.

The government's policy paper has been criticised for being vague. David Davis, the U.K.'s Brexit Secretary, has said the ambiguity is "constructive" in that it does not reveal Britain's hand entirely. Even within the government, consensus on the need for an interim agreement was hard to achieve. While the Labour Party spokesperson Keir Starmer used "fantastical and contradictory" to describe the plan, Labour shadow cabinet members have had different opinions on whether the Customs Union should be on the negotiating table.

The EU's Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, has reiterated the EU position that trade deals cannot be agreed until matters relating to the Irish border, the U.K.'s divorce bill with the EU and the rights of EU and U.K. citizens living across borders are settled.

Critics have also argued that a post-Brexit customs union with the EU that ends up being identical to the existing Customs Union obviates the need to leave it in the first place. Business lobbies have said they would like a one-step transition to minimise adjustments. The financial sector is keen on quickly reaching an agreement that includes services; 80% of the U.K.'s GDP is from the service sector.

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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First, a "highly streamlined" arrangement in which the U.K. and EU trade with each other as third parties but in a simplified regime that includes unilateral adjustments on the U.K.'s part; second, a new customs partnership with the EU, where the U.K. government has suggested the potential for setting standards and tariffs exactly in line with the EU, so goods destined for the EU market passing through the U.K. do not need to cross a customs border between the U.K. and EU. The British government, like the EU, does not want a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the absence of a customs union, it is not obvious how some form of border can be avoided, since the Republic of Ireland is a part of the EU Customs Union.

The government has proposed a temporary, "close association" with the EU after Brexit concludes until a new customs arrangement is in place to protect businesses in the EU and U.K. from experiencing a "cliff edge" on the day Brexit concludes.

The government's policy paper has been criticised for being vague. David Davis, the U.K.'s Brexit Secretary, has said the ambiguity is "constructive" in that it does not reveal Britain's hand entirely. Even within the government, consensus on the need for an interim agreement was hard to achieve. While the Labour Party spokesperson Keir Starmer used "fantastical and contradictory" to describe the plan, Labour shadow cabinet members have had different opinions on whether the Customs Union should be on the negotiating table.

The EU's Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier, has reiterated the EU position that trade deals cannot be agreed until matters relating to the Irish border, the U.K.'s divorce bill with the EU and the rights of EU and U.K. citizens living across borders are settled.

Critics have also argued that a post-Brexit customs union with the EU that ends up being identical to the existing Customs Union obviates the need to leave it in the first place. Business lobbies have said they would like a one-step transition to minimise adjustments. The financial sector is keen on quickly reaching an agreement that includes services; 80% of the U.K.'s GDP is from the service sector.

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Understanding work

The Global Commission on the Future of Work, established on Monday, has a critical role in addressing the decent jobs deficit that affects the lives of roughly three billion working people. The body, which includes two representatives from India, is to present a report at the 2019 commemoration of the centenary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Experts will build on recent dialogues in over 100 states on the implications for individuals and societies from the changing dynamics of work, production processes and rapid technological transformation.

Meanwhile, the ILO's ongoing assessment of major trends in different segments of the employment scenario points to the challenges that lie ahead and the adaptations required to advance its broader mission to promote social justice. Foremost, the far-reaching modifications witnessed in the means of production and access to mobile information and communication technology have created a flexible overall work environment. These applications allow relative independence from the rigid office settings and make room for people to function with autonomy and even achieve a better work-life balance. But in an increasingly competitive economic climate, these same developments invariably entail more intense activity and longer hours. Noteworthy is the acceleration in the demand for industrial robots, at an annual rate of 9% since 2011, making the upgradation of human skills imperative upon corporations and governments alike. In the manufacturing sector, where two-thirds of them are concentrated, the robot density — one machine deployed per 1,000 employees, in 2015 — was at 14 in the advanced world and two in developing countries. Harnessing the opportunities from these new technologies and mitigating the human costs from this unfolding transformation is a function of recognising the rights and responsibilities of individuals and employers.

In this latter respect, the overall record is not particularly encouraging. In 2016, less than half of all women in the working age bracket were engaged in the labour market, compared to over 75% among men. Worse, this situation is projected to persist over the next 15 years. Similarly, declining ratios of the population in the working age are expected to exacerbate the challenge of care for the elderly. Persistently high levels of unemployment since the global financial crisis perhaps encapsulate most of these concerns. The growth in international migration by as much as 50% since 1990 and the rise of xenophobia in many parts of the world illustrate the dangers from the lopsided trajectory of the current phase of globalisation. Compounding the effects of these challenges are two not unrelated factors. The first is the continued exclusion of about 50% of the global labour force from the formal sector of employment, with all-round insecurity. The other is the absence of meaningful social protection coverage for the majority of the world population; only 27% has recourse to comprehensive minimum support. Given this backdrop, the 2019 centenary must necessarily be more than an occasion for ceremony and symbolism.

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Bilateral Meeting - India and Uzbekistan**Bilateral Meeting - India and Uzbekistan**

The Commerce and Industries Minister, Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman and Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Elyor Ganiev, Minister of Foreign Trade held detailed discussions on deepening trade and economic ties between India and Uzbekistan in a bilateral meeting held on 23rd August 2017 in , New Delhi.

Commerce Minister expressed happiness on formation of an **Uzbek India Trading House** at Delhi as a Joint Venture Company.

Commerce Minister suggested setting up and activation of a private industry led **Joint Business Council** to develop and enhance business relations at all levels including investments, trade in goods and services such as education and health in Uzbekistan and India. She expressed the hope that if the draft agreement under negotiation between India-CIS Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Uzbek Chamber of Commerce is quickly finalized and the Joint Business Council commences work, then it would be a very positive development for enhancing bilateral economic and trade relations.

Both the Ministers underlined the high importance of transport & logistics infrastructure for strengthening bilateral trade ties. Commerce Minister requested Uzbek Minister to become member of multilateral INSTC Agreement which would facilitate increased international transit cargo traffic through Iran.

Commerce Minister requested Uzbek Minister for reduction of import duty on leather goods and footwear in Uzbekistan from current 30% to 10%, which is current MFN rate in India. She mentioned that India could source finished leather from Uzbekistan. Commerce Minister also requested Uzbek Minister to consider reducing higher import duty on Indian engineering exports to Uzbekistan.

Commerce Minister requested Uzbek Minister to consider reduction of Import tariff imposed by Uzbekistan which are comparatively higher especially on fabrics and made-ups (upto 30%), reduction in Higher MFN duty on RMG products which is 31.1% and simplifying the procedure for registration and certification.

Commerce Minister informed Uzbek Minister that existence of Non-Tariff Barriers such as import quotas and licensing, price and foreign exchange control, complex customs and

administrative procedures, harsh sanitary norms and outright border closures have also been limiting inter-regional trade. Minister of Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan informed that Uzbek Government was seriously working to liberalise and simplify various procedures, systems and norms and expressed the hope that most of difficulties faced by exporters would get resolved shortly.

Commerce Minister requested Uzbek Minister to simplify procedure for granting visa to Indian business men and tourists and expressed the hope that if visa issues are resolved, tourism will also receive impetus in both countries.

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List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the State Visit of Prime Minister of Nepal to India (August 24, 2017)

List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the State Visit of Prime Minister of Nepal to India (August 24, 2017)

S.No.	Title of Agreement	Nepalese side	Indian side
1.	MoU on Modalities for Utilization of India's Housing Grant Component to support Reconstruction of 50,000 Houses	Mr. Shanta Raj Subedi, Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Shri S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
2.	MoU on Implementation of the Grant Component of India's Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Package in the Education Sector in Nepal	Mr. Shanta Raj Subedi, Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Shri S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
3.	MoU on Implementation of the Grant Component of India's Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Package in the Cultural Heritage Sector in Nepal	Mr. Shanta Raj Subedi, Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Shri S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
4.	MoU on Implementation of the Grant Component of India's Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Package in the Health Sector in Nepal	Mr. Shanta Raj Subedi, Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Shri S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
5.	MoU for Implementation Arrangement on Cost Sharing, Schedules and Safeguard Issues for Construction of Mechi Bridge under ADB's SASEC Road Connectivity Programme (Tranche 2), Funded by Gol	Mr. Devendra Karki, Secretary, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport	Shri Yudhvir Singh Malik, Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
6.	MoU on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemical and Related Matters	Mr. Lok Darshan Regmi, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs	Shri Hasmukh Adhia, Revenue Secretary, Ministry of Finance
7.	Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Standardization and Conformity Assessment	Mr. Bishwo Babu Pudasaini, DG, Nepal Bureau of Standards & Metrology	Shri Sanjay Singh, Director General, Bureau of Indian Standards
8.	MoU between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal	Mr. Prakash J. Thapa, President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal	Shri Nilesh S. Vikamsey, President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

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Festival of india being Organised in Brazil from 31 August to 9 September 2017**Festival of india being Organised in Brazil from 31 August to 9 September 2017**

A Festival of India is being organized in Brazil from 31 August-9 September 2017. The Festival will showcase diverse Indian culture, i.e. classical dances, literature, cuisine and Exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi. The following events will be held in the cities of Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro:

- Bharatnatyam Dance by Devayani and Group from 31 August-4 September 2017.
- Kathak Dance by Nandini Singh and Group from 1-5 September 2017
- Indian Food Festival from 3-9 September 2017
- Literary Festival from 5-9 September 2017
- Exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi from 31 August-9 September 2017

Sanjay Kumar/jk/Culture/24-08-2017**END**Downloaded from crackIAS.com© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Trump's brave new Afghan strategy

US President Donald Trump was right to jettison his initial instincts for a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan and to articulate a firm, continued commitment to that country and the region. Trump deserves credit for a decision that goes against immediate political interests. Sure, this is a low bar; we all expect our commander in chief to prioritize national security above voter popularity. But it is easy to forget how domestic political considerations were so often the driving force behind president Barack Obama's foreign policy. The best example of this is the drive to remove all US forces from Iraq before the 2012 presidential election.

More important, Trump's new strategy discards the timeline under which Obama's Afghan strategy always laboured. The significance of returning to the conditions-based approach of president George W. Bush cannot be underestimated. Nothing did more to undercut Obama's 2009 surge of troops into Afghanistan than his announcing in advance when forces would be pulled out. Given that no victory over the Taliban was conceivable, the only realistic objective of more military might was to bring the enemy to the negotiating table. Yet as long as waiting out US resolve was a distinct option, compromise never seemed attractive to the Taliban, and the war dragged on.

Ditching the timeline will also help strengthen the nation's institutions critical to success. Afghans were reluctant to invest in a state when the chances of its failure seemed high; instead, many in important roles saw their time in government as little more than a chance to position themselves as well as possible for when the state collapsed. But now that the US seems committed to staying, Afghans are more likely to see the state as worthy of their efforts to create a new reality.

Finally, losing the timeline could make a big impression on two countries that are not mentioned in Trump's speech, but are creating obstacles to a better Afghan future: Iran and Russia. Both governments have upped their meddling, positioning themselves for an imminent American departure.

Yet, while appreciating these points, I still find the new strategy wanting. As a former deputy national security adviser to president George W. Bush, I listened to the speech asking myself whether it would give all members of our government sufficient strategic guidance to put in place a winning plan. The answer was no. At least three contradictions need to be resolved.

First, Trump spoke of how "a fundamental pillar of our new strategy is the integration of all instruments of American power: diplomatic, economic and military". Yet not only did Trump not explain how the non-military tools would be used in concert with physical force, he sowed doubt about their importance with his line "we are not nation-building again, but killing terrorists".

"Nation-building" may be the most unpopular phrase in America. But one cannot succeed in squelching terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) without improving the military and civilian abilities of partner governments. Military engagement helps but it is in the realm of nation-building that the non-military instruments of national power truly come to bear. What is the purpose of diplomatic and economic efforts in Afghanistan if not to buttress the legitimacy and capacities of Kabul?

Second, Trump made his usual comments about how he will not provide the enemy with details about his military approach. But his audience is not only the enemy; it is also, more importantly, the American people. If he wants to calibrate US military presence to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan, he will need to invest a lot of time and effort speaking to the American public about why Afghanistan is important. Obama rarely did this, even with tens of thousands of Americans deployed there.

Trump will have to be different, and specific, if he hopes to succeed. Americans aren't interested in tactical plans, but they want to understand and have confidence in the strategy—which will require sharing more details than offered on Monday.

Finally, Trump glossed over the complexities of the US relationship with Pakistan. It was refreshing to hear an American president call Pakistan out on its troubling behaviour but there is an obvious tension between the ability of the US to work with Pakistan on the larger agenda of non-proliferation and counter-terrorism that goes beyond Afghanistan, and threatening to condition US support for Islamabad based only on Pakistani actions in Afghanistan.

In a world in which terrorism and WMD have not yet been married but could be, Pakistan—the fastest builder of nuclear weapons in the world—has as least as much leverage over the US as Washington does over Islamabad.

The Trump administration may have decided to prioritize Afghanistan above all other interests in which Pakistan has a role. If so, this approach requires contingency planning about other crises that may occur, and we can only surmise such planning is going on behind the scenes.

Trump's speech on Afghanistan was welcome on several fronts. But let's hope that it was a telegraphed version of a more developed strategy—one that the president's team is laying out in greater detail to the military and civilian leadership, and one that he will take more time to explain to the American people. If not, the kudos he gets for resisting a more politically popular short-term approach will be meaningless in the face of a long-term strategy full of unresolved contradictions.

Bloomberg View

Meghan L. O'Sullivan is a Bloomberg columnist and professor of international affairs at Harvard University's Kennedy School.

Comments are welcome at views@livemint.com

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India, Qatar discuss citizens' welfare

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj with Ministers of State M.J. Akbar and V.K. Singh arrive to meet Qatar Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Thani in New Delhi. PTIPTI

India on Saturday discussed with Qatar the welfare of its citizens in the wake of its lingering disputes with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain.

In wide-ranging talks between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, the two sides also discussed ways to deepen co-operation in energy, trade and investment.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said bilateral issues, including welfare of the more than six lakh workers, were discussed. Official sources said expanding co-operation in energy, trade and investment were also discussed.

In June, the four nations had announced cutting diplomatic ties and closing all connectivity links with Qatar, alleging that it supported terrorism. Qatar had rejected the charges.

India had asked countries in the region to resolve the crisis through constructive dialogue and well-established international principles of mutual respect.

India's ties with Qatar have intensified in the last few years. Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani visited New Delhi in December during which India had expressed keenness in investing in hydrocarbon projects in the Gulf nation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Qatari counterpart had also discussed enhancing cooperation in defence and security and agreed on joint action to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing.

Two sides discuss cooperation in trade and investment

India urges countries in the region to resolve crisis amicably

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India must ensure Nepal's constitution is genuinely inclusive

India has multiple and at times contradictory goals in its relations with Nepal. One is to bring political stability to South Asia's poorest and arguably most divided country so that it does not slip back into civil war. The overriding element of this goal, at present, is to ensure Nepal's fractious leadership does not pass a Constitution that creates a polity that is permanently biased against its Madhesi population. Its other goal is to persuade the several political elements of Nepalese politics to work together to produce a reasonably functional government and allow India to help the country's economic development, especially in terms of infrastructure. Finally, and publicly unstated, is New Delhi's desire to limit the degree to which Pakistan — which has used Nepal as a conduit for terrorist attacks on India — and China are able to have an influence on the country.

State visits by Nepalese dignitaries, the most recent being that of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, bring the complexity and intimacy of the Indo-Nepalese relationship into focus. The Deuba government has promised to pass the two constitutional amendments that would ensure Nepal does not marginalise the Madhesis and other terai groups. However it is highly doubtful his coalition government will be able to muster the necessary votes. Kathmandu seems set to descend into yet another game of political musical chairs in which the same three or four politicians take turns holding the prime-ministership.

Nepal's present situation offers up a set of suboptimal choices. The timeline for passing the constitutional amendments seem likely to be pushed back given Deuba's weakness. Therefore New Delhi has urged the Madhesi parties to end their boycott of coming provincial elections, calculating that the loss of political clout outweighs the gains from pressing a gridlocked Kathmandu. The focus of policy has instead switched back to finishing the numerous connectivity and power projects that are still pending between the two countries. These have become more important given China's enormous Belt Road Initiative and its implicit use of infrastructure to change the geopolitics of South Asia. The joint statement following Mr Deuba's visit is noticeable for the prominence given to such projects. While this policy back-and-forth can be partly understood given the ever changing landscape of the country's fragile polity, India must remain clear about the overriding priority of ensuring the Nepalese constitution is genuinely inclusive. Without this, Nepal's development will carry within it a latent cancer that will in time become destructively malignant.

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That old spark: Nepal Prime Minister's visit brings bilateral hope

At a time when the [Doklam stand-off had focussed attention](#) on Himalayan geopolitics, it was impossible to miss the significance of the visit of Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to India. This was his first foreign visit as Prime Minister, and it confirmed Kathmandu's abiding interest in strong ties with India. The recovery of bilateral warmth has taken some doing on both sides. Mr. Deuba is Nepal's 10th Prime Minister in a decade, and its fourth since its Constitution was promulgated in 2015. India had mounted strong opposition to the Constitution with demands that it be made more inclusive, especially *vis-à-vis* the Madhesi in the Terai area, sending ties with Kathmandu's ruling establishment on a downward spiral. Even as Nepal struggled to cope with rehabilitation work after the massive earthquake of 2015, many in Kathmandu held India responsible for the three-month-long "great blockade" of goods and fuel supplies that followed sustained protests by Madhesi groups. To that end, Mr. Deuba's visit was another opportunity, as were the visits of his predecessors K.P. Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', to repair the India-Nepal relationship. The joint statement at the end of the Delhi leg of his visit refers to the "deep, comprehensive and multi-faceted" ties between the neighbours as it listed projects being developed in Nepal under lines of credit provided by India. These include \$200 million for irrigation projects, \$330 million for road development and \$250 million for power infrastructure in Nepal. India made the obligatory appeal to Kathmandu "to take all sections of society on board" while implementing its Constitution, but the tenor was notably softer this time. No mention was made of a key amendment to the Constitution to accommodate Madhesi demands that had been defeated just last Monday.

On Doklam, Nepal walks a tightrope

Yet, it would be a mistake to presume that ties can so easily return to their pre-2015 strength, as the ground has shifted in too many ways since then. To begin with, memories of the blockade still rankle in Nepal. And while South Block and Singha Durbar have been keen to move ahead with trade linkages and complete the integrated check-posts at Raxaul-Birgunj and Jogbani-Biratnagar, the land-locked country has actively sought to break its dependence on India for fuel and connectivity. Since 2015, Nepal and China have cooperated on infrastructure plans, including a big hydroelectric project and a rail link to Tibet. Nepal is also part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. India is struggling to leverage the historical closeness with Nepal, the open border the two share and the special status Nepalis working in India have enjoyed. The India-China stand-off in Doklam will add to the awkwardness in the trilateral relationship. Mr. Deuba's visit will need a sustained follow-up.

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Mission indefinite: Donald Trump's Afghanistan policy

In a prime time national address on August 21 from the Fort Myer military base, U.S. President Donald Trump laid out his long awaited strategy for "[Afghanistan and South Asia](#)". After 16 years, Afghanistan remains America's longest war. It has spent more than \$800 billion and nearly 2,400 U.S. soldiers have lost their lives. The American people are now weary of this long war without victory — and Mr. Trump has characteristically promised, in the end, we will win!

Launched with the full support of the international community in 2001 after 9/11 by President George Bush, the war in Afghanistan got derailed as the U.S. shifted focus and resources towards Iraq from 2003 onwards. The end objective of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan began to recede further and further as the Taliban launched their insurgency in 2005 after they had recovered, regrouped, refinanced and re-equipped themselves from their sanctuary in Pakistan. Since then, the insurgency has gathered momentum and also exposed the U.S.'s policy weaknesses.

An Afghan exit plan for Obama

After taking over in 2009, President Barack Obama too had undertaken a major policy review describing the Afghan war as "a war of necessity", "a war that we must win". He went on to authorise a surge in U.S. troop presence from 55,000 in early 2009 reaching 100,000 in 2010. The objective was to gain a decisive victory over the insurgency. The simultaneous announcement that the drawdown would commence in 2011, and by 2014 the Afghan security forces would take charge of all combat operations, however, only encouraged the Taliban insurgency and also exposed the shortcomings of the Afghan army and the police forces, in terms of numbers, training and equipment to deal with the post 2014 situation.

In 2014, Mr. Obama realised that the bitterly contested Afghan presidential election had led to a politically fragile situation. He and Secretary of State John Kerry engaged in personal diplomacy to create the compromise of a National Unity Government, with Ashraf Ghani becoming President and his rival, Abdullah Abdullah, taking over as CEO, a newly created position that was to be converted into a prime-ministership through a constitutional amendment within a two-year time-frame. Having announced the pull-back, Mr. Obama withdrew the bulk of U.S. soldiers (the other allies were equally eager) and Operation Enduring Freedom formally concluded on December 28, 2014. Approximately 8,400 U.S. soldiers and another 5,000 from other allies stayed behind to "advise, train and assist" the Afghan security forces under Operation Resolute Support. Initially, this too was to conclude by end-2016 but faced with a difficult political and security situation, Mr. Obama decided to bequeath this decision to his successor. In addition, the U.S. maintains approximately 2,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, for counter-terrorism operations, described as Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Mr. Trump was right when he said, "When I became president, I was given a bad and very complex hand." Since 2012, he had been voicing his frustration with U.S. policies in Afghanistan and had applauded Mr. Obama's original decision to pull out U.S. soldiers by end-2014. He reminded the audience that, "My original instinct was to pull out." But like his predecessor, he was prevailed upon to curb his instincts.

Full texts of Donald Trump's speech on South Asia policy

The same logic that persuaded Mr. Obama persuaded Mr. Trump to conclude that the U.S. "must seek an honourable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made"; that 'a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum for terrorists, including ISIS and al-Qaeda'; and the "20 U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organisations... active in Afghanistan and Pakistan"

continue to pose “immense” security threats to the U.S. With these conclusions, his options were limited. One option was to do nothing but this would only prolong the stalemate that Gen. John Nicholson (commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan) had publicly warned about. He could hardly announce a major expansion of U.S. presence which his predecessor had attempted and failed. So he had to go with the recommendations of the generals — Gen. Nicholson from Kabul, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, Defence Secretary James Mattis and his new chief of staff, John Kelly. In short, once his conclusions were determined, the choices vanished.

He has therefore authorised a modest increase in the U.S. military presence on the ground (approximately 4,000 soldiers) but without specifying a time frame for the operations. He has also ‘lifted restrictions’ so that the commanders in the field can have access to resources needed to prosecute military operations. This mostly relates to surveillance and air support. He has put the Afghan government on notice by reminding them that “our support is not a blank cheque” and “the American people expect to see real reforms, real progress and real results”.

This provides a short window of 18 to 24 months. Today, 70% of operations on the ground are being conducted by the Afghan Special Forces (Ktah Khas). These numbers are expected to be increased from 35 to 63 companies and reforms in the Army will enable it to hold territory once the Special Forces have cleared it. Together with increased air capabilities, Gen. Nicholson hopes that this will tilt the stalemate against the insurgency.

Mr. Trump has made it clear that the purpose of the U.S. military presence “is not nation-building”, but “killing terrorists”. Linked to this is his disdain for any reconciliation with the Taliban — “someday, after an effective military effort, perhaps it will be possible to have a political settlement that includes elements of the Taliban in Afghanistan. But nobody knows if or when that will happen.”

Does all this make for a dramatically different plan as Mr. Trump would have the Americans believe? Will it help America declare victory as has been promised? The key lies with Pakistan, something Mr. Trump’s predecessors also understood but found too intractable a problem to tackle. The truth is that an Afghan policy review is also a Pakistan policy review. As the U.S. Department of Defence Report on Afghanistan issued in June this year categorically states, “Afghan-oriented militant groups, including the Taliban and Haqqani Network, retain freedom of action inside Pakistani territory and benefit from support from elements of the Pakistani Government.” Gen. Nicholson told a Senate committee that “the primary factor that will enable our success is the elimination of external (read Pakistan) sanctuary and support to the insurgents”. Neither of these is new. What is, however, new is the open acknowledgement of this by a U.S. President.

Mr. Trump has described the Pakistan policy as a key pillar of his new strategy and cautioned that the U.S. “can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organisations,” and that the U.S. has been “paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars, at the same time they are housing the very terrorists we are fighting”.

Expectedly, there have been vociferous protests in Pakistan. Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif rejected the charges and said that the U.S. “should not make Pakistan a scapegoat for their failures in Afghanistan”. Pakistan is upset that Mr. Trump has also indicated determination “to further develop its strategic partnership with India” and appreciated “India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan”. China has come to Pakistan’s defence calling it a frontline state in the struggle against terrorism that has “made great sacrifices and contributions”.

Pakistan’s problem is that it sees its relations with Afghanistan through the prism of its relations with India. It seeks a veto on Afghanistan’s relations with India which the Afghans will not accept.

Changing this dynamic requires getting rid of the military's stranglehold on Pakistan's India and Afghan policies.

As long as the U.S. maintains a military presence in Afghanistan, geography determines its dependence on Pakistan for supply routes. The other possible access routes are through Iran or through Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Neither is feasible since sanctions on both countries have been ramped up and the U.S. base in Kyrgyzstan closed in 2014 under Russian pressure.

Consequently, Mr. Trump's policy reflects more continuity than he is willing to acknowledge.

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Afghanistan and a new hyphenation

US President Donald Trump's much anticipated speech outlining his administration's approach to the quagmire in Afghanistan was uncharacteristic. It was cogent, coherent, logical, even compelling, and stayed on message. It was what one would expect of any significant foreign policy initiative but unlike most of the speeches that have become the hallmark of a president used to letting his stream of consciousness flow unfettered. A disappointed headline in *The Atlantic* summed it up as: "Trump's Depressingly Normal Speech About Afghanistan".

The speech bore the indelible imprimatur of Trump's national security council and department of defence teams, and only the lightest of touches from the state department. It made three key arguments: first, threats emanating from Afghanistan and the "broader region" pose a clear and present danger to the US; second, a rapid US disengagement would create a vacuum for terrorists to fill, which is "predictable and unacceptable"; and third, the US needs an "honourable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices" that it incurred in men and material over 17 years. To buttress his argument Trump asserted that "20 US-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan", even though the actual number, according to the state department, is just half of that.

Trump identified three pillars to deal with this reality: first, diplomatic, economic, and military instruments of US power to leverage a "successful outcome"; second, to jettison the Obama administration's approach where the timetable for entry and exit of US forces was announced in advance, and instead use the element of surprise by deploying forces at a time, place and duration of Washington's choosing, and measure effectiveness on conditions on the ground; and, third, "to change the approach on how to deal with Pakistan" while building on the "strategic partnership" with India. Trump justified the absence of details as strategic ambiguity; critics argued that this reflected his lack of attention to detail.

The hardball Trump policy on Pakistan echoes former President George W. Bush's "with us or against us" threat to Islamabad in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. While most Indian officials and experts would be tempted to gloat over Pakistan's fall from the stature of a "non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ally" to a quasi-terrorist state, this approach is unlikely to advance India's interests.

First, the ability of Islamabad to outmanoeuvre Washington's strong hand is matched only by the inability of the US to carry through its threats. There is almost no scenario where the US can achieve its objectives in Afghanistan without the support of the Pakistan military. This is partly on account of the porous Durand Line and partly the logistics-heavy requirements of the US military, which makes supplies through Pakistan (in the absence of an alternative route) indispensable. Moreover, the young Trump administration has not had the best record of translating policy into action, except episodically. This is even more likely in the case of Pakistan, given the latter's nuclear arsenal which will prove to be the ultimate guarantor against the US.

Second, even if the US was able to neutralize Pakistan, China has emerged as a key player in the great game over Afghanistan and has the potential to be a spoiler of US and Indian interests. Unsurprisingly, both China and Russia rushed to defend Pakistan after Trump's speech. Unless the US appreciates the Chinese threat to its objectives and can devise a policy to manage Beijing's assertiveness in both the South China Seas and South-Central Asia, there will be no "successful outcome" in Afghanistan.

This is where the new hyphenated US-India strategic partnership can play a crucial role. India, in close coordination with the US and its allies, could spearhead the development agenda in

Afghanistan. While India has been doing this bilaterally and in a limited way through triangular cooperation with the US (where the US funds training of Afghan police in India), it needs to step up its game. New Delhi needs to play a bridging development role with Western donor countries, which it is reluctant to do. Such an initiative would secure India's development assistance and investment, and also ensure the sustainable development of Afghanistan.

Additionally, given the Trump administration's abhorrence of Iran, even when it might serve Washington's agenda in Afghanistan, India could become a conduit; especially in partnership with other US allies—notably Japan and South Korea—who are also keen on business with Tehran. Here, an India-Japan-South Korea consortium (with the US as an absent partner) could revive the Chabahar route to Afghanistan and, perhaps, manage the crucial supply chain to support US operations in the region.

Such a move might also make the China-Pakistan economic corridor redundant, thus giving Washington an upper hand in dealing with both China and Pakistan. Clearly, despite several formidable challenges, the new US-India partnership over Afghanistan, along with the cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, would serve New Delhi's economic and strategic interests well by aligning Washington closer to them.

Of course, the biggest challenge to Trump's Afghan policy could come from Trump himself. The Twitter-happy fingers of the president could, in 140 characters or less, demolish the policy so painstakingly crafted over several months. Given India's high stakes in the region, that is still a risk worth taking.

W.P.S. Sidhu is visiting professor at New York University's Center for Global Affairs and associate fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

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Doklam standoff ends: What it means for India, China relations — Editorial

The Doklam border crisis has ended as suddenly as it began. India announced both countries had agreed to mutually disengage their troops from the plateau along the Sino-Bhutan border. Beijing, in keeping with its recent tendency to speak in nationalistic hyperbole, said Indian troops were “retreating” and that it would continue to patrol the area. The two statements are not contradictory. China does not speak of what its troops will do. Patrolling upto a country’s claims area is allowed under the various Sino-Indian border management agreements and will now de facto be applied to the Sino-Bhutanese border as well. In effect, both governments seem to have agreed to go back to a status quo that existed before crisis began.

China’s original sin was the decision to extend a road up to the Doklam plateau in violation of the 2012 trilateral agreement on the border. The proof of the pudding, however, will be in the eating. In other words, whether Beijing will seek to change the Doklam status quo in a substantial way over the coming months remains to be seen. One will expect aggressive patrolling in the immediate future by both sides. There may even be verbal brickbats from Beijing, in keeping with the unusually harsh language that has come from the Chinese foreign ministry and media over the past few months. Sound and fury signify nothing. Keeping its troops and workers indoors is what will be the real measure of China’s intentions.

Doklam deserves some introspection on the part of India. Beijing seems to have assumed a passive Indian response to its initial construction efforts. Possibly New Delhi’s failure to respond to the initial Chinese action of demolishing two vacant Indian bunkers was misread. Or Beijing concluded that India would feel constrained about interceding on behalf of the territorial claims of a third country. Either way, there was a miscalculation that was potentially dangerous. The announcement of a withdrawal indicates neither side is interested in a wider conflict. But there needs to be some thought about the growing regional footprints of both countries and that their spheres of influence will brush against each other in third countries with increasing frequency. India and China should not see Doklam in terms of point-scoring but rather as a warning of the need for extending their border management framework across other borders as well.

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Agreeing to disagree: ending the Doklam stand-off

The separate announcements by [India and China that the Doklam military stand-off](#) has ended are a welcome sign that diplomacy has prevailed over the harsh rhetoric of the past 10 weeks. The measured tone of the statement from New Delhi, referring to the “expeditious disengagement of border personnel” as part of the understanding between the two countries, shows that the government’s policy of pursuing diplomatic measures in the face of China’s angry rhetoric was wise. In turn, China’s statement, which said that Indian troops had withdrawn from the disputed Doklam plateau while Chinese troops continue to patrol the area, gives Beijing the latitude it requires to end the stand-off peacefully. The differing versions and the lack of further information leave several questions unanswered about the terms of the disengagement. But the very fact that both countries have been able to issue statements — even if they were designed to satisfy their domestic audiences — suggests that in diplomatic negotiations, each took into account the other’s constraints. In issuing statements that were inconsistent with each other, both sides seem to have agreed to disagree. To that end, the importance lies less in the detail but in the détente itself, in the decision by the leaderships of both countries to pull back from what some feared could escalate into a full-blown conflict. In this, it must be noted that New Delhi and Beijing have respected the wishes of the Bhutanese government, which wanted an early end to the crisis before the bitter winter set in.

Timeline: the story of the Doklam stand-off

One hopes the decision on Doklam, which comes a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to go to China, will guide the bilateral spirit beyond the September 3-5 BRICS summit to be held in Xiamen. Once Mr. Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping have met, diplomats must begin the heavy lifting required to repair the rupture in ties over the past few months, beginning with the cancellation of the Nathu La route for Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrims. Statements from China during the stand-off indicate that it no longer recognises the gains made in the Special Representative talks in 2012. Nor does it regard the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction near Batang-La to have been settled. India has made it clear that it does not consider the Sikkim boundary settled either, and both sides will have to walk swiftly to come back to some semblance of an accord on such basic issues before they can move further. India and China must revert to the spirit of the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2013, which laid down specific guidelines on tackling future developments along the 3,488-km boundary the two countries share. The past two and a half months are also a lesson that India cannot be unprepared for “another Doklam”, as Chief of the Army Staff Bipin Rawat said on Sunday. India must necessarily “hope for the best, and prepare for the worst”, when it comes to tensions with its northern neighbour.

Rajasthan’s ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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A new chapter in the US's South Asia policy?

In a dramatic reversal from his earlier position on the war in Afghanistan, US President Donald Trump has recast the Barack Obama era's "Af-Pak" policy dramatically. "Let's get out of Afghanistan," Trump had tweeted on 11 January 2013. "Our troops are being killed by the Afghans (sic) we train and we waste billions there. Nonsense! Rebuild the USA." Now as president, Trump is having to revisit his earlier assumptions. The Obama administration was intent on drawing down American troops and that too within a specified time frame, thereby allowing the Taliban to wait out the American forces.

Trump's plan will lead to the deployment of an additional 4,000 soldiers to train and buttress Afghan forces. Contrary to official US data, there are already 12,000 Americans serving in the country, and not 8,400, a number bandied about since the Obama administration. With Trump signing off on a larger deployment to Afghanistan of around 4,000 troops, this number would jump to around 16,000. The new strategy, we are told, will be dictated by "the conditions on the ground" not "arbitrary timetables". The Pentagon deems such a move necessary to avoid the collapse of the US-backed government in Kabul but it would hardly be a force capable of dramatically changing facts on the ground a few years after a surge to some 100,000 American troops at the beginning of Obama presidency failed to do so. Trump acknowledged that although his "original instinct was to pull out ... a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum for terrorists,"—an outcome Washington clearly wants to avoid even when disenchantment with Afghanistan's polity is strong.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani thanked the US for supporting "the joint struggle against the threat of terrorism". The Taliban predictably panned Trump's strategy, warning that "the Afghan Mujahid nation is neither tired nor will it ever get tired in pursuit of winning their freedom and establishing an Islamic system." But the Taliban are no longer a cohesive force and are being challenged by the Islamic State. On the other side, the anti-Taliban camp is also a divided one with regional states playing one faction off another. Iran, Russia and China have moved beyond simply siding with the enemies of the Taliban and are busy cultivating influence with the main Afghan jihadist movement.

Along with an expansion in American military footprint, the second aspect of the new strategy is a strong focus on Pakistan to make sure it abides by its commitments. "Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror. The threat is worse because Pakistan and India are two nuclear-armed states whose tense relations threaten to spiral into conflict," Trump observed in his speech. "We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond," he added. For Pakistan, the message was unambiguous with words like "change of approach," "a break with the status quo," and "no partnership can survive a country's tolerance of militants and terrorists."

Pakistan has leveraged its centrality in America's Afghanistan policy for decades now, securing billions of dollars in US civilian and military aid. Given the geographical constraints facing the US supply lines, reliance on Pakistan has been a constant. Indeed, during previous tensions between Washington and Islamabad, Pakistan has restricted the movement of trucks carrying supplies to US forces in landlocked Afghanistan. Confronting Pakistan is, therefore, easier said than done but Trump has put Pakistan on notice by placing it alongside North Korea and Iran, countries which are being watched closely by his administration. The US secretary of state further piled up pressure on Pakistan by underlining ways that Washington could press Pakistan by means such as withholding military aid and reassessing its status as a major non-Nato US ally.

Washington's annual economic and security assistance to Islamabad had been falling anyway. After peaking at more than \$3.5 billion in 2011, the US had been scaling back its aid for Pakistan

since then, with funding falling below \$1 billion. Pakistan, of course has a new benefactor in China which was quick to leap to its defence, saying that, “We believe that the international community should fully recognize Pakistan’s anti-terrorism efforts.”

The third part of the Trump strategy is his outreach to India, saying a “critical part” of his administration’s South Asia policy is to further develop the US’s strategic partnership with India. “We appreciate India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the US, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development,” Trump said, underlining India’s role in Afghanistan and the need to do much more. New Delhi has welcomed the new approach, saying it shared Mr Trump’s concerns over safe havens and “other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists.”

Trump’s policy is a remarkable turnaround for Washington which had wanted to keep India out of its “Af-Pak” policy for long for fear of offending Rawalpindi. India was viewed as part of the problem and now Trump is arguing that India should be viewed as part of a solution to the Afghan imbroglio. It is now for New Delhi to effectively leverage the positive trend in America’s South Asia policy—not only for its own interests but also for the greater good of its regional friends such as Afghanistan.

Harsh V. Pant is a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation and professor of international relations at King’s College London.

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Lessons from Doklam

Soldiers seen at | Photo Credit: [AFP](#)

The resolution of the [Sino-Indian military stand-off at Doklam](#), that lasted close to two and a half months, is a much-awaited and welcome development where patient statecraft and deft diplomacy seem to have paid off. Even as several significant questions remain unanswered about the terms and conditions of the resolution, it provides New Delhi and Beijing an opportunity to reflect over what went wrong and rejig this important bilateral relationship. The upcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to China to attend the BRICS summit will provide the two sides such an opportunity.

“War is the continuation of politics by other means,” observed the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz in his classic work, *On War*. In other words, military strategy should flow from carefully considered political thinking. Now that we have arrived at a peaceful resolution at Doklam, we need to examine the political strategy guiding India’s military deployment at Doklam. Moreover, are there any lessons we can learn from this military stand-off with China?

Agreeing to disagree: ending the Doklam stand-off

The most self-evident lesson from the Doklam stand-off is that we inhabit a ‘self-help’ world wherein China is a world power — India is on its own and would have to fend for itself in case of a clash with China, a country with which every major state in the international system has a robust economic relationship. It is important to note that none of the major powers unambiguously and unreservedly supported India’s position on Doklam. In fact, even Bhutan kept a studied silence through the latter part of the stand-off. New Delhi, therefore, must carefully review the scenarios and consider its options before upping the ante. Moreover, regarding Doklam, instead of inviting military attention to itself and trapping itself in a conflict with Beijing, New Delhi could have convinced Thimphu to be more vocal about Bhutan’s territorial rights.

The second lesson from the Doklam stand-off is that China is unlikely to respect India’s ‘special relationships’ with its neighbours. India has long enjoyed a special status in the South Asian region and often treated it as its exclusive backyard. With China expanding its influence in the region and competing for status and influence, the ‘middle kingdom’ considers South Asia, with India in it, as its periphery. China uses economic incentives and military pressure to do so. Nepal is an example of the former, and Bhutan of the latter. Recall Bhutan, besides India, is the only country from the region that did not attend China’s recent Belt and Road Forum in Beijing. India’s traditional policy towards South Asia, of limited economic assistance topped with a big brother attitude, will need to undergo fundamental transformation to retain its influence.

Midway through the stand-off there had been concerns in New Delhi about how the Doklam stand-off would eventually pan out. It is pertinent to ask whether Doklam is so fundamental to Indian interests that we were willing to risk a possible military skirmish with China based on the sketchy clauses of the India-Bhutan friendship treaty. The lesson for us is clear: we should consider all odds and evaluate the merit of the cause before making military commitments.

China sidesteps issue of road construction in Doklam

Four, hyper-nationalism does not pay when it comes to dealing with China. China, simply put, is not Pakistan, and Indian political parties cannot make any domestic gains by whipping up nationalist passions against China. India needs to engage China diplomatically to resolve outstanding conflicts rather than engage in a war of words, or worse, threaten to use force. For

sure, it is not 1962, and that's true for both parties.

Five, the Doklam stand-off is a direct fallout of the Indian and Bhutanese refusal to be part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While this round may have concluded without any of the three sides getting hurt, this is unlikely to be the last of Chinese designs against India or Bhutan. Surely India cannot, and should not, acquiesce to the BRI just because of Chinese pressure. And yet, at the end of the day, Indian abstention would only frustrate BRI, it will not derail it. Moreover, down the road, Indian unwillingness to be part of this mega-project will hurt its own long-term economic interests. Therefore, it needs to realise the importance of cooperating with China on the BRI while getting China to do so on various India-led regional projects. It cannot be a zero-sum game.

What is also becoming abundantly clear is that the snail-paced 'Special Representatives' talks on the India-China boundary question have not yielded much so far, and it is perhaps the appropriate occasion to revamp the dialogue process. The 19 rounds of talks held till last year have hardly anything substantive to show for them in terms of the resolution of the boundary dispute. Indeed, the focus is increasingly shifting from conflict resolution to conflict management. It is high time, therefore, that the two countries appointed dedicated high-ranking officials to discuss the boundary issues in a more sustained and result-oriented manner.

Let's briefly revisit the Doklam facts for the sake of clarity and future policy direction. The Indian Army was deployed on the soil of another country against a third country without proper treaty mandate or unambiguous official invitation to intervene on behalf of the Bhutanese government. The 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty states that the two countries "shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests." And that: "Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other." Notwithstanding the special security relationship that India and Bhutan have shared over the past several decades, nothing in the 2007 treaty binds India to send troops to help Bhutan. Nor did Bhutan explicitly request military assistance from India during the stand-off even though the MEA statement of June 30, 2017 refers to 'coordination between the two countries' during the stand-off.

The argument here is not that India does not have legitimate security and strategic interests in Bhutan which would be undermined by the Chinese territorial aggression, but that there is a need to engage in careful scenario-building before India decides to take China on militarily.

But finally, it all comes down to devising a strategy to engage a resurgent China, also a significant neighbour, in the days ahead. While Doklam may now be a thing of the past, Sino-Indian ties are never likely to be the same again – there will be skirmishes, war of words and attempts to outmanoeuvre each other in the neighbourhood and beyond. While New Delhi needs to constantly look over its shoulders for potential Chinese surprises, there is also an urgent need to adopt a multi-pronged strategy to deal with Beijing, for, after all, statecraft is not as black and white as some would like it to be. India, for one, needs to engage China a lot more at several levels: diplomatically, politically, multilaterally and economically. The upcoming BRICS summit in the Chinese city of Xiamen is a good occasion to initiate a dedicated backchannel with Beijing given the high potential for future disagreements. The two sides also need to conduct bilateral consultations on various issues – ranging from Afghan reconciliation to regional economic development. The more diplomacy the better.

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N. Korea fires ballistic missile over Japan

Provocative move: A television news screen in Seoul shows file footage of a North Korean missile launch; soldiers from the Japan Air Self-Defence Force carry out a temporary deployment drill at the U.S.'s Yokota Air Base in Tokyo on Tuesday. AFP/JUNG YEON-JE

Nuclear-armed North Korea fired a ballistic missile over Japan on Tuesday in a major escalation that triggered global alarm and a furious response from the government in Tokyo.

Later, two U.S. officials said it was likely an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) and further analysis was under way to determine whether it was a success or failure. It appeared to be a KN-17, or Hwasong-12, according to initial data, they said.

A visibly unsettled Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said it was an "unprecedented, serious and grave threat", while the UN Security Council called an emergency meeting at Tokyo and Washington's request.

2009 satellite launch

The last time a North Korean rocket overflew Japan was in 2009, when Pyongyang said it was a satellite launch. Washington, Seoul and Tokyo believed it was a clandestine test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Pyongyang last month carried out two overt ICBM tests that appeared to bring much of the U.S. mainland within reach for the first time and heightened strains in the region.

At the time, U.S. President Donald Trump had issued an apocalyptic warning of raining "fire and fury" on the North, while Pyongyang threatened to fire a salvo of missiles towards the U.S. territory of Guam.

South Korea said the latest missile was launched from Sunan, near Pyongyang and flew around 2,700 km at a maximum altitude of around 550 km.

Guam is about 3,500 km from North Korea — although the missile was fired in an easterly direction and not towards the U.S. outpost, home to 1,60,000 people and host to major military facilities. Mr. Abe said the overflight was an "outrageous act" that "greatly damages regional peace and security". In a 40-minute telephone call with Mr. Trump, he said, the two allies had agreed to "further strengthen pressure against North Korea".

Pyongyang defiant

However, North Korea was defiant.

"The U.S. should know that it can neither browbeat the DPRK with any economic sanctions and military threats and blackmail nor make the DPRK flinch from the road chosen by itself," North Korea's official *Rodong Sinmun* said, using the initials of the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Robert Wood, U.S. Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament at the UN in Geneva labelled it "another provocation" that was "a big concern".

Russia, which also has ties to Pyongyang, said it was "extremely worried", hitting out at a "tendency towards escalation".

Any launch towards Guam would have to pass over Japan first and analysts said Tuesday's overflight presents a major challenge to both Tokyo and Washington.

Before 2009, the only time it had traversed Japanese airspace was in 1998, in what it also claimed it was a space launch. The U.S. said it was a Taepodong-1 missile.

Pyongyang says it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself against the U.S., and the firing comes during the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian South Korean-U.S. joint military exercise, which the North always condemns as rehearsals for invasion.

'Halfway house option'

Euan Graham, of the Lowy Institute in Australia, said that a launch towards Guam would have been a "red line" for Washington, and instead Pyongyang selected a "half-way-house option".

Japan has in the past vowed to shoot down North Korean missiles or rockets that threaten to hit its territory.

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Cabinet approves Memorandum of Understanding by the Election Commission of India with the Election Management Bodies of other countries/International Agencies

Cabinet approves Memorandum of Understanding by the Election Commission of India with the Election Management Bodies of other countries/International Agencies

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal of the Election Commission of India to enter into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of electoral management and administration with the Election Management Bodies of other countries/International Agencies. These are as follows:

- i. The National Electoral Council of Ecuador;
- ii. The Central Election Commission of Albania;
- iii. The Election Commission of Bhutan;
- iv. The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan;
- v. The National Independent Electoral Commission of Guinea;
- vi. The Union Election Commission of Myanmar; and
- vii. The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

These MoUs contain standard articles/clauses which broadly express promotion of cooperation in exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of organizational and technical development of electoral process; support in exchanging information, institutional strengthening and capacity building, training of personnel, holding regular consultations etc.

These MoUs would promote bilateral cooperation, aimed at building technical assistance / capacity support for the said Election Management Bodies.

Background:

The Election Commission has been participating in promoting cooperation in the field of election matters and electoral processes across the world with certain foreign countries

and agencies by adopting the mode of MoU signed by the concerned parties. The Election Commission, a constitutional body, conducts the largest electoral exercise in the world. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission to organize free and fair election in the country of about 85 crore voters with diverse socio-political and economic backgrounds. In recently years, the role being played by the Election Commission ensures greater participation of people in political affairs. India, today, is considered as the world's largest democratic country. The success of democracy in India has attracted the attention of almost every political system around the world.

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Cabinet approves MoU on "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund"**Cabinet approves MoU on "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund"**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Israel on "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F)". The MoU was concluded in July, 2017

India and Israel will make an contribution of four million US Dollars each for the Fund, both equivalent amount, annually for five years. The Innovation Fund will be governed by a joint Board which will consist of four members from each country.

The MoU envisages promotion of bilateral Industrial R&D and Innovation cooperation in the fields of science and technology by extending support to joint projects for innovative or technology-driven new or improved products, services or processes. Such projects will lead to affordable technological innovations in focus areas of mutual interest such as water, agriculture, energy and digital technologies. Institutional support in building up consortia including private industry, enterprises and R&D institutions from India and Israel will be enabled through these collaborative projects.

The activities supported by the Joint Fund would increase the techno-economic collaboration between the two countries by investing in jointly developed technology projects and collaborations based on technological innovation. It would leverage the complementary strengths of Israel and India to encourage Israel-Indian joint projects that capitalize on both the national and global marketplace. It would provide a comprehensive set of support tools to encourage joint projects that convert "know-how" into "show-how". It is expected that this will foster and strengthen the eco-system of innovation and techno-entrepreneurship in India and will contribute directly to the Start-up India programme.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies. The MoU was signed in October, 2016.

The MoU will strengthen the existing friendly relations between India and Brazil and promote development of Genomics and Assistant Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) in Cattle through joint activities to be implemented through mutually agreed procedures.

An implementation committee shall be created with an equal number of representatives of each party for the purpose of regularly determining the activities and developing work plans and subsequently their evaluation.

It will be done through joint projects in the fields of Productivity Improvement of cattle and buffaloes, for the purpose of broadening the existing knowledge base on sustainable dairy development and institutional strengthening.

The MoU would promote and facilitate scientific cooperation and setting up of genomic selection programme in Zebu Cattle through (a) application of genomic in Zebu Cattle and their crosses and buffaloes (b) application of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) in cattle and buffaloes (c) capacity building in genomic and assisted reproductive technology (d) Related research and development in Genomics and ART in accordance with the respective laws and regulations of the two countries and is covered under Rule 7 (d) (i) of the Second Schedule of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961.

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Cabinet apprised of jointly issue of postage stamps between India and Canada**Cabinet apprised of jointly issue of postage stamps between India and Canada**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was informed today that India and Canada have mutually agreed to jointly issue a set of two Commemorative Postage Stamps on India-Canada: Joint Issue on the theme "Diwali". The joint stamps will be released on 21st September, 2017. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has already been signed between Department of Posts and Canada Post for this joint issue.

India and Canada have a longstanding close relationship, based on shared values of democracy, pluralism, equality for all and rule of law. Strong people-to-people contacts and the presence of a large Indian Diaspora in Canada provide a strong foundation for the relationship.

In this joint issue, the theme "Diwali" has been selected as it is a cultural theme for both the countries and also considering the large presence of Indian Diaspora in Canada.

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NDB approves \$1.4 bn loan for projects in India, China, Russia

BEIJING: Ahead of the BRICS summit, the New Development Bank (NDB) of the five-member group today approved USD 1.4 billion loans for sustainable development projects in China, India and Russia.

The Board of Directors of the Bank have approved four infrastructure and sustainable development projects in the three countries, an NDB press release said today.

For India, the Bank has approved USD 470 million loan for Madhya Pradesh's Multi-Village Rural Drinking Water Supply Scheme Project.

"The four projects approved today are fully in line both with national development agenda in our member countries and the NDB's mandate of mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries," said the Bank's President K V Kamath.

"The NDB is committed to further strengthening our partnership with all member countries and developing a robust and dynamic pipeline of projects that benefit people's lives," he said.

"Experiences learned while preparing and implementing the projects will serve as a model for implementing similar projects in the future," the release said.

The other loans approved included China's Hunan Green Area Watershed Environmental Development Project which would get two billion yuan to enhance flood control, and improve water quality in Xiang River watershed.

Also China's Jiangxi Industrial Low-Carbon Restructuring and Green Development Pilot Project will get a USD 200 million loan to promote energy conservation, resources recycling and pollutants reduction through technology upgrade.

The NDB will provide a USD 460 million loan to the Russian Federation for the development of infrastructure and implementation of information technology systems of Russia's judicial system in Russia.

The loans were approved ahead of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit to be held in China's Xiamen city from September 3 to 5.

NDB was established in 2014 with an initial fund of USD 100 billion pooled from five BRICS countries.

The bank - headquartered in Shanghai - was launched in July 2015 and issued its first loan in April 2016.

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India's clever use of the BRICS card in Doklam standoff

For almost two and a half months, Indian and Chinese troops found themselves in a standoff in the Doklam plateau in Bhutan—the worst crisis between the two countries in three decades. That standoff ended on Monday. While both sides seem to have found acceptable face-savers, it is clear that India stands vindicated: the status quo in the Doklam plateau has been restored. Chinese bulldozers have now retreated from the disputed sliver of land (India's core ask) even though India moved its troops out first (thus meeting a key Chinese demand). What is exceedingly interesting about how the crisis ended was its timing—a week before China hosts the annual BRICS (involving Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit in the coastal city of Xiamen.

To be sure, the upcoming meet (which would have, by custom, included a bilateral meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi) is not the sole reason why China agreed to, what in effect is, a climbdown. For example, the local balance of forces and the terrain would have put India ahead of China in any limited military conflict in the Doka La tri-junction area, thus removing Chinese incentives to forcibly dislodge Indian troops. A consequent military debacle would have proved very expensive for Xi ahead of the autumn congress of the Chinese Communist Party. But at the end, it was Chinese imperative to host a successful summit in Xiamen that may have provided the requisite push to end the face-off in Doklam.

Since becoming president in 2013, Xi has, in his quest to restore China as a central power in the international system, relied on economic and military coercion, and quasi-liberal rhetoric around solidarity with great and small powers alike. From the latter has flowed a new Chinese diplomatic lexicon: of “a new type of great power relations,” “win-win pragmatic cooperation,” and, most recently, “major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics”. This rhetoric has sought to couch China's geopolitical ambitions in benign and acceptable terms. A unifying feature of Chinese diplomatese under Xi has been an emphasis on sovereignty and equity even when Chinese foreign-policy practice has ignored these precepts.

Enter BRICS. Even though the grouping predates Xi's ascendance to power, he has promoted it as a template for cooperation between emerging powers. As such, BRICS has been a key proof-of-concept that China is willing to play a greater role in global governance—and that it will not remain a perennial shirker in the international system. China's membership in BRICS has concretely promoted its interests in multiple ways. The BRICS push to reform international financial institutions has led to greater accommodation of China in the International Monetary Fund, for example. BRICS' nascent norm-making around Westphalian sovereignty and equitability in the international order has been a useful instrument for Beijing to fight the agenda-setting monopoly of Atlantic powers. Above all, BRICS has furthered the cause of a multipolar world—the leading trope in recent Chinese foreign policy—more than any other institution that China has had stakes in.

Western analysts—when not dismissive of the grouping as a glorified talk shop with very little internal coherence—have harboured a nagging suspicion that BRICS seeks to promote an illiberal world order. A saving grace for the grouping in countering this perception has been India's membership. Euro-Atlantic powers realize that as a de-facto member of the political West, India's deep-seated preference for the status quo, its close relationship with the US, and commitment to a liberal global order is what prevents BRICS from becoming an anti-Western coalition led by Russian muscle and Chinese money.

Was Modi to boycott the Xiamen summit, it would have been the end of BRICS as we know it and

reduced the grouping to a motley of expansionist powers (Russia and China) and perennial basket cases (Brazil and South Africa). As Xi seeks to fashion himself as the champion of globalization in the era of Donald Trump—witness his Davos speech this January—this would have been terrible press. Beyond the issue of optics: the Chinese have aggressively pushed for expanding BRICS to include other upcoming economies in the run-up to the Xiamen summit, perhaps as a way to interface a “BRICS Plus” grouping with Xi’s signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Was Modi to skip the summit, this proposition would have been dead on arrival.

If several news reports are to be trusted, New Delhi shrewdly calculated this and accordingly played the boycott card. What added potency to this threat was its credibility: witness how India sat out the Belt and Road Initiative mega-forum earlier this year—the only major country to do so. Beijing would have also been cognizant of how Saarc essentially collapsed when New Delhi refused to participate in the annual summit in Islamabad last year.

At the end of the day, the surprising thing is not that Delhi played this card. It is that Beijing could not foresee this as a distinct possibility when it embarked on a prolonged standoff with India aided by its shrill state-controlled media. Despite China’s braggadocio, through the standoff in Doklam, it has come across as a parvenu in the international system. It has failed to absorb an elementary insight that the very institutions that have facilitated its prominence can be potentially used to constrain its behaviour and shape its choices.

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Making the Doklam standoff useful for India

The India-China standoff in Doklam, an area contested between China and Bhutan, came to an end on Monday after more than two months. The contours of the disengagement are now much clearer: The Indian side has withdrawn from Doklam and China has ceased its road construction activities, which had triggered the standoff in the first place.

While it is clear that it was Beijing that had to blink in the face of India's firmness, China has saved face by portraying the endgame as India's unilateral withdrawal to its domestic audience. The spokesperson for the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs has said that their forces will continue to patrol the Doklam area—this was never the reason for the standoff and Chinese and Bhutanese soldiers have indeed been patrolling the region earlier as well—and the road building plan will now take into account various factors, including weather. The meaning is clear: The Indian withdrawal has come in exchange for the Chinese concession of not going ahead with the road construction. If Beijing goes back on its part of the bargain, India has the option of doing the same.

What made Beijing budge from its position, especially after unleashing a barrage of India-bashing rhetoric through its state-controlled media? The most probable reason is India's military advantage in the Sikkim sector that would have made any escalation costly for China. Chinese concerns regarding the overhang of Doklam during the forthcoming Brics (involving Brazil, Russia, South Africa along with India and China) summit, which they will be hosting in Xiamen, must have also played a part. And not least, President Xi Jinping would also have wanted to ward off even a remote chance of an embarrassment before the 19th national congress of the Chinese Communist Party, to be held later this year.

While the Doklam denouement may have vindicated India's position, there are important lessons to be learnt from this protracted standoff. First, the fact that China has made a tactical retreat should not lull India into a belief that the former will stop deploying its time-tested technique of using incursions into disputed or others' territories as a means of embarrassing its opponents. As one has seen in the South China Sea, China is now increasingly adept at changing the facts on disputed territories and waters to present rival claimants with a fait accompli. But this trick did not work in Doklam—as Oriana Skylar Mastro and Arzan Tarapore have brilliantly [explained](#)—because India used denial tactics to physically prevent China from altering the facts on the ground. This meant that the onus of military escalation was left on Beijing. In contrast, a strategy—like the US' in the South China Sea—which threatens to retaliate after Beijing has created new facts would leave the onus of escalation on China's rival. However, rather than resting on its laurels, India should be prepared with its diplomatic and military apparatus should China try Doklam-type unilateral adventurism again.

Second, China's rise presents a daunting challenge to India's primacy in South Asia. The Doklam foray was not so much to intimidate India—Beijing is well aware of its disadvantages in Chumbi Valley—but more to create a rift between New Delhi and Thimphu. This standoff was the gravest threat ever to the special and unique Indo-Bhutanese relationship. And thanks to Thimphu's resilience, the relationship has come out with flying colours. While Beijing's rhetorical fury was on full display, Thimphu maintained its calm and stated its position in two crisp statements released on 29 June and 29 August. In both, Thimphu endorsed India's position by calling for a return to the status quo ante.

But India's relations with other South Asian neighbours are not as strong as with Bhutan. Forget India entering their territories to stave off an intrusion by the People's Liberation Army, most of them are busy pocketing Chinese money to build infrastructure in their own countries. India's methods there will have to be different. New Delhi has met with some limited success due to the

presence currently of friendly regimes in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But India should also exploit its advantages of geography and cultural affinities to present its economic growth as a veritable opportunity for neighbours through higher volumes of trade, greater investment flows and better connectivity.

Third, the China challenge is much bigger than episodes of border standoffs. In Pakistan, China has facilitated the creation of a nuclear-armed state which deploys terrorists against India to achieve its territorially revisionist goals. Another challenge is headed India's way through the activities of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean. Sea denial, as Abhijit Singh has [argued](#) in this newspaper, is not really a credible option. India will need the ability to project power in the Western Pacific.

Perhaps it is also time—in light of the changed circumstances that China's rise presents—to discuss an even closer military partnership with the US and Japan. Such a move may have its downsides but it is important to weigh them against the benefits rather than continue debating the utility of concepts as outdated as non-alignment and as mythical as strategic autonomy. If such a debate ensues, the Doklam standoff would have done some real good.

What are the lessons India should learn from the prolonged standoff in Doklam? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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BRICS off the wall

At Copenhagen in 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and other leaders of the newly formed BASIC group (with Brazil and South Africa) were sitting in a conference room, negotiating a statement on the failure of the climate change summit. The group of emerging economies had been bolstered by the formation of the BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India and China, South Africa joined in 2010) with a declared objective of battling “Western hegemony”. The BASIC group had decided they would walk away from Copenhagen without a deal, unless the demands of emerging economies, which couldn’t afford the same emission cuts, were reflected. The scene, as described by Shyam Saran (then India’s chief climate negotiator) in a new book on Indian foreign policy, turned dramatic: with a knock on the conference room door, the U.S. team, led by then President Barack Obama and then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, barged into the meeting. After much back and forth, Mr. Wen and Dr. Singh accepted an American compromise on the wording of the drafts, and the Copenhagen accord went ahead.

The event didn’t just change the course of international negotiations on global warming at the time, it heralded the arrival of emerging economies as a political force, and particularly the [potential of the combined political clout of India and China](#). BRICS (BASIC was later disbanded) went from a modest 16-paragraph joint statement at Yekaterinburg in June 2009 to the more substantive 110 paragraphs that the five countries agreed upon in the Goa Declaration of October 2016, developing common positions not just on climate change but also on terrorism, energy, and world politics.

Over time, it no longer met with sneers and references, like being called the “Bloody Ridiculous Investment Concept” by one investment banker, or the group of “paper tigers”, a reference to the fact that the term BRIC was coined in a paper by Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O’Neill in 2001. The valuation of the BRICS grouping, that represents 40% of the world’s population and a quarter of its growth at \$17 trillion, also did well, with more and more investment being driven into the five economies, mainly led by India and China. Not only did the BRICS countries better their positions in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, they also struck a small blow against Bretton Woods institutions, and the BRICS New Development Bank set up in 2015 has already given out about \$6 billion in loans for 23 projects across BRICS countries. This is no mean feat given the vast differences in size and political systems, and internal turmoil in BRICS countries.

Despite all of these gains, the truth is that [BRICS now faces its most challenging summit](#), not because of the West or the developed world, but because of growing differences between its two biggest members, India and China. And as Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to travel to Xiamen for the September 3-5 summit, it is important to see how the bilateral relationship and several other changes in geopolitics are now going to change the course of the BRICS engagement as well.

The Xiamen summit follows a gruelling two and a half months during which the rhetoric between India and China — especially the latter’s — has been quite sharp. While diplomats smoothed out a victory over more hawkish elements by disengaging the troops at Doklam and obtaining a Chinese assurance that it would not continue its road construction at the tri-junction area, more heavy lifting will have to be done to restore the situation to pre-June terms. The bilateral tensions will no doubt spill over to the multilateral negotiations at Xiamen, especially given the negative atmosphere built up by state-run Chinese media these past few weeks.

Off the road: India cannot sit out B&RI

Beyond the bilateral issues over the boundary, Nuclear Suppliers Group membership for India, terrorism, the Dalai Lama and others, the rift over China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also likely to dominate discussions at BRICS, as it now underpins all of China's other policies. India's refusal to be a part of the BRI over sovereignty issues, coupled with its broader objections to the transparency and agenda of the project, was a cause for tensions before the Doklam stand-off, with some commentators even arguing that it precipitated the crisis. There is little doubt that China will aim to bring the BRI on the table for negotiations at BRICS, to win a statement of endorsement as it did at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation last year. India will have to use considerable leverage with other members to ensure that its concerns prevail. However, it must be remembered that Russia and South Africa are important parts of BRI, and while Brazil is not, it is no less a recipient of Chinese investment, with a \$20 billion Brazil-China infrastructure fund inaugurated this May.

Another challenge for India is likely to arise from China's plan for a "BRICS-Plus" or "Friends of BRICS" grouping, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi's plan to include Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Mexico to an expanded version of BRICS. The suggestion of including Pakistan is something India has balked at and won't pass quite yet, but it wouldn't want to be seen to be opposing China's rationale of promoting "south-south cooperation" further.

Meanwhile Russia, which was the prime mover for the grouping, has moved closer to China and away from India; this could affect the language of the joint statement, especially on issues like Afghanistan, on which BRICS members had previously been on the same page. Russia's estrangement from the U.S. and Europe post-2014 and the Ukraine crisis in particular have increased its dependence on its east and south, mainly in the direction of the \$300 billion Russia-China oil pipeline that China is funding. Russia's shift on dealing with the Taliban is a strong signal of which way it is headed.

Mission indefinite: Donald Trump's Afghanistan policy

The U.S.'s new Afghanistan-Pakistan-India policy, that builds India's economic assistance into its own strategy for Afghanistan, will crystallise battle lines in the latest round of this age-old battle, with Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan ranged on one side, and India, the U.S. and NATO allies now on the other. In keeping with this, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has called the U.S.'s Afghanistan policy a "futile course", while President Vladimir Putin's Afghanistan envoy Zamir Kabulov has warned against "putting too much pressure" on Pakistan. At both the BRICS conference in Goa last October, as well as the Heart of Asia summit in December, Russian officials cavilled at backing India's strong language on terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

Nevertheless, it is an indicator of the importance of BRICS that both Mr. Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping appeared to have exerted enough pressure on officials to bring about the disengagement in Doklam a week before the summit at Xiamen. The Modi government must be credited for ensuring that it won peace at Doklam without building the outcome up as a defeat of China, which would have made their rivalry at BRICS that much more intense. In this, BRICS has fared better than two other groupings, SAARC and the Non-Aligned Movement, whose last summits India skipped, and appears to have abandoned. It remains to be seen how the two leaders use next week's bilateral encounter to chart a road map to repair ties. This could provide a realistic understanding of where the road ahead leads for BRICS as well, and whether post-Xiamen it can still bear out the potential that was promised a decade ago in Yekaterinburg and Copenhagen.

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Joint Proposal by India & China in WTO on Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)**Joint Proposal by India & China in WTO on Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)**

Recently (on 18 July 2017) India and China jointly submitted a proposal to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) calling for the elimination - by developed countries - of the most trade-distorting form of farm subsidies, known in WTO parlance as Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) or 'Amber Box' support as a prerequisite for consideration of other reforms in domestic support negotiations.

This is an important proposal by India and China in view of the ongoing negotiations for the upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017. It counters the efforts by some countries to target the subsidies of the developing countries while letting the developed countries retain their huge farm subsidies.

The joint paper reveals that developed countries, including the US, the EU and Canada, have been consistently providing trade-distorting subsidies to their farmers at levels much higher than the ceiling applicable to developing countries. Developed countries have more than 90% of global AMS entitlements amounting to nearly US\$ 160 bn. Most of the developing countries, including India and China, do not have AMS entitlements.

Listing the most heavily and frequently subsidised products by the US, the EU and Canada since 1995, the paper calls for elimination of such subsidies. The numbers reveal that subsidies for many items provided by the developed world are over 50% and some even more than 100% of the value of production of the product concerned, while developing countries are forced to contain it within 10% of the value of production. In other words, while developed Members have access to huge amount of AMS beyond their *de minimis* (these are the minimal amounts of domestic support that are allowed even though they distort trade — up to 5% of the value of production for developed countries, 10% for developing.) in contrast most developing Members have access only to *de minimis* resulting in a major asymmetry in the rules on agricultural trade.

The paper illustrates the adverse effects of concentration of AMS on a few products, which no other proposal in the WTO addresses. Elimination of AMS, India and China believe, should be the starting point of reforms rather than seeking reduction of subsidies by developing countries, some of which like India provide a subsistence amount of about US \$ 260 per farmer per annum compared to over 100 times more in some developed countries.

MJPS**END**