

Trump to push for 'open Indo-Pacific'

U.S. President Donald Trump will “present the U.S. vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region” in a speech in Da Nang, Vietnam on November 10, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEOs meet, the White House said on Tuesday.

Mr. Trump’s visit to the region — from November 3 to 14 — will be the longest by a U.S President in 25 years, and will “underscore the long-standing U.S commitment to the region”, a senior administration official said. Mr. Trump will travel to Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines, and this will be the largest number of countries covered by a U.S. President in a single trip to the region, since George W. Bush in 2003.

The official said Mr. Trump’s visit will make the “message clear to China that for trade relations between the two countries to be sustainable, it has to be free and fair”.

“It is very important to note that the President is making a long term commitment to the region, based on the shared principles of rules-based, high-standard, economic system and reduction of chronic trade deficits,” the official said.

Market principles

The official repeatedly said that countries in the Indo-Pacific region must stick to an economic system based on “market principles”, and accused China of undermining principles of market.

At the recent congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Chinese President Xi Jinping had asked countries to emulate the Chinese model of development, and shun Western liberalism.

“China must provide fair and reciprocal treatment, not just to the U.S. but all countries in the region”, the official said, accusing Beijing of “predatory investment and economic practices”. He said China’s unwillingness to do so “reflects a slowdown, or even a retreat in China’s progress toward a market driven economy”.

The official said the Chinese economy has become so big that its practices are negatively impacting not only the U.S. but all other countries in the region. The President will press China on these issues, the official said.

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The Burundi way, on the country's decision to quit ICC

Burundi's [decision to quit](#) the International Criminal Court is likely to resonate in other African states whose leaders have long complained that they are targeted for investigation by the UN institution. But the obstacles faced by the court in The Hague to hold big global powers to account for human rights violations does not detract from the complicity of the region's many dictators in subverting democratic institutions to keep their grip on power. Burundi is the first member-country to leave the ICC. In September, a UN commission investigating violence for over two years under President Pierre Nkurunziza recommended a criminal investigation by the court. The panel corroborated the evidence collected by fact-finding missions, which have reported large-scale incidents of sexual abuse, torture, forced disappearances, and summary executions of over 500 people. The flight of refugees to neighbouring countries is said to have exceeded 400,000. All these atrocities were triggered by legitimate and often heroic protests in this small central African state against one man's lust for power. Mr. Nkurunziza won a third term in 2015, in contravention of a provision in the 2003 peace agreement and despite an opposition boycott. He rejected the two-term limit in his renewal bid, contending that his first tenure should not be counted as he was elected by parliament rather than through a popular vote. His pursuit of power became all the more savage since an aborted coup prior to the elections, and the military and intelligence services seem to have rallied behind his authoritarian agenda.

Meanwhile, international pressure to bring the situation in Burundi under control has proved ineffective. The African Union (AU) abandoned plans last year to authorise a peacekeeping mission, despite the commitment codified in the bloc's charter to intervene to prevent genocide. But that initial enthusiasm dissipated. Securing an extension of presidential terms is not unique to the Burundian leader. Burundi's example may well be emulated by other countries. Within weeks of a parliamentary vote last year to leave the ICC, South Africa announced its own decision, which has been deferred pending legislative approval. More worrying is the mood across the AU to defy the jurisdiction of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the ICC. The erroneous logic of the region's leaders is that since most of the ICC investigations involve African governments, the institution is somehow biased against the continent. Such arguments are unlikely to appeal to their people. In any case, Mr. Nkurunziza's regime may not be able to evade the international court; the UN Security Council is empowered, under the Rome Statute, to refer complaints against non-member nations. Having unanimously backed constructive engagement, the Council may exercise its authority if the situation remains dire.

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

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India, Italy vow to fight terror

Looking ahead:Narendra Modi, right, with Italian PM Paolo Gentiloni in New Delhi on Monday.Sandeep Saxena

Reviving bilateral ties, India and Italy on Monday agreed to coordinate efforts at the multilateral level to counter global terrorism.

Describing India as an “Asian superpower”, visiting Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said Italy was in favour of a EU-India free trade agreement. He inked six agreements with India, covering energy cooperation, diplomatic training and railways.

Strategic ties

At a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Gentiloni said Italy was keen on deepening cooperation in the strategic sectors and focussed on cybersecurity and anti-terrorism as common areas of cooperation.

“India can play a big role in the global coalition against terrorism. Today, all countries can face the same terrorist threat from groups that may be different, but have a common link in the use of religious extremism for common goals. A multireligious country like India is itself a contribution to fighting terror. The very existence of a democracy with these characteristics is strategic,” Mr. Gentiloni said in a special address at the Observer Research Foundation.

Marines issue

Sources indicated that during the bilateral talks at Hyderabad House, both sides expressed a desire to leave difficult issues such as the Italian marines case behind and initiate steps in the interest of the larger relationship. In this direction, Italy supported India’s quest to bring Pakistan-based terror masterminds Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim and others to justice.

“The leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation to take decisive and concerted actions against Al Qaeda, ISIS (Da’esh) and their affiliates and all other UN-designated globally proscribed terrorists and terror entities...,” a joint statement said.

Officials said the statement was proof of Italy’s support to India’s concerns on terrorism.

Mr. Modi said, “India and Italy are two large economies, and the respective strengths of our economies provide us ample opportunities to strengthen our commercial cooperation. There is a lot of potential for our bilateral trade of about \$8.8 billion to grow much further.”

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Law panel moots life term for torture

Recommending life in jail for public servants convicted of torture, the Law Commission on Monday said the government should ratify a United Nations convention to tide over difficulties in getting extradited criminals from foreign countries due to the absence of a law preventing harsh treatment by authorities.

The panel also said that in case the government decided to ratify the UN convention on torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, a Bill should be introduced in Parliament to amend various laws to prevent torture by government officials.

The draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017 proposed “stringent punishment” to perpetrators to curb the menace of torture and to have a deterrent effect on acts of torture.

The punishment could extend up to life imprisonment and include a fine.

The report submitted to the Law Ministry said the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, require amendments to accommodate provisions regarding compensation and burden of proof.

Compensation favoured

It recommended an amendment to Section 357B to incorporate payment of compensation, in addition to the payment of fine provided in the Indian Penal Code.

The report, now in the public domain, said the Indian Evidence Act required the insertion of a new Section 114B.

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China to block UN bid to ban Azhar

Citing a lack of “consensus,” China said on Monday that it is once again not designating Masood Azhar, head of the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist.

The Chinese position, expressed by its Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, came ahead of Thursday’s meeting of the 1267 committee of the United Nations Security Council, where the status of Azhar would be discussed. In September, hopes had been raised of a shift in China’s position but they were belied.

This followed an “excellent” meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Xiamen between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi.

“We have made our position clear many times from this podium. The relevant resolutions of the Security Council have clear stipulations as to the mandate to the 1267 committee and also clear stipulations when it comes to listing of relevant organisations and individuals,” said Ms. Hua. “As for listing the application by the relevant country, there are disagreements. China raised the technical hold to allow for more time for all parties to deliberate. To our regret the committee so far has yet to reach a consensus.”

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China plans tunnel from Brahmaputra

Chinese engineers are testing techniques that could be used to build a 1,000-km-long tunnel, the world's longest, to divert water from the Brahmaputra river in Tibet, close to Arunachal Pradesh, to the parched Xinjiang region, a media report said on Monday.

The move, that is expected to "turn Xinjiang into California", has raised concerns among environmentalists about its likely impact on the Himalayan region, Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported.

Water would be diverted from the Yarlung Tsangpo river in southern Tibet, which turns into the Brahmaputra once it enters India. The proposed tunnel would provide water to China's largest administrative division, comprising vast swathes of deserts and dry grasslands.

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Delegation led by Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Morocco meets Indian delegation led by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju**Delegation led by Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Morocco meets Indian delegation led by MoS (Home) Shri Kiren Rijju**

Mr. Noureddine Boutayeb, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Morocco is leading a composite delegation from various Ministries dealing with ICT and Socio-Economic Programmes and Morocco's National Bank to India from 28th October to 6th November, 2017. The delegation met with Shri Kiren Rijju, Minister of State for Home Affairs today.

Mr. Boutayeb added that Morocco is emerging as a key counter-terror and de-radicalization partner in North Africa and they will like to share with India their experiences in this field. MoS for Home responded positively to the offer and added that India has also been a long sufferer of terrorism and Government of India was taking steps to counter this problem effectively. MoS Shri Rijju welcomed the Moroccan offer.

The delegation is presently in India to study the Indian experience of Aadhar, Crime, Criminal Tracking Network & System (CCTNS) and benefits like DBT, Gas Subsidy, Digitised Banking Systems.

Mr. Boutayeb during interactions expressed his happiness at the fact that a big democratic country like India with a population of over 1.3 billion, with its diverse cultures, languages could implement Aadhar in India in the shortest possible time. He went on to add that Morocco is also in the process of implementing programmes based on the socio-economic model of India and that his delegation's primary focus was to learn from the experiences of India's model of development and socio-economic reforms initiated by the Indian Government.

MoS for Home also briefed in detail the Moroccan Minister of various initiatives like the very recently introduced Crime, Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) a mission mode project under the National e-Governance Plan which will help modernize the Police Force and envisages national wide networking enabling share of information between Police Stations, State Officers and Security Agencies. He also briefed how this provides citizen interface to register complaints and to avail citizen services and covers all 35 States and UTs in India. Moroccan side expressed interest in details of this Project. MoS also requested the Moroccan side for liberal visa regime for Indian citizens for more people to people contacts between the two countries and also facilitate visas to business community on both sides. He also requested for expeditious conclusion of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. The Moroccan side requested for e-visa facility to Moroccan citizens.

Mr. Boutayeb expressed his happiness on his visit to a great country like India and thanked MoS Shri Kiren Rijju for the positive exchanges both sides had today.

KSD/NK/PK

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Indian Air force contingent leaves for Israel to Participate in 'Ex Blue Flag-17'**Indian Air force contingent leaves for Israel to Participate in 'Ex Blue Flag-17'**

A 45 member contingent of the Indian Air Force left for Israel today to participate in exercise 'Blue Flag-17'. Blue Flag is a bi-annual multilateral exercise which aims to strengthen military cooperation amongst participating nations. Indian Air Force is participating with the C-130J special operations aircraft along with Garud commandos. The exercise would provide a platform for sharing of knowledge, combat experience and in improving operational capability of the participating nations. The exercise is being conducted at Uvda Air Force Base in Israel from 02-16 Nov 17. The team consists of personnel from various combat elements of the IAF and is led by Gp Capt Maluk Singh VSM.

This is the first time the Indian Air Force is operating with Israeli AF in a multilateral exercise setting. Exercise Blue Flag gives opportunity to the IAF to share and learn best practices with some of the best professionals from other Air Forces.

NAo/MKR

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India, Bhutan security indivisible: President

Brothers in arms: Ram Nath Kovind with Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Queen Jetsun Pema and Prince Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck in Delhi. AFP/rashtrapati bhavan

The security of India and Bhutan is "indivisible and mutual", President Ram Nath Kovind said here on Wednesday. The first such statement on the subject since the Doklam standoff with China ended in August indicates a closer engagement between India and Bhutan after the months-long episode.

Mr. Kovind, who issued the statement after meeting Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck in Delhi, thanked the King for his "personal involvement" in addressing the Doklam crisis, the first time a reference has been made to the King's role during the tensions between Indian and Chinese troops.

"[The President] conveyed deep appreciation for the King of Bhutan's personal involvement and guidance and the support provided by Bhutan in addressing the recent situation in the Doklam area. He added that the manner in which both India and Bhutan stood together to address the situation in the Doklam area is a clear testimony to our friendship," said a press release issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan after the King and Queen of Bhutan met Mr. Kovind.

However, neither the External Affairs Ministry nor the Bhutanese embassy responded to queries from *The Hindu* about the nature of the King's role.

Officials said the King, who is on a four-day visit to meet the President, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and senior Cabinet Ministers, will return to India for a formal "state visit" next year, which marks the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan statement is significant as it seeks to end speculation over India's decision to send troops into land caught in a dispute between Bhutan and China.

While Indian officials said the Indian troops went into Doklam at the request of the Royal Bhutanese Army, Bhutan's government has never said so officially.

In two statements issued on June 29 and August 29, the Bhutanese Foreign Ministry had said China was in violation of its agreements, but gave no statement on the Indian Army's role there.

Clearing the air

The visit by the Royal couple to Delhi this week is therefore being seen as not just a personal one, but one that signals a tacit endorsement of India's actions during the Doklam crisis, as well as a reaffirmation of ties, analysts said.

President Kovind's comment that "security concerns of India and Bhutan are indivisible and mutual", is also likely to be analysed closely for whether the two are considering a new formulation in their ties post-Doklam.

Although Article 2 of the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 1949 had said Bhutan would be "guided by the advice" of India on its external relations, the treaty was amended in 2007 to a less entwined "close cooperation on various issues relating to their national interests."

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Russia-India partnership second to none: Envoy

Russia's partnership with India is "second to none" and cannot be compared with its relationship with Pakistan, Russian Ambassador Nikolay Kudashev said on Wednesday.

Asked about Russia's two-week military drill in October with Pakistan near the Russian town of Minralney Vody, he said there is no comparison between ties with India and Pakistan and that the purpose of the drills was counter-terror cooperation.

"Our partnership with India is second to none while we have a normal inter-state relationship with Pakistan," he said during a media briefing on the recently concluded tri-services exercise between Russia and India in Vladivostok. Russia favours "space" for all stakeholders in the region, the envoy said when asked about a possible quadrilateral involving India, Japan, the U.S. and Australia for deeper cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. There should "open cooperation" among all countries, he added.

Regional architecture

Mr. Kudashev underlined the need for a non-bloc regional architecture. Washington has been pressing for strengthening Indo-U.S. cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono said recently that Tokyo favours a dialogue between Japan, the U.S., India and Australia to further boost strategic partnership.

Asked about China's indication that it may once again block the U.S., France and U.K.'s bid to list Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief and Pathankot terror attack mastermind Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, he evaded a direct reply. "We are members of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), where there is ample agenda to fight terrorism," he said.

The envoy also spoke about the tri-services exercise between India and Russia from October 19 to 29. More than 900 soldiers, sailors and air warriors participated in the exercise along with over 1,000 personnel from the Russian defence forces. A senior official said no decision has been taken on whether the tri-services exercise will be an annual feature.

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A document that still resonates

Arthur Balfour visiting Jewish colonies, in 1925. | Photo Credit: [UniversallImagesGroup](#)

The famous (or infamous) Balfour declaration was issued exactly a hundred years ago on November 2, 1917.

The visionary behind Zionism, Theodor Herzl moulded the Zionist movement into a demand for a Jewish homeland in the last decade of the 19th century. The immediate provocation was the ruthless pogroms carried out by Czarist Russia that caused a large exodus of Jews. These Jewish émigrés had to be settled somewhere; why not give them a homeland of their own? And why not Palestine as their homeland, from where they were forced out (according to the Israeli narrative) centuries ago?

British Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne offered unrestricted immigration to Jewish people in Uganda. (Uganda, a colony, was fair game.) Herzl supported Lansdowne's offer as an interim solution. He was supported by majority of Zionist delegates but opposed fiercely by many. But he died soon after, and with him died the Uganda solution.

The Weizmann intervention

By this time, a young academic of Russian origin, a professor of chemistry in Manchester University, Chaim Weizmann had emerged on the scene. He single-mindedly steered the Zionist movement in the direction of turning Palestine into a Jewish state. He eventually achieved his objective and became the first President of Israel in the late 1940s.

Far-sighted as he was, Weizmann realised, as soon as Britain had entered the Great War, that the eventual peace conference would be the best opportunity to push for a Jewish state in Palestine. He and his colleagues began drafting a memo for the British government to give concrete shape to their demand. At the time, almost everyone expected that the war would be over in about a year or so. It dragged on; Weizmann and the group never gave up. He cultivated leading Jews in England and elsewhere. The most significant of them was Lord Rothschild who wielded enormous influence in the British government.

In the summer of 1917, Weizmann and Sokolov launched a strategy to force the issue. They decided to compose a Zionist statement.

Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour would present it to the cabinet for approval whereafter he would inform Lord Rothschild about it by a letter, which would then constitute a declaration of support for Zionism; in effect a Balfour declaration. In July 1917, a group of Zionist leaders drafted a declaration. There were differences among them. One pressed to ask for "as much as possible", including, in particular, the right to control the state machinery, promising the Arabs only cultural autonomy, but "the state must be Jewish". A few days later, a smaller group drafted a single paragraph, to the effect that the British government should recognise Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people and work closely with the Zionist Organisation. Some in the group kept in touch with the Foreign Office, in particular with Mark Sykes (of the Sykes-Picot fame) and had a good idea of what the government could accept. They met a few days later and one of them, Leon Simon, jotted down on a scrap of paper two sentences, which were accepted by the others. The scrap survived and was sold in an auction at Sotheby's, in 2005 for \$884,000. The two sentences were:

"H.M. Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the national

home of the Jewish people.

“H.M. Government will use its best endeavours to secure the achievement of the object and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Zionist Organization [ZO].”

The first sentence implied an unbroken link between Jews and Palestine despite years of separation and the second sentence posited the ZO as the official representative of Jewish interests.

Balfour personally supported this small paragraph and drafted a reply for approval of the cabinet, stating: “I am glad to be in a position to inform you that HMG accept the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people.” For some reason, Balfour did not send the note to the cabinet. War Cabinet Minister Alfred Milner removed the word “reconstituted” and instead of terming Palestine “the” National Home of the Jewish people, he called it “a National Home for the Jewish people”. The reference to the Zionist Organisation was excised.

It was the Jewish member of the cabinet, Edwin Montagu, who opposed the whole concept. He wanted the foreign secretary to redraft his letter and reject the Zionist statement. His colleagues were taken aback by the vehemence of his opposition.

His argument was that the proposed declaration would prove a rallying ground for anti-semitism all over the world. He had said earlier that there was not a Jewish nation. He felt strongly that declaring Palestine as the homeland of the Jews would imply that persons like him everywhere would lose their citizenship of the countries of their domicile, perhaps not legally but certainly morally and ethically. He had been appointed as the next Secretary of State of India. “How could a Palestinian represent England in India?” he asked. He was, in short, an ardent assimilationist.

When the cabinet met in early September, Montagu stuck to his position with the result that the meeting remained inconclusive. It decided to consult U.S. President Wilson for his opinion.

Weizmann galvanised himself and all Zionists, in Britain and in America. Hundreds of telegrams flooded the Foreign Office. Montagu too got active and prepared an anti-Zionist statement, but had no organised movement behind him. He was isolated. At yet another meeting in October, he repeated his firm position. This time, one more member of the cabinet opposed the proposed declaration, arguing: “Zionism was sentimental idealism, which would be never realised and with which the British Government should have nothing to do.” A decision was deferred again.

The issue was settled, conclusively, when Wilson sent an unambiguous message of support for Zionism.

The War Cabinet met in late 1917 and authorised Foreign Secretary Balfour to write to Lord Rothschild as follows: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

Balfour sent the letter containing the declaration to Rothschild on November 2. Thus was born the Balfour Declaration.

No place for sentiment

At the same time that the British were promising the Jews their homeland in Palestine, T.E. Lawrence was promising an Arab kingdom to the Sheriff of Mecca who, of course, had no idea of the promises to the Jews. They were also negotiating with Turkey in Geneva offering them the privilege to fly the Turkish flag in Jerusalem in return for ditching Germany. England was also concerned, fed cleverly by Weizmann, that Germany too would play the Zionist card.

There is a lesson for India here. England was facing an existential threat. America had not yet joined the war and England was more or less on its own. Whatever helped the British war effort was kosher. Britain could not afford to worry about morality, ethics, or broken promises. National interest alone would decide British policy and actions; sentiment had no place. This is how major powers conduct their foreign policy.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, a former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, was Special Envoy for West Asia in the Manmohan Singh government

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

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From Lenin to Xi Jinping

The 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution this month has passed without too much discussion. This is for entirely understandable reasons: The meaning of 1917 has to a great degree been eclipsed by the meaning of 1989. The more we learn about the revolution from new archives, or rescue it from encrusted Cold War histories, the more difficult it is for even the last remnants of Communist nostalgia to hold onto any idea of commemorating it in a celebratory spirit. The revolution had far-reaching effects, no doubt. The ways in which Bolsheviks acquired, and more importantly, held onto power, still repays study.

The avoidable human catastrophe the revolution unleashed is still something the world is coming to terms with. Due to recent historiography, it has become even harder to detach the subsequent history of the Soviet Union from the revolutionary moment. The distinction between Stalinism and Leninism has become harder to sustain.

But in so far as there is some discussion of the meaning of 1917, there are attempts to recapture the revolutionary spirit in its more metaphysical form, to make some nostalgia about it more acceptable. Forget the events, this view goes, look at the meaning. The revolution was at least an assertion of political agency, a small group determined to remake the world. Without a revolutionary ideal we feel disempowered as political agents. But Hannah Arendt made short shrift of reading the revolution this way. On revolution as an act of historical agency, she wrote, "They were fooled by history and they have become fools of history."

The revolution, it was claimed, aspired at popular empowerment. It turns out its connection with popular uprisings was tenuous. It devoured the very peasants in whose name it spoke. The revolution was no dawn of freedom; like almost all revolutions it led to an unprecedented growth of state power and coercion. But the last sliver of metaphysical nostalgia about the revolution is that it had utopian aspirations. The revolution may have had a millenarian element, but it was not an embodiment of utopia.

In fact, one of the lessons is that you can hold onto a utopian imagination only if it is detached from a revolutionary one; revolution is the death knell of utopia. But finally, some hold onto 1917 as a signifier of alternative possibilities. It may have gone horribly wrong, but to entirely give up on the idea of revolution is to be trapped in current horizons, where we cannot imagine an alternative to the current system. The revolution is significant on this view as keeping open the horizon of an alternative world. But the question is: Why do you need a revolution to keep the idea of the alternative alive?

But the invocation of 1917 is dimmed not simply because the Soviet Union lost the Cold War, as it were. It has been dimmed by another spirit: The Chinese Communist Party. It could be argued that the triumph of the Leninist party system has been in China. China also sees itself as having the good sense to hold onto Communist party rule, even as it opened up the economy. The 19th Party Congress has raised the question of the extent to which China is an alternative model, a competitor that makes us think outside the current horizons of capitalist existence. China is, of course, a competitor to liberal democracy, and as it grows more authoritarian, the tensions with individual freedom become starker. There is some debate about whether China now seeks to export its model. Richard McGregor, an authority on the Chinese Communist Party, wrote in *The Guardian*, referring to the confidence of the 19th CPC: "It (China) has always extolled the value of its system, but has never explicitly suggested it was something that could be exported around the world."

There is no question China seeks greater ideological legitimacy for its model. It will propagate it as a model to learn from. Part of seeking status is to have the success and legitimacy of one's

political system acknowledged. China perceives the normative subordination to which it is subjected by the West as a matter of affront. But there are reasons to be sceptical about the idea of exporting a Chinese model. For starters, Maoism was more explicitly an exportable ideology than "Xi thought" might be.

Second, it is still worth remembering that while Xi may place himself in line with Mao, in some ways the legitimacy for order in China is a kind of anti-Maoist impulse, the dread of leaders speaking in the name of the people, causing disorder. Third, there is a more acute historical consciousness of Chinese exceptionalism. Ideologies can be exported, models cannot. This is a fatal confusion the Americans fell prey to in thinking of liberal democracy as an exportable model. That adventurism weakened America. Models require preconditions for success, and it is doubtful that the Chinese believe the conditions that made the Chinese Communist Party what it is can be easily replicated.

Fourth and finally, the Soviet-American competition was more explicitly an ideological competition, in a way that Sino-American competition, despite having some ideological elements, is not. And the nature of the economic relationship between China and the West is of a different kind.

But there might be a deeper reason to think why there are limits to China as an alternative. And these limits go back to thinking of the idea of revolution. In some ways, if there is a big lesson from recent Chinese history and self-understanding, it is just this: That the revolutionary spirit needs to be buried. Deng was a far-reaching reformer. But everything he and his successors did was predicated on an anti-revolutionary sensibility: Avoiding convulsive change, avoiding universalistic pretensions, a suspicion of political agency, pragmatism about institutional choices, improvisation in terms of the balance of freedom and control needed to retain power, the projection of continuity over change.

If the spirit of 1917 was buried, it was not just because capitalism with all its warts proved more enduring than Soviet-style socialism, or that liberal democracy became the only alternative. Ironically, 1917 has been buried, and the scepticism of revolution has been furthered even more powerfully by that Leninist Party: The Chinese Communist Party.

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Harnessing science and technology for a better future of people is the new spirit which drives the present Indo-UK cooperation – Dr. Harshvardhan

Harnessing science and technology for a better future of people is the new spirit which drives the present Indo-UK cooperation – Dr. Harshvardhan

India and UK Science & Technology Ministers review the progress made in the India-UK partnership in science, technology and innovation

Science and Technology Ministers of India and UK reviewed the progress made in the India-UK partnership in science, technology and innovation which has been significantly intensified under the Newton-Bhabha programme. Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan, had a meeting with UK Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation Mr. Jo Johnson in New Delhi today.

Based on the shared principles of co-funding, co-development and co-creation multiple agencies both in India and UK are seamlessly contributing to the multifaceted cooperation which covers the three strands of people, project and translational research partnerships. Both the Ministers reiterated the spirit and essence of the Newton-Bhabha program which underlines that the scientific knowledge creation and its application is directed for the welfare of both the nations. In this context, Dr. Harsh Vardhan remarked that “harnessing science and technology for a better future of our people is the new spirit which drives the present Indo-UK cooperation.”

In November 2016, UK was the partner country in the Technology Summit which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Theresa May. Speaking in the event, our PM had remarked “today, the world is at an inflection point where technology advancement is transformational and it is vital that India and the United Kingdom, two countries linked by history, work together to define the knowledge economy of the 21st century”. Towards achieving this goal several major initiatives have been recently launched as a part of the multifaceted collaboration in STI between India and the UK. These include projects on Energy Efficient Building Materials as a part of green initiative with co-investment of £ 8.4 million. Indo-UK Clean Energy Virtual Centre has been established with leading academic centres in India and UK to work on advanced R&D in Solar Energy, Storage and Grid Networks.

The two Ministers welcomed the release of the scoping Indo-UK report on Antimicrobial Resistance which has been prepared to launch a virtual research centre to address the increasingly serious threat to public and animal health in both countries. To study the

impact of atmospheric pollution on Human Health a programme has been launched and first campaign for taking observation in Delhi is scheduled to begin soon.

Under Industrial R&D programme India and UK have made visible progress with support to 10 joint projects led by industries from both sides towards co-development of Clean Technologies and Affordable Healthcare devices.

In the meeting between the Science Ministers, it was also informed that the India-UK Frontiers of Science Symposium is planned for summer of 2018 in UK which will bring the future science leaders across disciplines for brainstorming the future direction of the bilateral cooperation.

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Joint Indo-Russia Tri-Services Exercise Indra-2017 successfully conducted**Joint Indo-Russia Tri-Services Exercise Indra-2017 successfully conducted**

The Joint Indo-Russia Tri-Services Exercise INDRA-2017 was successfully conducted from 19 to 29 Oct 2017 at Vladivostok in Russia. The name of the exercise INDRA has been derived from **IND**ia and **RussiA**. So far INDRA exercises have been undertaken between respective Armies, Navies and Air Forces engaged with each other without concurrent participation from other Services. 17 such service specific exercises with the Russian defence forces have been conducted since 2003. Exercise INDRA-2017 is the first Joint Tri-Services Exercise between Russia and India. This is also the first time that Russia has hosted a Tri-Services Exercise on its soil.

The theme of Exercise INDRA-2017 was 'Preparation and Conduct of Operations by a Joint Force for Suppression of International Terror Activity at the request of a host country under UN mandate'.

More than 900 soldiers, sailors and air warriors from the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force participated in the exercise along with over 1000 personnel from the Russian Defence Forces. The exercise was conducted in the Sergeevsky Combined Arms Training Range, Cape Klerk Training Area and the waters of the Sea of Japan.

Army exercise tasks involved check point defence and humanitarian convoy escort in the back drop of threat from armed groups. Naval tasks comprised Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) operations besides Force Protection Measures, Joint Air Defence and Anti-mining Operations. The Air Forces of both countries, combined their air crews for Combat Air Patrols, Reconnaissance Missions, Formation Flying and Slithering operations utilising Russian fighters, transport aircraft and helicopters.

It was indeed a historic occasion for two of the world's greatest Armed Forces to join hands and successfully conduct an exercise of this magnitude with professionalism, providing an opportunity for both defence forces to imbibe the best practices from each other and jointly evolve and practice drills to defeat the scourge of terror. The first ever Indo-Russia Joint Tri Services Exercise has been a combination of training and cross training in field conditions on land, sea and air, to achieve seamless integration. The validation of the exercise tasks is a testimony of the contingents of both countries having integrated and synergised seamlessly to achieve the laid down objectives. The exercise also provided an opportunity to all personnel for cultural exchange and for friendly sports competitions.

Exercise INDRA-2017 will surely be a benchmark for future exercises of this nature all across the world. The esprit de corps and goodwill generated during the exercise will facilitate further strengthening of bonds between the defence forces of India and Russia enabling them to understand each other's organisations and the methodology of executing joint counter terrorist operations. It is even more satisfying that this milestone in Indo-Russia defence cooperation has been realised as we commemorate 70 years of Indo-Russian friendship.

MJPS/NA/NM/RP

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King of Bhutan calls on the President**King of Bhutan calls on the President**

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, along with Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Prince of Bhutan called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (November 1, 2017).

Welcoming the King and Queen to India, the President said that it is a privilege to welcome the King on the anniversary of his Coronation Day. He also thanked them for bringing the Royal Prince on his maiden visit to India.

The President complimented the King of Bhutan on the successful completion of the first decade of his reign and his vision for a stable, happy and prosperous Bhutan. He stated that India is delighted to see the rapid progress made in Bhutan while simultaneously preserving its very special culture as well as protecting the environment. India has been happy to share its knowledge, experience and resources with Bhutan. Our development cooperation has been guided by the priorities set by the Government and people of Bhutan.

The President said that India and Bhutan share exemplary bilateral relations. Our relations are unique and special. Our bilateral ties are based on utmost trust and understanding. We should do everything to make it a model of bilateral cooperation, which will be noted by others in the neighbourhood.

The President said that security concerns of India and Bhutan are indivisible and mutual. He conveyed deep appreciation for the King of Bhutan's personal involvement and guidance and the support provided by Bhutan in addressing the recent situation in the Doklam area. He added that the manner in which both India and Bhutan stood together to address the situation in the Doklam area is a clear testimony to our friendship.

AKT/AK/VK**END**

Cabinet approves trade Agreement between India and Ethiopia for strengthening and promoting trade and economic cooperation

Cabinet approves trade Agreement between India and Ethiopia for strengthening and promoting trade and economic cooperation

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval for the trade Agreement between India and Ethiopia for strengthening and promoting trade and economic co-operation. The trade Agreement was signed on 5th October, 2017 during the State visit of the President of India to Ethiopia from 4th to 6th October, 2017.

The trade Agreement will replace the existing trade Agreement signed in 1982. The trade Agreement will provide for all necessary measures to encourage trade, economic cooperation, investment and technical co-operation.

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Cabinet approves signing an Agreement between India and Armenia on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters**Cabinet approves signing an Agreement between India and Armenia on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing and ratifying an Agreement between India and Armenia on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters.

The Agreement will be signed on behalf of the two countries after it is approved by the respective Governments. This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the second month after the Contracting Parties notify each other in through diplomatic channels, that the necessary national legal requirements for entry into force of this Agreement have been fulfilled.

The Agreement will help in the availability of relevant information for the prevention and investigation of Customs offences. It is also expected to facilitate trade and ensure efficient clearance of goods traded between the countries.

Background :

The Agreement would provide a legal framework for sharing of information and intelligence between the Customs authorities of the two countries and help in the proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs offences and the facilitation of legitimate trade. The draft text of the Agreement has been finalized with the concurrence of the two Customs Administrations. The draft Agreement takes care of Indian Customs' concerns and requirements, particularly in the area of exchange of information on the correctness of the Customs value declared and authenticity of certificates of origin of the goods traded between the two countries.

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Commerce & Industry Minister visits Cuba to explore bilateral trade and investment opportunities in Latin American and Caribbean regions

Commerce & Industry Minister visits Cuba to explore bilateral trade and investment opportunities in Latin American and Caribbean regions

The Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu visited Cuba from October 28 to 31 to explore opportunities to tap the huge untapped potential, for not only bilateral trade but also investment in the Latin American and Caribbean regions. It has been the strategy to pursue new markets to expand India's trade footprint and targets to double trade with the Latam and Caricom region in the next 4 to 5 years. With the Caribbean region, India's bilateral trade was US\$ 1755 million in 2016-17, constituting only 7.16 percent of India's trade with the Latin American and Caribbean region.

India has always enjoyed a good political relationship with Cuba, with India being one of the first countries to recognise the regime after the Revolution. The visit of the Commerce & Industry Minister was to leverage this age old political relationship to enhance the economic and commercial ties between the two countries.

The Minister met almost the entire top leadership in Cuba including the First Vice President Mr. Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez Mario, Vice President and Minister of Economic Affairs and Planning Mr. Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment Mr. Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz, Minister of Energy and Mines Mr. Alfredo Lopez Valdes, Minister of Industries Mr. Salvador Pardo Cruz and also the President of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce. The First Vice President Mr. Miguel Diaz attached historic importance to this visit saying that 'India has a prominent role in global dynamics' and aligned with the Minister for Commerce & Industries' proposition of an integrated approach in multilateral organisations and environmental issues. Considering the overwhelming support and warmth in the meetings, a spontaneous decision was taken to take the next step in this economic engagement in the form of an MoU between the Federation of Indian Exporters Organisation (FIEO) and the Cuban Chamber of Commerce. The MoU priorities six sectors for bilateral trade and investments. These are Pharmaceuticals, Tourism, Renewable Energy, Bio Technology, Sugar and Infrastructure development. Similar MoUs were later signed with Barbados and Guyana.

Shri Prabhu also leveraged this opportunity to meet his counterpart from Haiti, Mr. Pierre Marie du Meny and the Barbados Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development, Mr. Donville Inniss.

The Minister for Commerce & Industry also attended the inauguration of the 35th edition of FIHAV-2017 which saw participation from over 70 countries. The Minister also inaugurated the Indian Pavilion in the presence of the Cuban Minister of Energy & Mines. The Minister said “FIHAV was an exhibition of goods but I exhibit the love and affection which 1.3 billion people from India have for Cuba”.

Shri Prabhu also engaged with the Indian diaspora, leading businessmen from Cuba and other prominent Cuban individuals, including the daughter of President Raul Castro and the son of Comrade Fidel Castro.

The Minister for Commerce & Industry also visited the Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) and appreciated the high research standards and advancement in medical technology that Cuba has achieved. Shri Prabhu reiterated the potential of cooperation between the Indian Pharmaceutical Industry which is a world leader in generics and CIGB to find affordable health solutions.

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India offers to share real-time maritime data

Stronger vigil:The move comes as India gears up to counter China's presence in the Indian Ocean Region. S.R. Raghunathan

India has made an offer to share intelligence of maritime movements in the Indian Ocean in real-time with 10 Indian Ocean littoral states.

This comes even as India gears up to counter China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The information to be shared includes movement of commercial traffic as well as intelligence.

"It was very positively received," Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba told *The Hindu* on Thursday at the Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) when asked about the response to this proposal from the 10 littoral states present.

The Indian Navy is hosting Navy and Maritime Chiefs of 10 countries of IOR at the first GMC to identify common threats in the region and evolve a mechanism on how to tackle them.

Co-operative system

India already has co-operative arrangements with several countries in the region and this initiative would see that expanding further. For instance, white shipping agreements to share commercial shipping data have been signed with 12 countries and more are in the works.

Fusion centre

"We have offered them to share real time data on movement in the Indian Ocean. Now let them review it and get them. This is not so much for conventional military purposes but to deal with non-traditional threats arising at sea," a senior officer said.

India is in a position to be a fusion centre, the officer added and this would be based on the Navy's nerve centre for coastal surveillance and monitoring, the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) located outside the national capital.

Welcoming the offer, a Navy Chief of one of the Indian Ocean littorals present said all countries should pitch in equally in the effort. "It has to be done equally by all nations, small or big. We have to work out modalities for the information exchange," he said on the sidelines of the GMC.

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China blocks U.N. move on Azhar

China on Thursday blocked another bid by the U.S., France and the U.K. to list Pakistan-based JeM chief and Pathankot terror attack mastermind Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the U.N., saying it had rejected the move as “there is no consensus”.

A veto-wielding member of the Security Council, China had repeatedly blocked India’s move to put a ban on the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief under the Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the Council.

The JeM, founded by Azhar, has already been in the U.N.’s list of banned terror outfits.

China had in August extended by three months its technical hold on the proposal after having blocked the move in February at the U.N. “China has rejected the move as there is no consensus,” sources in the Chinese Foreign Ministry told PTI here.

The comment came as the China’s technical hold was set to lapse on Thursday. The official’s comment indicates that China would veto the application in the 1267 Committee of the UN Security Council that would subject him to an assets freeze and travel ban to allow it to lapse.

This is the second year in succession that it has blocked the resolution.

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India hits out at China's stance

India hit out at double standards in the war on terrorism on Thursday, hours after China blocked a move at the United Nations Security Council to place Masood Azhar, the Pakistan-based chief of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, in a list of global terrorists.

India's strong response did not name China but hinted at "one country" that had hurt the global campaign to ban the terror mastermind who is blamed for several attacks against India, including the Pathankot airbase attack of 2016.

"We are deeply disappointed that once again, a single country has blocked international consensus on the designation of an acknowledged terrorist and leader of UN-designated terrorist organisation," said a late evening statement from the Ministry of External Affairs.

China blocked an attempt by the U.S., U.K., and France to place Masood Azhar in the list of global terrorists of the Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council citing "no consensus" as a ground for its objection.

"India strongly believes that double standards and selective approaches will only undermine the international community's resolve to combat terrorism," said the MEA statement.

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Indo – Kazakhstan Joint Exercise “PRABAL DOSTYK 2017” Begins**Indo – Kazakhstan Joint Exercise “PRABAL DOSTYK 2017” Begins**

A fourteen day joint training exercise “PRABAL DOSTYK – 2017” between the Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army commenced today with the Opening Ceremony at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh. The joint exercise is aimed at enhancing the military ties between the two countries as also at achieving interoperability between the two armies. The training contingents comprise of platoon strength from the 11th Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army and a similar strength of the Kazakhstan Army.

Col Aman Anand

PRO (Army)

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Col Aman Anand

PRO (Army)

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India is committed to partner Bhutan in its socio-economic development: Vice President

India is committed to partner Bhutan in its socio-economic development: Vice President

Calls on the King of Bhutan

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India is committed to partner Bhutan in its socio-economic development, and to support in its XII Five Year Plan. He was interacting with the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, here today. Senior officials from both India and Bhutan were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that India and Bhutan share exemplary bilateral relations and these are unique and special. He further said that our historical and cultural linkages make us natural friends and partners. He thanked the King for his warm letter of felicitation on his assumption of responsibilities as the Vice President of India earlier this year.

The Vice President said that India is delighted to see the rapid progress which has been made in Bhutan while simultaneously preserving its very special culture as well as protecting the environment. He further said that the Government and people of India appreciate the vision of the Druk Gyalpos (Kings), which has guided relations between our two countries. With the wisdom and foresight of the Monarchs of Bhutan and Indian leadership, India-Bhutan relations have grown from strength to strength, he added.

The Vice President said that India has been happy to share its knowledge, experience and resources with Bhutan and thus contribute to Bhutan's socio-economic development. He further said that our development cooperation has been guided by the priorities set by the Government and people of Bhutan. India is committed to partner Bhutan in its socio-economic development, and to support in its XII Five Year Plan, he added.

The Vice President said that India remains committed to consolidate existing hydro-power cooperation with Bhutan. Timely implementation of the ongoing hydro-power projects with minimum cost overrun, is important for both governments. This is the flagship area of our bilateral cooperation and has high visibility. We should do everything to make it a model of bilateral cooperation, which will be noted by others in the neighbourhood.

The Vice President said that the security concerns of India and Bhutan are indivisible, intertwined and mutual. We look forward to continuing close cooperation with Bhutan on issues of mutual security concern, he added.

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Prime Minister of Latvia calls on the President**Prime Minister of Latvia calls on the President**

His Excellency Mr Maris Kucinskis, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (November 3, 2017).

Welcoming the Latvian Prime Minister to India, the President said that this visit is of historic significance as it is the first ever visit of a Latvian Prime Minister to India. It takes place as we are celebrating 25 years of establishment of our diplomatic relations.

The President said that bilateral relations between India and Latvia are warm and friendly. We should work together to enhance our economic relations. We deeply appreciate Latvia's participation in the World Food India 2017 event. Latvia has acquired strengths in the agro-food processing sector and the participation of Latvian companies at World Food India will benefit both sides. The President stated that the Government of India has introduced programmes like Make in India, Smart Cities, Digital India and Clean India which present opportunities for Latvian companies. Latvia can also gain from the strengths of Indian industry, particularly in the IT and pharma sectors.

The President said that we deeply value our strong cultural ties and people-to-people connect with Latvia. He expressed happiness that the 'Centre for India Studies and Culture' established in the University of Latvia is promoting yoga and Hindi. He was glad that a new Centre for Baltic Culture and Studies has been opened at the Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya in Haridwar. He stated that this will further deepen cultural and academic contacts between India and the Baltic region.

The President noted that the Latvian Prime Minister will be inaugurating the Honorary Consulate of Latvia and attending business meetings in Mumbai tomorrow. He expressed confidence that these will help in further strengthening our bilateral ties.

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Shri Radha Mohan Singh meet the Ministers of Germany, Denmark and Serbia**Shri Radha Mohan Singh meet the Ministers of Germany, Denmark and Serbia****Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) & German AgriBusiness Alliance (GAA) agree to co-operate the establishment of Centers of Competence/Excellence in Agriculture: Shri Radha Mohan Singh**

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Radha Mohan Singh welcomed the Shri. Peter Bleser, German Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture and said that India's relations with Germany have always been warm and friendly and that it is based on common values of democracy, respect for fundamental rights, and mutual trust. He said he is particularly happy with the pace at which cooperation in the agriculture and allied sectors are progressing between the two countries.

Talking about the cooperation, the Minister said that six JWG meetings have taken place since 2008; Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) and German AgriBusiness Alliance (GAA) have agreed to cooperate the establishment of Centers of Competence/Excellence in Agriculture, while the cooperation in seeds sector is active as project implementation agreement for the next phase (January 2017 to December 2018) had been signed in May 2017.

The Minister briefly mentioned the various initiatives taken by the Government in the agriculture sector and said that the present level of bilateral trade in agricultural products can be further enhanced. Shri Singh requested the German Minister to use his good office for early resolution of the issue relating to Tricyclazole (TCA) in Indian Rice exported to Germany and other members of EU and issue of acceptance of digital phytosanitary certificates by the EU countries.

After that, the Agriculture Minister met Danish Minister for Environment and Food, Mr. Esben Lunde Larsen. Welcoming the visiting Minister, Shri Singh recalled the historically friendly relations between the two countries. Shri Singh expressed satisfaction at the significantly expanded cooperation in trade, investment, and technology and said that he hopes that full potential would be realized in all areas following normalization of our relations.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh conveyed his appreciation to the Minister for Denmark's participation at the "World Food India 2017" as a partner country and said that there are many opportunities in the food processing sector which can be successfully tapped by the Danish companies.

It was followed by a meeting with Branislav Nedimovic, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia. Shri. Singh welcomed the visiting Minister and expressed his satisfaction at the warmth of relationship as is indicated by Serbian Government's decision to abolish visas for Indians. Shri Singh also briefly recalled India's remarkable journey in the sector since gaining independence in 1947 to become the world's largest producer of milk and one of the leading producers of fruits,

vegetables, and fisheries.

The Minister said that agriculture & food processing and agricultural machinery are crucial industry segments in India-Serbia trade relations. He said that the present level of trade in agricultural products has much potential for further enhancement and suggested that Serbia may consider importing tropical fruits such as mango, pineapple, banana, papaya etc. from India.

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President of Armenia calls on the President**President of Armenia calls on the President**

His Excellency Mr Serzh Sargsyan, the President of the Republic of Armenia, called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (November 3, 2017).

Welcoming the Armenian President on his first visit to India, the President congratulated him on steering Armenia successfully from the Presidential form of government to the Parliamentary form. The President thanked Mr Sargsyan for his presence at the World Food India event.

The President said that India and Armenia share very special ties. Our warm and friendly relations are rooted in history. Our people have interacted with each other over centuries. We have had the privilege to live together with Armenian brothers and sisters in Kolkata, Chennai and other cities in India. We are extremely proud of this common heritage.

The President said that our bilateral relations are strong. However, there is much scope to enhance trade and economic relations between the two countries. The health sector is one of the promising areas of bilateral cooperation. He expressed confidence that this visit would provide a fresh impetus to India-Armenia relations.

The President expressed happiness that there is a Hindi Chair in the Yerevan State Linguistic University. He noted that the Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture and Sports is working to have a Chair in Yoga soon. He stated that these initiatives will further strengthen cultural ties between India and Armenia.

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Pak. faces flak over terror funding

Maulana Masood Azhar

Even as it faced a Chinese veto on designating Masood Azhar a terrorist at the United Nations Security Council, India scored a major victory at the Financial Action Task Force that looks into terror financing that held its plenary in Buenos Aires this week.

Pakistan has failed to penalise or curb the activities of any of the terror groups [designated by the UNSC]. India raised the issue at the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) in Argentina. Other countries supported India and now Pakistan has to submit a compliance report during the next session in February 2018, Home Ministry and External Affairs Ministry officials confirmed to *The Hindu*.

The win for Indian negotiators was significant, said an MEA official, as it came even as China vetoed the latest bid to have Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar designated at the UNSC.

“China tried hard to defend Pakistan during the FATF proceedings,” the official said, “But unlike at the UN, two speaking countries are needed to block consensus, and China was isolated there.”

February deadline

According to the directive of the FATFs' International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG), Pakistan has been asked to report again in February on action taken against designated terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and its off-shoots Jamaat-ud Dawa and Falah-i-Insaniyat.

Also for the first time, Pakistan's Central Bank, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), has been asked specifically to report on its work in shutting off the finances to the groups. A report on “SBP's enforcement activity as it relates to ensuring compliance of the statutory regulatory orders [on terror financing] and penalising non compliance” has been demanded, according to the ICRG report.

During previous FATF sessions, India had raised the funding of the groups and leaders like 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed, who openly addressed rallies and raised funds in Pakistan as well as LeT commander Zaki-Ur Rahman Lakhvi, who received bail in the Pakistani trial court hearing the Mumbai attacks case.

In addition, volunteers of the Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), also run by Hafiz Saeed, have travelled to Syria and other countries on alleged “charity missions”, all of which is proscribed by the UN Security Council 1267/1373 rules.

While officials concede the 37-member FATF is a voluntary group, without much power to enforce its ruling, it works through “peer pressure” and “naming and shaming” countries into compliance on terror finance by putting them on “grey lists and black lists”.

“Pakistan is obviously not immune to their orders, and is also facing growing pressure from the US to cooperate,” an MEA official privy to the process told *The Hindu*.

Saeed detention

In January this year, Pakistani authorities detained Hafiz Saeed in Lahore — an action understood to have been taken to avoid any negative reference at the FATF in February. During that session

India raised the issue of another front of the JuD, the Tehreek-e-Azaadi Jammu and Kashmir (TAJK). Pakistan banned the TAJK barely days before the FATF's next plenary in Spain in June 2017.

Officials in New Delhi and Washington said they hope the FATF move will ensure that Pakistan curtails activities of all groups under the scanner, and keep Hafiz Saeed in detention for the foreseeable future.

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The rise and rise of Xi Jinping

The recently-concluded 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was an intricately choreographed political theatre which showcased President Xi Jinping's primacy, his vision and his status as the helmsman of the party and the nation. China's confidence in the validity of its chosen path and its ambitions of "restoring" its global leadership role were also on full display.

While this conclave was more about reaffirmation of trends evolving since Mr. Xi's ascendance to power at the 18th Party Congress, rather than charting out new policy directions, it has significant implications for India.

The Congress has confirmed Mr. Xi's standing as the most powerful Chinese leader in the post-Deng era. His vision for the future of China, "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era", is enshrined in the party constitution as part of its guiding ideology.

A Xinhua commentary gushingly suggests that "Xi Jinping's thought will be China's signature ideology and the new communism", the implication being that it supersedes and encompasses the doctrinal offerings of previous leaders.

Mr. Xi has become the only leader after Mao (with his "Mao Zedong Thought") to have his eponymous ideological contribution written into the party charter while in office. "Deng Xiaoping Theory" was adopted after Deng's death, and contributions of two of Mr. Xi's predecessors, Hu Jintao ("Scientific Outlook") and Jiang Zemin ("Three Represents"), are not named after them.

While this self-elevation and his position as the "lingxiu", a wise and great leader, makes Mr. Xi the principal arbiter of China's future directions over the next five years and possibly beyond, it does not yet put him on a par with Mao and Deng. Arguably, Deng did not need a theory named after him or to hold many offices to bring about transformational changes in China. Mr. Xi is a transformative leader in the making but has a long way to go before he can rival Mao and Deng in impact and legacy.

Mr. Xi has, however, taken decisive steps to move away from Deng's legacy in four key areas: collective leadership; identification of successors well ahead of the transfer of power; a measure of differentiation between the party and the state; and the dictum of China biding its time, keeping a low profile and never claiming leadership.

Deng had institutionalised collective leadership to correct the problems of "excessive concentration of power" witnessed under Mao. With Mr. Xi steadily accumulating levers of authority and eliminating rivals, there has been a shift towards personalised rule in his first term and now at the Party Congress. The erosion of checks that it involves has attendant risks for China.

The new Politburo is packed with Mr. Xi's close associates. By one count, there are as many as 14 of his allies among 25 members of the Politburo. However, the composition of the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) is more balanced and possibly the result of a compromise, thus suggesting limits to Mr. Xi's authority. Premier Li Keqiang has retained his position, along with Mr. Xi, and of five new members, only one (Li Zhanshu) is seen as a Xi protégé, while others have links to his predecessors but cannot be described as rivals. Mr. Xi had changed virtually all Provincial Party Secretaries in the months ahead of the 19th Congress, and appointments since the Congress have underlined his sway over personnel matters.

In another departure from the post-Deng practice, no potential successor to Mr. Xi has been included in the new line-up of the PBSC. This has kept open the possibility of him staying on as the paramount leader or the power behind the throne well beyond 2022, when he completes his second term as the party leader.

Though the party constitution rules out “life tenure”, it sets no term limits for any office, unlike the state constitution which has a two-term limit for presidency and other senior positions. It is still too early to figure out how the post-2022 scenario will pan out, but it seems unlikely today that Mr. Xi will completely exit from the leadership position as his predecessor Hu Jintao did at the end of his second term.

The absence of a succession plan has potential perils in a party which has witnessed destructive factional feuds in the past.

Mr. Xi’s penchant for the dominance of the party, including in the economic domain, has received a boost at the Congress. In his work report, he reaffirmed a key message of his 2013 third plenum policy statement that the market should play the “decisive” role in allocation of resources but the state would take the “leading role” in the economy. His preference for maintaining a strong state and party role in the economy with minimal privatisation of state-owned assets and firm control over social and financial risks is unlikely to change in the wake of the Congress. Likewise, while he is positioning China as a defender of globalisation, it comes with a strong dose of mercantilism.

For India, one key outcome of the party conclave is the articulation of China’s increasingly explicit great power ambitions. In his speech, Mr. Xi talked about China becoming “a global leader of composite national strength and international influence” and moving closer to the centre-stage by mid-century. A Xinhua commentary of October 24 is more candid: “By 2050... China is set to regain its might and re-ascend to the top of the world.”

In sync with Mr. Xi’s “Chinese dream” enunciated five years ago, an overarching theme of the Party Congress was the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and “restoration” of China’s centrality on the global stage. In his speech, Mr. Xi spoke of China as a “strong country” or “great power” as many as 30 times, jettisoning the earlier coyness about the country’s great power ambitions.

The preoccupation with building up global combat capabilities to safeguard China’s overseas interests also figures prominently in Mr. Xi’s vision. Arguably the most ambitious restructuring of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in the last 50 years currently underway is focussed on joint command, power projection capability and the party’s control on the military. Mr. Xi has set the goal of completing modernisation of the armed forces by 2035 and transforming the PLA into a world-class military by 2050.

In a significant departure from China’s position in the post-Mao period of not seeking to export its model, Mr. Xi has suggested that “the Chinese path... offers a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence, and it offers Chinese wisdom and approach to solving problems facing mankind”. It is to be seen how far China will go to promote its model as an alternative to liberal, capitalist democracy and the “Washington Consensus”.

However, China is likely to intensify its efforts to shape its periphery and forge a “world community of shared destiny” centred around it. With the U.S. in temporary retreat and the West distracted by internal challenges, China considers this to be a period of strategic opportunity to take its great power project to the next level in the new era that Mr. Xi has envisioned.

Mr. Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the key instrument in this grand strategy and it is now embedded in the party constitution. There is nothing to suggest that China is inclined to address India's concerns about the BRI.

In a development possibly linked to China's enhanced global agenda, for the first time since 2003, the Politburo includes a diplomat, State Councillor Yang Jiechi. As the Chinese special representative for boundary talks with India, he has had extensive interactions with us.

It may also be noted that since his 2014 visit to India, President Xi has emerged as the principal Chinese interlocutor for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the past, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh engaged primarily with Premier Wen Jiabao. Given Mr. Xi's pre-eminence, his being personally invested in the relationship with India has its advantages.

Looking ahead, a more assertive China will be one of the most critical factors shaping India's external environment, apart from engendering new challenges in the management of bilateral relations, more so as the footprints of the two re-emergent countries will increasingly overlap.

Ashok K. Kantha, a former Ambassador of India to China, is Director of the Institute of Chinese Studies and Distinguished Fellow with Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi

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On Rohingya crisis: Suu Kyi in denial

Nearly three months after [violence escalated against the Rohingya](#) in Myanmar's Rakhine State, leading to the exodus of more than half a million to neighbouring Bangladesh, State Counsellor [Aung San Suu Kyi finally visited the region](#). By all accounts, Ms. Suu Kyi had little more than platitudes to offer and her words showed no recognition that what transpired is a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing", as the UN Human Rights chief put it. This is extremely disappointing. Ms. Suu Kyi endured years of house arrest and unremitting hostility from the military junta before emerging victorious in a free and fair election two years ago. But despite taking over a top post after the election, her civilian government's powers have been clipped as the military still holds sway over defence, home affairs and border issues. Ms. Suu Kyi, a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, has found it pragmatic not to challenge the official rhetoric in Myanmar, which suggests the military's actions were aimed at tackling "terror" in Rakhine. This could be for two reasons. First, she does not want to upset the fragile balance of power in the fledgling democracy after years of rule by the junta. Second, there is a clear lack of empathy for the Rohingya in a country that has seen the rise of Buddhist and Bamar majoritarianism that has corresponded with an official "othering" of the Rohingya, who are Muslims, as non-citizens. Despite the widespread international condemnation of her government's actions, Ms. Suu Kyi has sought to pander to the domestic gallery by defending the military's actions in Rakhine. Her conduct during her visit to the region this week suggests that she has no intention of effecting any real or meaningful change in her government's position on the Rohingya.

The Rohingya, meanwhile, have been left to deal with themselves, unwanted and stateless in their homeland and forced to migrate, mostly to Bangladesh, in hazardous conditions. Dhaka has been trying to drum up support and relief for the constant and unremitting stream of refugees making their way to Bangladeshi soil. Against this background, it is unfortunate that New Delhi has turned its back on the Rohingya refugees, leading to perceptions that it has failed to rise to its status as a regional power and take the lead in dealing with the humanitarian crisis. The Myanmar government has said that it will repatriate returning Rohingya if they prove they were residents of Rakhine, but it is not clear how the refugees would be able to do so having been denied citizenship and having fled their villages under duress with barely anything in hand. Myanmar's evasiveness makes it all the more imperative that the international community, including India, quickly provide succour for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who are living on the edge.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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Trump in Japan as Asia trip begins

Past and present: U.S. President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump lay a wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial on Friday. AFP/JIM WATSON

U.S. President Donald Trump headed to Japan on the first stop of his five-nation tour of Asia on Saturday, looking to present a united front with the Japanese against North Korea as tensions run high over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests.

Mr. Trump, who is on a 12-day trip, is to speak to U.S. and Japanese forces at Yokota air base shortly after arriving in Japan on Sunday and looked to stress the importance of the alliance to regional security.

Ballistic missile tests by North Korea and its sixth and largest nuclear test, in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, have exacerbated the most critical international challenge of Mr. Trump's presidency.

Aerial drills conducted over South Korea by two U.S. strategic bombers have raised tensions in recent days. In a display of golf diplomacy, Mr. Trump is to play a round of golf with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The two leaders also played together in Florida earlier this year.

Mr. Trump will also have a state call with the Imperial Family at Akasaka Palace during his visit. Mr. Abe and Mr. Trump will meet families of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea.

Joined by his wife Melania on part of the trip, Mr. Trump's tour of Asia is the longest by an American president since George H.W. Bush in 1992. Besides Japan, he will visit South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines. Mr. Trump extended the trip by a day on Friday when he agreed to participate in a summit of East Asian nations in Manila.

His trip got off to a colourful start in Hawaii. He was taken by boat out to the USS Arizona Memorial, where lies the Second World War ship that was sunk by the Japanese during the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. The Trumps tossed white flower petals into the waters at the memorial in honour of those who died at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Trump's trip is to be dominated by trade and how to muster more international pressure on North Korea to give up nuclear weapons.

"We'll be talking about trade," Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday. "We'll be talking about obviously North Korea. We'll be enlisting the help of a lot of people and countries and we'll see what happens. But I think we're going to have a very successful trip. There is a lot of good will."

A centerpiece of the trip will be a visit to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Danang, Vietnam, where he will deliver a speech in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, which is seen as offering a bulwark in response to expansionist Chinese policies.

No talks, says N. Korea

Meanwhile, North Korea ruled out talks and threatened to increase its nuclear arsenal in a fresh warning to Mr. Trump's administration on Saturday.

The North's state-run KCNA news agency said in a commentary that the U.S. should be disabused of the "absurd idea" that Pyongyang would succumb to international sanctions and give up its nuclear weapons, adding that it is in "the final stage for completing nuclear deterrence". "It

had better stop daydreaming of denuclearisation talks with us”, said the commentary titled “Stop dreaming a daydream”.

“Our self-defensive nuclear treasure sword will be sharpened evermore unless the US hostile policy toward the DPRK is abolished once and for all”, it said, using an abbreviation for the official name of North Korea.

Also, some 500 protesters took to the streets in Seoul Saturday, chanting slogans and waving banners as they accused Mr. Trump of bringing the Korean peninsula to the brink of war. “No Trump, No War”, read one of the banners, while others portrayed the U.S. President wearing a Nazi uniform.

Nearby, a rival group of some 100 Trump supporters, including many military veterans, chanted: “Welcome to Korea, We believe in Trump”.

Mr. Trump, who dismissed direct talks with Pyongyang as “waste of time”, will meet with President Moon Jae-In, who came to power early this year advocating for engagement with Pyongyang, a stance denounced as “appeasement” by Mr. Trump.

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Seeds of secession in California

Catalonia may be struggling to break free from Spain, but it has breathed fresh inspiration into a campaign for California's secession from the U.S. Spearheading the campaign for an independent 'country' of California is a bunch of activists who cut their teeth in pro-immigration, anti-war, feminist and green causes, and have now come together under the banner of California Freedom Coalition (CFC) that was started early this year. The first hurdle in the long march to freedom has been passed when the campaign was allowed in July to start signature gathering — if it collects 5,85,407 signatures of registered voters, the proposal titled 'California's Future: A Path to Independence' will be on the ballot in the November 2018 elections.

The campaign is to "demand the liberation of the people of California from its captors," but it "explicitly rejects conduct or speech inciting open rebellion against the United States government", according to its charter.

One could argue that California, the epicentre of the global digital economy, has already seceded from the rest of the U.S., and the election of Donald Trump as President was an illustration of that fact. Hillary Clinton's national lead in popular votes came almost entirely from California where she won nearly two votes for each vote for Mr. Trump, leading him by 4.37 million votes in the U.S.'s most populous State. After Mr. Trump became President, California's Democratic Governor Jerry Brown clashed with him on several issues. Among other things, Mr. Brown met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June, committing California to stay the course on implementing the Paris climate agreement, disregarding Mr. Trump's decision to quit it. He has also announced a Global Climate Summit next year to bring together sub-national representatives — from cities and States.

Greater autonomy

What could be on the ballot is not an immediate secession but the repealing of a provision in California's Constitution that states it is an inseparable part of the U.S. It could direct the Governor, in consultation with those members of Congress who represent California, "to negotiate continually for greater autonomy from federal government, up to and including agreement establishing California as a fully independent country".

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra has given a series of interviews in recent weeks, making the case that the U.S. and California need each other. The secessionists have forceful arguments too. California contributes \$370 billion in federal taxes and gets only \$334 billion in federal spending. As an independent country, its economy will be the sixth largest in the world; and being on the Pacific coast, its links to other future centres of world economy will be immense. About 27% of California's population is foreign-born, about twice that of the U.S. percentage. It is not unimaginable for the immigrant population to visualise California as an independent country. More than half a million of the State's population is of Indian origin and Shankar Singam, one of the four members of the CFC leadership, is of South Asian origin.

The U.S. Constitution allows for secession, if two thirds of the Congress — 67 Senators and 290 Representatives — vote in favour, followed by three fourth of the 50 States. The idea of secession has been around for a while in California. In 2014, 20% of the people favoured it; after Mr. Trump's election, it grew to 32%, according to a Reuters poll. "But if that number gets into the high 40s or 50s, it makes sense to consider. And then we have a few more tools to pursue it than Catalonia," said Dave Marin, director of research and policy at CFC.

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Yuan will enter a 'new era' or 'Minsky moment'

Addressing the recently held 19th congress of the communist party of China, president Xi declared that China had entered a 'New Era'. In political terms, the message is amply clear: more absolute power in his hands for a longer tenure.

The economic prospects are not that certain, though, with the steadily increasing prospects of a turmoil in China's financial markets triggered by a debt crisis and a sharp depreciation in the exchange rate of the yuan.

And, in good measure, the government-owned funds in China, the so-called 'National Team', remained active to curb volatility in the equity market during the congress.

It is commonly agreed that China built trade and current account surpluses over successive decades by keeping the yuan artificially weak, which facilitated its emergence as a global manufacturing powerhouse. Between 2000-2014, Chinese authorities allowed the yuan to appreciate about 27% against the dollar, to encourage domestic consumption and offset persistent criticism of its exchange rate policy.

Since 2014, however, sustained pressure of capital outflows from residents led to a 10% fall in the yuan, despite massive intervention by PBoC, which sold a total of \$790 billion in 2015 and 2016. The calm for most part of 2017 so far notwithstanding, there is a danger that yuan can fall further and faster, going forward. This will but be a manifestation of the broad vulnerabilities facing the Chinese economy in transition to its next aspirational epoch. We see four distinct road bumps in China's economic path ahead: current debt built-up, bare adequacy of forex reserves, excessive capital controls and weak spots in US-China trade relation.

Four road bumps

First, the short-term foreign debt by residual maturity was very high at \$871 billion in 2016 and debt service to exports ratio rose significantly from 25.1% in 2012 to 39.9% in 2016.

The total non-financial corporate debt which reached a high of 235% of GDP in 2016 is projected to increase to 290% of GDP by 2022. Interestingly, post the global financial crisis, the state owned enterprises (SOEs), whose aggregate assets are now about 200% of China's GDP, have accounted for a significantly large portion of the rise in the overall corporate debt to GDP ratio.

This is particularly worrying as SOEs with questionable governance and business practices have become the focal point of debt vulnerability in overlap with zombie companies and excess capacity firms in ten vital sectors. These are: coal, steel, cement, plated glass, aluminum, chemicals, paper, solar power, shipbuilding and coal-fueled power.

The corresponding picture for public debt is not rosy either. As per IMF calculations, public debt, including the debts of local government funding vehicles (LGFVs) and government-guided funds, was 62% of GDP in 2016 and is projected to reach 92% in 2022. The corresponding fiscal deficit to GDP ratio in 2016 was 12%.

Further, the ratio of household debt to GDP is 44% — well above the emerging market average. Overall, the strategy of debt-fuelled high growth as per the compulsions of the so-called Beijing consensus has probably run its full course.

Second, the IMF metric for Assessment of Reserves Adequacy is based on differential weighting

of short-term foreign debt, portfolio liabilities, broad money and exports. For China, it comes to \$2,118 billion as the lower bound, with the upper bound higher at 1.5 times the lower bound — \$3,177 billion. China's current forex reserves at \$3,109 billion is a tad below the upper bound.

The moot point here is how much of forex reserves is in liquid form to help defend the yuan? Various estimates put it in the range of \$1-2 trillion, Given the sharp fall in the ratio of forex reserves to broad money during the last five years (22% in 2012 to 13.3% in 2016), it is doubtful if the liquid forex reserves are sufficient to arrest the yuan's fall, if the residents trigger another bout of capital outflows. Table 1 shows the trend in reserves and Table 2 the value of the yuan between 2000-17. The upshot here is that the risks of rising U.S. rates, trade protectionism and major armed conflicts can test the adequacy of China's forex reserves, given the underlying external and domestic debt vulnerabilities and likely pressures of capital outflows by residents.

Third, capital controls in China are still extensive and strict, when it comes to the ability of residents to move money abroad. There are rules for outbound investment in sectors which are grouped as banned, restricted and encouraged.

Overseas investments in line with state thinking such as in the belt road initiative are encouraged while real estate and portfolio investment are discouraged. However, as is always the case with capital controls anywhere, if the economic incentives are strong enough, residents will find a way to move money cross-border.

In China, the temptation to do so is rising with its deepening debt problem and the current over-valuation of the yuan, which, as per the BIS, is about 20%. There are signs that residents are using creative ways to move money abroad: through tourism, for example.

The overseas tourism outflow rose from 0.9% of GDP in 2012 to 2.2% in 2016. Spending by Chinese tourists abroad in 2016 was \$246 billion, a more than threefold rise over 2012. Fourth is the political economy considerations of U.S.-China trade relations. The U.S. Treasury follows a three-point objective criteria for embarking on a detailed review to name a country as a currency manipulator: trade surplus in excess of \$20 billion, current account balance greater than 3% of GDP and one-sided forex intervention greater than 2% of GDP in 12 months.

Risk of U.S. sanctions

While China currently meets only one of them, the scale of its persistent trade surplus vis-a-vis the U.S. is a boiling political issue. President Trump has followed a softer stance on trade issues with China since assumption of office than he did in his election campaign, possibly in his bid to obtain China's support in dealing with North Korea. However, if this turns out to be a miscalculation, and President Xi finds a menacing North Korea a better bet than a destabilised one, then imposition of U.S. trade sanctions on China becomes a distinct possibility.

The logic of economics says that the yuan should depreciate in line with China's fundamentals, counterbalanced by the authorities' need for stability. The longer it is delayed, overshooting becomes a distinct possibility and a 'Minsky Moment' can happen. Paradoxically, massive forex reserves, meant to assure stability, may themselves lead to instability. If it happens, reverberations will be felt far and wide, including in India.

(Sivakumar Sivaprakasam is MD, Argonaut Global Capital LLC, U.S. Himadri Bhattacharya is senior adviser, Riskkontroller Global. Views are personal)

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The new oil game

Imperial Britain, over whose empire the sun never set, gerrymandered the politics of tribal Middle East in the early part of the 20th century to secure its requirements of oil. America, the dominant power in the second half of the century, sidestepped its liberal principles and cosied up to monarchs and unabashed despots, also to ensure it never ran out of oil. History is an imperfect guide but often it is the only one we have. So the question should now be asked. What will China, the “mighty power” of the 21st century, do to mitigate its dependence on oil supplies from the Middle East? And what might be the consequences for India of such actions?

In 1911, the First Lord of the Admiralty (the cabinet member responsible for the navy), [Winston Churchill](#), persuaded his cabinet colleagues to support the recommendation to substitute oil for coal as the fuel for the British Navy. The cabinet was, at first, reluctant because Britain had an abundance of coal and no domestic oil. The switch would expose the navy to the vagaries of international oil supplies. Churchill allayed these concerns with a combination of economic and geopolitical logic. He argued the switch would increase ship speed; it would allow for refuelling at sea and as coal was bulkier than oil, it would release storage space that could then be configured to increase the ships' firepower. He added, Britain would secure oil supplies from the Middle East through a combination of hard power and political guile. This, he managed through the vehicle of an Anglo-Persian company which in 1935 was renamed Anglo-Iranian Oil company and in 1954 British Petroleum Company. Churchill's decision marked the beginning of the “oil era” and the start of the Great Game of oil politics that over the years has convulsed the region.

Post World War II, America emerged as the dominant global political, economic and military power. Security of oil supplies were a crucial ingredient of this development. To safeguard this security and in contradistinction to its avowed commitment to democracy and freedom, America offered the region's autocrats an “implicit” guarantee of protection. And at times, towards fulfillment of this guarantee, they intervened “explicitly”. Former US President [George W. Bush](#) may one day tell us why, despite lack of any substantive evidence to confirm that Iraq was developing “weapons of mass destruction” he approved the bombing of the country but until then, the predominant view will be, it was to secure control over Iraq's oil resources. Today, the Middle East is riven by sectarian tension, civil conflict and fundamentalism, in no small part due to the fiasco of this “explicit” intervention.

So, how will China the emergent power of the 21st century protect its energy interests? How will it use its political and economic muscle to secure its oil supplies? These questions have heightened relevance in light of the signals conveyed at the recently concluded 19th People's Party Congress of the Communist Party. The Chinese leadership declared at the Congress that China will no longer hide its “light under a bushel” and “bide its time” — this was with reference to former president Deng Xiaoping's advice that the country not display its strength prematurely — that the country was at a “historic juncture” a “mighty force” and ready to occupy “centre stage” in the world.

The chink in the global aspirations of China, just as it was a chink in imperial Britain and superpower America's ambitions, is dependency on oil imports. China consumes approximately 13 million barrels of oil a day (mbd). Of that, 60 per cent is imported of which 50 per cent (approximately 4 mbd) is sourced from the Middle East — mainly Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia — through the Straits of Hormuz, the Straits of Malacca and the conflictual South China seas. The Chinese leadership are fully aware of this chink and have for years sought to mitigate the risk by investing in non-oil sources of energy. They have, for instance, committed \$340 billion over the next four years to solar and wind. This is more than any other country in the world. They are operating 34 nuclear reactors and another 20 are under construction. And they have invested in

long-term gas supply deals with Russia, Central Asia and Australia. Notwithstanding all this, they have not managed to close the import gap. The reason is the surging demand for diesel/gasoline-fueled vehicles. Twenty-one million of them hit the road in 2016 alone. China is the largest importer of crude oil in the world today and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

China has, for years, adopted a low profile in the Middle East. It has proffered economic support but it has not been an active participant in traditional great power politics. Recently, however, it upped the ante with a slew of ideologically agnostic initiatives. It cast its lot with Iran in support of President Bashar-al-Assad of Syria and carried out a small-scale naval exercise with the Iranian Navy in the Straits of Hormuz. Separately, it welcomed Iran's arch enemy, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, to Beijing in March 2016 and signed an agreement in April 2017 to manufacture Chinese drones in the kingdom. There has also been speculation that China is interested in picking up a stake in the Saudi national oil company, Aramco, at a valuation that will obviate the need for it to face the regulatory and disclosure hassles of a public listing on the London or New York Stock Exchange. Why this heightened interest? Perhaps to fill the space left behind by America. More likely, to secure its oil supplies.

India has major strategic interests in the Middle East. Aside from its dependence on the region for oil, it has eight million citizens who remit approximately \$70 billion annually. A convulsion in the region would give India a massive logistic and financial headache. This could, however, sharpen into a severe migraine if China were in pole strategic position at that time. China plays a long game. We must track its moves assiduously.

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Beyond big game hunting: the 'Quadrilateral' meeting

By accepting an invitation to join the [Japan-proposed, U.S.-endorsed plan for a “Quadrilateral” grouping](#) including Australia to provide alternative debt financing for countries in the Indo-Pacific, India has taken a significant turn in its policy for the subcontinent. Explaining the need to invite other countries into what India has always fiercely guarded as its own turf, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar was remarkably candid. “Our neighbours also feel more secure if there is another party in the room,” he said recently, giving examples of working with the U.S. on transmission lines in Nepal or with Japan on a liquefied natural gas pipeline in Sri Lanka. His words contain a tacit admission: that having India in the room is no longer comforting enough for our neighbours.

The Quad pivot?

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to the East Asia summit in the Philippines next week, where the first ‘Quad’ meeting is likely to be held, it is necessary that India analyse the impact of this admission on all our relations. It would also serve as a useful exercise to understand why India has conceded it requires “other parties” in the neighbourhood, even as it seeks to counter the influence of China and its Belt and Road Initiative.

One reason is that as a growing economy with ambitious domestic targets, India’s own needs often clash with those of its neighbours. More connectivity will eventually mean more competition, whether it is for trade, water resources, or energy. Take, for example, the case of Bhutan, which is working, with India’s assistance, on its own [goal of producing 10,000 MW of hydropower by 2020](#).

Even as [Indian and Chinese troops were facing off at Doklam](#) on land claimed by Bhutan, a very different sort of tension was claiming the attention of the government in Thimphu. The first indicator came on May 8, when in his budget speech at the National Assembly, the Bhutanese Finance Minister warned that the external debt is about 110% of GDP, of which a staggering 80.1% of GDP (or 155 billion Nu, or \$2.34 billion) is [made up by hydropower debt mainly to India](#). In April, the International Monetary Fund’s world economic outlook had already put Bhutan at the top of South Asia in terms of the highest debt per capita, second only to Japan in all of Asia for indebtedness. The budget figures attracted much criticism for the Bhutanese government, and opposition taunts that Bhutan could become the “Greece of South Asia” forced Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay to appoint a three-member committee. In a government order he said that said the negative media, public perception and “absence of strategy” could even affect the “larger and more important relationship between Bhutan and India.”

Among the committee’s findings were that Bhutan’s external hydropower debt financed by India at 9-10% rates was piling up, with the first interest and principal payments expected in 2018, and construction delays, mainly due to Indian construction issues, were taking the debt up higher. Above all, despite several pleas to the Ministries of External Affairs and Power, the Cross Border Trade of Electricity (CBTE) guidelines issued by India had not been revised, which put severe restrictions on Bhutanese companies selling power, and on allowing them access to the power exchange with Bangladesh.

In the Power Ministry’s reckoning, relations with Bhutan took a backseat to the fact that India already has a power surplus, and its new renewable energy targets come from solar and wind energy, not hydropower. Moreover, given falling prices for energy all around, India could not sustain the Bhutanese demand that power tariffs be revised upwards. Eventually, it wasn’t until early October that [Mr. Jaishankar visited Thimphu](#) and subsequently the [visit last week of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck](#) began to address the problem that has been brewing

for more than a year.

History of forgetting

Another problem is what one diplomat in the region calls 'India's big game hunting attitude': "India chases its neighbours to cooperate on various projects and courts us assiduously, but once they have 'bagged the game', it forgets about us. As a result, crises grow until they can no longer be ignored, and the hunt begins again." Over the past decade, since the defeat of the LTTE, India passed up offers to build the port in Hambantota, Colombo, and Kankesanthurai, despite Sri Lanka's pressing need for infrastructure. At the time, given India's crucial support in defeating the LTTE, Sri Lanka was considered "in the bag". With the U.S. and other Western countries also taking strident positions over human rights issues and the reconciliation process, Chinese companies stepped in and won these projects, for which Sri Lanka recklessly took loans from China's Exim bank.

New Delhi has changed its position on Hambantota several times, going from initial apathy, to disapproval of the Chinese interest, to scoffing at the viability of the project, to open alarm at the possibility of any Chinese PLA-Navy installation in Sri Lanka's southern tip. Finally this year, upturning everything it has said, the government decided to bid for the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport at Hambantota, a \$205 million investment for the empty facility that sees an average of two flights a day. Even as a 'listening post', it is an expensive proposition, with some officials now suggesting a flight training school at Mattala to defray the cost. India is also hoping to win the bid to develop Trincomalee port with several projects. Clearly India is moving in now to build a counter to China in the neighbourhood, but it may be too little, too late and a little too expensive.

India has also been ambivalent on tackling political issues in its region, often trapped between the more interventionist approach of the U.S., which has openly championed concerns over 'democratic values' and human rights in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh, and the approach of China, which is to turn a blind eye to all but business and strategic interests. In Nepal, India lost out to China when it allowed a five-month-long blockade at the border, calling for a more inclusive constitution to be implemented by Kathmandu — but in the case of Myanmar, it lost precious ground in Bangladesh when [Mr. Modi refused to mention the Rohingya refugee situation](#) during a visit to Nay Pyi Taw. In both cases, India reversed its stand, adding to the sense that it is unsure of its next steps when dealing with neighbours on political issues.

Multiple rivalries

Finally, it is important to note that while the government's new plan to involve the U.S. and Japan in development projects in South Asia will yield the necessary finances, it will come at the cost of India's leverage in its own backyard. India's counter to China's persistent demand for a diplomatic mission in Thimphu, for example, could be to help the U.S. set up a parallel mission there — but once those floodgates open, they will be hard to shut.

In Sri Lanka, the U.S. and Japan will now partner in India's efforts to counter China's influence, but whereas India objected to Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean, it will not be able to object to an increase in U.S. naval warships and Japanese presence there. Writing about Myanmar in a new book, *India Turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, the former French diplomat Frédéric Grare says the emergence of new players like the U.S., Europe and Japan has only increased multiple regional rivalries in the region. "This does partly benefit India, who is no longer isolated *vis-à-vis* Beijing," he concludes. "But New Delhi's political profile has consequently diminished."

Mr. Modi, who began his pitch for his “neighbourhood first” plan by inviting the neighbours to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014, must look before he leaps while inviting other powers, howsoever well-meaning, into the neighbourhood.

suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in

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Warring over disarmament in the UN

For most people the UN is the venue of an annual *kabuki* theatre where world leaders come to make sonorous speeches and snipe at each other to score points with populations back home. While these theatrics, played out every September from the UN General Assembly (UNGA), make for high entertainment, they do very little to either advance national interests or multilateral goals.

However, just weeks after the curtains come down on the UNGA drama, diplomats from all member-states gather in the less glamorous bowels of the UN to deliberate on disarmament and international security, promote national interests, and, if possible, do some global good. The deliberations of the First Committee have tended to be business-like and the envoys have sought to bridge differences and seek common ground, if possible. Until now.

According to Reaching Critical Will, a non-governmental organization that closely monitors disarmament developments, the First Committee has been “particularly fractious this year, influenced by events in the conference room but also by events in other conference rooms, and of course, in the real world”. These events include tensions over North Korea between the US and China, differences over the Iran nuclear deal, and the Russian veto in the UN Security Council blocking the extension of the Joint Investigative Mechanism mandated to probe alleged chemical weapons use in Syria. Perhaps, the biggest factor behind this year’s undiplomatic dust-up is the recently concluded Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Adopted in July, the TPNW commits state parties not to “develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” and forbids them to “use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”. This single treaty has exacerbated rifts not only between the nuclear-armed states and the non-nuclear armed states but also members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and in some cases, between nuclear-armed states and their allies, which are protected by these weapons.

At the crux of this bitter contest are two competing pathways towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The first, led by the NPT nuclear weapon states and their allies, prefer a “step-by-step” approach under the aegis of the NPT regime. This group also seeks to break the “deadlock of two decades in the Conference of Disarmament”, which has rendered the forum comatose. They see the TPNW as a danger to this traditional (but ineffectual) approach and refuse to recognize it. Second, the proponents of TPNW—all NPT states neither possessing nor protected by nuclear weapons—frustrated with the lack of progress, seek a more “comprehensive, inclusive, interactive and constructive” road to multilateral nuclear disarmament. They argue that while the NPT and the Conference on Disarmament are crucial, they are not sufficient and that the new treaty “is an essential contribution towards nuclear disarmament”.

This acrimonious war over disarmament is being fought through the votes for various resolutions in the First Committee. For instance, the resolution on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations proposed by as many as 40 of TPNW’s staunchest champions and supported by another 77 countries was opposed by 39 states—eight nuclear armed states (North Korea abstained) and 31 states living under the nuclear umbrella provided by the US. This despite the fact that the TPNW resolution sought to accommodate the concerns of the opposition by making pointed references to the step-by-step approach and the NPT.

Perhaps the clearest sign of disunity in the proceedings was evident, ironically, in the voting on the resolution on united action with renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Proposed by Japan, the resolution was supported by 45 countries, including the US and

the UK. This resolution made no reference to the TPNW and, worse, was perceived to be promoting nuclear deterrence over nuclear disarmament. The resolution also appears to have watered down many of the commitments made during previous NPT review conferences. Unsurprisingly then, the resolution invited an unprecedented number of votes on individual paragraphs and explanation of votes by nearly 30 countries. While the resolution was comfortably adopted by a vote of 144 for and four against (including China and Russia), the large number of abstentions—27, including India, Israel and Pakistan—highlighted the growing divisions.

While both camps may well leave the First Committee claiming victory, it is clear that the cause of disarmament has not been served and might even have been impaired. Indeed, this stalemate has the potential to derail the NPT before the crucial 2020 review conference as well as lead to the collapse of the Conference on Disarmament. Worse, this showdown has created a paralysis that prevents countries from discussing the crucial implications of exponential advances in science and technology on international security.

Against this backdrop, India's pithy resolution on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, which was adopted by consensus not only highlights India's rule-shaping efforts but might also contribute to building a much-needed bonhomie among the disarmament community. This is a critical step to curb the war over disarmament.

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

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The status of de facto states and the conditions that allow them to thrive

For Kurdish homeland The Parliament of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region approved a plan recently to hold a referendum on independence on September 25, ignoring opposition from Baghdad as well as Western concerns. Picture shows Syrian Kurds taking part in a rally in support of the referendum. | Photo Credit: [AFP](#)

On September 25, a referendum for independence was held by the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government in the northern areas of Iraq. The government claimed that 93% of those who voted supported independence. Predictably, the Iraqi government in Baghdad rejected these results. On Monday, Iraq's Supreme Federal Court ruled that no region or province can secede from the country.

Adrian Florea's paper, "Defacto States: Survival and Disappearance (1945-2011)", published in the *International Studies Quarterly* in March, seeks to study these kinds of "de facto states" — separatist territories that are administered autonomously and are recognised as part of sovereign nation states. Other examples include the rule of a portion of northern Sri Lanka by the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam from the 1980s to the late 2000s, and present day de facto states such as Gaza (ruled by the Hamas) and South Ossetia (Georgia), Somaliland and Puntland in Somalia besides formerly de facto states such as Eritrea, East Timor and South Sudan which later became de jure sovereign nation states.

The author tries to understand the conditions that led to the transition of de facto states to full statehood, or their forceful or peaceful reintegration into their de jure parent states from which they sought separation, or the prolonging of de facto status. The study reveals that the survival of de facto states is mainly linked to the following factors: external patronage, including military support; insurgent fragmentation; the extent of rebel governance; and the presence of government veto players in the parent state. External military help for rebels in the de facto state helps them stave off the threat from the Central government, but lowers the likelihood of peaceful reintegration or transition to statehood. This was clear in the case of the LTTE which managed to retain power for a significant period, but once substantive external help was cut off from the rebels, the territory the LTTE held was forcefully reintegrated within Sri Lanka. The more the rebels work out a state-like structure capable of providing strong alternative governance, the better their chances of recognition by the international community as a separate nation state over time. That said, if there are multiple rebel actors who disagree among themselves, the lesser such chances, as is seen in Palestine. Last, if there are multiple veto powers in the Central government, it reduces the possibility of a settlement with the rebels that could result in independence, the study finds.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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An open question

The spate of high-profile arrests in Saudi Arabia on Saturday — including of 11 princes and four ministers — is a radical step in a polity which has historically been slow to change. The country has traditionally been run by a consensus between and among the religious establishment and the royal family, and government positions are distributed among princes of the House of Saud. The House of Saud has also been a supporter of Wahhabism — a rigid, conservative school of Islam, with ties to extremist groups. On the economic front, the country needs to diversify beyond its traditional dependence on oil. The need for a wide range reforms has been recognised by the crown prince, 32-year-old Mohammed bin Salman, the king's top adviser. However, it is an open question whether Prince Salman's actions will lead to a more liberal and stable Saudi Arabia.

The crown prince has recently allowed women to drive in the country and attend open-air events in stadiums. He has formed a committee to look into religious reforms. But, under his watch, Saudi Arabia is also involved in a conflict in Yemen and its relations with Qatar have sunk to a new low. Iran continues to be a rival in the region. With battles on so many fronts, the recent arrests may well destabilise the kingdom. Among those arrested are Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, a billionaire tech mogul and a social liberal by his country's standards, and Prince Miteb bin Abdullah, the son of the previous king and head of the Saudi national guard, a locus of tribal power. The crackdown on potential political rivals is ostensibly being undertaken to end corruption but it could also be seen as a way for the young crown prince to consolidate his power.

A stable Saudi Arabia is pivotal to the global political economy. Global oil prices hit their highest point since July 2015 on Monday after news of the arrests. For India, Saudi Arabia's importance is three-fold — as a supplier of oil, a destination for Indian labour and because it controls access to sites of pilgrimage. Recently, especially since Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s visit to West Asia in 2016, Indo-Saudi relations have grown deeper. Whatever the outcome of the current political turmoil, New Delhi must ensure that the gains it has made with Saudi Arabia are not reversed or lost.

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Hope quadrilateral meet not against us: China

China on Sunday reacted cautiously over a proposal by the Trump administration for a working-level quadrilateral meeting with India, Japan and Australia, saying Beijing hoped that it would not target or damage a “third party’s interest”.

The U.S. was looking at a “working-level” quadrilateral meeting and offer countries in the Indo-Pacific region an alternative to predatory financing or unsustainable debt, the State Department had said last month.

The proposal was, however, seen by China as an attempt to counter its influence in the region. Its Foreign Ministry hoped that such an arrangement would promote mutual trust among countries in the region and not harm its interest.

“China hopes the collaboration among relevant countries could comply with the trend of times, which refers to peace, development and cooperation and shared benefits, and also conform to the prospects of the regions and nations for common security and development,” the Ministry said in a written response to a query from PTI.

“We hope it would be beneficial for improving the mutual trust among countries and regions, at the same time safeguarding and promoting peace, tranquillity, and prosperity within the area, without targeting or damaging a third party’s interest,” it said.

The quadrilateral idea has drawn criticism from State-run Chinese media.

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Raja Mandala: Commonwealth in the time of Brexit

As India hosts Charles, the Prince of Wales this week, Delhi and London have an opportunity to think afresh about the future of the Commonwealth. If an archaic anti-colonial prism distorted Delhi's view of the Commonwealth, the troubled dalliance with Europe did much the same to London. If they contributed to the marginalisation of the Commonwealth in the past, Delhi and London now have a stake in reviving it through shared leadership.

Charles is coming to India to invite Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) to attend the Commonwealth Summit in London in April 2018. On his way, Charles stopped over in three other commonwealth countries — Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia. The London Summit of the 52-nation forum, formally called the “Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting” is significant for many reasons.

For one, Charles, who has been taking considerable interest in Commonwealth affairs in recent years, is likely to take over from Queen Elizabeth as the head of the organisation. As the largest country in the Commonwealth — with more than half of its population — India will have a key role in formalising this transition.

An even more important change is Britain's renewed interest in the Commonwealth amidst its impending separation from the European Union. As the government led by Theresa May negotiates Britain's messy divorce from Europe, London is making a big push to reconnect with its historic partners in the Commonwealth and the Anglosphere. During his current four-nation tour, Charles has been talking up the Commonwealth. In a speech at Kuala Lumpur last week, Charles declared that “the Commonwealth should, and does, have a pivotal role” in resolving contemporary global problems like climate change, urbanisation and sustainable development.

“Representing a third of the world's population and a fifth of its land-mass,” Charles said, the forum “can draw on a uniquely wide range of national contexts, experiences, traditions and, above all, professional associations — something, of course, which makes the Commonwealth unlike anything else in the world — for the solutions that we all so desperately need now.”

The political conservatives in Delhi, who dismiss the Commonwealth as a relic from the past, may not find Charles too persuasive. But a much smaller but bolder group of realists in the foreign policy establishment sense India's new possibilities with the Commonwealth. They would want to explore with Britain the idea of a long-term partnership between Delhi and London in rejuvenating the Commonwealth. Delhi's lack of interest in the Commonwealth in recent decades was reinforced by the preoccupation with managing the complex relationships with its immediate neighbours, reordering its ties with the major powers, and becoming part of regional institutions like the Association of the South East

Asian Nations in the decades after the Cold War came to an end. It was no surprise then that the Indian leadership stayed away from the last three Commonwealth summits in Malta, Colombo and Perth for one reason or another.

This inattention stands in contrast to the significance attached to the Commonwealth by [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) and his immediate successors. Despite considerable opposition from the [Indian National Congress](#) and many others, Nehru decided to join the Commonwealth.

Nehru understood that the Commonwealth and British connection gave India a measure of flexibility in a world engulfed by the Cold War. It allowed him to maintain a substantive political and economic link to the West even as he refused to become part of its alliance system. Nehru's successors, [Indira Gandhi](#) and [Rajiv Gandhi](#) built on Nehru's legacy of leveraging Commonwealth

for promoting decolonisation and countering White South Africa's racism and apartheid.

After the Second World War, Britain saw the Indian connection as a critical factor in sustaining its great power role in the international system. London was eager to have Nehru's India join the post-War British military arrangements under the aegis of the Commonwealth, but had to live with his refusal and settle for a less ambitious forum.

As the strategic trajectories of India and Britain diverged in the last few decades and multiple irritants bedeviled the bilateral relationship, it was inevitable that the Commonwealth would simply fall off the radar in both the capitals. But the essence of the original idea — that the Commonwealth can serve the interests of both countries — has not just survived but has come back to the fore today.

For a Britain that is reinventing itself politically after Brexit, the Commonwealth has become an important forum to recalibrate London's international relations. For a rising India, the Commonwealth is the most natural theatre to demonstrate its credibility as a "leading power". With a globally dispersed membership — from the Caribbean to the South Pacific and Southern Africa to East Asia — the Commonwealth can easily reinforce India's expanding international footprint.

The question today, then, is no longer about whether India and Britain should resurrect the Commonwealth, but how. Central to a new Indo-British partnership would be an equitable framework for bilateral burden-sharing, a strong commitment to promote the collective interests of the Commonwealth members including sustainable growth and climate change, and joint contributions to the global public good. Modi's consultations with Charles this week should be the first step towards a revival of the Commonwealth at the London summit next April.

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UK MoS (Immigration) Mr. Brandon Lewis holds delegation level talks with Shri Kiren Rijiju

UK MoS (Immigration) Mr. Brandon Lewis holds delegation level talks with Shri Kiren Rijiju

A delegation from the United Kingdom led by the Minister of State for Immigration Mr. Brandon Lewis, held talks with the Indian delegation led by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju here today. The discussions covered variety of important issues ranging from cooperation in matters of immigration, tackling extremism, extradition, cyber crimes, sharing of criminal records and social security for Indian workers returning from the UK.

At the outset, Shri Kiren Rijiju elaborated the stand of the Government of India on the Migration issues between India and the UK and also sought cooperation of the UK side on more favourable visa regime for Indians, especially Indian students. While seeking cooperation of the UK Government in expediting India's 13 extradition requests MoS (Home) also assured the visiting Minister of full cooperation on behalf of the Government of India in the extradition of Mohammad Abdul Shakur wanted in the UK on murder charges. During the meeting, Shri Rijiju conveyed New Delhi's concerns on the continuing anti-India propaganda carried out by Kashmiri and Sikh extremists in the UK that bear "serious repercussions on India's sovereignty". On behalf of the Government of India, Shri Rijiju also conveyed willingness to cooperate on exchange of criminal records.

Mr. Lewis expressed satisfaction that meetings between the Indian and UK Immigration Ministers have been formalized as a dialogue every six months and expressed hope that this will further strengthen the bilateral ties. Further, drawing attention to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that will take place in London in April next year, Mr. Lewis sought India's participation and support in making the summit a success.

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Visit of Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of The Naval Staff to France

Visit of Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of The Naval Staff to France

Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of the Naval Staff is visiting France on a bilateral visit from 05 to 10 November 2017. The visit aims to consolidate cooperation between the Armed Forces of both India and France and also to explore new avenues of defence cooperation.

During his visit, the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of the Naval Staff will hold bilateral discussions with Her Excellency Ms Florence Parly, Hon'ble Defence Minister of France, General Francois Lecointre, Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Christophe Prazuck, Chief of French Navy, General Joel Barre, Director General Armament and Vice Admiral Hervede Bonnaventure, Director General International Relations and Strategy.

In-addition to holding important bilateral discussions, the Admiral will be visiting the Maritime Prefectures at Brest and Cherbourg, and be conducted around the Maritime Operations Centre. He will also visit the French Airbase at Landivisiau, where he will be briefed on the operational employability of the Rafale aircraft by the French Air Force, and also visit the French Submarine Facility at Cherbourg.

India and France have traditionally maintained close and friendly relations. The two countries established a Strategic Partnership in 1998, thereby significantly enhancing bilateral cooperation in strategic areas such as defence, nuclear energy and space. The Defence relationship between the two countries has been one of mutual trust and confidence. India has been importing critical defence technologies from France; the latest being the Rafale fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Forces and the Scorpene submarines for the Indian Navy.

The Indian Navy cooperates with the French Navy on many issues, which include operational interactions such as the VARUNA series of bilateral exercises, training exchanges, exchange of White Shipping Information and Subject Matter Experts in various fields through the medium of Staff Talks. Warships from Indian Navy have been regularly visiting ports at France, with IN ships Mumbai, Trishul and Aditya making port call at Toulon from 24 to 27 April 2017. The French Navy ship Auvergne, a FREMM Class Frigate, also visited the Indian Naval Base at Karwar from 02 to 06 October 2017.

The Indian Army and Air Force also maintain robust cooperation with the French Army and Air Force. The Indian Army conducts the biennial exercise SHAKTI with the French Army, whilst the Indian Air Force conducts the GARUDA series of exercises annually. Both the Services also carryout exchanges of Subject Matter Experts and pursue a structured cooperation mechanism through the medium of Staff Talks of their respective Services.



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India urged to join Belt and Road Initiative

China on Wednesday counselled India to shed its objections to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and take advantage of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which had already drawn wide international support.

“You and your colleagues have asked this question before and it shows that India is quite wavering on the issue of the Belt and Road Initiative,” said Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying.

Ms. Hua was responding to a question on remarks by the Russian ambassador to India backing a dialogue between New Delhi and Beijing on the BRI.

“I think you must be very clear (that) since the BRI was proposed by President Xi Jinping, progress has been made smoothly with strong outcomes.”

India was among a handful of countries that had skipped attendance in Beijing of the Belt and Road Forum in May, objecting to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passed through Kashmir.

Referring specifically to CPEC, Ms. Hua, in a veiled reference to India, said the project did not target “third countries” or prejudice China’s position on territorial disputes. “We also said many times that the CPEC corridor is an economic cooperation. It is not targeted at any third country and does not involve territorial disputes”.

“We hope that countries and parties with shared vision will work with us to allow practical cooperation to bring more benefits to our peoples.” Signalling China’s openness to India’s participation, Ms. Hua said: “We remain quite open and inclusive to cooperation involving the BRI.”

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India sends fuel shipment to Sri Lanka

Following Sri Lanka's request for emergency shipment of fuel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday assured President Maithripala Sirisena of "all possible assistance."

The two leaders spoke over telephone and a 21,000 kilolitre-shipment left Paradip Refinery in Odisha on Wednesday, according to a press statement issued by the Indian High Commission in Colombo.

Retail distribution

Lanka IOC, the Indian Oil Corporation subsidiary in Sri Lanka, has made 3,500 kilolitres from its stock available to the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC), with which it controls retail distribution of fuel in Sri Lanka.

On Friday, a sudden fuel shortage gripped the country after CPC rejected a recent 35,000 metric tonne-shipment procured by LIOC, on grounds of contamination. Reports of the shortage sparked panic-buying across the island, intensifying the problem over the last few days. Motorists formed long queues outside gas stations, waiting several hours for fuel.

While the Petroleum Ministry and CPC unions accused the LIOC of forcing them to accept the rejected shipment after filtration, LIOC denied the allegations which, it said, were "factually incorrect."

In an official statement, LIOC said that while it catered to 16% of the market, CPC had a majority 84% share, and was hence responsible for the shortage.

Some parliamentarians, including those from former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's faction of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, blamed the LIOC, and by extension, India, for the crisis. Responding to lawmakers who criticised LIOC's presence in Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said the causes would be probed, but that he disagreed with the allegation. "Fuel supply was maintained to some extent during the recent strike action launched by petroleum workers, thanks to the LIOC," he said.

Meanwhile, a 40,000-metric tonne shipment of petrol, for CPC's supply, is expected to reach Colombo late Wednesday. India has assured Sri Lanka of additional petrol from the Kochi Refinery, should a need arise, officials said.

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Asia's maritime-quad might prove elusive

The “quadrilateral” is back, and with a verve that is making strategic pundits sit up and take notice. After reports emerged last week that Japanese Prime Minister Shinz Abe would propose a four-way dialogue between the US, Japan, Australia and India during President Donald Trump’s visit to Tokyo this week, there is speculation in New Delhi that the new “quad” might seek to counter Chinese naval power in Asia. Indian analysts say New Delhi might be willing to experiment with the idea of a countervailing alliance if it addresses India’s power imbalance with China. India’s expansion of the Malabar Exercises to include the Japanese navy and the reinvigoration of defence ties with Tokyo and Canberra, they suggest, is a sign that Indian policymakers are amenable to the idea of hard-balancing in Asia.

Yet, the prospects for an Indo-Pacific “concert of democracies” in maritime Asia aren’t strong. A closer look at emerging naval dynamics in Asia makes clear that the maritime “quad” isn’t still a wholly viable proposition. First, neither Japan nor the US has given any indication that the new grouping will have a China-centric security agenda. Earlier this week, a senior US administration official rejected suggestions that the “quad” alliance was about containing China. If anything, reports from Tokyo and Washington suggest the group might be focused on finding an alternative to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The second reason why India’s nautical observers might have to wait longer for their “quad” moment is Washington’s indifference to the geopolitics of maritime South Asia. Nearly a year into Trump’s presidency, the US is yet to address New Delhi’s key concerns in its near-littorals, including China’s growing footprint in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar, the Indian Navy’s inability to track Chinese submarines in the Bay of Bengal, and the strengthening China-Pakistan nexus in the Arabian Sea. Indian analysts say Washington’s real equities reside in the Western Pacific, where senior US officials expect New Delhi to play a larger security role. But even in East Asia, the Trump administration is looking circumspect, with a growing dependence on China to solve vexing problems like North Korea. From an Indian standpoint, the more Washington needs Beijing to negotiate with Pyongyang, the less leverage it has in shaping China’s strategic choices in the Indian Ocean.

New Delhi won’t be surprised if Trump’s promotion of a “free and open Indo-Pacific region” is more focused on trade, than maritime security. With rising angst among Apec (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) members over Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Washington is under pressure to underline its commitment to the economic development of the Asia Pacific. Even if the US wanted to signal a hardening of maritime posture in Asia, it is likely to be dissuaded by Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), which is showing a new enthusiasm for naval engagement with Beijing (evidenced by the first joint China-Asean maritime search and rescue exercise in the South China Sea last month). With many South-East Asian states openly acknowledging China’s role in regional security and development, it seems unlikely a proposal aimed at the containment of Chinese naval power in Asia will find much support—regardless of Beijing’s real and perceived violations in the disputed littorals.

The third reason why New Delhi might have to wait longer for a four-way naval alliance is the lack of clarity over what a naval quadrilateral really means for Indian interests. For the US and its Pacific partners, the maritime “quad” is a concept aimed at the joint implementation of a rules-based order in Asia. For India, however, the endeavour is an opportunity to develop its military capabilities to secure the Indian Ocean, a primary theatre of strategic interest. However, with Japan no longer in contention for the India’s submarine project P-75 (I), and US defence firms still unwilling to part with proprietary technology (including vital anti-submarine warfare know-how), the proposal for a close maritime cooperation holds little promise for improving India’s underwater

surveillance and combat prowess.

Finally, if there is a need for a balancing coalition in Asia, it must happen only when the threat becomes clearer. Despite an expansion of PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) activity in the Indian Ocean Region, China does not pose a physical threat to Indian interests (not for the moment). Chinese naval assets haven't challenged Indian sovereignty in its territorial waters, or ventured close to Indian islands with malign intent. Nor have PLAN ships and submarines impeded the passage of Indian merchantmen in the regional sea-lanes and choke-points. To the contrary, the Chinese navy has avoided any entanglement with Indian naval ships in the subcontinental littorals, limiting its ventures to friendly countries in the region, many of which are happy to benefit from Beijing's economic and military power.

This does not mean India's grievances with China are invalid. New Delhi is rightly concerned about Beijing's use of its navy to normalize Chinese dominance of the littorals, a condition that supports Beijing's vision of a unipolar Asia. Indian maritime observers are convinced that China's maritime strategy in the Indian Ocean involves a "slow choke" of New Delhi's geopolitical influence in its strategic backyard. But Beijing is going about its business carefully, ensuring that its military presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) does not cross the threshold of conflict with India. Whatever the impact of China's naval expansion in South Asia on New Delhi's geopolitical and strategic equities, it does not constitute an intrusion for which Beijing can be held legally, politically or militarily accountable.

At the first quadrilateral discussion in the Philippines next week, India will observe how far Japan, Australia and the US are willing to take substantive cooperation forward in the Indian Ocean. The turn of events at Manila will determine whether and how New Delhi will expand its trilateral Malabar naval exercise with the US and Japan to include Australia.

For the moment, the maritime-quad remains an idea whose time still hasn't arrived.

Abhijit Singh is senior fellow and head, maritime policy project, at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com

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China dismisses Indo-Pacific quad plan as 'speculation'

Mutual interests: President Donald Trump with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Hamburg, Germany, in June. APSaul Loeb

China on Tuesday dismissed the proposed Indo-Pacific security arrangement among the U.S., Japan, India and Australia to contain China's rise as "media speculation" and timed its remarks ahead of the arrival in Beijing of U.S. President Donald Trump.

In response to a question, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying signalled that the Indo-Pacific region was part of the global commons. She said the Indo-Pacific — an area in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean on either side of the Malacca straits — was a "dynamic region" with great potential.

She stressed that that "stability and peace" in the Indo-pacific was of great importance to ensure the prosperity of the region.

Ms. Hua's observations follow the remarks made by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday. At a joint Tokyo press conference with President Trump, Mr. Abe said Tokyo and Washington "concurred" that they should beef up cooperation to realise "a free and open Indo-Pacific", Japanese media reported.

Mr. Abe unveiled his 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' last year. According to *Nikkei Asian Review*, the Premier's approach involving the U.S., India and Australia as the other partners "is partly intended to keep in check China's growing presence in the region".

But China is confident that Beijing and Washington will be able to establish a special relationship, based on mutual interests. "The U.S. is still using a 2010 strategic White Paper which indicated that the way to contain China was to use India, in alliance with the Philippines, Australia, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea as part of a containment strategy," said Einar Tangen, a Beijing-based political commentator.

In a conversation with *The Hindu*, he pointed out that only India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. remain possible participants. "Given the uncertainty around Trump's long-term strategy, South Korea may not commit to China containment and a sea change in Australia's direction is possible, given Prime Minister Tony Abbott's domestic problems and Australia's reliance on China for trade."

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India vows to keep oceans free

S. Jaishankar

India is working with “like-minded” countries on preserving security of the oceans where India has a particular responsibility, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar has said.

“As the Indian Ocean takes centre stage in the 21st century, the onus is on us, as equal stakeholders, to collectively secure and nurture our oceanic states,” Mr. Jaishankar told a meeting of maritime experts at the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) held in Delhi.

“The Indian government has been working with like-minded countries to preserve the integrity, inviolability and security of the maritime domain,” he said, according to a release issued by the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) that organised the conference.

The words of India’s top diplomat are significant ahead of the ASEAN and East Asia summits in Manila next week, where Japan has reportedly suggested an official meeting of the “Quad” grouping of U.S.-Japan-Australia-India. While India is not a military alliance partner, as the other three countries are, the MEA spokesperson had said India is “open” to the idea of the quadrilateral. In Perth last week, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had also endorsed the idea, calling it a continuation of a 2008 quadrilateral plan that was subsequently shelved.

“Already Australia has regular meetings with Japan and Australia and the U.S. so it’s natural that we should continue to have such discussions but there is nothing formal but there has been no decision made on [the quadrilateral with India],” Ms. Bishop told reporters.

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'India, Russia stand united against terror'

Russia's relation with India is "privileged and strategic" and Moscow shares New Delhi's counter-terrorism concerns, said the newly appointed envoy of Russia to India.

Addressing the media for the first time since his appointment, ambassador Nikolay Kudashev said Russia supported India's pursuit of global convention against terrorism. "We stand united on majority of issues [with India] including the [UN] comprehensive convention on counter-terrorism," said Mr. Kudashev.

He also supported the China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative which ties Pakistan and China through the CPEC corridor that India opposes as the corridor passes through the disputed Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

"OBOR is an economic venture. We favour China and India coming to an understanding for the preferred route on this."

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Can India hold its ground at the 'quad' summit?

On Friday, 21 leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) bloc will congregate for their annual summit in Da Nang, Vietnam. Since its inception in 1989, APEC has made halting progress towards Pacific-wide trade liberalization. Free trade guru C. Fred Bergsten of the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics is credited for advocating a free trade agreement of Asia-Pacific, with the US as the main driver. Bergsten's famous "Bicycle Theory" of trade liberalization, which calls for uninterrupted trade liberalization to hold back a "protectionist slide" and "restrictive" pressures, became the soul of the Washington Consensus.

Surely, Bergsten would be aghast to read about what his country's elected president is going to say on US trade priorities right now. President Donald Trump is going to harangue his counterparts from the other 20 APEC countries about "a new US strategy to engage with Asia", says *The Financial Times* of 6 November. The "strategy he will unveil in Da Nang on Friday hinges on developing stronger bilateral trade and investment ties with like-minded regional allies" like Japan, India, and Australia. Such a strategy is going to be reverse-bicycle theory. One country will dictate what it wants in trade and investments in the Asian region while the other three will meekly follow.

The new "quadrilateral" grouping or "quad" aims to contain a rising China and its "predatory" economic and trade policies. In a way, the "quad" will be Washington's new "pivot" in Asia for a new trade cold war. "We have trade deficits with China that are through the roof" and "they're so big and so bad that it's embarrassing saying what the number is," Trump told reporters last week before heading to Asia for his first visit.

The mantra about the US's trade deficits with other countries is chanted almost on a daily basis by Trump and his trade representative, ambassador Robert Lighthizer. India's commerce minister Suresh Prabhu was told by top US trade and commerce officials that the US's trade deficit of \$27 billion with India remains a cause for concern. India was asked to open up its market—from agricultural products to pharmaceuticals—to restore the balance.

Against this backdrop, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi goes to meet Trump during the first "quad" meeting in the Philippines next week, it remains moot as to what they will agree on. Will the four—the US, Japan, India, and Australia—launch investment initiatives of hundreds of billions of dollars like the One Belt One Road initiative of China, which is already making progress? Are the four ready to undertake investment projects in Asia on easy and attractive terms to beat the Chinese investment initiatives? What effect will the quad's investment initiatives/policies have on their trade policies? Will Japan, India and Australia succumb to American pressures for opening markets selectively in areas for American products—from poultry to pharmaceuticals and from F-16s to the latest destructive arms and weapons?

These are some questions that ought to be addressed before embracing the quad's trade and investment initiatives on an irrationally exuberant basis. "The problem for Mr Trump is that even as he tries to embrace his allies in what his White House has taken to calling the 'Indo-Pacific', in pursuit of the bilateral trade deals he has declared to be his preference, the US is already being written out of the script," writes Shawn Donnan in an oped titled *Globalization Marches on Without Trump* in *The Financial Times* on 6 November.

It is interesting that even before the quad came into existence, Trump accused Japan on 6 November of "engaging in unfair trade practices". "We want fair and open trade. But right now, our trade with Japan is not fair and it's not open. The US has suffered massive trade deficits with Japan for many, many years."

Coming to India's plunge into such a framework, it is important to take into consideration how the three—the US, Japan, and Australia—are going to treat India which is not an equal trade partner and which has hitherto insisted on “developmental” trade policies. India's multilateral trade positions on agriculture, industrial goods, and services, among others during the current Doha round of trade negotiations remain an anathema to the US, Japan, and Australia.

In agriculture, for example, India wants an easy and effective permanent solution for public stockholding programmes for food security at the upcoming World Trade ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires. But two countries—the US and Australia—are insisting that India must undertake onerous/burdensome commitments. The US and Australia want India to undertake commitments to ensure that stocks procured for public stockholding programmes “do not distort trade or adversely affect the food security of other members” and that “no direct export from the (public stockholding) stocks shall occur upon the release of products from the stocks nor any release of products from the stocks shall occur on the condition that they are exported.”

Significantly, for countering the US-Australia offensive against a permanent solution for public stockholding programmes, India and other members of the G33 developing countries' coalition led by Indonesia are waging a grim battle with their backs to the wall. Also, India and China are calling for the elimination of most trade-distorting farm subsidies provided by the US and Japan, among others.

On electronic commerce, the US, Australia and Japan among others want India to agree to negotiations to eliminate barriers on data flows without localization requirements, a permanent moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions, and non-disclosure of source code, cloud computing and so on. Clearly, the trade agenda pursued by the three—the US, Australia and Japan—does not match India's bread and butter interests.

In short, will Prime Minister Modi turn a deaf ear to what his negotiators are fighting for to safeguard the interests of over 400 million poor farmers just because he has to be an active member of the quad? Will a policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds serve India's core trade interests?

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Breach in the pact

On the 70th anniversary (October 30) of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the multilateral system faces a challenge to its very foundations – from its chief architect. But the genesis of this predecessor agreement to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) holds important lessons for today's isolationist America under President Donald Trump. It was the U.S. which, since the midst of World War II, championed international cooperation as the only means to counter the rampant restrictive trade practices of the inter-war period.

This was no mean feat for a country that had legislated the notorious 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act. An ostensible move to protect agricultural products, the law raised import duties on some 900 goods, averaging about a 50% hike. To counteract its effects, Canada diverted exports away from its immediate neighbour and largest trading nation, to cash in on the imperial preferences under the British dominion. The retaliation to Smoot-Hawley was no less severe from Europe and Japan.

In its new incarnation, Washington emerged as a staunch votary of the GATT's so-called Most Favoured Nation principle. Under this non-discrimination provision, tariff concessions agreed by any two contracting parties would be extended immediately and unconditionally to all others. Given the reciprocal nature of commitments agreed among countries, the U.S. was forced to withdraw many of its proposed duty cuts at the 1947 Geneva conference. These proved to be far too ambitious for the British Commonwealth nations which, gripped by a balance of payments crisis, were unwilling to grant matching concessions. There were strong reactions among top U.S. diplomats against Britain's recalcitrance. The Truman administration, however, deemed it prudent not to walk away from the GATT negotiations in the larger interest of cementing the Western alliance at the beginning of the Cold War. Similarly, despite the incorporation of provisions against protectionism, GATT also codified exceptions that allowed countries to retain the old restrictions on imports for a time. The final Uruguay Round of GATT heralded its successor, the WTO, whose scope extends well beyond tariff reductions to trade in services and much else.

Seventy years on, there has been a rapid proliferation of bilateral and regional free-trade agreements around the world, raising concerns over trade diversion rather than generation. Even so, the erosion of the larger commitment to the post-war global liberal order has never been more pronounced than under the current Trump administration. The context to this regression is the populist tide against the opening of the U.S. market under the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA), portraying trade liberalisation as a zero-sum game. Similarly, the rhetoric on the surge in Chinese imports since Beijing's 2001 accession to the WTO seeks to play down the benefits of cheaper consumer goods and the opportunities in outsourcing and exports. Earlier this year, Washington quit the Trans-Pacific Partnership trading bloc, and continues to threaten taxes on overseas operations of domestic industries and astronomical import tariffs. But as long as the rhetoric does not move into the realm of real action, there is still hope that the damage could be undone.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Quad is a good idea, not Quad-plus

US President Donald Trump is on a 12-day-long Asia trip. On the last day, he will attend the East Asia Summit in Manila. It is also expected that the quadrilateral dialogue between India, the US, Japan and Australia will resume on the margins of this summit after a hiatus of nearly a decade. The voices in support of resuming “the quad” had grown louder in recent weeks. First, it was Rex Tillerson who had, in his important speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies last month, clearly expressed America’s desire to include Australia in the India-US-Japan security collaborations. More recently, Japanese foreign minister Tar Kono also made a similar call. Kono went a step ahead and suggested that Britain and France too could be involved in this grouping.

The coming together of India, the US, Japan and Australia is being seen as building a strategic partnership to deal with China’s rise and its implications. As all these countries have noted in different ways, China’s rise has presented a serious challenge to a rules-based international order. India, the US and Japan already engage with each other in a ministerial-level trilateral dialogue and annual naval exercises. The logic of expanding membership in a security-focused group is not very obvious. Unlike, say, trade negotiations where the involvement of more countries helps achieve uniformity of standards and, consequently, greater scale, more intra-supply chain compatibility and higher efficiency for businesses and economies, security collaboration among a larger group is a challenging task as success depends on the credibility and commitment of each participant. Moreover, the greater the number of people at the table, the narrower the agenda on which a consensus can be achieved.

India has been reluctant in accepting Australia in the grouping for multiple reasons. One, it was Australia under prime minister Kevin Rudd which had decided to exit the quad last time around in 2008, in deference to China’s concerns. Two, Australia’s economy is heavily dependent on commodity exports to China. Three, Chinese money is deeply enmeshed in Australian politics owing to lax rules related to the foreign funding of political parties. And four, unlike Japan and India, Australia has no direct dispute with China.

However, there is some merit in considering Australia’s entry and concomitant resumption of the quad. First, despite all its economic and political ties with China, Canberra has been very critical of Chinese activities in the South China Sea. Second, Australia is mulling reforms to its political donation laws in order to limit foreign influence in its politics. Third, Australia is a major maritime democracy in the Indo-Pacific region. India, the US or Japan, all of them frame this partnership in terms of common political values rather than as a counterweight to China—a strategy that makes a lot of sense. Fourth, there are already three trilaterals in operation—India-US-Japan, India-Japan-Australia, and US-Japan-Australia. Coalescing them into one quadrilateral will not be a bad idea. And fifth, the last time the quadrilateral engagement was attempted, it was successful in making China sit up, take notice, and register protest with all the members. In essence, the coming together of these four powers had worked.

The above arguments are, however, not valid for either Britain or France. Even if the two have islands and military facilities in the region, they are extra-regional powers. Both their capacity and willingness to engage in tough operations in the region is suspect in case the US chickens out—and the unreliability of the US is one of the reasons (goo.gl/HF24sy) being given for their inclusion. Most importantly, the European powers are still too fixated on Russia (rather than China) as the primary security threat to be of much utility to their Asian partners.

The resumption of the quadrilateral dialogue, therefore, is a good idea but there isn’t much rationale for involving Britain and France at this stage. This doesn’t preclude India and other members of the quad from having separate, productive partnerships with the European powers.

But some strategic analysts in India are still debating the utility of the Indian partnership with the US and Japan, leave alone Australia, Britain or France. They argue that India is needlessly dragging itself into the US-China rivalry. There cannot be a more misleading argument. As the world's biggest military and economic power, the US is more than capable of meeting the China challenge without New Delhi's helping hand. But can the same be said of India? Facing a huge power deficit, India needs partnerships to balance China. Another argument is that India's political profile in its neighbourhood will stand diminished if it accepts the need for assistance from other powers. To the contrary, India's neighbours—as foreign secretary S. Jaishankar has pointed out—are bound to feel more reassured of India's (as against a rapacious China's) words if New Delhi has the economic, military and political backing of major powers in the region.

And one should never forget that for all of New Delhi's grand political and moral standing as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), not many countries chose to condemn Chinese aggression against India in 1962. There isn't a starker lesson from independent India's history.

Should India support the inclusion of Britain and France in the quadrilateral dialogue? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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MEA seeks details of U.S. programme

A day after the United States announced a funded programme for organisations interested in fighting religious intolerance in India, the Ministry of External Affairs said such funding would have to conform to legal processes at home and sought more details.

The statement from the MEA came even as the U.S. Embassy in India maintained that the fund would improve civilian security.

“We have requested for more details [from the U.S.]. Once we have more details, we will be in a better position to comment on this. But in any case, any such activity in India, in this area, by anybody has to follow the rule of the land,” MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

The MEA would look into the context in which the U.S. had pledged the amount, he said.

Religious tolerance

The Ministry’s response came a day after the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor announced a competition-based programme through which suitable organisations willing to counter religious intolerance in India would get funds amounting to \$4,93,827.

The programme which has called for applications from interested organisations is understandably aimed at countering majoritarian acts of discrimination and violence targeting the minority communities.

The MEA spokesperson refused to interpret the announcement at the moment but it is understood that those who will win the grant for their programmes will have to seek clearance from the Indian government before undertaking any work.

Explaining the nature of the grant, the U.S. Embassy’s spokesperson said: “This programme is funded by U.S. government foreign assistance funds. The goal of the programme is to increase societal tolerance and improve civilian security to reduce religiously-motivated violence and discrimination, and funds will support activities that work toward that end.”

Any such activity in India by anybody has to follow the rule of the land

Raveesh Kumar

MEA spokesperson

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Trump, Xi vow to tackle global issues

Special guest:Xi Jinping, left, and Donald Trump review Chinese guards during a welcome ceremony in Beijing.AFP

The United States on Thursday highlighted its special ties with China in managing global problems, including nuclear tensions in North Korea, instability in Afghanistan and tackling the scourge of international terrorism.

Visiting U.S. President Donald Trump, signalled at a joint press conference that Washington and Beijing will be the main pillars of a more inclusive international system.

“The United States working with China and other regional partners have an incredible opportunity to advance the cause of peace, security and prosperity all across the world. It is a very special time and we do indeed have that very special opportunity,” said Mr. Trump.

“A great responsibility has been imposed on our shoulders Mr. President; truly a great responsibility,” he observed, referring to his host Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Emerging order

Some Chinese scholars were quick to point out that with Mr. Trump’s visit, the U.S. and China were becoming the main pillars of an emerging new global order.

“Trump has recognised that China is its main partner to meet short and long-term global challenges, ranging from trade to nuclear issues,” said Wang Yiwei, professor at the School of International Studies at Renmin University, in a conversation with *The Hindu*. “I think his visit to China has helped Mr. Trump understand that the relationship between China and the United States should be viewed from long-term, comprehensive and global perspectives.”

President Xi was equally upbeat about the unfolding relationship, saying Beijing-Washington ties now stood “at a new historic starting point”, which had global implications. “We believe Sino-U.S. relations concern not only the well-being of peoples, but also world peace, prosperity and stability,” Mr. Xi observed.

Massive deals

The remarks by the two leaders were preceded by a ceremony, where massive deals worth \$253 billion dollars, focussed on shale energy, aviation, and computer chips were signed. State-owned China Petroleum and Chemical Corp signed a \$43-billion joint natural gas exploration contract in Alaska. China National Petroleum Corporation inked an initial agreement with Cheniere Energy, specialising in shale gas, for long-term supplies of liquefied natural gas. China’s cellphone giants Xiaomi, OPPO and Vivo also signed deals with U.S. telecom mobile chip-maker Qualcomm.

Significantly, China’s Silk Road Fund, a unit under the People’s Bank of China promoting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), will set up a joint fund with the U.S. During his remarks, President Xi also invited American firms to participate in the BRI. In other contracts, China will buy Tesla electric cars and Boeing aircraft from the U.S.

The two leaders tried to project a common strategic orientation towards the region, underscored by their common stance of achieving denuclearisation of North Korea. Yet, there were differences in the fine-print, highlighted by President Xi’s advocacy of a dialogue with North Korea to

supplement UN-backed economic pressure that was being imposed on Pyongyang. But using much harsher rhetoric, President Trump described Pyongyang's leadership as "the murderous North Korean regime", and urged all "responsible nations" to stop arming, financing and trading with it.

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India, China border talks next month

India and China will hold the 20th round of border talks at December-end, the first since the 73-day stand-off at Doklam.

“Starting next month, the bilateral exchanges will begin. The first one is of our Foreign Minister Wang Yi who will attend the India-China-Russia Foreign Ministers’ meeting here... Then our State Counsellor Yang Jiechi will come to attend the 20th round of border talks... So these two very important visits... will start a new chapter in bilateral relations,” said Li Bijian, Minister Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy here, said on Thursday. He was speaking on the sidelines of a seminar organised by the Observer Research Foundation.

Mr. Li said that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Xiamen after the Doklam incident in September, they agreed to take forward the ties, and these visits were part of the initiative.

The two Armies were locked in a stand-off at Doklam on June 16 after Indian soldiers prevented the Chinese from building a road in a disputed territory near the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction.

After tough negotiations, the two sides agreed to disengagement on August 28.

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Deepening innovation ties with the US

This month, the US and India will co-host the seventh Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES)—the pre-eminent gathering of entrepreneurs across the world—in Hyderabad. As US secretary of state Rex Tillerson has noted, co-hosting GES is “a clear example” of how both sides are “promoting innovation, expanding job opportunities, and finding new ways to strengthen both our economies”. With preparations for GES under way, Washington, Delhi and the private sector should take additional steps to maximize GES’ impact and accelerate the trajectory of the US-India innovation partnership.

Since 2010, Global Entrepreneurship Summits have been held in Dubai, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Marrakesh, Nairobi, and Washington. GES 2016 convened 700 entrepreneurs from 170 countries and 300 investors who announced millions of dollars in commitments to support entrepreneurs. India is the natural partner to sustain this success.

The US and India have a history of pooling in the ingenuity of our peoples to achieve global breakthroughs, such as the Green Revolution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has injected new dynamism into India’s innovation ecosystem with initiatives like the Atal Innovation Mission and the creation of a \$100 million “fund of funds” for start-ups. Driven by this logic and the bipartisan support for the US-India partnership, during Modi’s visit to Washington in June, he and President Donald Trump reaffirmed a commitment made during the Barack Obama administration to co-host GES 2017.

So what can be done to maximize the success of GES 2017?

First, the government should use GES not just to showcase its innovation record to date but also highlight its forward-looking policy and regional leadership. It should announce reforms at GES that further enrich the innovation ecosystem in India and enable foreign investors. It should also host an invite-only event for policymakers from select countries who are prepared to make similar announcements. Delhi must also message Indian industry and society on the importance of start-ups. At GES 2016, one of the most compelling engagements for attendees was seeing former US president Barack Obama moderate a discussion with three young entrepreneurs on the challenges they faced; in many countries, the political elite only shared the stage with corporate titans.

A prime minister-level engagement with young entrepreneurs who are not household names would be a powerful visual stamp of support for India’s burgeoning entrepreneurs. In terms of regional leadership, GES 2017 will be the first GES in South Asia—an opportunity for India to leverage its soft power to promote regional connectivity. There should be panels at GES focused on collaboration among innovators and entrepreneurs in South Asia to tackle cross-cutting challenges, along with discounted registration fees for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) attendees to increase regional affinity.

Second, the Trump administration needs to ensure that a top-flight US private sector delegation attends GES and that US engagement tangibly advances commercial partnerships. With Ivanka Trump—adviser to the President—leading the US delegation, the White House must take ownership by building a strong delegation that is prepared to announce funding, training, and mentorship opportunities. In addition, the Trump administration needs to bring a clear policy focus to its engagement at GES. The US delegation must come prepared to talk not just about partnership in theory but also about the specific steps that are needed to unlock opportunities and to use the GES platform to help accelerate commercial partnerships in India.

Third, industry must seize the opportunity GES provides to identify and nurture talent and

innovation in India. Companies should proactively engage the GES organizers in Washington, Delhi and Hyderabad on potential interventions, ranging from hosting side events at GES to offering their corporate leadership as speakers, to announcing investment and training commitments. Many companies are well-positioned in this regard. US firms such as Uber, Mozilla, Qualcomm, Pfizer and others have announced programmes to strengthen India's innovation ecosystem. Such programmes should be highlighted and replicated.

Looking ahead, the US and India must channel the momentum from GES to take their innovation partnership to new heights. They should survey US incubators and accelerators to identify those interested in supporting Indian counterparts funded under the Atal Innovation Mission. The US Small Business Administration has novel programmes to channel funding to start-ups; India should adapt these programmes for its domestic efforts. Lastly, American universities play a key role in the innovation ecosystem. The US should create channels to share how these universities integrate into the ecosystem, from community business outreach to commercializing intellectual property created on campus.

The US-India partnership is thriving. We have made progress in expanding our defence ties; American and Indian firms are enlarging our trade and investment linkages. Now we must leverage GES to deepen ties between our innovators and enabling institutions. A successful GES with follow-on action will only deepen the intimate connection and strategic partnership between our two democracies.

Ziad Haider and Richard Rossow are, respectively, the senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and senior adviser and Wadhvani chair in US-India policy studies at CSIS

Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com

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Prime Minister of India & Prime Minister of Bangladesh Jointly along with Chief Minister, West Bengal Flag off New Cross-Border Train between India & Bangladesh, "Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express" from Kolkata through Video Confencing

Prime Minister of India & Prime Minister of Bangladesh Jointly along with Chief Minister, West Bengal Flag off New Cross-Border Train between India & Bangladesh, "Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express" from Kolkata through Video Confencing

Two Rail Bridges in Bangladesh and International Rail Passenger Terminus at Kolkata Station also Inaugurated

Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh & the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, in an historical event today **flagged off Cross Border Train between India & Bangladesh, the Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express** through video conference from Kolkata station. The leaders unveiled jointly an e-plaque to inaugurate the following:

- (i) Second Bharirab & Titas Railway Bridges in Bangladesh,
- (ii) International Rail Passenger Terminus with End-to-End Immigration and Customs Clearance Facilities (for the passengers of Maitree Express and Bandhan Express) at Kolkata station.

Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyaya, Member of Parliament & Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, Smt. Mala Saha, MLA, Shri Harindra Rao, General Manager, Eastern Railway, Mr. Toufique Hassan, Dy. High Commissioner, Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Kolkata were also present to grace the occasion at Kolkata station.

In his address, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said that the close connection and understanding between two countries requires connectivity between the people across the border and Maitree Express and Bandhan Express trains will further add to connectivity between India and Bangladesh and strengthen and strengthen our bonding. He underlined the fact that India has emerged as the most trusted partner of Bangladesh by undertaking and completing a series of developmental projects in Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, lauded the initiative and expressed hope that there would be more such initiatives for increasing rail link & connectivity between the two countries. She also highlighted the fact that it would result in reducing the journey time for the passengers of Maitree and Bandhan Express trains with the

introduction of International Passenger Rail Terminus with End-to-End Immigration and Customs Clearance Facilities.

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee said that this new Passenger Train link between Kolkata & Khulna will strengthen the ties between two countries. She expressed happiness on introduction of the new train between the two countries & recollected the traditional bonding with Bangladesh.

The Bandhan Express train is the second train to be flagged off after the introduction of 'Maitree Express' between Kolkata and Dhaka Cantonment stations in April, 2008. It covers the distance between Kolkata and Khulna through Petrapole & Benapole route to cater to the demands of the people from both the countries to enhance the connectivity.

The Bandhan Express will be a weekly service on every Thursday. The Kolkata - Khulna Bandhan Express (13129 Up) will depart from Kolkata at 07.10 hrs.(IST) and arrives at Khulna at 12:30 hrs.(BST) on the return journey the Khulna-Kolkata Bandhan Express (13130 Down) will depart from Khulna at 13.30 hrs. (BST) and arrive at Kolkata at 18.10 hrs.(IST) on the same day. The immigration and Customs checks will take place at Kolkata International Passenger Terminal for the Indian side and at Benapol border station for Bangladesh side.

The journey time of Maitree Express from Kolkata to Dhaka will be 08 hrs.25mts while from Dhaka to Kolkata it will take 08 hrs.15mts. The journey time would be reduced by 2 hours. It will depart from Kolkata at 7.10 hrs.(IST) (on Mon, Tue, Fri & Sat) and arrive at Dhaka at 16.05 hrs.(BST) instead of earlier arrival at Dhaka at 18.05 hrs.(BST). On the return journey it will depart from Dhaka at 08.15 hrs.(BST) (on Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) instead of earlier departure from Dhaka at 08.10 hrs. (BST) and arrive at Kolkata at 16.00 hrs.(IST) instead of earlier arrival at Kolkata at 18.10 hrs.(IST).

In order to reduce the en-route journey time of the passengers of the existing Kolkata – Dhaka Cantt. Maitree Express and newly introduced Kolkata – Khulna Bandhan Express, Ministry of Railways, with the coordination of Department of Immigration & Customs has opened an **International Rail Passenger Terminus** at Kolkata station with proper infrastructure and facilities of end-to-end immigration. With this new facility at Kolkata Terminal, the passengers of Maitree Express and Bandhan Express will be immensely benefitted.

The second Bhairab Bridge and Titas Bridge in Bangladesh built under the assistance of Government of India are two of the most important projects in Bangladesh for infrastructure and rolling stock development. The one kilometer long second Bhairab Railway Bridge was built over the mighty Meghna river at a cost of around USD 75 millions by Indian contractors and consultants. Similarly, the Titas bridge over river Titas in Eastern Bangladesh was built with a cost of around USD 25 million. Both these bridges are on the main Chittagong to Dhaka Trunk Rail Line which will help in faster movement of both passenger and freight trains of Bangladesh.

Following is the text of the Prime Minister's address on the occasion:

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video conference
leaders
, visits
protocol
South Asia Satellite launch video conference
Petrapole ICP
connectivity projects video conference
Connectivity people-to-people connectivity.
international passenger terminus - express - express

customs immigration , 3

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rail 100 million dollars rail network

8 billion dollars concessional (-) finance commitment projects

Development Connectivity , links , ,

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PM Modi, Bangladesh PM, and West Bengal CM, jointly launch connectivity projects between India and Bangladesh

PM Modi, Bangladesh PM, and West Bengal CM, jointly launch connectivity projects between India and Bangladesh

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, today jointly inaugurated a series of connectivity projects between the two countries.

These include, the second Bhairab and Titas Railway Bridges; and the International Rail Passenger Terminus at Chitpur in Kolkata. The dignitaries also flagged off the inaugural run of the Bandhan Express between Kolkata and Khulna.

External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj, also joined the event from New Delhi.

Following is the text of the Prime Minister's address on the occasion:

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festival season
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Making a reconnection

The distance between Kolkata and Khulna is only about 170-odd kilometres. That's nearly 1,000 kilometres less than what you would travel to reach Delhi from Howrah, for instance. But such is the logic of nations and history, and the power of borders, that one figure has seemed far more momentous for the people of the two Bengals. Thus, a new weekly train between the two cities inaugurated on Thursday by the prime ministers of India and Bangladesh and the chief minister of West Bengal, is a welcome move. Now you can board the Bandhan Express in the morning in Kolkata and reach Khulna in a little over five hours — one small journey in freeing geography from the clutches of history.

A rail connection between Khulna, an industrial city, and the West Bengal capital resumes after a break of 52 years. An earlier service, the Barisal Express, was cancelled during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. In that respect, too, this is a long-overdue attempt to bring the two countries closer. Happily, India's relationship with Bangladesh has been on an upswing since Sheikh Hasina's landmark visit in 2010. On security issues, especially, our neighbour has been greatly sensitive to our concerns — even though the Teesta water-sharing remains unresolved.

That such bigger hurdles are not standing in the way of the flow of people, ideas and cultures between the countries is a sign of maturity — something sorely missing on India's north-western borders. As a dominant power in the subcontinent, India has often been seen as the big brother who cuts a hard bargain. It can allay such suspicions if it goes by that old motto: Only connect. At a time when borders across the world seem more like implacable walls, we need more, not less, international road, rail and water routes. India can take the lead. The Bandhan Express is a good train to take for that journey.

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Xi, Trump, Asian disorder

US President Donald Trump's extended swing through Asia underlines the deep difficulties in sustaining the present order in Asia. At the root of the Asian instability is the changing dynamic between the traditional hegemon, America, and its challenger, China. That Washington and Beijing need each other is not in doubt. What is in play, though, is the terms of a new economic and political settlement between the two. For all the sweet talk by Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping this week, there is no clarity on what a potential accommodation might look like. On its part, Delhi should stay the course on managing its problems with China and deepening ties with the US and key Asian actors, Japan, Korea, the ASEAN, and further afield, with Australia.

On his extended Asian tour, Trump is participating in two major regional summits — the forum for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation in Vietnam and the East Asia Summit in the Philippines. In the current tour, Trump has also had bilateral visits to Japan and South Korea. Trump's visit to Beijing was undoubtedly the most important element of this tour. Trump's exchanges with Xi are also emblematic of the new complexities driving Asian politics. These include America's demands for "fair" rather than "free trade" with Asia and the problem of accommodating China's rise without abandoning its long-standing allies and friends in the region.

Before Trump set out, his senior aides laid out the three broad objectives that the president intended to pursue. One was to get greater reciprocity in the commercial engagement with Asia. The second was to strengthen US alliances and partnerships in the region. A third was to get a better fix on North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Trump has begun to discover how difficult it is to advance on the three fronts.

On their part, the Asian leaders were happy to pander to the now familiar vanities of the American President. The Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and the South Korean President, Moon Jae-in, played up the theme of "making America great again". China's Xi rolled out a thicker than usual red carpet in what was billed as a "state visit plus" welcome to Trump. The US president, in turn, joined Xi in raising the "flattery quotient" in the US-China engagement. While saying nice things is always part of public diplomacy, Xi and Trump have taken it to new levels. However, while flattery certainly generates the right mood music, it is not enough to resolve structural problems.

Consider, for example, the trade friction between the US and China. Beijing resorted to the familiar trick of wrapping a package of commercial deals with American companies amounting to \$250 billion. While the big number grabs the headlines, sceptics point to the fact that many of these "deals" are MoUs rather than commercial contracts. Many of them will take a long time, if at all, to fructify. And this does nothing to resolve Trump's political problem with America's massive trade deficit. Trump's decision to drop his hostile rhetoric against China in Beijing and his move to blame past American presidents for the burgeoning deficit with the US, has got many to jump to the conclusion that trade ties may be on the mend between America and China.

Nothing of the sort. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggested that Trump's remarks blaming past presidents was "tongue in cheek". "In the grand scheme of a \$300- to \$500-billion trade deficit, the things that have been achieved thus far are pretty small," Tillerson said. He insisted that "there's lot more work to do" in redressing the trade imbalance with China. On his part, Trump is happy to pocket the deals that Xi has to offer, but continued to press him on the problems with China on market access, demands for technology transfer, cyber security, and the larceny of intellectual property. While Trump has softened his words on the trade deficit, he can't be seen as walking back on the promise to his core domestic supporters that he will deal firmly with the Chinese threat to American jobs.

On the question of political relations, Trump and Xi had nice things to say about the need for greater cooperation and engagement. But there was no apparent breakthrough on the question of North Korea that was at the top of Trump's agenda. Trump publicly reminded Xi about the need to stop arming, financing and trading with North Korea — most of which takes place from Beijing. At the end of his talks, Trump tweeted that he looks forward to “an even STRONGER relationship” with China in the coming years. (The capital letters are Trump's.)

Xi was even more effusive in emphasising the partnership with America. He declared that “the Pacific Ocean is big enough to accommodate both China and the United States”. He insisted that Beijing and Washington need to “jointly” promote peace and stability in Asia. This is one of Xi's core demands on Trump — to share the leadership of Asia on Beijing's terms. Trump, or any other US president, will have a hard time ceding America's long-standing primacy in Asia. Before he landed in Beijing, Trump warned the region not to test American resolve and promised to sell lots of advanced arms to its Asian allies.

As Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) heads to the Philippines to join the East Asia Summit, three things stand out: America and China will continue to jockey for political primacy in Asia; the tension between Washington's traditional commitment to economic globalisation and Trump's “America First” policies is unlikely to be resolved any time soon; and most countries in the region are beginning to diversify their security partnerships. The rise of China and the turbulence in American domestic politics have created great disorder under the heavens. But they have also opened up much room for creative Indian diplomacy in Asia.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Philippines on agriculture and related fields**Cabinet approves MoU between India and Philippines on agriculture and related fields**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Philippines in the field of agriculture and related fields.

The MoU will improve bilateral cooperation in the field of agriculture and will be mutually beneficial to both countries.

It will promote understanding of best agricultural practices in the two countries and will help in better productivity as well as improved global market access.

This MoU provides for cooperation in the fields of rice production and processing, multi cropping system, dryland farming systems, bio-organic farming, solid and water conservation and management, soil fertility, sericulture, agro forestry, livestock improvement etc.

The MoU provides for constitution of Joint Working Group composed of equal number of representatives. The Joint Working Group shall meet once every two years alternatively in the Philippines and India.

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Cabinet approves Agreement between India and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on income

Cabinet approves Agreement between India and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on income

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for entering into an Agreement between India and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of China for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on income.

The Agreement will stimulate flow of investment, technology and personnel from India to HKSAR & vice versa, prevent double taxation and provide for exchange of information between the two Contracting Parties. It will improve transparency in tax matters and will help curb tax evasion and tax avoidance.

Background:

In so far as India is concerned, the Central Government is authorized under Section 90 of the Income Tax Act, 1961 to enter into an Agreement with a foreign country or specified territory for avoidance of double taxation of income, for exchange of information for the prevention of evasion or avoidance of income-tax chargeable under the Income-tax Act, 1961. This Agreement is on similar lines as entered into by India with other countries.

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Cabinet approves the protocol amending the Agreement between India and Kyrgyz for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income

Cabinet approves the protocol amending the Agreement between India and Kyrgyz for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for the protocol amending the Agreement between India and Kyrgyz Republic for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

The Protocol amending Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) aims to update Article 26 (Exchange of Information) of the DTAA to international standards. The updated Article provides for exchange of information to the widest possible extent. The new paragraphs 4 and 5 being inserted into the existing Article 26 of the DTAA provide that the State from which information is requested cannot deny information on the ground that it has no domestic tax interest in that information or that the information requested is held by a bank or a financial institution, etc. The Protocol further empowers India to use information received under the DTAA to be used for other law enforcement purposes on the supplying State authorizing such use.

Background:

The existing DTAA between India and Kyrgyz Republic was notified on 7/02/2001 and the same was in force since 10/01/2001. A Protocol amending DTAA between India and Kyrgyz Republic for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income has been agreed to be signed between the two countries.

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Cabinet approves Joint Interpretative Declaration between India and Colombia regarding the Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investment signed on November 10, 2009

Cabinet approves Joint Interpretative Declaration between India and Colombia regarding the Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investment signed on November 10, 2009

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing the Joint Interpretative Declaration (JID) between India and Colombia regarding the existing Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments between India and Colombia signed on November 10, 2009.

The JID would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing Agreement as it includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including, the definition of investor, definition of investment, Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET), National Treatment (NT) and Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment, expropriation, Investor - State Dispute Settlement provision and Denial of Benefits.

Joint Interpretative Declarations/Statements in general play an important supplementary role in strengthening the investment treaty regime. With increasing Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) disputes, issuance of such statements is likely to have strong persuasive value before arbitration tribunals. Such pro-active approach by partners can foster a more predictable and coherent reading of treaty terms by arbitration tribunals.

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It's finally time to make the Pacific a bit bigger

As President Donald Trump makes his way across Asia, ears in local capitals have picked up a subtle but unmistakable change in messaging from the US administration. The shift focuses on an apparently innocuous term: “the Indo-Pacific.” US national security adviser H.R. McMaster introduced the president’s itinerary to reporters as “a great opportunity to demonstrate America’s and the Trump administration’s commitment to the Indo-Pacific.” Trump himself has used the term and it’s all over the official press releases from the White House.

This isn’t just semantics. The difference between the more commonly used “Asia-Pacific” and the new “Indo-Pacific” is actually quite deep. Those who prefer the latter want to stress that the great power conflicts in East, South and Southeast Asia are essentially maritime—over the control and openness of trade routes and over who gets to build and secure the infrastructure through which the vast majority of the world’s trade passes. By pushing the borders of America’s awareness as far as India, it means that China and its concerns are no longer at the center of US strategy. And it might also reflect a desire to “bring India permanently into the US web of alliances and partnerships in the region.”

For the Japanese, it reflects their pressing need to keep sea routes free of Chinese influence; for Indians, the term embodies the conviction that the most important relationship between any two capitals over the next century will be that between Delhi and Beijing. For the countries of Southeast Asia, the term mirrors the hope that a network of alliances, led by the US, Japan, Australia and India, would allow them to preserve their sovereignty and strategic independence amid China’s rise.

Indeed, the one country that clearly dislikes the term is China. And that may be the biggest takeaway from this presidential progress so far—the Trump administration’s decision to shelve its predecessors’ diffidence and junk the notion that the US might accommodate China’s preference for a unipolar “Asia-Pacific.” From an “America First” president, this willingness to ally if not lead in the effort to counterbalance China may be the best that countries in the region could have hoped for.

The phrase “Indo-Pacific” has been used before, of course, though only rarely by US presidents. During Shinzo Abe’s first term as prime minister of Japan in the mid-2000s, it was hoped that a “quadrilateral” that encompassed the US, Australia, Japan and India could help patrol sea lanes and stabilize the region. But that initiative foundered. Prime minister Kevin Rudd’s Australia, its economy thriving on China’s demand for commodities, had no intention of displeasing Beijing. India’s government wasn’t too keen on unsettling relations with its giant northern neighbour either.

Australia pulled out of the quadrilateral dialogue in 2008 explicitly to soothe Chinese sensitivities; Rudd’s foreign minister told the press after a visit from his Chinese counterpart that “one of the things that caused China concern last year was a meeting of that strategic dialogue. ... Australia would not be proposing to have [another] dialogue of that nature.”

But times have changed. Having returned to power, Abe is firmly in command in Tokyo; he’s turned “a free and open Indo-Pacific” into something of a mantra. Meanwhile, the commodity market has cooled and Australia has been reminded of the costs of economic dependence. “Indo-Pacific” has become its official definition of its neighbourhood.

India’s Narendra Modi, who is close to Abe, has lately embraced the term as well, especially after his nation emerged from a nasty border confrontation with the People’s Republic. China’s protestations of a peaceful rise may not sound quite as credible in 2017 as they did in 2007.

Much work will need to be done before the new terminology results in practical changes on the ground, of course. Officials from the “quadrilateral” are likely to meet at the upcoming East Asia Summit in the Philippines. They will need to set concrete goals for military and strategic cooperation—for example, scheduling regular patrols together for their navies.

The meeting itself would send a message: When it became a possibility, China warned it had better not be set up to “target or damage a third party’s interest.” That’s probably not an issue yet. None of the countries is engaged or powerful or determined enough at the moment to contain Chinese ambition in the short-term. Still, leaders such as Trump and Abe have taken an important first step towards ensuring that, in the decades to come, China’s leaders don’t have it all their way in, yes, the Indo-Pacific. **Bloomberg View**

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At the heart of the Pakistan-Iran-India tango lies Chabahar

A new churning is taking place in the region, with India announcing its first shipment to Afghanistan, via the Chabahar port in Iran, and Pakistan's army chief taking a delegation to Iran earlier this week for a series of meetings.

Has India's Chabahar initiative caused Pakistan to re-engage with Iran? Or, is this a parallel development, addressing bilateral issues and the repercussions of Pakistan's involvement in the Middle East?

Pakistan's Iran Predicament

Since Zia ul-Haq's time, Pakistan's relationship with Iran has been tense, indifferent and sometimes, even hostile. Zia's Islamisation strategies were perceived by Shia Tehran as the deepening of Sunnization, creating new stress in the bilateral relationship and emphasising sectarian faultlines inside Pakistan.

High-level visits between Iran and Pakistan became the exception. Afghanistan soon became a much more important neighbour, with the US using Pakistan as a cat's paw in its own war against the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Meanwhile, Iran-US relations went through the wringer, even as Teheran was bogged down with other issues in the Middle East.

Despite the continuing political tension between Iran and Pakistan, both countries drew closely together on two other matters. First, Pakistani nuclear scientist A Q Khan drew a willing Iran into his own underground network of nuclear linkages that served both sides well. Second, smuggling between the Pakistan-Iran border, especially along the Makran coast, began to take place.

Enter the Middle East Cold War and the Islamic Military Alliance

But the political divide was exacerbated by Saudi Arabia's expanding influence on Pakistan. Riyadh's Islamic Military Alliance is now headed by Pakistan's former army chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif. Clearly, the Pakistani government isn't terribly attracted to the idea, especially because its own Shias, between 30-40 million, are said to comprise about 10 per cent of the total 200 million population. Pakistan's National Assembly has even discussed Raheel Sharif's new job and pointed out that there is a need to go slow.

Was Raheel Sharif given the job because he was once the most powerful man in Pakistan and Pakistan is the only country in the Islamic world with a proven nuclear weapon capability ?.

Meanwhile, Teheran's relations with Saudi Arabia began to deteriorate over the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Riyadh also seemed determined to isolate Qatar, in an attempt to consolidate its leadership in the Muslim Ummah. Its efforts to get the US on board this regional great game were enormously boosted with Donald Trump identifying Iran as the cause of instability in the Arab Islamic American summit in Riyadh in May 2017, even as King Salman looked on.

Certainly, Pakistan being a part of this Summit would not have gone down lightly in Tehran.

Chabahar: Trigger, not the Cause

The operationalization of Chabahar port by India has triggered the panic button within Pakistan. As Delhi faltered in its execution of Chabahar in recent years, Pakistan was cynical and even sarcastic; meanwhile there was the China-supported Gwadar port as well as the Beijing-funded

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, both projects being described as a “regional game changer”.

With Chabahar now in the mix, the regional great game has taken a new turn. Chabahar is not far from Gwadar. As the crow flies, the straight distance is only 171 km, while the road route doubles it to 356 km. Second, Chabahar is more than a port, it is the starting point of a trade and transit corridor that could become parallel to the CPEC as it cuts across Iran and into Afghanistan. Third and most importantly, New Delhi has big plans for Chabahar, to connect it to the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and opening it up to the passage of goods into Russia and onwards.

Gen Bajwa’s Visit: Should India be worried?

India’s political will to walk the talk with Chabahar has exaggerated the bilateral and regional predicament in Pakistan’s west. Islamabad would certainly like to repair its relations with Teheran. Gen. Bajwa’s visit to Iran must be seen in this context, when he met the Iranian president, its defence minister as well as the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

The army in Pakistan has always been all-powerful, but a trend towards greater consolidation of power can now be clearly seen. Gen. Bajwa’s visit to Iran was preceded by a trip to Kabul, where he also met President Ashraf Ghani as well as the top Afghan leadership. Both New Delhi and Teheran, now connected through the Chabahar thread, must be closely watching.

But despite the fanfare of the visit, Gen. Bajwa did not succeed in getting a succulent joint statement with the Iranians. Whatever was made public is mediocre and focussed on border security between the two countries relating hotline communication, border fencing and patrolling, intelligence sharing etc. The fact that Pakistan has to talk about establishing hotlines in 2017 shows the level of communication so far!

The powerful director-general of the media wing of Pakistan’s armed forces, ISPR, Maj-Gen Asif Ghafoor, effusively thanked the Iranian Supreme Leader for a “supportive statement” on Kashmir and said, “It is a long pending dispute between India and Pakistan. Regional peace and security remains at stake unless it’s resolved to the aspiration of Kashmiris in line with UN Resolution.”

Predictably, the Pakistan media sought to project this as Iran’s Supreme leader throwing its “weight behind Pakistan on Kashmir”.

That’s why the operationalization of the Chabahar port in Iran is so significant. India has demonstrated its intention to play on the regional chessboard, even while it balances its own relations with the US and Iran. The old great game just got a new veneer.

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Pacific trade deal reached, sans U.S.

(From left) Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, South Korea's President Moon Jae-in, Malaysia's PM Najib Razak and Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto in Danang. AP Jorge Silva

Ministers from 11 Asia-Pacific countries agreed on Saturday to press ahead with a major trade deal without the U.S., as the world's largest economy seeks to go it alone under President Donald Trump's 'America First' policy.

Mr. Trump pulled his country from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) at the start of the year, dismaying allies and casting into doubt an agreement heralded for tying lower tariffs to strong environmental and labour protections. He has been something of a lone protectionist voice at the APEC summit in the Vietnamese city of Danang where world leaders, including China's Xi Jinping, have been keen to promote the virtues of free trade and multilateral deals.

In a joint statement on Saturday morning, the remaining countries — dubbed the TPP-11 — said they had “agreed on the core elements” of a deal at the sidelines of the APEC summit in the Vietnamese city of Danang, after days of stalled talks raised fears it could collapse altogether.

The Ministers said further talks would be needed to reach a full consensus before inking the deal, which now carries an even longer official name — the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

U.S. is welcome

Japan's lead negotiator Toshimitsu Motegi said the remaining members would still welcome the U.S. back into their pact. “This time all the 11 countries are on board and this would send out a very strong positive message to the U.S. and other Asia Pacific countries in the region,” he said. Francois-Philippe Champagne, Canada's Trade Minister, described the breakthrough in a tweet as “big progress”.

Canada had held out to maintain environmental and labour protections linked to freer markets in the deal. Those elements were thrown into jeopardy by America's sudden withdrawal from the deal earlier this year. Canada had dug in over those progressive clauses. But they are much less attractive to countries like Vietnam, Malaysia, Chile and Peru now that the carrot of access to the huge U.S. market has been pulled.

Mr. Trump's election has upended years of American-led moves to open up global trade. The U.S. President is among leaders attending the APEC summit in Danang and on Friday he ladled out more of his trademark 'America First' rhetoric. In a strident address, he said his country will “no longer tolerate” unfair trade, closed markets and intellectual property theft. “We are not going to let the U.S. be taken advantage of any more,” he added, taking a swipe at multilateral trade deals.

Beijing is not included in the TPP, a deal initially driven through by the former U.S. administration as a counterweight to surging Chinese power in Asia. China has since sought to fill the free trade gap left by the U.S., even if much of its own market remains protected.

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South China Sea, Rohingya on ASEAN map

The maritime dispute over the South China Sea, exodus of the Rohingya citizens of Myanmar into Bangladesh and India, North Korean nuclear posturing and Islamic State-linked terrorism are likely to be the key talking points at the 31st ASEAN summit beginning here on Monday.

The South China Sea has been at the centre of discussions on multilateral problems at the ASEAN-China level, which has been further complicated by China's land reclamation projects aimed at building air surveillance and domination projects in the region.

Common future

ASEAN has been battling with the task of framing a Code of Conduct (CoC) for the common maritime future, which officials of the Philippines say is likely to get the green light during the ASEAN summit.

"We expect the leaders to announce the negotiations but the actual start of the negotiations will probably happen sometime next year," Foreign Affairs spokesperson Robespierre Bolivar said in a press interaction at the International Media Centre on Saturday.

Attention is also focused on Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, who arrived here on Saturday, and is expected to present her country's stand on the Rohingya issue.

Rohingya crisis

A Bangladeshi source told *The Hindu* that Dhaka expected ASEAN to raise the issue in a prominent way and convince Myanmar to stop the atrocities against the Rohingya. It is likely to be a major issue at the "retreat" where leaders can speak freely about all issues away from the media glare.

"It will be discussed, it will be up to Myanmar to raise the issue because this is a domestic concern for them," said Mr. Bolivar giving the official position of the Philippines.

The presence of the pro-Islamic State militants in the Marawi city in southern Philippines is also expected to receive attention as the fight with the militants has been a major domestic issue of the Philippines. The developments in Marawi have also emerged as a reason for it to seek international support. China has in recent months extended support to the Philippines.

Counter-terrorism

"China also provided timely weaponry assistance in the counter-terrorism campaign in Marawi, and on the second day after the campaign successfully concluded, Chinese engineering machinery were delivered for local reconstruction," said Premier Li Keqiang of China in a newspaper article.

It is expected that the simmering tension between the North Korea and the U.S. and Japan will also feature prominently on Monday's talks.

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Sea rights figure in first Quad talks

The event was also attended by Premiers Li Keqiang of China and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia.

The U.S.'s statement indicated that further cooperation "to curtail DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)'s nuclear and missile programmes and unlawful acts" were also on the agenda of Sunday's discussions.

Indian official sources emphasised that the quadrilateral was not aimed at any other country and said New Delhi was also involved in similar groupings in the region to deal with security and political issues.

The quadrilateral meeting is significant as it was held in the backdrop of the comments by the Chinese Premier urging reduction in tension over regional issues like the South China Sea dispute. "The wise expand common ground while the unwise aggravate differences," said Premier Li in a newspaper article, defending the Chinese position in the dispute.

Official sources emphasised that the quadrilateral was not aimed at any other country and said India was also involved in similar groupings in the region to deal with security and political issues.

India's commitment towards the region was highlighted by Mr. Modi as he took to the social media before arriving here and said, "I will take part in the ASEAN-India and East Asia summits, which symbolise India's commitment towards deepening engagement with ASEAN and India-Pacific region."

On Monday, Mr. Modi will take part in the inauguration of the ASEAN summit and will hold talks with Mr. Trump and Mr. Duterte.

He is also expected to deliver an address at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit.

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Contours of a counter-BRI

Recent high-level visits to India show distinct contours of a counter-alliance to China's Belt and Road Initiative taking shape. AP

India finds itself at a crossroads of grand alliances unfolding in the Indian Ocean Region. While one axis is a maritime one across the Indo-Pacific, the other is land-based, extending from Afghanistan into Southeast Asia. Interestingly, both are intended to act as a check on China's growing clout.

On Sunday, foreign ministry officials from India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. held discussions on the sidelines of the [East Asia summit in Manila in the Philippines](#) and discussed peace and stability in the region in addition to addressing common challenges.

"The discussions focussed on cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners. They agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large," a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said while reiterating that India's Act East Policy was the "cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region".

Four corners

Of late, the U.S. has been more vocal in its desire to include Australia in the India-Japan-U.S. security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region, referred to as the "quad" — a quadrilateral alliance of "like-minded" countries. Taking it a step further, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono has called for the inclusion of France and Germany. Against this backdrop, the prospect of quadrilateral discussions in Manila have generated considerable global interest on the possible outcome which China hoped "would not target or damage" a "third party's interest." Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meetings during his visit there will be watched closely.

While the quad still remains an idea, and it has to be seen what shape it takes, the diplomatic discussions in the national capital over the last few weeks and the statements by world leaders in the run-up to some recent high-level visits to India show distinct contours of a counter-alliance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also called One Belt, One Road, taking shape. The arc extends from Afghanistan on India's west all across the Northeast and into Myanmar and the Southeast Asian countries.

Various strands of this are already under way. India has been trying to build connectivity under various initiatives in its own Northeast region, in its neighbouring countries, and further into ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Now the U.S. has begun investing in India's periphery, and Japan is attempting to align its own development initiatives to improve connectivity in the region with India's Act East policy. The broader attempt is to institutionalise this into a structured trilateral format, and possibly a quadrilateral one at a later stage.

Collaborating with India

Last month, ahead of his visit to India, while delivering a speech at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State [Rex Tillerson expressed the need to collaborate with India](#) to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific so that it "does not become a region of disorder, conflict, and predatory economics."

Elaborating on the predatory economics, Mr. Tillerson said there are a “number of fledgling democracies for infrastructure investment” and stressed on the need to have alternative means of developing them. He referred to China’s investment model, saying, “the financing mechanisms it brings to many of these countries [results] in saddling them with enormous levels of debt.”

Mr. Tillerson further said, “We think it’s important that we begin to develop some means of countering that with alternative financing measures, financing structures” and added that they began a “quiet conversation” during the East Asia ministerial summit in August to create “alternative financing mechanisms” in a multilateral way.

In September, the [U.S. signed a \\$500 million agreement with Nepal](#) to build infrastructure for the latter’s electricity and transportation needs and to promote “more trade linkages with partners in the region like India.” Earlier, U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis had endorsed India’s sovereignty concerns surrounding the BRI.

Speaking at a think tank in New Delhi last month, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar endorsed the U.S. investment in Nepal. Stating that India cannot be in denial of other players coming into the region, he said: “I think an intelligent nation harnesses the changes and sees what works for you. To the extent we have countries whose broad goals are aligned with us.” India and Japan are also cooperating on a project for LNG (liquefied natural gas) supplies to Sri Lanka in addition to aligning their connectivity projects in Africa under the proposed ‘Asia Africa Growth Corridor’.

The broad mechanism is akin to China’s own build-up of the BRI initiative. China spent over a decade building capacities independently in its areas of interest — for instance, it built a series of dual-use facilities across the Indian Ocean surrounding India which is popularly referred to as its ‘string of pearls’ strategy. All such efforts have now been consolidated under its grandiose idea of BRI, bringing legitimacy to them and succeeding in getting the global community on board with offers of lucrative investments and long-term returns.

Time for caution

While cooperative mechanisms are crucial to maintain stability in the Indian Ocean Region, it would be prudent on India’s part to do a cost-benefit analysis of building such grand alliances in such uncertain times, especially on the role of the U.S. with President Donald Trump at the helm. One of the agreements reached between Mr. Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping was China’s Silk Road Fund, under the People’s Bank of China, to promote the Belt and Road international trade initiative. This shows the dichotomy in American policy, and India should exercise caution before jumping on to the bandwagon. It must await policy clarity from the U.S. both on Afghanistan and beyond.

On the other hand, Russia has asked India to join its International North-South Transport Corridor, arguing that it would be a gateway for India to connect with Central Asia through Chabahar port in Iran and via Afghanistan.

While India has objections to the BRI, it wouldn’t be ideal to bracket the country in a counter camp, but rather it should balance its outreach in accordance to national interests and its own terms. After all, the very countries which are pushing India into alliances are deeply intertwined with China in terms of trade. Excessive dependence on multilateral frameworks to fulfil national objectives may seem lucrative in the short term but could prove to be a costly mistake in the long term and compromise Indian sovereignty.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Next Door Nepal: Limits of democracy

International observer teams from distant Europe and elsewhere have started arriving in Nepal ahead of the provincial and federal polls slated for November 26 and December 7. The over-enthusiastic Election Commission has earmarked a huge budget — approximately 11 billion rupees — to conduct the first election under the new constitution. Some suspect a lack of transparency in financial allocation and management.

Elections in a democracy trigger enthusiasm and hope in the people. It is shared by the contesting political parties as well as external stakeholders. Nepal is no exception. The arrival of international observers' teams much in advance of the elections is an indication of the interest Nepal, a tiny nation of 290 million people, generates in the rest of the world. But there is also a visible sense of fear and scepticism. Will this election enhance hope and opportunities among the people, especially the youth? Or will it trigger more frustration and corruption? This is what the German ambassador to Nepal, Roland Schafex, asked while hosting a reception to celebrate German unification last Thursday. Germany's goodwill as well as cooperation towards the yet-to-be completed peace process and political transition is much appreciated in Nepal. Ambassador Schafex's question reflects the general mood and apprehension about the post election scenario.

The top leaders of all three major parties — the Nepali Congress and the Left Alliance (LA) consisting of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) — had claimed that this poll would be proof that the 2015 constitution has been fully executed and a failure (to hold the poll) could lead to Nepal's rebirth as a Hindu kingdom. The fact is the threat to the constitution emanates more from K.P. Oli, the prime ministerial candidate of the Alliance, made it clear that the communists have no reason to stick to the "parliamentary system" if they win the poll. "Why should we communists stick to the parliamentary system?" he asked, while addressing election meetings in the eastern region, his home ground.

The controversial 2015 constitution is clear about parliament electing the prime minister as the chief executive and a ceremonial president. What Oli was hinting at was that the Alliance may amend the constitution and opt for an executive president with sweeping powers and no accountability towards the parliament. With the prospects of the Nepali Congress, the oldest but a clearly confused and demoralised party, on the decline, the fear of the Left dumping the constitution and imposing party supremacy in statecraft is real. Incidentally, the top leaders of the Left Alliance, Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the CPN (Maoist Centre) and Oli of the CPN-UML, share a common political lineage. Both started their political careers with the annihilation of "class enemies" and preferred "one-party dictatorship" throughout the 1970s. It is only many years later that both were forced to shun the politics of violence and join the democratic system.

Dahal and Oli now seem to nurture hopes of reviving the idea of a totalitarianism system. This could well be triggered by their recent experience in government that the civil bureaucracy, judiciary and almost all the other constitutional organs of the state could be turned servile, at the cost of constitutionalism and the principle of separation of powers. The Nepali Congress has no reasons to complain for it had actively endorsed this subversion of the democratic system. It should not surprise anyone if a verdict in favour of the Left Alliance is interpreted as an endorsement of the party's supremacy over parliament and judiciary.

A democratic system in which the executive is not accountable to the elected parliament, which lacks an independent and credible judiciary, and where effective service delivery mechanisms are absent, in Nepal's context, will undermine the peace process, the very foundation of political change inaugurated in 2006. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that would cease to

exist in three months has not been able to take up any of the 61,000 human rights violation cases that took place during the Maoist insurgency because political parties, mainly the Maoists, refused to cooperate, out of fear that their top leaders and cadres could face trial.

“We have turned helpless in this political set-up,” says Krishna Adhikari, who was severely wounded when a public transport bus he was travelling in was ambushed by the Maoists a decade ago in Chitwan district. Thirty-eight passengers had died in that incident. “This was the worst case that took place during the insurgency,” Maoist chief Dahal, now a parliamentary candidate, admitted at an election rally last week. However, he neither promised justice to the victims nor did he apologise to them on behalf of his party. “We can’t do much, but the TRC must fulfil its mandate,” says National Human Rights chairman, Anup Raj Sharma. Many however, fear that the TRC and the peace process will be dead if the Alliance wins. It could well mean that the victims of the insurgency can’t expect any justice.

In the midst of all this confusion, questions are being raised about the transparency or lack of it on the part of the Election Commission. Misuse of government funds by the ruling parties, including the distribution of discretionary funds, has become brazen and routine. President Bidya Devi Bhandari signed a bill to ensure transparency in the conduct of private medical colleges only after a public-spirited doctor, K.C. [Govinda](#), threatened to go on indefinite fast. In the past six years, he has sat on hunger strike 15 times for the purpose.

The hiccups aside, all eyes are focussed on “the historic election” that is sure to deliver a parliament, most likely with the Left Alliance in majority. That, however, does not guarantee a new lease of life for democracy in Nepal.

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Delhi to Manila

As he joins the annual round of regional consultations in the Philippines, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) will find himself in a very different Asia than the one he has been familiar with. Delhi's challenge in the recent past was to cope with the sweeping agenda on trade liberalisation and climate change. Over the last three years, Modi has made India enthusiastic about green energy. But on commerce, he has found it hard to bridge the gap between regional expectations and India's slow pace of trade reform. Meanwhile in Manila, Modi will find that President Donald Trump's America, the long-standing champion of free trade, has turned a critic of economic globalisation and walked away from climate change commitments. On both counts, China has stepped in to fill the breach. As it reels under a massive trade deficit with China, chafes at President Xi's Belt and Road initiative which is limiting its regional space, and tries to catch up with China's lead on green technologies, Delhi will have considerable difficulty in accepting Beijing's leadership claims.

China's growing military power and political assertiveness have profoundly destabilised the regional security environment. Washington is struggling to find a reasonable accommodation with Beijing while trying to reassure its regional allies and retaining America's regional primacy. This churn has produced an unexpected strategic enthusiasm for India in Trump's Washington. The US president has surprised his regional friends and adversaries by replacing the term "Asia-Pacific" with "Indo-Pacific" to describe the region. He has also encouraged the renewal of a quadrilateral American dialogue with India, Japan and Australia. On its part, Delhi has signaled readiness to negotiate the terms of a new partnership.

China's rise is weighing heavily on the unity of the Association of South East Asian Nations and its centrality in shaping the regional agenda. Beijing's relentless pressure has tilted smaller states like Cambodia towards China, weakened US ties to long-standing allies like the Philippines and Thailand, and has begun to neutralise others. In inviting India as a founding member of the East Asia Summit in 2005, the ASEAN hoped that Delhi would actively contribute to peace and prosperity in the region and ensure a measure of balance among the major powers. If India's Commerce Ministry never stops disappointing the ASEAN on trade issues, the obduracy of the Defence Ministry has frustrated those in the region looking for stronger military partnerships with Delhi. Having invited all the leaders of the ASEAN to join India's Republic Day celebrations in January at a critical moment in Asia's economic and political evolution, Modi can hopefully convince his regional interlocutors that Delhi has something more than the long Rajpath parade on offer.

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4th India-Canada Annual Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi Tomorrow

4th India-Canada Annual Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi Tomorrow

A high level delegation led by the Canadian International Trade Minister, Mr. François-Philippe Champagne is visiting India to attend the 4th Annual Ministerial Dialogue (AMD) scheduled to begin tomorrow in New Delhi. The Indian delegation will be led by the Commerce and Industry Minister, Shri Suresh Prabhu.

In the current round of the Ministerial Dialogue, India and Canada would be focusing on some of the key commercial drivers to enhance the India-Canada partnership. Efforts would be made to work towards the expeditious conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) for a progressive, balanced, and mutually beneficial agreement covering both goods and services. Considering the high potential for bilateral trade, the trade ministers of both countries are likely to discuss issues to explore ways of expediting the early conclusion of the CEPA and the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA). They would also explore options for Indian interests in addressing the Temporary Foreign Workers Programme (TWFP) of Canada, which is affecting the movement of Indian professionals seeking short term visas, address equivalence by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for Indian organic product exports and exploring two way investment opportunities.

India has long standing friendly bilateral relations with Canada. Though geographically separated by a large distance, the historical ties between the two countries date back to the late 19th Century, when Indians began migrating in small numbers to British Columbia in Canada. Canada now has over 1.2 million Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), comprising more than 3 percent of its population. Though India's commercial ties with US have seen an upswing in the last few years, trade and investment relations between India and Canada are yet to realise their full potential. Given enormous complementarities, a concerted effort to boost bilateral trade and investment from both sides would provide a fruitful outcome.

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US policies toward India and Asia need strategic coherence

President Donald J. Trump is on his first official trip to Asia, with stops in Japan, South Korea, China, and now Vietnam, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) summit. In his address to the APEC CEO Summit, he outlined his stamp on Asia statecraft, which includes a vision of upholding a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” However, the United States cannot achieve that goal without strong Asian partnerships—including with India.

Though India is not on the president’s Asia itinerary, the nomenclature alone—Indo-Pacific rather than Asia-Pacific—suggests that New Delhi stands rightly to play a central part in the Trump administration’s larger Asia strategy. With long-standing allies like Japan, South Korea and Australia, India offers democratic and economic ballast to deal with the rise of China’s power. Sadly, US economic policy appears disconnected from the administration’s broader strategic goal. For the Trump team to succeed with the ambition of building a network of Asian partners which share our values, including India, the White House will need to corral its economic policies to match its strategic pursuits.

It is worth noting that the pursuit of a free and open rules-based order in a larger Indo-Pacific region represents the most purposeful articulation to date from the administration on Asia. Secretary of Defense James Mattis uses the phrase. Last month, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson delivered an entire speech about the concept, in which he called the United States and India “two bookends of stability” who can together “foster greater prosperity and security” in this broad region.

The Indo-Pacific idea recognizes that a rising China has become more assertive as well as authoritarian, and it elevates Washington’s ties with New Delhi as an alternative model to all that Beijing represents. By expanding Asia’s geographic net to include the world’s largest democracy, this larger region encompasses a greater balance favoring rule of law, freedom of navigation, open trade, and democracy. We commend this vision and see it as entirely in line with the [Barack Obama](#) and [George W. Bush](#) approaches to India and Asia.

To elevate India’s role, make it a full partner in our Asian network, and enhance Washington’s relations with New Delhi, the administration should help India gain a seat at the tables from which it is absent. In the security realm, Mattis has this part right, focused on tighter integration with New Delhi in joint exercises, defense technology, and sharing security perspectives in the region. In diplomacy, Tillerson also understands the important role India can play, and he has called for a partnership with India to develop financing that can provide an alternative to the market-rate Chinese Belt and Road infrastructure loans, which have caught smaller countries like Sri Lanka in a potentially insurmountable debt trap.

But to date, the administration has said little about what Washington can do to advance these interests. The “Quad” grouping that adds Australia to the robust trilateral of India, Japan, and the United States appears on the verge of revival, a positive step. In addition to strengthening ties to our traditional Asian allies, the president could start by clearly stating support for cooperative economic institutions like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. He should call explicitly for APEC to offer membership to India. Asia’s third largest economy deserves to have a seat at the table, and it will help India to be more embedded in the premier regime focused on free and open trade in Asia.

To address the urgent need for infrastructure funding in the Asian region—a principal political and economic imperative—the president should also support a capital base expansion for the World Bank, something favored by countries around the world, but which Secretary of the Treasury

Steven Mnuchin opposed during the Bank's annual meeting this year. It's hard to see where alternative support for development financing, especially financing for Asia's massive infrastructure needs, will come from if Washington does not enable the World Bank to do more at the low interest rates that can actually help countries develop—and which offer a real alternative to the Belt and Road loans. In fact it is impossible to imagine China improving its Belt and Road loan terms unless it is faced with real competition from the United States, Japan, Europe and India.

In economic dialogues with India, the administration needs to keep its gaze on the strategic and not get buried in the transactional. At a time when China has emerged as the most powerful economic partner to virtually every country in Asia, including South Asia, we must have a stable strategic and non-contentious relationship with India. While we recognize India's famously difficult stances on trade and market access questions, a narrow focus on the \$24 billion trade deficit with India (compared to more than \$300 billion with China), should not distract from this larger goal. Of course, we and India need to sort out market access problems and our difficulties with Indian intellectual property rights policies, but these questions are not strategic in nature.

Instead, we should identify realistic steps to enhance greater trade and investment with India—recognizing the time horizon might well appear farther than desired—and continue technical assistance to encourage New Delhi's ongoing reforms, which will be the key to unleashing greater economic growth. The Commerce Department's technical discussion with India on standards marks a great step in that direction. The trade deficit, a new favorite punching bag for the U.S. Trade Representative, does not.

To meaningfully support a "free and open Indo-Pacific," the Trump administration will have to be creative in building broad Asian partnerships, especially with its India policy. We need all the allies we can muster. A strong, stable, democratic India committed to a rules-based order will indeed be a "bookend" for the region. Washington will have to alter its economic focus to get there.

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Where clashes of geopolitics, politics and economic interests intersect

Discontent over saleA protest in Colombo in February against the proposed sale of stake in Hambantota port.AFPISHARA S. KODIKARA

Home to about six lakh people and investments worth billions of dollars, the district of Hambantota, along Sri Lanka's southeastern coast, is currently witness to at least three clashes.

At the geopolitical level, the competing strategic interests of China and India are no secret. From being almost invisible to becoming the most-watched district in Sri Lanka, Hambantota's image makeover foretells Sri Lanka's pivotal role in the Indian Ocean Region, more so after Colombo sold majority of its stake in the Hambantota port to China.

India in turn has offered to run the nearby Mattala airport, famous for its emptiness. While there is no final word yet, New Delhi is exploring options of using the airport facility to manage its air traffic or possibly run a flying school.

Also watching from India's side are countries such as the U.S. and Japan. They share India's concern over the heightened presence of China, which has pumped in billions of dollars into infrastructure projects in post-war Sri Lanka. China sees the port town as a valuable transshipment hub in 'One Belt One Road'.

In domestic politics, it is the constituency where the political futures of Sajith Premadasa and Namal Rajapaksa clash. Their fathers, both former Presidents — Ranasinghe Premadasa and Mahinda Rajapaksa — rose to power with a strong rural backing.

Living in uncertainty

The third clash, which is the least apparent but the most telling, is that between the people of Hambantota, the animals inhabiting the district and the development that is threatening to shake its ecosystem.

"Our lives have remained uncertain from the time of the tsunami in 2004," says G. Milani Harim, an aspiring politician who plans to contest in the local polls in 2018. "People are in perpetual fear, worrying when their land might be gazetted for development activity," she said, about the predominant fear of farmers and fisher-folk who constitute over 90% of the district's population.

Clearly, concern over land is on top of people's minds. With forest cover diminishing in the wake of development, locals point to an increase in incidence of human-elephant conflict — often leading to destruction of agricultural fields, damage to houses, and, at times, injuries or death to humans encountering the tusker. At least 25 people in the district died between 2010 to 2017 succumbing to wild elephant attacks, local newspaper *The Sunday Times* reported. As many as 57 elephants got killed in the same period.

However, Prithiviraj Fernando, Chairman of the NGO Centre of Conservation and Research, argued that there is scope for both conservation and development. Nearly 6,000 elephants in Sri Lanka are found in 62% of the country's expanse. "Of those, 70% live outside national parks and that is because elephants can coexist with humans," he said, countering popular anxiety. In his opinion, planned development where elephant paths are clearly demarcated with electric fencing can make a difference.

Development question

On the one side are farmers, fishermen and community leaders like Ms. Harim who remain sceptical of the huge projects surrounding them. On the other hand are local businessmen who are counting heavily on the mega development and the investment they hope it will bring.

“It does not matter if the investment comes from China, India or America, we want businesses in our district to benefit,” said K.A. Hemantha Padmalal, a former president of the Hambantota Chamber of Commerce, an organisation with representatives from the 4,000-strong local business community. India being “like a brother” could invest in the local agriculture and information technology sectors and boost them, Mr. Padmalal said. “India can also set up an automobile assembly facility, considering that car manufacturers in India transship their vehicles through the port,” he added.

Ms. Harim sees development differently. In her view, it should speak to the needs of an entire family. “Be it education, health, or access to jobs — all these should improve. For that, development should be holistic, not merely about infrastructure projects or businesses. At present, we can see the development, but not feel it.”

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China proposes inclusive dialogue with Indo-Pacific nations

China on Monday proposed an inclusive dialogue among all countries in the Indo-Pacific area, following fledgling attempts to form a quad group comprising India, the United States, Australia and Japan.

Rejecting a Cold War mindset, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said: "I think all relevant parties can put forward their vision and proposal on how to develop cooperation between the countries and regions. I hope this kind of proposal and vision can correspond to with the trend and correspond with the trend of the world." There is widespread perception in China that the quad effort is primarily aimed at its "containment", in response to Beijing's rapid rise.

"The relevant proposal (of forming the Indo-Pacific quad) should be open and inclusive and... avoid politicising or excluding some relevant parties," Mr. Geng observed.

During a visit to China last week, U.S. President Donald Trump had rejected the doctrine of 'containment' of China, and signalled that Washington and Beijing will be the main pillars of a more inclusive international system.

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Eastern promise

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Philippines to attend the ASEAN-India summit, the East Asia Summit and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership summit has put India centre-stage in the Asian region now referred to as "Indo-Pacific". Equally, it puts the "Indo-Pacific" and ties with the U.S. centre-stage in India's Act East policy, in all three spheres: political, strategic and economic. Mr. Modi's arrival in Manila was preceded by the first meeting of the India-U.S.-Japan-Australia quadrilateral, a grouping first mooted in 2006 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It ended with statements on cooperation for a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region", a direct signal that it will counter China's actions in the South China Sea if necessary. Next, Mr. Modi's meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump saw a similar emphasis on cooperating in the Indo-Pacific, a term now widely adopted by the U.S. The 'Quad' doesn't just pertain to maritime surveillance, it also aims at enhancing connectivity in accordance with "the rule of law" and "prudent financing" in the Indo-Pacific together, a reference to American plans to build an "alternative financing model" to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Finally, Mr. Modi's speech to ASEAN vowed to bring India's economic and business ties with the region up to the level of their "exceptionally good political and people-to-people relations". This sets the stage for closer engagement ahead of the 25th year Commemorative Summit to be held in Delhi in January 2018, with ASEAN leaders also expected to attend Republic Day festivities.

The clarity in India's purpose in East Asia at this juncture is important, but the next steps are equally vital. To begin with, despite a government statement to the contrary, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Quad, also called a "coalition of democracies" of the Indo-Pacific, is a front aimed at countering China's influence. As the only member of the proposed coalition that is also part of another security arrangement involving China and Russia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, India's ability to balance its interests will be tested. Finally, while there will be much to navigate on the political front, Mr. Modi would be keen to keep a sharp focus on the economic tailwinds during his engagements in Manila. The 10 ASEAN countries account for about 11% of India's global trade. For the past few years India has joined the ASEAN "plus six", including China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, to discuss the RCEP free trade agreement. Talks have often run into rough weather over India's stand on visas and services access, while also holding out against free trade that could give China an unfair edge in goods trade. Mr. Modi's work is cut out as he clarifies India's pivot in east Asia.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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The forgotten people: on Sri Lankan refugees

In recent months, the focus of the media has been on the Rohingya refugees in India. But the plight of Sri Lankan refugees, who have been here for nearly 35 years, appears to have gone out of the public consciousness.

The pathetic condition of shelters, restrictions on movement, and limited scope of livelihood opportunities affect the community of one lakh-odd Sri Lankan refugees, who have been living in Tamil Nadu ever since the anti-Tamil pogrom in Sri Lanka in July 1983. Besides, statelessness is a major problem for a section of refugees whose roots are from central parts of Sri Lanka, generally called hill country.

The refugees also suffer from social and psychological problems as reports of suicides, school dropouts and child marriage show. Many middle-aged refugees worry about their children's future, given the fact that 40% of camp refugees are below 18 years. As 28,500 refugees are said to be stateless, the Sri Lankan government, in 2003 and 2009, amended its laws to enable easier repatriation. Tamil political parties on the other side of the Palk Strait would love the refugees to return so that the strength of elected representatives from the Tamil-majority Northern Province will go up in the Sri Lankan Parliament.

Time to go home, maybe, but is home Lanka or T.N.?

Yet, the voluntary reverse flow of refugees has happened only incrementally. Even the end of the Eelam War in May 2009 and the decision of Indian authorities in January 2016 to waive visa fees and overstay penalty on a case by case basis for willing persons have not made a huge difference. In the last eight and a half years, hardly 10% of the refugee population (9,238 people) went back through a scheme implemented by Indian officials along with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). There is perhaps good reason for the refugees' reluctance to return.

Improvement in lifestyle

Around 62,000 refugees, living in 107 camps across Tamil Nadu, have been receiving various relief measures of the Central and State governments. In addition, in recent years, the Tamil Nadu government has taken steps for scores of young boys and girls of the refugee community to join professional courses, particularly engineering. This has benefitted eligible candidates among 36,800 non-camp refugees in the State too.

Repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees on the increase

Regardless of the quality of housing and the nature of their jobs, several camp refugees have experienced a perceptible improvement in their lifestyle. Besides, a new generation has been raised completely in Tamil Nadu and it would not be a surprise for many among them to regard Sri Lanka as an alien country, however nostalgic their parents may be for Jaffna or Mullaitivu.

The refugees know well that if they go back to Sri Lanka, they will not get many of the benefits they have been enjoying in Tamil Nadu. What especially bothers them is "lack of or no livelihood opportunities", as found in a survey of refugee returnees by the UNHCR, Colombo, in 2015. This situation may not improve in the near future given the state of the Sri Lankan economy.

The refugees from the hill country are landless. Unless they are given some quantum of land, they will be not be inclined to go back. One has to keep in mind the current situation in the hill country

region too where the Tamils are no longer interested in working on tea plantations.

Change in status quo

At present, for both India and Sri Lanka, the repatriation of refugees does not seem to be a priority. But they cannot afford continuing with the status quo either, as Tamil Nadu holds the distinction of hosting the largest number of refugees in India. It would be in the interests of the two countries to thrash out the issue sooner than later. While for India a long-standing problem would be resolved, for Sri Lanka it would be a step towards ethnic reconciliation.

In fact, political changes in Tamil Nadu in the last year provide a window of opportunity for India to revive talks with Sri Lanka. The two governments can come out with a comprehensive package on voluntary repatriation, after involving representatives of the refugee community, the Tamil Nadu government and Sri Lanka's Northern Provincial Council.

For refugees who want to stay back, India can consider providing them citizenship, as it did for refugees from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Of course, it has the right not to grant citizenship to trouble-makers. If everything goes off smoothly, authorities can finally close down camps in Tamil Nadu, bringing an end to an episode that has lasted longer than the civil war of Sri Lanka.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Myanmar: human rights under the junta?

The picture that accompanies this article has become iconic — iconic for all the wrong reasons of course, a symbol of an unhinged, dismal world where the mother with a dead baby in her arms must hold herself up in all her vulnerabilities to convince the world of the seriousness of the issue she represents. The issue here is the displacement and persecution of a desperately poor ethnic minority — the Rohingya from the Rakhine State in western Myanmar. It is also an issue that seems to have the uncertain prestige of unifying the world — from U.S. President Donald Trump [to her Oxford college](#) — all are willing to shake their head and say with a self-righteous sigh, Aung San Suu Kyi should be shorn of all honours.

The background

Unlike the earliest Muslim migrants to Burma who came from Persia, Arabia or India as traders, the Rohingya Muslims of Rakhine were never really well-assimilated in Burmese life. The community grew mainly through immigration and exogamy, because of the proximity of Muslim Bengal. This gave the community an inherent fragility which perhaps made them repeatedly reach out for external assistance, thus deepening the communal divide.

Rohingya's hope floats on a boat

But the fact that they were never well-assimilated and at a point in history dared to express solidarity with another nation, reason enough for the punishing circumstances they suffer today? Is that justification for the wretched mother's misery who kisses the forehead of her dead child? No.

News also keeps trickling in that the Rohingya might not be as vulnerable as they look. A local terrorist outfit called the ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) is said to have connections with even the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. In fact, the entire security operation by the Burmese Army this year that sparked off the mass exodus of half a million Rohingya to Bangladesh in what has been called a textbook case of ethnic cleansing was actually triggered by the ARSA simultaneously attacking 30 police outposts and one Army regiment's headquarters in Rakhine. But are we convinced by this explanation? That this was merely an act of self-protection by the Burmese military? No.

The picture of that unfortunate mother, eyes closed in resigned acceptance of her cruel destiny, lingers. And out tumbles our final question, angry because it is desperate: then what was Ms. Suu Kyi, State Counsellor since the landmark elections of 2015, doing? The winner of the Peace Prize, the upholder of human rights, the voice of conscience and hope in a world gone all wrong? And herein lies the twist to the tale. In a country where the military junta still holds unbridled power, granted to it by the Constitution of 2008, how much power does the State Counsellor really have? Did she really give the marching orders to the Army to unleash felony and violence on the community in August 2017? For let us not forget, the Burmese Army, or the Tatmadaw, still functions more or less as a parallel establishment, with unquestioned control over the departments of defence, internal affairs and border security. The 2008 Constitution guarantees it not only a guardianship role but also places it outside civilian control. No debates on defence or strategic matters are ever held in plenary sessions of the Burmese Parliament and the annual defence budget is merely a matter of parliamentary record, not scrutiny.

Rohingya: Bangladesh's burden to bear

And as we take note of these facts, let us also not forget the extraordinary timing of the first grisly rape and murder of a young Rakhine girl in the Muslim dominated township of Ramree in the

Rakhine State — May 28, 2012 — just before Ms. Suu Kyi was to leave after a period of 24 years for her first high-profile foreign trip outside Myanmar. Even as she officially accepted her Nobel Peace Prize on June 16, 2012, more stories of sectarian violence against the Rohingya surfaced in the international media. Too much of a coincidence to be taken at face value? Maybe.

Look at the system

To view the Rohingya issue merely as a racial or religious one is to catch the most superficial glimpse of it. It has deep roots which go back to 1948 or even beyond, it has a geographical spread that encompasses nearly the entire world or large tracts of it, causes of conflict that are social and economic as much as they are natural or religious. It also has at its epicentre something as basic and tangible as Myanmar's Constitution of 2008 — a document that the Tatmadaw pledges to protect with its life and the amendment of which is one of the main objectives of the Suu Kyi-led civilian government. It is only after its amendment that Myanmar can look forward to emerging as a true democracy and till that happens Ms. Suu Kyi has to continue her careful tiptoed walk with the military as well as the Buddhist ultranationalists with whom the Tatmadaw seems to be in an unholy alliance. Otherwise in jeopardy will be not only the Rohingya but also the fragile hopes of Myanmar's 53 million people with consequent ramifications for the ASEAN region and the rest of the world.

So while we mull over these facts, babes in arms die to prove to us the seriousness of the issue. It is indeed a world gone all wrong.

Nilanjana Sengupta is the author of 'Female Voice of Myanmar: Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi'

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Raja Mandala: A rediscovery of non-alignment

Why is a low-key meeting between officials from four nations — India, US, Japan and Australia — taking place after a gap of 10 years drawing so much attention? After all, India has joined so many mini-lateral forums since the end of the Cold War. That America is a big part of the quad provides a partial answer.

Although Indian officials have been sitting down with their American and Japanese counterparts for some years now, the quad comes amidst the growing Chinese unilateralism in Asia. India did much the same when it sought to hedge against America's unipolar moment by forming a political triad with Russia and China that later became the BRICS to include Brazil and South Africa.

If the explicit purpose of the triad was to promote a "multipolar world", the quad has the big task of preventing the emergence of a "unipolar Asia" dominated by China. But compared to the BRICS, which convenes annual summits and makes such big moves as creating new international financial institutions, the quad has a long way to go. It is also useful to remember the quad was formed a decade ago and disbanded soon after.

BRICS issues long joint statements on all contemporary issues. After their meeting in Manila, the quad officials did not put out a collective version of the deliberations. They issued separate national statements. If you are a foreign policy geek, you might find a nuanced variation in the emphases.

All the renewed quad did this week was to identify their shared interests on promoting connectivity, countering terrorism, addressing proliferation of nuclear weapons, and encourage respect for international law. It will be a while before they move towards effective actions on the ground. Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of India, China and Russia are gathering in Delhi next month. That should rule out much of the apprehensions of the quad as an "alliance to contain China". None of the four countries are interested in containment. In fact, the US, Japan and Australia have much deeper economic and political ties with China than India.

That India is open to both the quad and triad suggests not the construction of new alliances, but Delhi's return to the original conception of non-alignment. The persistent Indian anxieties on the quad are not about the high principle of strategic autonomy. They reflect the entrenched political distrust of America that expresses itself on any issue involving partnership with the US — whether it was the multilateral nuclear initiative, mini-lateral regional coordination through the quad, or the bilateral defence framework.

Contrary to the popular view, distrust of America was not written into independent India's DNA. India's founding fathers did not define non-alignment as "anti-Americanism". That distortion was a product of the 1970s. As US-India relations deteriorated and domestic politics drifted towards left-wing populism, a new dogma emerged. It decreed that working with Soviet Russia was "progressive" and cooperation with America meant "surrendering national sovereignty". In utter perversity, "non-alignment" was interpreted as "aligning" with Soviet Russia.

But this framework could not have survived without some correspondence with the new balance of power system that emerged around India. It was based on the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations after the 1962 war, breakdown of the socialist solidarity between Soviet Union and China, Sino-American rapprochement, and the Indo-Soviet entente. If America and China drew closer to Pakistan, Delhi tied up with Moscow.

This system began to slowly unravel after the Cold War ended. In the new era, conflict among the

major powers ebbed. India opened up its economy to globalisation and Western capital and technology. Restoration of cooperation with America became central to the recalibration of India's foreign policy since the 1990s.

If America has become more empathetic since then to India's concerns on terrorism, Kashmir and global nuclear order, a rising China has turned hostile. To make matters worse, tensions on the disputed Sino-Indian border have become more frequent and intense. Moscow, which once helped India balance China, is now in a tight embrace with Beijing.

The proposition that India must tilt to one side, towards Russia and China, and keep distance from America is a legacy from the 1970s. It does not square with contemporary reality. Russia and China, which are both eager to cut separate deals with America, can't demand a veto over Delhi's ties to Washington.

The original conception of non-alignment was about building strong ties with all the major powers and making independent judgements about international affairs. In what was described as "suckling from two cows", Delhi benefited immensely from simultaneous cooperation with Washington and Moscow in the 1950s and 1960s.

Discarding the ambiguities inherited from the 1970s, Delhi now appears ready to expand cooperation with the West or East on the basis of enlightened self-interest. If the quad helps India improve its ability to defeat terrorism, improve regional connectivity and extend its naval reach, Delhi is not going to thumb its nose. If China is ready to cooperate on terrorism and stop blocking India's rise, Delhi will be happy explore the multiple possibilities with Beijing. If this is not non-alignment we really don't know what is.

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4th Annual India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment Held in New Delhi

4th Annual India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment Held in New Delhi

The 4th India-Canada Ministerial Dialogue on Trade and Investment was held in New Delhi today. The Indian Delegation was led by the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri Suresh Prabhu while the Canadian side was headed by the Minister for International Trade, Mr. François-Philippe Champagne. The talks were held in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere covering a host of trade and investment issues. Both sides recognized that the current bilateral trade is much below the potential between the two world's robust economies, despite the huge untapped potential for two-way trade and investment.

Both sides noted the progress made during the 10th Round of the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) held in August, 2017 and expressed their strong commitment for taking forward negotiations for early conclusion. India also highlighted the importance of Services Component under CEPA. Both sides also noted the exchange of wish lists on the Services front and the Indian side reiterated that the architecture for Services under CEPA is a vital focus area and response from Canada on positive elements has to be mutually beneficial. The Canadian side assured that they would look into the issues concerned, including movement of natural persons and what kind of provisions could be built into the CEPA. The Ministers directed the Chief Negotiators to discuss and explore ways for early conclusion of the Agreement. Both sides also took note of the progress made under the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) and expressed their hope for an early conclusion.

Also, both sides deliberated on possible cooperation between the supporting agencies concerned, for mutual benefit as well as finding these agencies contributing directly or indirectly for promoting mutual trade interests. It was agreed to explore collaboration in the area of export credit insurance through India's Export Credit Guarantee Corporation Ltd. (ECGC Ltd.) and Canada's Export Development Canada (EDC). Both ECGC Ltd. and EDC are members of the Berne Union (BU), an international association representing the global export credit and investment insurance industry. Canada also proposed for possible cooperation with their Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC).

The other issues such as early institutionalization of the CEO Forum mechanism, issue of extension of derogation of pulses, etc. were also discussed. On the issue of pulses, the Commerce and Industry Minister suggested that given Canada's advantage in Geo-Spatial Planning and the work done in Geographical Information System, both should be utilised to analyse the crop production systems in India, forecast the trend for next 10 years and accordingly work towards a predictable environment for potential pulses which could be supplied from Canada. Commerce and Industry Minister also invited the Canadian side for participation in the Partnership Summit scheduled to be held in February, 2017 at Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and also invited Canada to be a partner country.

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US policies toward India and Asia need strategic coherence

President Donald J. Trump is on his first official trip to Asia, with stops in Japan, South Korea, China, and now Vietnam, for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) summit. In his address to the APEC CEO Summit, he outlined his stamp on Asia statecraft, which includes a vision of upholding a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” However, the United States cannot achieve that goal without strong Asian partnerships—including with India.

Though India is not on the president’s Asia itinerary, the nomenclature alone—Indo-Pacific rather than Asia-Pacific—suggests that New Delhi stands rightly to play a central part in the Trump administration’s larger Asia strategy. With long-standing allies like Japan, South Korea and Australia, India offers democratic and economic ballast to deal with the rise of China’s power. Sadly, US economic policy appears disconnected from the administration’s broader strategic goal. For the Trump team to succeed with the ambition of building a network of Asian partners which share our values, including India, the White House will need to corral its economic policies to match its strategic pursuits.

It is worth noting that the pursuit of a free and open rules-based order in a larger Indo-Pacific region represents the most purposeful articulation to date from the administration on Asia. Secretary of Defense James Mattis uses the phrase. Last month, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson delivered an entire speech about the concept, in which he called the United States and India “two bookends of stability” who can together “foster greater prosperity and security” in this broad region.

The Indo-Pacific idea recognizes that a rising China has become more assertive as well as authoritarian, and it elevates Washington’s ties with New Delhi as an alternative model to all that Beijing represents. By expanding Asia’s geographic net to include the world’s largest democracy, this larger region encompasses a greater balance favoring rule of law, freedom of navigation, open trade, and democracy. We commend this vision and see it as entirely in line with the [Barack Obama](#) and [George W. Bush](#) approaches to India and Asia. To elevate India’s role, make it a full partner in our Asian network, and enhance Washington’s relations with New Delhi, the administration should help India gain a seat at the tables from which it is absent.

In the security realm, Mattis has this part right, focused on tighter integration with New Delhi in joint exercises, defense technology, and sharing security perspectives in the region. In diplomacy, Tillerson also understands the important role India can play, and he has called for a partnership with India to develop financing that can provide an alternative to the market-rate Chinese Belt and Road infrastructure loans, which have caught smaller countries like Sri Lanka in a potentially insurmountable debt trap.

But to date, the administration has said little about what Washington can do to advance these interests. The “Quad” grouping that adds Australia to the robust trilateral of India, Japan, and the United States appears on the verge of revival, a positive step. In addition to strengthening ties to our traditional Asian allies, the president could start by clearly stating support for cooperative economic institutions like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. He should call explicitly for APEC to offer membership to India. Asia’s third largest economy deserves to have a seat at the table, and it will help India to be more embedded in the premier regime focused on free and open trade in Asia.

To address the urgent need for infrastructure funding in the Asian region—a principal political and economic imperative—the president should also support a capital base expansion for the World Bank, something favored by countries around the world, but which Secretary of the Treasury

Steven Mnuchin opposed during the Bank's annual meeting this year. It's hard to see where alternative support for development financing, especially financing for Asia's massive infrastructure needs, will come from if Washington does not enable the World Bank to do more at the low interest rates that can actually help countries develop—and which offer a real alternative to the Belt and Road loans. In fact it is impossible to imagine China improving its Belt and Road loan terms unless it is faced with real competition from the United States, Japan, Europe and India.

In economic dialogues with India, the administration needs to keep its gaze on the strategic and not get buried in the transactional. At a time when China has emerged as the most powerful economic partner to virtually every country in Asia, including South Asia, we must have a stable strategic and non-contentious relationship with India. While we recognize India's famously difficult stances on trade and market access questions, a narrow focus on the \$24 billion trade deficit with India (compared to more than \$300 billion with China), should not distract from this larger goal.

Of course, we and India need to sort out market access problems and our difficulties with Indian intellectual property rights policies, but these questions are not strategic in nature. Instead, we should identify realistic steps to enhance greater trade and investment with India—recognizing the time horizon might well appear farther than desired—and continue technical assistance to encourage New Delhi's ongoing reforms, which will be the key to unleashing greater economic growth. The Commerce Department's technical discussion with India on standards marks a great step in that direction. The trade deficit, a new favorite punching bag for the U.S. Trade Representative, does not.

To meaningfully support a "free and open Indo-Pacific," the Trump administration will have to be creative in building broad Asian partnerships, especially with its India policy. We need all the allies we can muster. A strong, stable, democratic India committed to a rules-based order will indeed be a "bookend" for the region. Washington will have to alter its economic focus to get there.

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Canada urges WTO deal on e-com, SMEs

Infrastructure push: Canadian pension funds are keen to invest in smart cities in India, said Mr. Champagne. Reuters

Canada plans to pitch for a global deal to boost trade involving e-commerce and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) besides norms that will help eliminate gender barriers to trade, at the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Ministerial Conference to be held next month, Canada's Minister of International Trade, François-Philippe Champagne said.

In an interview, Mr. Champagne said, "Canada will be pushing [for a] gender declaration... to favour more women and women entrepreneurs in trade. We are going to be pushing for [norms on] SMEs and e-commerce. We are very committed [to these] because we think these elements are real enablers for greater trade and [an agreement on these] are possible at the Ministerial Conference." The next Ministerial Conference, which is the WTO's highest decision-making body, will be held between December 10-13 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

On the possibility of WTO members agreeing for inclusion of a work programme on 'investment facilitation', he said, "We will see."

'Expedite FIPPA'

On bilateral issues with India, Mr. Champagne said Canadian pension funds were keen to invest in the development of infrastructure and smart cities in India. However, he said, "what is slowing down the level of (Canadian) investment (in India) is that we haven't yet finalised the bilateral Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPPA)." "That is why I was telling [commerce and industry] minister Suresh Prabhu that we need to quickly finalise the FIPPA." Mr. Champagne, who on Monday also met Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, said, "... it is in the best interests of Canada and India to finalise it [FIPPA] to bring a new momentum in our relationship."

On whether the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which, among other things, enables investors to sue governments before international tribunals and seek huge compensation for the economic harms they suffer due to reasons including policy changes, will be included in the FIPPA, he said, "when there is a will there is a way."

He further said, "Both Jaitley and I are lawyers, so we have, I think, established a way forward, which takes into account the interests of Canada and the reality also from the Indian side. I am confident that, on that basis, our chief negotiators will be able to make progress." When queried if the ISDS provisions in the FIPPA would ensure a balanced outcome or whether it would be in favour of either investors or the State, Mr. Champagne said, "You will find a win-win outcome because that's what we want. Canada stands out as the flag bearer of progressive and inclusive trade." Asked whether Canada was keen on signing the FIPPA before the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), he said, "I want both. [But] on the FIPPA, the negotiations are more advanced, and so I spoke to Jaitley. We agree on what are the remaining issues... [and] on how to resolve them. So we have told our chief negotiators to get on with it." On the CEPA, he said, "we need to engage in discussions... From the Canadian side we are equally committed because, blame me for being ambitious ...we need to look at the full potential of our relationship."

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India, U.S. deepen engagement

Stronger ties: Vietnam's PM Nguyen Xuan Phuc, left, PM Narendra Modi and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, right, shake hands at the 15th ASEAN-India Summit in Manila. AFP/MANAN VATSYAYANA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday left for home after concluding his three-day visit to the Philippines where he attended the ASEAN-India and East Asia summits besides holding a series of bilateral meetings with a number of leaders including U.S. President Donald Trump.

"After a series of productive bilateral and multilateral engagements in Manila, PM @narendramodi heads for home," Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

United approach

On the sidelines of the summits, Mr. Modi held "very expansive" talks with Mr. Trump during which the two leaders carried out a "broad review" of the strategic landscape in Asia, signalling deeper cooperation by the two countries in dealing with sensitive security issues confronting the region.

It is learnt that the broader security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region in the backdrop of China's increasing military presence in South China Sea figured in their talks apart from a host of other regional and global issues including terrorism emanating from Pakistan, North Korea's missile tests, situation in Afghanistan and also the Gulf region.

Mr. Modi also held wide-ranging talks with Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, covering an entire gamut of bilateral relationship. After their talks, the two countries inked four pacts providing for cooperation in a number of areas, including defence and security.

He held wide-ranging talks with his Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe, with a focus on ramping up the strategic partnership between the two Asian giants.

Many bilateral meets

Mr. Modi held bilateral meetings with his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull, Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and discussed ways to further ramp up cooperation in various key areas like trade and investment.

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India asserts itself in China's backyard

The explanation of India's post-Doklam international image acquires significance in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's one-on-one meeting with Premier Li Keqiang that was held on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit on Tuesday.

Following the meeting the MEA spokesperson took to social media to announce that the meeting signified, "two neighbours in deep conversation."

Elaborating on the counter-China angle, the high-level official said the Southeast Asian region had been facing uncertainties following the exit of President Barack Obama as he took visible interest in the region.

However, the latest visits by the leaders of the quadrilateral countries, including by the new U.S. President Donald Trump have once again assured support to these countries as they face China's commercial and military domination.

In this context, he said the fundamental change in India's foreign affairs is in its embrace of the big ticket issues of East Asia like the North Korean nuclear crisis as well.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared concerns of DPRK's pursuit of missiles and nuclear weapons and called for complete verification and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. He also said that North Korea's proliferation links must be investigated and the parties who have supported these unlawful programmes must be made accountable," Preeti Saran, Secretary in charge of eastern ties in the Ministry of External Affairs said at a media briefing explaining India's position.

The anonymous Indian official said that taking up of North Korean threats was part of a new Indian set of concerns that also covers major global issues like terrorism by the Islamic State and its capability to inflict mass casualties, and tensions in the South China Sea that concern the world as well as India.

"The North Korean nuclear missiles are not just problematic for the U.S., but for the entire world, including us, as Pyongyang's missiles are capable of hitting targets in different parts of the world," said the diplomat.

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India and Canada Technology Summit opens a new chapter of industrial research and innovation cooperation

India and Canada Technology Summit opens a new chapter of industrial research and innovation cooperation

India and Canada opened a new chapter in their bilateral relationship with the start of a two-day India-Canada Technology Summit in New Delhi today. The Summit, organized jointly by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) was inaugurated by Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan and Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Mr. Navdeep Singh Bains.



In his inaugural address, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that “as partners in the 21st century knowledge economy, this Technology Summit reinforces our common belief in the power of science and technology in contributing to the present and future strategic Indo-Canadian partnership”.

A new call for joint projects under the Indo-Canadian Industrial R&D programme was also announced on this occasion. Industry led joint R&D projects that have significant potential for commercialisation leading to product or process development in the areas of advanced manufacturing, clean technologies, smart cities and food and agro technologies will be supported by DST from India and the National Research Council of Canada.

The two Ministers also announced a new mobility based student internship program that will foster research and industrial linkages by promoting cross-border cooperation under support of the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of DST and MITACS of Canada. The new phase of India Canada - IMPACTS program between DST and NSERC, Canada, was announced to promote multidisciplinary research partnerships aimed to deliver practical solutions through application of science and technology.



Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Navdeep Bains is leading the large business delegation to participate at the event. The 175-member Canadian delegation also include Mr. Francois Champagne, Canadian Ministers of International Trade and Mr. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport, besides large number of industries and academic institutions.

Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Professor Ashutosh Sharma, and Dr. B. Mario Pinto, President of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), signed an MoU that will facilitate continued innovative partnerships between Canadian and Indian researchers.

The themes for the Technology Summit highlight a broad range of research and innovations areas where India and Canada have common interests. These cover, Advanced Manufacturing, Intelligent Transport Systems, Aviation, and Infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence, Data Sciences, Agricultural Technology, Clean Energy & Clean Technologies. A particular focus of the Summit is highlighting the role of women in science and business as well as promoting the start-up and incubator communities in India and Canada. The Canadian and Indian companies for the Tech Summit include world class innovators and technologies that have potential to forge new knowledge-market-economy connect at bilateral level. Sixty smart technologies were also showcased as a part of the exhibition.

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Curtain Raiser Event held for the Founding Ceremony of International Solar Alliance in Bonn, Germany

Curtain Raiser Event held for the Founding Ceremony of International Solar Alliance in Bonn, Germany

A Curtain Raiser Event for the Founding Ceremony of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was held at Bonn, Germany yesterday.

Speaking at the event, Shri Anand Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India hoped that, in the spirit of affirmative action, developed countries will earmark a percentage of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) towards solar energy projects in developing countries. He suggested that Multilateral Development Banks and other financial institutions provide wholehearted support for solar projects through low cost finance, and research & technology institutions worldwide try their utmost to bring the cost of solar power and storage within the reach of all. Shri Kumar also invited corporates and other institutions to support solar energy development and deployment in every possible manner.

Recalling that the ISA initiative is the vision of Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, Shri Kumar reaffirmed Indian Government's continued support for the ISA. He also spoke about the Government plans to increase the share of renewable energy in India's energy mix, especially towards achieving cumulative installed renewable power capacity of 175GW by 2022.

Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, Shri C.K. Mishra, underlined the need for visualising solar energy in the context of sustainable development goals. He emphasised upon the need for arranging technologies, finance and capacity building for solar energy projects, as well as for developing storage technologies. He also suggested that there is a need to work in the areas of renewable power evacuation and application of off-grid solar energy.

Interim Director General of the ISA, Shri Upendra Tripathy, informed that ISA will become a treaty-based international intergovernmental organisation on 6 December 2017. 44 countries have already signed the ISA treaty, and many more are set to join. He spoke on the ISA's three ongoing programmes: facilitating affordable finance for solar, scaling up solar applications for agriculture, and promoting solar mini-grids in Member Nations. The discussions also covered the ISA's Common Risk Mitigation Mechanism (CRMM) project,

aimed at de-risking investments into solar energy projects in developing countries, and thereby, encouraging flow of funds into the sector.

Speaking at the occasion, H.E. Ségolène Royal, Special Envoy for the implementation of the ISA, Government of France, emphasised upon five key points to accelerate global solar deployment: setting concrete goals, developing and leveraging common tools, enhancing projects, establishing decentralised PV solutions, and forging new partnerships that capitalise on complementary capabilities.

The ISA was jointly launched on 30 November 2015 by Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and then-President of France, H.E. François Hollande, on the side lines of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties 21 (CoP21) at Paris, France. The ISA is a treaty-based alliance of 121 prospective solar-rich Member Nations situated fully or partially between the Tropics, and aims at accelerating development and deployment of solar energy globally.

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France wants to work with India in Indo-Pacific

Jean-Yves Le Drian

France will like to deepen cooperation with India in the Indo-Pacific bilaterally and not as a part of a multilateral arrangement like the recently convened “quadrilateral” between India, U.S., Japan and Australia, officials said here on Wednesday.

“We have a growing cooperation in the Indian Ocean, where both India and France have focal positions, and we are in the process of forming a defence and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific,” announced France’s Ambassador Alexandre Ziegler, adding that this new cooperation would be discussed as part of the strategic partnership along with cooperation in counter-terrorism, defence hardware, nuclear energy, and space cooperation during the upcoming visit of Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to India.

However, senior diplomats clarified that France and India have a “special and specific” interest in the Indian Ocean, and would prefer to conduct their exchanges across the Indo-Pacific bilaterally. “There is a very strong interest on both sides to keep this bilateral,” a French Embassy official told reporters. “We should not forget that India and France have both a geographical presence as well as a traditional connection of trust in the Indian Ocean,” the official added.

Large territory

France is the only western country with large territory in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) including the Reunion Islands, that spans about two million square kilometres of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and it has a population of one million French Citizens in the region, including about 30% of Indian origin. The French navy maintains bases in the UAE, Djibouti as well as in Reunion, with a total of 20,000 forces permanently based in the IOR. In addition, said the official, France is India’s oldest strategic partner, and has conducted India’s first international ‘Varuna’ joint naval exercises since 1983.

“Therefore, the idea would not be for France to join some other formation, but for others to join what India and France are already doing,” the official said in reply to a question about whether France would consider joining the quadrilateral that met in Manila on November 12. Both the official and Ambassador Ziegler declined comments on the nature of the projects being considered for bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Drian, who will meet with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and other Ministers on Friday, will be in India as part of a series of trips by senior French officials, including the Defence Minister and the National Security Adviser who are preparing for a visit by France’s President Emmanuel Macron in “early 2018.”

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An itinerary in search of a strategy: on Trump's East Asia tour

Parsing Donald Trump's statements and Twitter posts through his 12-day, five-nation tour of Asia — the longest for a U.S. President in 25 years — to decipher a new American strategy towards the region can be taxing unless the idea is to cherry-pick and substantiate pre-existing notions.

'Terrific' China

One can read resistance to China's expansive ambitions in euphemisms such as 'freedom of navigation' and condemnation of 'predatory' economic practices, used along with America's commitment to democracy, human rights, and free trade. When you read them alongside the U.S.-Philippines commitment to "share best practices" to prevent illegal drug use, which is a "problem afflicting both countries", and Mr. Trump's desire to be friends with the "short and fat" ruler of North Korea, the emerging picture could appear confusing, if not outlandish.

In his interactions with reporters as he travelled back, Mr. Trump gave an overview of the "terrific" tour and the new friendships that he has developed, how he enjoyed the unprecedented reception in Beijing, conversations with the ["terrific" President Xi Jinping](#) and the special honour he received at the Forbidden City. What topped the list of achievements for him were the business deals — he put the figure at \$300 billion and hoped that it would exceed \$1 trillion in the coming months, though the actual numbers remain unclear. He said security partnerships with these Asian partners have also been enhanced.

Ahead of his travel, the White House had said his speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO summit in Vietnam would elucidate his vision for the Indo-Pacific region, a term that the Trump administration has started using in a clear acknowledgment of India's prominence. Administration officials had been emphatic that his speech would demonstrate the U.S.'s continuing commitment to the region. His speech did not live up to the build-up, and may have actually added to the nervousness among traditional U.S. partners. Recalling the U.S.'s historical ties to the region, Mr. Trump said it is time the terms of engagement between these countries and the U.S. changed. In his reckoning, the U.S. has been taken advantage of by all countries and global institutions, particularly the World Trade Organisation (WTO). But he would not blame other countries or their leaders for this situation; it was all the fault of the U.S. administrations that preceded him.

"Those days are over," he declared. He was there "to offer a renewed partnership with America," the basis of which would be "bilateral trade agreements with any Indo-Pacific nation that wants to be our partner and that will abide by the principles of fair and reciprocal trade... I call it the Indo-Pacific dream."

What does he mean?

The U.S. has trade deficits with all the five countries that Mr. Trump visited and he told four of them that the U.S. would not tolerate this — putting China, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam in the same basket on this count. In the case of the Philippines, which has a small surplus with the U.S., the relationship is less about trade, he said, but more for "military purposes... it's called the most prime piece of real estate from a military standpoint."

What are the implications of Mr. Trump's statement that "those days are over?" First, America offers these countries technology, capital and access to its market. Second, America offers a

security guarantee and a predictable world order based on multilateral trade and security pacts. China has also been a beneficiary of this system, and the rise of China has added additional buoyancy for neighbouring countries. The friction between China and its neighbours heightened as Beijing's ambitions grew after the 2008 financial crisis. Vietnam, Philippines, Japan, and South Korea started to gravitate more towards the U.S., which was itself alarmed by the assertiveness of China. The Obama administration announced the Pivot to Asia strategy in response. Kurt Campbell, an Obama official who is credited with drafting the policy, described it as "a multifaceted approach that will involve a strong security component, working with allies, working constructively with China, a commercial dynamic that is about not shipping U.S. [jobs], but U.S. exports and services to Asia; a commitment to building institutions to multilateralism; bringing other partners into Asia, like Europe, working closely with Europe."

Like Mr. Trump, Barack Obama also wanted to open the Asian markets for American companies, but there was a broader blue print at play. Mr. Trump has knocked it down to a one-point agenda: buy our goods and services. His statement that countries in the "region [should] be strong, independent, and prosperous, in control of their own destinies, and satellites to no one," is a call for ending multilateralism. More than a newfound respect for the autonomy of these countries, it reflects American disinterest.

Mr. Trump also told his Asian hosts that they were free to pursue their interests solo, as he would pursue his. He hinted that America is washing its hands of any leadership role, making it clear that it could cut a deal with China on its own, regardless of its potential impact on other countries. China is the biggest trading partner of South Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Speaking after Mr. Trump at APEC, Mr. Xi presented a case for multilateralism and open trade. China is also willing to offer technology, capital and market access, on its terms under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Security concerns

Now, what is America offering for the security of these Asian partners? Mr. Trump asked them all to join hands with the U.S. in stopping North Korea's nuclear adventurism. But that apart, he told Japan, Vietnam and South Korea to buy "our weapons".

"We make the best," he told them and cited how Saudi Arabia was using them effectively. In one Twitter post during the tour, he also gave a carte blanche to the Saudi Arabian regime to chart regional politics.

Mr. Trump's "Indo-Pacific dream" may not appear to be much of a dream for most countries in the region. In 2006, Mr. Trump had said he was waiting for a housing market crash, and boasted about his ability to profit from a falling market. Conflicts in Asia, in the west and the east, could appear to be good opportunities for profit from the realtor's perspective.

We may be looking for a strategy that does not exist, perhaps. American economist Lawrence Summers, now a Harvard professor, and a key player in the American-led globalisation over the last three decades, described the challenge before America: "... (we) confuse a strategy with a wish list. Our strategy is that it is very important that they open their markets, that it is very important that they cooperate with us on this security issue... Well, that is a good wish list... And I do not think we as yet have a strategy for thinking about the management of the global economic system that is appropriately respectful of the scale and achievements of the Chinese economy."

varghese.g@thehindu.co.in

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A plan for Asia

The renewal of the quadrilateral security dialogue between senior officials of India, United States, Japan and Australia dominated the coverage of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s annual political pilgrimage to East Asia this week. When you cut through the hype though, it is easy to see that the quad is not among Delhi's immediate priorities. The conversation between the four capitals on reviving the quad has been taking place for some time. That the meeting took place in Manila on the margins of the annual ASEAN-led meetings was just a matter of diplomatic convenience. The separate national statements issued by the four governments after the meeting underlined the exploratory nature of the consultations. It will be a while before the quad acquires unity of purpose and an action plan that can make a decisive impact on the region.

The quad's significance, however, lies in the future. That President Donald Trump referred to the region as "Indo-Pacific" is a reflection of the emerging expectations from India amidst the increasing unsustainability of the present Asian order. The rise of China, the expansion of its military capabilities and Beijing's assertiveness on territorial disputes has ended the prolonged tranquility in the region. China's pressure on its neighbours is weakening the unity of the ASEAN and limiting the options of most countries — big and small — in the region. The US, which has long dominated Asian order, as well as many of China's neighbours, want Delhi to contribute a lot more to regional peace and security. On his part, the PM has signalled India's intent to promote a rules-based architecture in Asia.

The problem, however, is with Delhi's capacity to deliver on the PM's promises. On security cooperation, for example, the Ministry of Defence neither has the time nor inclination to think positively about military diplomacy in East Asia. While substantive MoD reforms are not on the cards, the PM must be prepared to announce a specific set of measures for deepening security cooperation with the ASEAN, when all the 10 leaders of the forum show up for Republic Day celebrations in January. Modi's challenge is a lot harder in the commercial domain, given his government's apparent political discomfort with trade liberalisation. India is the laggard in the negotiations on the ASEAN framework for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). If Trump has shocked the region by pulling America out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) talks and China is claiming the leadership of Asian regionalism, Delhi is paralysed. Without a plan to advance economic integration with East Asia, the gap between India's strategic promise and its performance will continue to grow and undermine Delhi's political credibility.

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After the tsunami: how the 'Quad' was born

On the morning after Christmas 2004, the staggering death toll (eventually more than 230,000) from the tsunami was still unknown, when a call from Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to Indian envoy Nirupama Rao made it clear that island nation needed urgent humanitarian assistance. In Washington DC, Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen was also being asked by the U.S. government how much India could help further afield, as the tsunami had wreaked havoc across the area now called the Indo-Pacific. For India, said a senior official, it was time to show that the Indian Ocean was in fact India's domain, and India committed in an unprecedented manner to the effort. Within 12 hours, Indian naval helicopters were in Colombo with relief material. By the next day, two Indian naval ships were in Galle and Trincomalee, while three others were despatched to Male. Two more, INS Khukri and INS Nirupak, were converted into hospital ships and sent to the worst hit-country, Indonesia, within days as well. In all, about 32 Indian ships and 5,500 troops were involved in the international relief effort, not to mention the work the armed forces carried out in Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

India, Japan, U.S., Australia hold first 'Quad' talks at Manila ahead of ASEAN Summit

India's effort

"India's full capabilities came as a surprise to the world," recalls Shyam Saran, Foreign Secretary at the time, who received a call from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, saying the world couldn't wait, and it was up to the countries of the Indo-Pacific that had naval capabilities of scale to move in urgently. On December 29, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that India, the U.S., Japan and Australia would set up an international coalition to coordinate the massive effort required: to rescue those trapped in the waters, rush relief, and rehabilitate those made homeless, and to restore power, connectivity lines as well as infrastructure like ports and roads. By mid-January the coalition handed over charge to the UN, but while their immediate mission had ended, it led to the birth of a new framework: the Quadrilateral, or Quad. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the first off the block, voicing his long-standing idea of an "arc of prosperity and freedom" that encompassed India, and brought it into a tighter maritime framework, with Japan, the U.S. and Australia, which were already close military allies. The plan for a meeting of the Quad was firmed up when [Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Tokyo](#) in December 2006.

Even as the idea grew, however, it encountered growing concerns in Beijing. But, the idea born of such intense urgency as the tsunami met a lack-lustre end after its meeting in May 2007. Contrary to public perception, Australia wasn't the first to demur. The U.S. felt that angering China with the Quadrilateral would hamper larger strategic efforts under way, including the move for sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council, and the six-nation talks on North Korea.

A decade later, the question is: will the [Quadrilateral](#) melt away as before, or is it an idea whose time has finally come?

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Japan and China move to mend ties as U.S. retreats under Trump

Moving closer: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in November 2014. AP/Kim Kyung-hoon

It was the smile that did it.

When Shinzo Abe, Japan's Prime Minister, met with President Xi Jinping of China on the sidelines of a regional summit meeting in Vietnam over the weekend, the pair shook hands and posed for a photo. Mr. Xi, who had looked more dour in previous meetings, flashed a grin.

It was a sign, the Japanese news media suggested, of warming relations between the two long-time adversaries.

With President Donald Trump creating unease among allies about the role the U.S. will play in the region, Japan and China are inching toward a possible rapprochement as they recognise the shifting dynamics around the Pacific Rim.

A realignment?

But with the two Asian powers long divided by disputes over history and territory, as well as testiness over influence in the region, it will take more than a few handshakes — or a smile — to cement a genuine realignment.

In gesturing toward a new friendliness, Japan is motivated in part by the recognition that China is supplanting the U.S. as the leader of free trade in the region.

Having watched Mr. Trump heap praise on Mr. Xi in Beijing last week, Japan is also propelled by fear that the U.S. may develop a closer relationship with China that would exclude Japan. And as China seeks to consolidate its power, it realises it may have more success exerting its authority in the region with Japan as a partner rather than a pure rival.

At the same time, Mr. Trump's visit showed China that the U.S. is unlikely to get in its way, allowing a more confident Mr. Xi to be more generous toward Japan.

Real shock

"What Trump represented was a real shock to the system of allies and the world," said Nick Bisley, professor of international relations at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

The threat from North Korea is also naturally drawing China and Japan together, although Mr. Abe has so far hewed closely to Mr. Trump's approach of calling for more pressure and sanctions.

Mr. Abe appears keenly aware of Mr. Trump's erratic swings in opinions and loyalties. Japan is naturally wondering if the U.S. may make some kind of deal with China that could put Japan at a disadvantage, experts said.

"Standing behind that is kind of what you always find in Japan — that underlying fear of abandonment," said Daniel C. Snider, a lecturer in East Asian studies at Stanford University. As Mr. Abe and Mr. Xi take the first steps toward a better relationship, many obstacles remain.

Neither country has given any ground in a territorial dispute over a set of islands in the East China

Sea, known in Japan as the Senkaku and in China as the Diaoyu. China also still regularly objects to what it perceives as any sign that Japan is returning to its militaristic past and carefully watches the debate in Japan about how much to develop the military's capabilities.

Trade pact

Japan has also actively sought to counter China's economic rise by developing relationships with other countries in the region. On the same day Mr. Abe met Mr. Xi in Danang, Japan led a group of 11 countries in announcing the restart of negotiations for a sweeping trade agreement to create an economic bloc that would exclude China.

In both countries, the public views the other with suspicion. "I don't think I see how they can make drastic improvements, given the public opinion base," said Ezra Vogel, a professor emeritus of social sciences at Harvard who is working on a book about Sino-Japan relations.

Still, the tentative outreach is happening as both Mr. Abe and Mr. Xi have recently shored up their domestic power, in Japan through a parliamentary election in October and in China as a result of last month's Communist Party congress. NY TIMES

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Coup de Grace: on Zimbabwe's political crisis

Zimbabwe's prolonged political crisis reached the boiling point earlier this month when President Robert Mugabe dismissed the Vice-President, Emmerson Mnangagwa. A battle to succeed the 93-year-old liberation hero-turned President had already been brewing within the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF), with the old guard backing Mr. Mnangagwa, himself a freedom fighter, and 'Generation 40', a grouping of younger leaders supporting Mr. Mugabe's 52-year-old wife, Grace. Ms. Mugabe, known for her extravagant lifestyle and interfering ways, has been vocal in recent months about her political ambitions. Mr. Mugabe was seen to have endorsed her when on November 6 he dismissed Mr. Mnangagwa. But Mr. Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980, erred on two counts: he underestimated the deep connections Mr. Mnangagwa has within the establishment and overestimated his own power in a system he has helped shape. In the good old days, Mr. Mugabe was able to rule with an iron grip. But those days are gone. Age and health problems have weakened his hold on power, while there is a groundswell of anger among the public over economic mismanagement. So when he turned against a man long seen by the establishment as his successor, Mr. Mugabe left little doubt that he was acting from a position of political weakness. This gave the security forces the confidence to turn against him and make it clear they didn't want a Mugabe dynasty.

Will never accept Zimbabwe coup: African Union

The military doesn't want to call its action a coup d'etat, for obvious reasons. A coup would attract international condemnation, even sanctions. But it is certain that the army chief, Gen. Constantino Chiwenga, is in charge. His plan, as it emerges, is to force Mr. Mugabe to resign and install a transitional government, perhaps under Mr. Mnangagwa, until elections are held. If Mr. Mugabe doesn't resign, it will complicate the process. He has not been seen since the army took over the capital, Harare. Any attempt to hurt him could backfire. Even if he agrees to resign, the transition may not be smooth. However inept and dictatorial Mr. Mugabe's regime had been, a coup will remain a coup irrespective of what the plotters call it, raising questions of legitimacy about the new government. Also, Mr. Mugabe can still tap into his support base among the black working class, which has provided him a buffer against public anger towards his government. Across Africa, he continues to be seen by many as an anti-colonial hero. His successor, who will be picked by the generals, will inherit huge challenges — a dysfunctional economy, massive unemployment, a broken ruling party and a united opposition. Besides, the military has shaken up the civilian supremacy over the armed forces by staging this coup. The biggest challenge for the new leader will be to make sure that the military stays in the barracks.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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The ASEAN outreach

The Philippines has been the centre of attraction for the last few days with Manila hosting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-India and East Asia summits as well as special celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of ASEAN, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) leaders' meeting and the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit. [Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined these meetings](#), underscoring India's commitment to deepening ties with the ASEAN member states and the wider Indo-Pacific region as part of the 'Act East' policy.

Centre of global politics

The Indo-Pacific region is now central to global politics and economics and recent days have merely reinforced the trends that have been emerging for some time. China is the most important player in the region, and as Chinese President Xi Jinping made clear in his speech at the recent Communist Party Congress, Beijing is now more confident than ever of projecting regional and global power. In this, China has had the good fortune of having an administration in the U.S. that lacks seriousness of purpose and is unable to communicate effectively its priorities for the region. This makes this period of transition very significant for countries like India that have a stake in the long-term stability of the region.

Addressing the 15th ASEAN-India Summit, Mr. Modi said India's relationship with ASEAN is a key pillar of its foreign policy. Referring to India's Act East Policy, he underlined that "its centrality in the regional security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region is evident." [He focused on terrorism](#) as well, suggesting, "It is time that we jointly address this challenge by intensifying cooperation in this crucial area." In a symbolic move, all 10 ASEAN heads of state have been invited to be guests of honour for next year's Republic Day function. Targeting China, Mr. Modi also assured ASEAN of "steady support towards achieving a rules-based regional security architecture that best attests to the region's interests and its peaceful development."

Eastern promise

The East Asia Summit, which includes India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S. and Russia apart from the 10 ASEAN member states, also gave Mr. Modi another opportunity to underline ASEAN's credentials: "ASEAN began in times of a great global divide, but today as it celebrates its golden jubilee, it shines as a beacon of hope; a symbol of peace and prosperity."

As China's profile grows, and the U.S. continues to be unsure of its security commitments, there is a new opportunity for India in the region. U.S. President Donald Trump gave mixed signals during his Asia trip where his 'America First' policy was on full display.

For a balance of power

Meanwhile, China has actually managed to emerge as a beacon of open and free global trade order. This has resulted in the regional powers taking it upon themselves to shape the regional economic and security order. On the one hand, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is being resurrected without the U.S., and on the other, the idea of an Indo-Pacific quadrilateral involving Japan, Australia, India and the U.S. is back. Unlike in the past, New Delhi is no longer diffident about engaging with other regional players if it helps to further Indian interests in maintaining a stable balance of power in region.

The ASEAN members and India together consist one of the largest economic regions with a total population of about 1.8 billion. ASEAN is currently India's fourth largest trading partner, accounting for 10.2% of India's total trade. India is ASEAN's seventh largest trading partner. India's service-oriented economy perfectly complements the manufacturing-based economies of ASEAN countries. There is, however, considerable scope for further growth. Formidable security challenges remain, and the two sides must think strategically to increase cooperation for a favourable balance of power that would ensure regional stability.

India needs to do a more convincing job as a beneficial strategic partner of ASEAN by boosting its domestic economic reforms agenda, enhancing connectivity within the region, and increasing its presence in regional institutions. The ASEAN nations should be clearer and more specific in their expectations from New Delhi and nudge India for a deeper, more broad-based engagement. There is much at stake for both sides.

Harsh V. Pant is a Distinguished Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and Professor of International Relations at King's College London

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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India and Singapore are partners in progress and sustainable development: Vice President

India and Singapore are partners in progress and sustainable development: Vice President

Interacts with Singapore Minister of Trade and Industry

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India and Singapore are partners in progress and sustainable development. He was interacting with the Minister of Trade and Industry, Singapore, Mr. S. Iswaran, who called on him, here today.

The Vice President said that India admires Singapore's emergence as a shining example of a harmonious, multicultural and multiracial society. He further said that a number of Indian states have developed productive partnership with Singapore. We believe in cooperative and competitive federalism and states are focussing on socio-economic development in a concerted manner, he added.

The Vice President said that that both India and Singapore are important to each other's progress and prosperity. He further said that Singapore is an important partner in India's development priorities. India is at the cusp of a major transformation in all spheres including the ease of doing business, he added.

The Vice President expressed his happiness that a Singapore consortium has started developing the start-up area in the new capital city Amaravati of Andhra Pradesh. This can very well develop as a future model for new projects all over India.

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Joint Indo-Bangladesh Exercise Sampriti 2017 Culminates**Joint Indo-Bangladesh Exercise Sampriti 2017 Culminates**

Joint Indo-Bangladesh Training Exercise SAMPRITI 2017, which is being conducted at Counter Insurgency & Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte in Mizoram culminated today with a validation exercise.

It is the seventh such exercise in the SAMPRITI series. The exercise has been aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies. The 13-day long field training exercise commenced on 06 November 2017, which was culminated with a validation exercise on November 15-16. It was conducted in a progressive manner wherein the participants initially familiarised themselves with each other's organisational structure and tactical drills. Subsequently, the training advanced to various joint tactical exercises by the two Armies.

Scenario of terrorists hiding in a village was painted for the validation exercise. It had commenced with joint briefings by the company commanders of both the Armies. Based on which troops established a cordon of the village. Validation Exercise finally culminated with a daring raid in the jungle terrain to neutralise the terrorists. A spectacular demonstration on room intervention drills was also conducted jointly by Indian and Bangladesh Army troops.

The final exercise was reviewed by Major General Md Moshfequr Rahman of the Bangladesh Army and Major General M S Ghura of the Indian Army. The combined exercise was an unprecedented success. Besides promoting understanding and interoperability between the two Armies, it further helped in strengthening bilateral ties.

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The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley calls on the Prime Minister of Singapore on the last day of his two day official visit to Singapore; Both the leaders recalled the shared history of both the countries, rooted in strong commercial, culture and people-to-people links; FM addresses the 16th Annual Asia Pacific Summit of Morgan Stanley on "India: Structural Reforms and Growth Path Ahead ".

The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley calls on the Prime Minister of Singapore on the last day of his two day official visit to Singapore; Both the leaders recalled the shared history of both the countries, rooted in strong commercial, culture and people-to-people links; FM addresses the 16th Annual Asia Pacific Summit of Morgan Stanley on "India: Structural Reforms and Growth Path Ahead ".

FM re-iterates his Government's commitment for both increasing the public expenditure on infrastructure and creating environment for private participation in infrastructure to boost employment and provide impetus to overall economic growth.

The Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley called on the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong today on the second and last day of his two day official visit to Singapore. Both the leaders recalled the shared history of both the countries, rooted in strong commercial, culture and people-to-people links. They also discussed the meeting between the two Prime Ministers and elevation of India-Singapore Partnership to a strategic level and actions taken to translate their vision. Both the leaders discussed at length the roll-out of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), issues of common interest, such as bilateral trade and investment, and measures to increase the engagements in these areas and the further road map for enhancing India- Singapore Economic and Commercial ties.

Earlier, the Union Finance Minister, Shri Jaitley in his Keynote Address at Morgan Stanley 16th Annual Asia Pacific Summit in Singapore today on "India: Structural Reforms and Growth Path Ahead " elucidated on the current state of India's economy, outlining the key reforms being implemented by the present Government with a view to position India as an attractive global investment destination. He specifically mentioned the roll-out of the monumental tax reform, GST; the Bank Re-Capitalization package, Ease of Doing Business in India, crackdown against black money, Demonetization and other follow-up measures; and reforms in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy regime. The Finance Minister, Shri Jaitley re-iterated his Government's commitment for both increasing the public expenditure on infrastructure and creating environment for private participation in infrastructure to boost employment and provide impetus to overall economic growth.

The Finance Minister, Shri Jaitley also addressed the senior fund managers and the key Financial Institutional investors and answered queries on various tax issues including GST, Fiscal policy, impact of the Bank Re-Capitalization Package on banks' NPAs, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and so on. He also met with the Senior Management of Morgan Stanley.

The Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley also met the Chairman and Board of Directors of Temasek, Singapore; one of the largest investment companies in Asia, and discussed the investment opportunities available across various sectors in India including, their investment in the National Investment and Infrastructure (NIIF).

The Finance Minister, Shri Jaitley will return to New Delhi late in the evening today after successfully completing his two day official visit to Singapore.

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Cabinet approves agreement between India and Belarus on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for mutual benefit in the areas of science, technology, agriculture, etc.

Cabinet approves agreement between India and Belarus on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for mutual benefit in the areas of science, technology, agriculture, etc.

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been apprised of the Agreement between the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB) on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for mutual benefit in the areas of science, technology, agriculture, etc.

The Agreement was exchanged on 12th September, 2017 at New Delhi during the visit of Belarus President H.E. Mr. Alexander Lukashenko.

The Agreement is aimed at identifying, assessing, developing and commercializing globally competitive technologies from India and Belarus. It will support institutions in both countries by way of research, technology transfers, exchange of visits and joint workshops leading to scientific and economic benefit.

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Cabinet approves MoU between India and Poland for the promotion of Civil Aviation Cooperation

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Poland for the promotion of Civil Aviation Cooperation

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Poland for the Promotion of Civil Aviation Cooperation. The MoU will be signed on behalf of the two countries after its approval by the two Governments. The MoU would be for a term of five years.

The objective of the MoU is to recognize the mutual benefit of Cooperation in the field of Civil Aviation having particular significance in establishing and improving Regional Air Connectivity in India. Apart from this both sides will recognize the mutual benefits of environmental testing or approvals, flight simulators monitoring and approvals, aircraft maintenance facilities approvals, maintenance personnel approvals and aircrew members approvals.

The main areas of this Memorandum of Understanding to promote and facilitate mutual cooperation are as under:

- a. Support in the civil aviation market by reviewing any legal and procedural issues which may adversely affect cooperation between India and Poland.
- b. Exchange of information and expertise between the Ministries and respective Civil Aviation Authorities related to aviation regulations, regional air operations, airworthiness requirements and safety standards to enhance safety and security of air transport; and / or
- c. Collaboration on or joint development, organization and/or conduct of training programmes on aviation safety, on topics such as safety oversight, airworthiness, flight operations, licensing, legislation and enforcement; and / or
- d. Aviation associated consultations, joint organization and/or conduct of conferences and professional seminars, workshops, talks and other such activities on aviation safety with the participation of representatives from the Parties related to the field of civil aviation; and / or
- e. Regular dialogue or meetings for exchange of information; knowledge, expertise and experiences between Ministries and respective Civil Aviation safety related development of mutual interest to the parties;
- f. Collaboration on research and studies on aviation safety interest topics and issues of mutual interest.

g. Any other issues related to co-operation in the areas mentioned above.

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INS Sarvekshak Reaches Dar-Es-Salaam : To Carry out Joint Hydrographic Survey with Tanzanian Navy

INS Sarvekshak Reaches Dar-Es-Salaam : To Carry out Joint Hydrographic Survey with Tanzanian Navy

In an initiative to bolster bilateral relations with friendly foreign countries and navies in the Indian ocean region, INS Sarvekshak, a hydrographic survey ship of Southern Naval Command, arrived Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania on 15 Nov 17 for undertaking joint Hydrographic Survey along with the Tanzanian Navy.

The joint survey will be conducted with the Naval personnel of Tanzania who have been trained in India in National Institute of Hydrography, Goa. During the survey, training of Tanzanian Naval personnel will also be undertaken on advanced hydrographic equipment and practices. The ship will visit Dar-es-Salaam harbour in Tanzania during her stay for refuelling and replenishing stores and provisions. Joint exercises with Tanzanian Navy are planned during the period of deployment.

The ship will be undertaking pioneer survey of Pemba Island which would include detailed surveys of Port of Weshu and Kiuyo and Pemba Channel in Tanzania and on completion will be proceeding to Port Louis in Mauritius in December for survey of Grand Port. In recent past, Indian Naval Hydrographic Ships Jamuna, Sutlej and Darshak have undertaken various hydrographic surveys of Dar-es-Salaam, Zanzibar, Makoni and Port Tanga in Tanzania. INS Sarvekshak has also undertaken various foreign cooperation surveys in the last few years in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles and Kenya.

INS Sarvekshak is a specialised survey ship of the Indian Navy presently based at Kochi and is fitted with state-of-the-art survey equipment like Deep Sea Multi beam echo sounder system, Side Scan Sonars and a fully automated digital surveying and processing system. In addition, the ship carries an integral Chetak helicopter which would be extensively deployed during the survey.

The ship is second ship of the Darshak class of ships and has a complement of 15 officers and 175 sailors and is presently commanded by Captain Peush Pawsey. Interestingly, the officer – prior to this appointment – was commanding INS Darshak, in which capacity too he had undertaken a similar survey in Tanzania in 2016.

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Ready to alter economic corridor route: China

Luo Zhaohui

China may consider alternative routes through Jammu and Kashmir to address India's concerns regarding the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

In an interaction with experts on Chinese affairs and students, Beijing's envoy Luo Zhaohui suggested the alternative routes, and said he was keen on accomplishing a bilateral friendship and trade treaty during his stint in India.

"We can change the name of CPEC [China Pakistan Economic Corridor]. Create an alternative corridor through Jammu and Kashmir, Nathu La pass or Nepal to deal with India's concerns," said the envoy in a speech at the Centre for Chinese and South-East Asian Studies in the School of Language, JNU, on Friday.

The Ambassador made a detailed presentation of the expectations on both sides and said that while the Dalai Lama's presence and activities remain an issue for China, Beijing recognised that India's expectations on the CPEC and Masood Azhar were also issues that both sides need to be deal with.

Dynamic situation

Referring to the dynamic situation in the world, Ambassador Luo said, "There is widespread change in world affairs since the coming to power of President Donald Trump of the U.S."

"President Trump sealed \$250 billion worth of trade deals with China. Would that be possible if China was a threat," he asked, arguing that China and India as growing economies must cooperate with each other.

"One of my goals is to have a treaty of friendship and free trade with India," he said, elaborating that both sides need to find more areas to collaborate like the Delhi smog. "Beijing also has smog and two sides can jointly deal with this issue."

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India, France to boost ties in counter-terror, trade

Bolstering ties:French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.AFP/PIBHANDOUT

Gravely concerned over growing terrorism, India and France on Friday decided to strengthen counter-terror cooperation, and asked the international community to oppose countries which are financing, sheltering and providing safe havens to terrorists.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held wide-ranging talks with her French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian, during which they also decided to strengthen cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), a development which comes barely days after India held quadrilateral talks with Japan, Australia and the U.S. in Manila on the sidelines of India-ASEAN Summit.

The two Ministers held discussions on key regional and international issues as well as the proposed visit of the French President to India next year. "We expressed grave concern on growing terrorism and decided that we need to fight the evil together. We appealed to all countries to oppose those financing, sheltering and providing safe havens to terrorists," Ms. Swaraj said at a joint press event with the French Minister. She said they also discussed concrete measures to expedite operations at the Jaitapur nuclear power project.

Atomic reactors

As part of the 2008 nuclear cooperation agreement between India and France, Paris is to help build atomic power reactors for New Delhi. The French Minister said he was here to lay the groundwork for the visit of the French president which would take place early next year during the summit of the International Solar Alliance.

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A beginning, an end

Three months ago, speaking to delegates from 47 African nations, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe launched into a monologue about his old friend Muammar Gaddafi. The slain Libyan despot, Mugabe admitted, had "killed many people, innocent persons and those who opposed his rule and did it callously". But, he argued, he also "united his people, fought for free education, free health". Today, he said, Libya was worse off. The rambling speech may well have been Mugabe's epitaph for himself. The revolutionary who brought independence to his country, and sought to radically transform its society, before degenerating into a corrupt autocrat, has now been held under de-facto arrest by his own military.

Earlier this year, a shock cabinet reshuffle had led Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa, a liberation war veteran long thought to be Mugabe's likely successor, to flee to South Africa. The army and intelligence patronage networks which Mugabe built, however, turned on their nonagenarian master, seeking to ensure his plans to be succeeded by his wife, Grace Mugabe, were foiled. The president's wife — infamous for building palatial properties with embezzled funds, shopping sprees in Paris, and selling illegally-mined diamonds — had come to occupy increasing power in the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, threatening to displace a well-entrenched system of patronage and pelf with one centred around herself.

For New Delhi, the stakes are modest. Though the two countries have had trade relations since the 1500s, bilateral trade hovers around only \$250 million. There are estimated to be less than 1,000 Indian citizens in Zimbabwe, along with some 10,000 people of ethnic-Gujarati origin. There are good strategic reasons, however, for India to follow events closely.

India has begun investing seriously in Africa over the past decade, hoping to retain its historic influence in the face of a growing Chinese presence. Generals who assert their political influence rarely step back and should the coup in Zimbabwe fail to lead on to a genuine democratic transition, it could intensify authoritarianism and internal violence.

Throughout Africa, China has been the principal beneficiary of authoritarianism and corruption. New Delhi can work to facilitate a good outcome, by throwing its weight behind South Africa-led mediation efforts, and persuading Western governments who placed Zimbabwe under sanctions to hold out carrots that might compel the country's military to take this opportunity to step into the sunlight.

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Indo-Bangladesh Exercise 'SAMPRITI 2017' comes to an end**Indo-Bangladesh Exercise 'SAMPRITI 2017' comes to an end**

Closing ceremony for the seventh Indo-Bangladesh joint exercise SAMPRITI was held at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte in Mizoram today. Exercise SAMPRITI is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh. Major General Md Moshfequr Rahman of Bangladesh Army and Major General M S Ghura of the Indian Army presided over the ceremony.

The exercise is aimed at strengthening and broadening the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies while working together in a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment under the UN mandate. Exercise was conducted under the aegis of the Red Horns Division of Gajraj Corps and had two distinct components which included Command Post Exercise (CPX) and Field Training Exercise (FTX).

Troops from 38 East Bengal Regiment of Bangladesh Army and Mahar Regiment of Indian Army represented respective Armies during the exercise. The CPX was conducted at recently created Joint Training Node, Umroi, Meghalaya from 06 November to 11 November 2017 over six days whereas FTX was conducted at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte, Mizoram from 06 November, over a period of 13 days. The CPX focused on planning of counter-terrorist operations whereas during FTX focus was on company/platoon level tactical drills. A tactical exercise was also conducted during the FTX.

Both contingents displayed great enthusiasm and professionalism while carrying out joint drills and skill displays during the conduct of exercise and it was a great learning experience for both the contingents. The troops have not only learnt about each other's organisation, but have also identified best practices. The exercise was a great success and has taught valuable lessons to the troops of both the countries. Joint Exercises between Armies across the world are increasingly becoming an important aspect of the bilateral relations. Exercise SAMPRITI between the armies of India & Bangladesh was not only symbolic of their maturing relationship but will also built trust and confidence between both Armies.





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Battle lines drawn over coal at U.N. climate talks

Police vehicles drive into the premises of the Weisweiler coal-fired power plant near Aachen, Germany on November 15, 2017. According to the dpa news agency environmental activists occupied coal supply routes of the plant. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

A score of mostly wealthy nations banded together at U.N. climate talks on November 16 to swear off coal-fired power, a key driver of global warming and air pollution.

To cap global warming at "well under" 2°C (3.6°F) — the planet-saving target in the 196-nation Paris Agreement — coal must be phased out in developed countries by 2030, and "by no later than 2050 in the rest of the world", they said in a declaration.

The dirtiest of fossil fuels still generates 40% of the world's electricity, and none of the countries that truly depend on it were on hand to take the "no coal" pledge.

One country participating in the 12-day talks, which end on November 17, has made a point of promoting the development of "clean fossil fuels": the United States.

The near-outcast status of coal at the U.N. negotiations was in evidence earlier in the week when an event featuring White House officials and energy executives was greeted with protests.

The U.S. position "is only controversial if we choose to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the realities of the global energy system" countered George David Banks, a special energy and environment assistant to U.S. President Donald Trump.

Led by Ministers from Britain and Canada, the "Powering Past Coal Alliance" committed to phasing out CO₂-belching coal power, and a moratorium on new plants that lack the technology to capture emissions before they reach the atmosphere.

"In a few short years, we have almost entirely reduced our reliance on coal," said British Minister of State Claire Perry.

The share of electricity generated by coal in Britain dropped from 40% in July 2012 to 2% in July 2017, she noted.

Other signatories included Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands and New Zealand.

Germany — where coal powers 40% of the country's electricity — was asked to join, said Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks.

"I asked them to understand that we can't make a decision like that before forming a new government," she told journalists.

Most of the enlisted countries don't have far to go to complete a phaseout.

Deadlines range from 2022 for France, which has four coal-fired plants in operation, to 2025 for Britain, where eight such power stations are still running, and 2030 for the Netherlands.

Warm, warmer: on climate change

“This climate meeting has seen Donald Trump trying to perversely promote coal,” said Mohamed Adow, top Climate analyst at Christian Aid, which advocated for the interests of poor countries. “But it will finish with the U.K., Canada and a host of other countries signalling the death knell of the world's dirtiest fossil fuel in their countries.”

But not all countries are in the same boat, said Benjamin Sporton, president of the World Coal Association.

“There are 24 nations that have included a role for low-emissions coal technology as part of their NDCs,” or nationally determined contributions, the voluntary greenhouse gas cuts pledged under the Paris treaty.

Coal continues to play a major role in powering the Chinese economy, and will see “big increases in India and Southeast Asia”, he told AFP.

Making coal “clean”, Mr. Sporton acknowledged, depends on the massive expansion of a technology called carbon capture and storage (CCS), in which CO₂ emitted when coal is burned is siphoned off and stored in the ground.

The U.N.'s climate science panel, and the International Energy Agency, both say that staying under the 2°C temperature threshold will require deploying CCS.

The problem is that — despite decades of development — very little CO₂ is being captured in this way.

There are only 20 CCS plants in the world that stock at least one million tonnes of CO₂ per year, a relatively insignificant amount given the scope of the problem.

One reason is the price tag: it costs about a billion dollars (900,000 euros) to fit CCS technology to a large-scale, coal-fired plant.

“If you could develop cost-effective technology that would be permanent and work at scale, it could be a real game-changer,” said Alden Meyer, a climate analyst at the Washington-based Union of Concerned Scientists. “But you have to be realistic about the prospects.”

At the same time, the price of wind and especially solar power has dropped so much that CCS may no longer be economical.

The crucial issue is not retro-fitting old plants, but avoiding the construction of new ones, Mr. Meyer added.

“There's really no economic rationale for coal, and there's certainly no environmental rationale for it,” he told AFP.

A book on geological history that explains climate change

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Rigid alliances will be avoided: India

S. Jaishankar

A week after joining the first official-level meeting of the new quadrilateral grouping in the Asia Pacific region, India on Monday stressed that it will avoid rigid geopolitical alliances. Launching a new policy-oriented club for diplomats, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar reaffirmed India's expanding commitments internationally and said that in view of the global uncertainties, India will have an "open-minded approach" to international politics.

"It is important to recognise that we are in a period of major transition, where many of the assumptions that guided our thinking in the past are no longer valid. This calls for a more open minded approach in international politics where there are less fixed points and more flexible combinations. Our earlier mindset of broadening our options in a structured work must give way to the understanding that rigidity of positions and alliances no longer hold and we ourselves are one of the poles," said Mr. Jaishankar.

He was speaking at the launch of the PHD Ambassadors Club here, which will be serve as a platform for former Indian envoys and resident foreign envoys to interact and cooperate on hard and soft diplomatic issues.

Cautionary position

Mr. Jaishankar said in the current order, optimal use of human resource alone can boost a country's standing. In that direction, the PHD Ambassadors Club was an initiative where diplomacy would converge with commercial goals of Indian foreign affairs.

The Foreign Secretary's comments about the alliances indicate that India will continue to adopt a cautionary position regarding the budding groupings and alliances in the morphing world order.

This is the second time in a week that the top diplomat of India has sounded a note of caution in international affairs. A day after the first quadrilateral meeting in Manila, Mr. Jaishankar had downplayed the meeting, arguing that the alliance was one of the many such groupings that India had recently participated in.

Instability

He explained that the position was borne out of the Indian analysis of recent history, where the end of the Cold War was followed by the subsequent rise of the Asian powers like China and India and the more recent 'recalibration' of the Western powers that were going through a phase of instability and change.

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China condemns Kovind's trip

Donning a new hat: Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal presents President Ram Nath Kovind the 'Japi' in Guwahati. PTI

China on Monday strongly objected to President Ram Nath Kovind's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, saying India should refrain from "complicating" the border dispute when bilateral relations are at a "crucial moment".

President Kovind visited Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday.

"The Chinese government never acknowledged the so-called Arunachal Pradesh and our position on the border issue is consistent and clear," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told presspersons when asked about Mr. Kovind's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as Southern Tibet.

Repeated opposition

China routinely objects to visits of Ministers and senior officials to the area. On November 6, China raised objection to Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

India has dismissed Beijing's objections, maintaining that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of the country and Indian leaders are as much free to visit the State as they are to any other part of the country.

Both countries are "in the process of settling this issue through negotiation and consultation and seek to reach to a fair and reasonable solution acceptable to all", Mr. Lu said.

Pending final settlement all parties should work for peace and tranquillity, he said.

"China firmly opposes the Indian leader's relevant activities in the relevant region when China-India relations are at a crucial moment," he said.

"We hope India could work in the same direction and maintain a general picture of bilateral ties and refrain from complicating border issue and work to create favourable conditions for border negotiations and for the sound and stable development of bilateral ties," he said.

The Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China stretches to 3,488 km.

Bilateral meet in Dec.

Both sides held 19 round of talks by the Special Representatives to resolve the boundary dispute.

The 20th round is expected to be held next month in New Delhi, though dates have not yet been announced.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, are the designated Special Representatives for the boundary talks.

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U.S. designates North Korea as a 'state sponsor of terror'

President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at a meeting. APEvan Vucci

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday declared North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism. "Should have happened a long time ago. Should have happened years ago," Mr. Trump declared, announcing the designation at the start of a White House Cabinet meeting.

North Korea is already under a wide array of United States and United Nations sanctions, and the terror designation will not have much immediate economic impact in itself.

But U.S. officials see the designation — lifted by then-President George W. Bush in 2008 — as a way of ratcheting up the pressure on Pyongyang and especially on other states that may be failing to fully enforce the sanctions already in place.

"In addition to threatening the world by nuclear devastation, North Korea repeatedly supported acts of international terrorism including assassinations on foreign soil," Mr. Trump said. In February, North Korea leader Kim Jong-un's elder brother Kim Jong-nam died after he was sprayed with a nerve agent in Kuala Lumpur airport, in an assassination blamed on Pyongyang. "As we take this action today, our thoughts turn to Otto Warmbier and others affected by North Korean oppression," Mr. Trump continued, underlining the legal case for the designation.

U.S. student Warmbier did this year aged only 22 after he was repatriated from detention in North Korea already in a coma. U.S. officials allege he was tortured in custody.

Mr. Trump warned that, in addition to the terror designation, Washington is preparing yet another round of sanctions to force Pyongyang to give up its nuclear missile programme.

"The Treasury Department will be announcing an additional sanction — and a large one — on North Korea," he said.

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Losing the war, winning the peace

India is not short of memories on 1962. The India-China War ended fifty-five years ago to the day, yet each winter brings back reminiscences of the conflict. The Chinese assault on the Thagla Ridge early in the morning of October 20, 1962, which turned simmering military tensions into open war. The doomed struggle of ill-equipped jawans. Jawaharlal Nehru's awkward radio address to Assam, just as the Chinese seemed poised to enter the plains. The unilateral ceasefire that China announced on November 21, 1962, saving Assam but ending India's chance of recovering the Aksai Chin. And above all, the scar of national humiliation at the hands of a triumphant China.

But is there all there was to the war? One can doubt it. Standard histories of 1962 almost completely ignore a key aspect of the conflict: the way the authorities and people of Arunachal Pradesh — the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), as it was then called — experienced it. Look away from the fighting and the India-China War takes on quite a different hue, one where the war does not end at the point of ceasefire and where the roles of winners, losers and bystanders aren't so neatly divided.

The October shock

When large-scale fighting erupted between China and India, it did not take long for NEFA's civilian officials to realise their entire administration was in jeopardy. By October 23, Tawang had to be abandoned. Meanwhile, Chinese troops were advancing onto Walong in the east. The retreat of the Indian Army entailed that of the civilian administration. Dozens of administrative centres were evacuated, leaving most of northern NEFA unoccupied and open for Chinese occupation. Thousands of Tibetan refugees followed suit, along with many local people (*Picture shows refugees fleeing from the India-China border war, in 1962*). Evacuee officials focussed on organising relief, and even began considering their permanent rehabilitation elsewhere in Assam. At the time, India's loss of NEFA seemed in danger of becoming permanent.

The war formally came to an end with China's unilateral ceasefire on November 21, but the crisis did not. Gains in the Aksai Chin aside, the People's Republic of China (PRC) now occupied significant portions of NEFA. Officially this was temporary, but everything was done to complicate India's return. Government stores, supplies, equipment, furnishings, weapons and often buildings were systematically damaged, eaten or destroyed. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) pointedly delayed its departure, keeping Indian troops and officials in the dark about it. On January 17, 1963 the Chinese still occupied Tawang. The local official only resumed his duties a few days later. In military terms, the India-China War had lasted only a month. As an occupation, almost three.

Battle for hearts and minds

What most worried India's frontier officials was how the inhabitants would receive them back. India's state presence in NEFA was recent. The Raj's eastern Himalayan frontier had barely been administered and remained poorly explored. Civilian administrators had made huge efforts since 1950 to consolidate India's sovereignty over the region; but given the difficult terrain, wet climate, and financial and human shortages, doing so required local inhabitants' cooperation. Gaining the loyalty of the Mishmis, Monpas or Adis was an aim in itself, if they were to become Indian citizens. Winning them over was key. The problem was that Indian officials' state-building per force had to contend with the PRC's own efforts in nearby Tibet. China too faced an uphill struggle to concretise its hold there, and it too needed border inhabitants' cooperation. Yet, in this porous Himalayan borderland criss-crossed by social, cultural or family ties and regular movement, people had ample opportunity to observe and compare what India and China respectively offered

— both the good and the bad. The result was a fierce competition for Himalayan hearts and minds, well before military and diplomatic tensions appeared between the two countries.

This struggle for authority and legitimacy did not stop when fighting erupted. On the contrary, the 1962 War offered China a chance to gain the upper hand in it. There is much evidence that the PRC's occupation of northern NEFA was a sort of public relations exercise *vis-à-vis* local people. Indian officials came back to Tawang to find that no women had been molested and nothing taken without payment; houses, monasteries and possessions were intact. Chinese troops had brought in gifts and exotic goods and made every effort to convince people that their religion, customs, and freedom would be respected. In fact, China had one key message for the people of NEFA: it was there to liberate them from India.

The story of NEFA's occupation suggests that, among other things, the 1962 War was China's chance to prove to Himalayan people that it was the better state — whereas a weak India could neither protect nor deliver. The unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal helped preserve the image of Chinese invulnerability and benevolence *vis-à-vis* local inhabitants while preventing an international escalation of the conflict. "Tell us to come back and we'll free you from India," departing troops reportedly said.

In an ideal scenario, Himalayan inhabitants would do just that. More realistically, a China-supported, anti-Indian uprising might erupt like in nearby Nagaland — and India would stop posing a threat to China's sovereignty in Tibet.

Going back

India's frontier officials had every reason to worry about returning to NEFA. Would people welcome them back considering China's impressive wartime performance? To their own surprise, the answer was by and large yes. Many inhabitants expressed both their disappointment at having been left behind and their support for Indian authorities' return. They made concrete demands to ensure that the disappointment would not re-occur, and that their support would be rewarded. Something strange was happening. China had won the war on both fronts, military and political; yet this had not been enough to win people over, especially since many people had heard of repression in Tibet from refugees passing through. In hindsight, China's demonstration of superiority seems to have been counter-productive. The Indian state might be weaker and less efficient, but from the inhabitants' standpoint it was less of a risk, and offered more chance for negotiation.

On that count, we may need to revise our standard narrative of 1962. The war was not just about winning more territory (in the Aksai Chin) or teaching India a lesson (which it did). It was also about winning over hearts and minds. And if the PRC did win the war, on that front it also lost the peace.

Bérénice Guyot-Réchard teaches contemporary history at King's College London. Her book, 'Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910-1962', was published this year

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Raja Mandala: New ripples in the oceans

Amidst all the excitement and anxiety about the Indo-Pacific quad — which brings together India, United States, Japan and Australia — it is easy to miss the significant prospects for Delhi's bilateral maritime security cooperation with Paris in the Indian Ocean. Looking beyond the traditional areas of high-technology and defence cooperation, and the more recent focus on global mitigation of climate change, Delhi and Paris appear ready to lend a strong regional dimension to their strategic partnership.

A series of recent high-level consultations — between foreign and defence ministers as well as the national security advisers — have focused on finding ways for India and France to work together, especially in the Western Indian Ocean. These discussions are likely to be turned into concrete decisions by the time French President Emmanuel Macron visits Delhi early next year.

Meanwhile, the debate on “getting France to join the quad” entirely misses the point about the nature of the new grouping. The quad is a flexible mechanism to coordinate the approaches of like-minded states to promote their shared political objectives in the Indo-Pacific. It is a work in progress and will take time to achieve institutional heft and make a real impact. When this quad is eventually up and running, there will certainly be room for its expansion.

Until we get there, there is much that India needs to do in elevating its bilateral security cooperation with the members of the quad as well as other partners in the Indo-Pacific. France is at the top of that list. France has territories in the Western Indian Ocean and South Pacific and has been a maritime power in the region for nearly four centuries. Paris has military bases in the Indian Ocean. It has the lead role in the Indian Ocean Commission that brings together the island states of Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros and the French territory of Reunion.

As a member of the NATO, France does not need the latest quad to do things with America. As it seeks to reclaim some of its historic role in the east, France is already stepping up its security cooperation in the Pacific. It has two quads of its own in the region.

Earlier this year, the naval forces of France, Japan, Britain and the United States conducted naval exercises in the Western Pacific. In a second quad, France coordinates South Pacific defence operations with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Paris also has a trilateral arrangement with Australia and New Zealand (FRANZ) to provide disaster relief to the island states of the Pacific. The missing link has been the inadequate political and security cooperation between Delhi and Paris.

This limitation stands in contrast to the general affinity between the French and Indian quest for different degrees of strategic autonomy during the Cold war. France was among the first to propose raising a coalition of middle powers to promote a multipolar world in the mid-1990s to limit the dominance of what the French called the American “hyper power” after the Cold War.

Paris also was the first to argue that ending the atomic blockade against India and integrating Delhi into the global nuclear order were important objectives. If this demanded a revision of the non-proliferation system centred on the NPT, then so be it, France said. This idea was taken forward by the US President [George W. Bush](#) in the historic civil nuclear initiative with India.

One can recall two earlier efforts — in the early 1980s by President Francois Mitterrand and in the late 1990s under Jacques Chirac — to transform the partnership with India. But the lack of consistent purpose in Delhi led to limited results from the two earlier efforts. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), however, appears determined to realise the full potential of the partnership with

France.

The case for a bold re-imagination of the India-France partnership has never been more urgent than it is today. The rise of China, the renewed tensions between Russia and Europe, the uncertainty in the US political trajectory, and the loosening of the old alliances demand more leadership from middle powers like India and France. Nowhere are the possibilities greater than in the maritime domain.

An intensive dialogue with the French on maritime issues under the Narendra Modi government over the last three years has created the basis for sharing intelligence and military facilities, promoting inter-operability between their navies, and the future conduct of joint operations. Once progress is made in the Western Indian Ocean, France could also help boost India's strategic footprint in the South Pacific.

Although India and France have long shared the Indian Ocean maritime neighbourhood, they have not put it at the heart of their partnership until now. The new regional framing will help develop the much needed depth to the India-France strategic partnership through maritime burden-sharing and reinforcement of each other's positions in the Indo-Pacific.

If India discards its military isolationism, develops productive defence diplomacy, and embarks upon deeper security cooperation with its partners through bilateral, minilateral and multilateral mechanisms, the "quad talk" might generate a lot less heat than it does today.

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China offers to mediate dialogue between Bangladesh, Myanmar

China has expressed its willingness to facilitate a dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar to solve the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday. He said Beijing was willing to facilitate the dialogue, acknowledging that the Rohingya crisis was a “big challenge for Bangladesh”. He was quoted by a Hasina aide as telling that China does not want the Rohingya issue to overshadow or slow down the progress of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor initiative.

Ms. Hasina reiterated her call to the international community, including China, to mount pressure on Myanmar to take back its nationals. Earlier, at a meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart A. H. Mahmud Ali, Mr. Wang said that as a friend of both Bangladesh and Myanmar, Beijing would “not be partial to any side”.

Mr. Wang’s visit came days after the UN revived a resolution on Myanmar that was dropped last year due to the country’s progress on human rights. The UN General Assembly’s Third Committee, which focuses on human rights, called on Myanmar to end operations that have “led to the systematic violation and abuse of human rights” of Rohingya Muslims. A total of 135 countries voted in favour of the resolution and 10, including China, against it, while there were 26 abstentions.

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Next Door Nepal: Whose dam is it, anyway?

The debate in Nepal a week before the first round of elections to the provincial assemblies and federal parliament, interestingly, is centred on an administrative decision of the government, not the electoral scenario.

The cabinet recently decided to annul the 1200-MW Budhi Gandaki Hydro project contract awarded to the Chinese firm Gejuwa, citing lack of transparency in the deal made by the Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government in May. Ironically, the Nepali Congress, which took the call to cancel the contract, was part of the Dahal government. Energy minister Kamal Thapa said the government was following the instruction of a parliamentary committee that had disapproved the deal on the ground of lack of “transparency”.

The annulment of the contract three weeks prior to the formation of the new government, expectedly, has triggered a debate. The country’s rich hydropower resource has, of late, attracted the Chinese, as much as the Indians, who had wanted a monopoly over it. Speculation in sections of the Indian media that the cancelled project may now go to an Indian company adds an element of mystery to the development.

India’s past failures in completing hydropower projects on time has discredited its image as a reliable partner in Kathmandu. China entered Nepal’s hydropower sector, challenging India’s monopoly, only about a decade ago. This was after political changes in Nepal became unmanageable and chaotic and Beijing began to get suspicious about the role of New Delhi and western powers in the country’s internal politics. During his second visit to Nepal as prime minister, [Narendra Modi](#) promised that projects taken up by India will be completed on time. The promise was never translated into action.

On the day the Gejuwa deal was scrapped, the investment board of the government extended the deadline for “financial closure” of two other major hydroprojects undertaken by Indian companies — the 900MW Upper Karnali undertaken by GMR and Arun Three undertaken by Sutlej Jal Vidhyut Ltd. Given that Nepal’s major electoral contestants bear pro-India and pro-China tags — the Nepali Congress of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is perceived to be pro-India while the left alliance is seen as pro-China — the decisions on hydro projects have given credence to the alleged influence of external forces in decision-making in Kathmandu. K.P. Oli, the prime ministerial candidate of the left alliance, which includes the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist and the CPN (Maoist Centre), said the decision on Gejuwa would be reversed if the alliance was elected to office. Clearly, the competing interests of its giant neighbours will continue to cast their shadow over Nepal’s future politics and development.

China has not yet reacted to the cancellation of the Budhi Gandaki deal, but it seems unfazed. Less than a week after the government decision, China’s Three Gorges International Corporation signed a deal with the Nepal Electricity Authority to form a joint venture company to develop the 750MW West Seti Project in a time-bound manner. In the current scenario of default, one country’s failure becomes a success for another while Nepal reels in the dark. The much-talked about Mahakali project that was signed between Nepal and India way back in 1996 has not moved an inch as the two sides are still to finalise the detailed project report. As most projects remain in limbo, power brokers and commission agents lobby on behalf of competing firms for the termination or transfer of contracts.

The delays in the execution of projects and the external interference on the country’s development agenda have infuriated a section of policy makers, including some politicians, who insist that the government must undertake some projects as a means to enhance national pride and implement

them in a time-bound manner. This vision has entered national planning and government policies. The impact is visible in the planning and building of highways, but it has not percolated to the hydropower sector. The fact also remains that projects are delayed because of corruption in the award of contracts, the blame for which lies with politicians.

Interestingly, none of the major parties — the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and the Maoists — have raised the issue of corruption or the lack of transparency and accountability in government decisions in their manifestos, indicating a convergence of interest and method.

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The emerging Indo-Pacific architecture

The term “Indo-Pacific” has long been in vogue among marine biologists and ichthyologists to define the stretch of water from the tropical Indian Ocean, through the equatorial seas around the Indonesian archipelago, the South China Sea, and to the western and central Pacific Ocean. The term entered the geopolitical lexicon only in the early 21st century and, predictably, has proved to be far more contentious than its scientific definition. The region has been the locale for some of the bloodiest inter- and intra-state wars in the 20th century and promises to be the theatre for similar conflagrations in the foreseeable future between failing, emerging and established nuclear-armed countries. This potential for conflict is exacerbated by the absence of a robust regional peace and security architecture.

Against this backdrop, efforts to rejuvenate the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or the “Quad”) between Australia, India, Japan and the US on the sidelines of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Manila are of notable significance. Although this meeting was low-keyed and downplayed by India in particular, the Quad itself has the potential to secure the region against great power conflict.

There are several factors why the countries chose to revivify the Quad at this juncture. For India, the Doklam confrontation with China and concerns over the latter’s so-called Belt Road Initiative (BRI) were crucial considerations. Similarly, following US secretary of state Rex Tillerson’s visit, there is a desire to engage Washington more closely in the region. For Australia, and to some extent Japan, the key drivers behind formally reviving the Quad was the concern about the commitment of the Donald Trump administration to the bilateral alliance arrangements and the quest to buttress them with the Quad commitment. For the US, the Quad offers a way to share its burden of containing China in the region.

When it comes to fruition, the Quad will not be dissimilar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato), which managed to “keep Russia out, the US in and Germany down”. Most observers have simplistically branded the nascent organization as a tool to contain China. However, to be truly effective—like Nato—the Indo-Pacific Quad will also have to fulfil three simultaneous missions: keep China out, the US in and Japan down.

While managing China and keeping Beijing on the status-quoist path, the Quad will also have to ensure the continued engagement and commitment of Washington to the region, which can no longer be taken for granted. Given the disruptive and isolationist tendency of Trump (evident in his skipping the EAS) and, possibly other future US leaders, this is a crucial role that the organization will have to fulfil. Similarly, given Japan’s brutal World War II record in the region, the Quad will also have to reassure other potential future members, including from ASEAN, that Tokyo’s role will remain benign and any revisionist tendencies will be kept in check.

Although the Quad was formally initiated in 2007 at the prompting of Japanese Prime Minister Shinz Abe, its informal origins can be traced to 2004. In the wake of the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami, Australia, India, Japan and the US launched an ad-hoc humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) mission, which allowed them to come together operationally. Since then the four navies have worked together on several occasions.

While formal Quad meetings were shelved following strong objections from China in 2007, discussions nonetheless continued. For instance, in 2015 the foreign secretaries of Australia, India and Japan met ostensibly to firm up the security leg of India’s “Act East” policy. Soon thereafter the India, Japan, US trilateral meeting was held in Honolulu. Thus, the Quad continued to function under the garb of two trilateral meetings. Subsequently, since 2015, the India-US Malabar naval

exercises have included Japan and are likely to include Australia in the next iteration, thus making the military component of the Quad a reality.

Nonetheless, the Quad's potential is likely to be limited by several internal differences. For instance, while India promotes the principle of "freedom of navigation", it is reluctant to enforce it through freedom of navigation operations by sailing warships through exclusive economic zones, particularly in the South China Seas. Thus, the 2015 Indian Maritime Security Strategy cautions that there may be divergent security perceptions "with nations that may be traditional friends (read US)". Members of the Quad will have to address these differences to develop the institution further.

Moreover, while the Quad is a crucial pillar of the peace and security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region, it needs to be buttressed by at least two other pillars. The EAS serves the role of the political pillar and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) as the trade and economic pillar. While all Quad participants are members of EAS, India is still not a member of Apec. This lacuna needs to be remedied if New Delhi is to contribute to all three pillars of the Indo-Pacific architecture.

Finally, India will also have to shed its inherent abhorrence for formal military arrangements and cooperation, even though this might bring with it the prospect of being dragged into a war not of its making. As Nato has shown, sometimes a democratic military alliance is essential to maintain peace.

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

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Catalonia's lessons for India

The ongoing crisis in the Catalonia region of Spain, where an attempt at secession was ruthlessly put down by central authorities, is a salutary reminder to us in India of what can go wrong when regional grievances in a federal political and economic union are allowed to fester.

One of the roots of the putative independence movement is a sense of Catalan identity distinct from that of much of the rest of Spain—an identity rooted in language, culture and history. Yet, it should not be overlooked that a growing dissatisfaction with fiscal transfers within the kingdom of Spain, which many Catalonians believe hurt their region disproportionately, was, and remains, an equally important driver of the desire for independence.

Like most federal unions, the Spanish central government engages in fiscal redistribution among regions, which, effectively, transfers resources from “have” regions to “have-not” regions. A 2012 research paper, by economist Núria Bosch of the Institut d’Economia di Barcelona, finds that Catalonia contributes 119% of national fiscal resources compared to the national average, but receives only 102% of the national average after central government redistribution—knocking it from third to ninth in the fiscal league table.

This is not outlandish when compared to other federal unions: for instance, in the US, the wealthy state of New Jersey receives only 57 cents back as federal spending out of every dollar it contributes in taxes to federal coffers, according to a 2011 piece of data analysis by *The Economist*. Similarly, Canada has a system called “equalization” in which have-not provinces in the centre and east of the country receive federal transfers while have provinces of the west do not. At present, Québec is the largest single recipient, accounting for a whopping 60% of total federal equalization payments, while the wealthy, resource-rich provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia receive nothing.

What about India? Central statistical authorities do not release such data to the public, but my IDFC Institute colleague, Praveen Chakravarty, has estimated that a sizeable quantum of inter-state fiscal redistribution occurs between have and have-not states through the Centre’s taxing and spending policies. For example, for every Rs100 that the average citizen of Maharashtra contributes to Central coffers, he or she receives Rs15; by contrast, the average citizen of Bihar receives Rs420 for every Rs100 that he or she contributes.

The crux is this: Resentment and separatist zeal in Catalonia have been fuelled by the feeling among many residents that their hard work and thrift are paying for the alleged indolence, welfare dependency culture, and absence of entrepreneurial ethos in lagging regions. Something similar is afoot in Italy, where many in the wealthy north resent large fiscal transfers to the poorer south, the way many in former West Germany bristle at transfers to the poorer former East Germany within the reunified German republic. In Canada, many Albertans and British Columbians complain that their tax dollars go to subsidize Quebec, which as a French-speaking province claims to be culturally distinct as well as having the largest claim on federal coffers. It is perhaps only the US among major federal economic and political unions which has little, if any, of such feeling: but then that country fought a bloody and bitter Civil War in the 19th century and emerged a stronger union from it.

Could India witness a Catalonian-style separatist movement from have states on the back of the potent brew of fiscal and cultural elements?

For a nation that has combatted numerous armed insurgencies, this question is not outlandish. The mix of economic and cultural sources of alienation amongst have states is perhaps strongest

in Tamil Nadu, where there exists a pre-existing vein of pan-Tamilian nationalism that may be tapped by vote-getting politicians.

As recently as 4 June, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam working president M.K. Stalin tweeted: “Willful erosion of States Rights by Centre which seeks to establish a Monolith will only incite a renewed War of Independence.” Meanwhile, the late All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader and chief minister, J. Jayalalithaa, argued last year that greater demands for fiscal and other forms of autonomy from the Centre by the states, “should not be seen as centrifugal or fissiparous trends that have to be curbed, but as a manifestation of India’s maturing as a nation with diversity and as a democracy”.

It would be short-sighted to dismiss such statements as merely political bravado. Many Spaniards dismissed similar statements coming from Catalanian leaders in the lead-up to the recent independence referendum as political posturing to help strike a more favourable deal, and that nation is now in crisis: lesson learnt.

The lesson for India is clear. The need of the hour is to move away from the over-centralizing tendencies of the Centre—which have characterized all dispensations—and towards a model which takes fiscal and policy devolution to the states seriously.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi often speaks of “competitive/cooperative federalism”. It is time to turn that rhetoric into reality.

Vivek Dehejia is a Mint columnist and resident senior fellow at IDFC Institute, Mumbai. Read Vivek’s Mint columns at www.livemint.com/vivekdehejia

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Pacific Ocean's 11: on TPP without U.S.

When Donald Trump abandoned the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in his very first week after being sworn in as U.S. President, there were doubts whether the trade agreement, painstakingly negotiated over more than a decade, would survive. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had termed the TPP without the United States — which contributed 60% of the combined Gross Domestic Product of the 12 members — as “meaningless”. Ten months on, exactly at a time when Mr. Trump was visiting Vietnam, trade ministers from [the remaining 11 nations](#) agreed in Danang in principle to a new pact, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), revising some of the features of the TPP. For the agreement to take effect, the pact requires domestic ratification, which is expected to be complete by 2019. This major step taken by the 11 countries of the Pacific Rim excluding the U.S. is a reflection of two things. First, these countries recognise that multilateral free trade, contrary to any misgivings, is beneficial in the long run. The TPP in its current form has significant protections for labour and environment and is in this regard an advance over other free trade agreements. Second, the U.S.’s self-exclusion reflects a failure on the part of the Trump administration; studies have shown significant benefits in comparison to minor costs — in terms of jobs — to the U.S. on account of the pact.

As things stand, the pact without the U.S. can only be interpreted as yet another step that diminishes American power and the international order that it has so far led. Already, Mr. Trump’s decision to pull out of the Paris climate accord and his repudiation of the Iran nuclear deal have raised suspicions about American commitment to well-negotiated treaties that seek to solve or have solved long-standing issues. Mr. Trump couches his regime’s policies as populist nationalism — ‘protecting labour’ in the case of the abandonment of the TPP, promoting jobs in fossil fuel-intensive sectors to justify the repudiation of the Paris Accord, and retaining American exceptionalism in West Asian policy in scrapping the Iran nuclear deal. While rhetoric to this effect had fuelled his presidential campaign with a heavy dose of populism, the actual effect of going through with these actions has been to create a suspicion among America’s allies about his reliability when it comes to standing by old commitments. Mr. Trump’s agenda to pull his country out of multilateral agreements has coincided, ironically, with the rise of China as the leading world power promoting globalisation. Now the ASEAN-plus-six Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), on which China is pushing for an agreement, could benefit from complementarities with the CPTPP. India, which is also negotiating the RCEP, must utilise this opportunity to win concessions on services trade liberalisation as part of the plan.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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WTO: India resolute on food security

Burden of negotiation:Prospects for a permanent solution on subsidies are not that bright, says Prof. Abhijit Das of the IIFT.

At the upcoming meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body, India will not agree to severe restrictions on its right to give price subsidies to farmers through the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to procure grains from them for food security purposes, according to highly-placed official sources.

The WTO's Ministerial Conference is slated to take place at Buenos Aires in Argentina next month.

"Food security and protection of low-income and resource-poor farmers are top priority items for India [at the WTO meet], and we will hold our ground to protect our interests to the maximum extent possible," an official privy to the developments said. Currently, an interim mechanism called the 'Peace Clause' is in place, per which WTO members had agreed not to challenge developing nations at the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism if they breached the cap of the product-specific domestic support (which is 10% of the value of production).

Peace clause

The 'Peace Clause' is available to developing nations, including India, till a permanent solution is found to public stockholding for food security purposes. Official sources said India would fight to ensure that at least the 'Peace Clause' is made the permanent solution, and will not accept any 'terribly stringent or onerous' conditions. However, the 'Peace Clause' is learnt to be difficult to invoke even in its current form because prior to using it, the country concerned will have to first admit that it 'is breaching' or 'is about to breach' the ceiling entitlement to give product-specific domestic support.

Difficult to invoke

Also, the 'Peace Clause' can be used only for public stockholding programmes that have been in existence on the date at which it was agreed upon at the Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013, and not for new programmes on public stockholding for food security purposes.

According to Abhijit Das, head and professor, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, the prospects of an agreement on a permanent solution are not that bright due to three roadblocks. "First, the U.S. has not been engaging actively on the matter till recently, and if the U.S. does not give its nod, it will be difficult to arrive at a decision.

"Second, the European Union has tried to link the permanent solution with outcomes including stringent disciplines on domestic support given by developing nations," he said.

Lastly, most WTO members are of the opinion that there should be a commitment on prohibition of exports from public stockholding saying such exports would be trade-distorting.

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India thanks the world for its support in ICJ

Court of the world: Peace Palace, the headquarters of the ICJ, in The Hague. AP

India on Tuesday thanked UN members for supporting the re-election of its judge to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and said the process reflected respect for its constitutional integrity and independent judiciary.

In the official press statement following Judge Dalveer Bhandari's return to the ICJ at The Hague, the Government of India expressed appreciation for the U.K. that chose to withdraw its candidate at the last moment, even as officials highlighted that the diplomatic campaign that backed the victory was "unprecedented".

Independent judiciary

"The UN Security Council and the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in support of India. Judge Dalveer Bhandari received all 15 votes in the UN Security Council and 183 out of the 193 votes in the UN General Assembly. The extraordinary support from the UN membership is reflective of the respect for strong constitutional integrity of the Indian polity and independence of the judiciary in India," said the Government of India in a press release.

Earlier Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the diplomatic team headed by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who had campaigned for the re-election of Judge Bhandari to fill the fifth vacancy for the 2018-2027 term.

"Congratulations to External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her entire team at the Ministry of External Affairs and diplomatic missions for their untiring efforts that have led to India's re-election to ICJ. Our gratitude to all the members of UN General Assembly as well as UN Security Council for their support and trust," Mr Modi said on Twitter.

He also congratulated Judge Bhandari. "His election is a proud moment for us," Mr Modi remarked.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj used the social media platform and said, "Vande Mataram — India wins election to the International Court of Justice — Jai Hind."

Official sources said the entire election process indicated the Indian diplomatic team's ability to mobilise UN members at short notice.

The Indian National Group to the Permanent Court of Arbitration had re-nominated Judge Bhandari as India's candidate in June 2017. *The Hindu* had reported that the election had become a contest between Judge Bhandari and the U.K.'s Christopher Greenwood.

To be appointed at the ICJ, the candidate would have required a majority in both the General Assembly and the Security Council of the UN.

Jadhav case

The re-election is also crucial as it ensures India's continued influence at the ICJ where the Kulbhushan Jadhav case against Pakistan will come up next month.

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Rohingya diplomacy

If India and China are two rivals jostling for power and influence in Asia, China's Rohingya diplomacy in Myanmar this week underlines how India may be blowing its chance. At the very least, the Chinese announcement that "as a friend of both Myanmar and Bangladesh, Beijing is willing to keep playing a constructive role for the appropriate handling of the Rakhine State issue" is an attempt to show itself in a new, more positive light in the region. So far, it has had a reputation, whether in Sri Lanka or Pakistan, of turning a blind eye to human rights, humanitarian crises and conflict in its single-minded pursuit of economic and strategic interests. The "three-stage plan" described by China's foreign minister Wang Yi is not rocket science: A ceasefire on the ground; once this is seen as working and people are no longer fleeing, talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh to work out the modalities of return of the Rohingya from their camps in Bangladesh to their homes in Rakhine; and third, poverty alleviation as a long-term solution.

While Dhaka has made no comment yet, Myanmar State Counsellor [Aung San Suu Kyi](#)'s response was careful but warm. She said the plan was in line with Myanmar's own views, but that her country wanted to sort it out with Bangladesh bilaterally. She thanked China for its "assistance as a friend in need" and prayed for "eternal friendship between the eternal neighbors". Wang, who held talks with Suu Kyi and President Htin Kyaw ahead of an Asia-Europe Meeting of foreign ministers in Naypitaw, also announced plans for a China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

It is surprising that despite its old ties with Myanmar, India struggles to find the right tone in its relations with that country. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#)'s visit to Myanmar in September was the right moment to take leadership in a regional crisis. But limited by the NDA government's views on the Rohingya, and the eagerness to pander to communal anxieties, plus the misguided notion that even a bare mention of the humanitarian problem then unfolding in the Rakhine would anger Myanmar and send it rushing to China, India lost the opportunity. Instead, there was an angry protest from Bangladesh, and the ungainly episode of Delhi having to issue an additional statement expressing concern over the events in the Rakhine state. Quad or not, India has a long way to go, and a lot to learn from China.

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What China does when it disagrees with you

Three recent developments have highlighted China's growing influence over foreign governments and civil society. In the past, China has admonished other countries to move beyond a "Cold War mentality"—presumably meaning engaging in relentless global competition using all means available. Yet these developments suggest that China itself may have learnt a lesson or two from it. The much touted Chinese principle of "non-interference" in the workings of other powers is past its sell-by date in Xi Jinping's China.

First, over the summer, Australians found themselves debating growing and pernicious Chinese influence in their society and politics. This has included the use of Chinese citizens as well as Australian nationals of Chinese origin as de-facto agents of China's spy services. A five-month long investigation by a team of Australian journalists found that China is actively seeking to shape opinion in Australian universities, monitor and coerce Chinese dissidents, as well as funnel money to local politicians. The Australian intelligence services have expressed alarm at the "unprecedented scale" of Chinese penetration of their society.

Australia has long tried to manage the dissonance between its deep economic ties with China on one hand, and its reliance on US-led security arrangements in the region on the other. This has included pulling out of the quadrilateral initiative in 2007 in order not to offend Beijing. However, observers of the region sense that Chinese meddling in its domestic politics may force Australia to adopt a more assertive stance. Allegations of a Chinese hand in Australian society could have indeed contributed to its acquiescence to a "Quad 2.0".

Second, the 11 November meeting of Xi and South Korean president Moon Jae-in all but ended the possibility of further American missile defence systems in the Republic of Korea in the immediate future. These systems were to be deployed as a response to North Korea's nuclear and missile tests over the summer. The summit capped strenuous efforts by China to coerce Seoul into submission, including through ersatz sanctions, portending ill for the South Korean economy.

What was interesting was how China went about doing so: While Beijing did not officially sanction South Korea, it cleverly marshalled the Chinese public behind its economic offensive against that country. As a reaction to Seoul's decision to allow the American THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) system in South Korea, stores belonging to the South Korean supermarket chain Lotte in China were attacked with tacit support of the state apparatus. By boycotting Hyundai cars as well as vacations in South Korea, China managed to inflict considerable pain on Seoul. As a Hong Kong-based newspaper triumphantly titled a story on this sordid saga, "China Wins Its War Against South Korea's US THAAD Missile Shield—Without Firing A Shot."

Third, some reports suggest Beijing may have green-lighted the 14 November coup in Zimbabwe that aimed at deposing the nonagenarian dictator Robert Mugabe. Ties between the two countries have been deep and long-standing, with Mugabe widely seen as China-friendly. However, an informed conjecture posits it might have been protection of Chinese economic interests that pushed Beijing to tip the scale away from Mugabe. The suspicion stems principally from the fact that the chief of Zimbabwe's military, Constantino Chiwenga, met with the Chinese defence minister only four days before the coup.

Wang Hongyi, a scholar from China's premier think-tank confidently declared: "After the military operation (referring to the coup), Zimbabwe will be more open." Laying the blame for Zimbabwe's faltering economy at Mugabe's door, Wang also noted that "Chinese investment in Zimbabwe has also fallen victim to Mugabe's policy and some projects were forced to close down or move to other countries in recent years, bringing huge losses." "Mugabe's policy" presumably refers to the

recent push to enforce indigenization laws that require a majority control of companies by Zimbabwean citizens.

It is hardly a secret that China has tried to intervene in local politics and shape elections in other countries in the past. Nepal is a case in point. However, Chinese influence is hardly limited to impoverished countries in dire need of capital. European politicians off-the-record note how China has started to influence local stakeholders—often at a very micro level—to promote its business interests. However, should the suspicion of a Chinese role in the Zimbabwe coup turn out to be accurate, it would imply that, going forward, China would not be averse to changing regimes abroad directly.

The Australian and South Korean episodes also suggest that China sees very little difference in deploying state agents and non-affiliated citizens to meet foreign-policy ends. A worrying corollary to this is the possibility of “ordinary” Chinese nationals abroad having covert roles. A recent report of an American government body suggests that this may already be the case. The US-China Economic And Security Review Commission noted in its latest report to the US Congress that *Xinhua*, the official Chinese news agency, often functions as an intelligence agency and actively engages in influence operations.

While Beijing puts its mouth to the cause of a post-Cold War “mentality”, its money is increasingly on more muscular influence around the world. How the world, in turn, responds, remains to be seen.

Abhijnan Rej is a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com

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The numbers game — On India's victory at the ICJ

The [election of Justice Dalveer Bhandari](#) to the International Court of Justice for a second term is a major diplomatic success for India. Five of the 15 judges of the ICJ are elected every three years. This year there were six candidates for five slots. The winning candidates required a majority in both the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council in simultaneous voting through secret ballot. While four candidates were elected smoothly, Justice Bhandari and Christopher Greenwood of the United Kingdom ended in a dead heat as the former won the UNGA and the latter the UNSC in multiple rounds of voting. The U.K. wanted to end the voting and move to a conference mechanism, which involves selecting a panel of three UNGA members and three UNSC members, who would then elect the judge. This mechanism has never been used before. India opposed the move, and the U.K. could not gather adequate support for its demand in the UNSC. The U.K. then withdrew its candidate, paving the way for Justice Bhandari's re-election. [India and the U.K. had staked considerable diplomatic goodwill](#) in the election, and the outcome is significant politically for both.

For the first time, the U.K. will not have a judge on the ICJ. It is also the first time that a permanent member of the UNSC has lost at the ICJ on a vote. For British Prime Minister Theresa May the loss comes at a difficult time as she struggles with the process of leaving the European Union and with her own leadership coming under assault from Conservative MPs. In this context, the loss at the ICJ is being read as confirmation of the U.K.'s diminishing role in global affairs. As America's inseparable and unquestioning junior partner, the country had asserted its relevance in the post-War order even as its military and economic power eroded. With the U.S. under President Donald Trump less guided by the "special relationship" with the U.K., a post-Brexit U.K. will have to do much more heavy-lifting in multilateral forums. For India, soon after its failure to gain membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the lobbying for the ICJ election has different lessons. With all five permanent members of the UNSC fiercely locking arms to protect their collective interest of dominating the world body, India's success was built primarily on the support of developing countries, among whom it has nurtured goodwill over the decades. Japan also appeared to align with the P-5. India's call for a more equitable world order has a better resonance among developing countries than the custodians of the current order. India's support in the UNGA was expanding with subsequent rounds of voting, a reality the U.K. and the U.S. could not brush aside. For India, the takeaway is clear: to find a louder global voice, it also needs to put more emphasis on ties with countries away from the high table.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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Far from keeping the world safe

“The science on climate change has been grim this year.” A replica of the Statue of Liberty which shows smoke emitting from the torch and a bronze sculpture titled ‘Unbearable’, both created by Danish artist Jens Galschiot, displayed during the climate change conference in Bonn, Germany. AFP

The 23rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-23) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change concluded on November 17 in Bonn, Germany. The two-week meeting was regarded by many as primarily intended to clarify processes for the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the creation of a rule book, with technical guidelines and processes. This would explain what compliance with the Paris Agreement means and how it would be monitored.

The key topics of contention were related to financial support, mitigation action, differentiation, and loss and damage — the same knots of disagreements that came up at COP-21 in Paris. The questions raised in Bonn were: Are developed countries going to do their fair share to support poor and emerging countries, having occupied the bulk of the planet’s available carbon space? What actions have thus far been taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by rich countries? Shouldn’t there be greater emphasis to phase out coal? There was also some apprehension about the role of the U.S. in the discussions since President Donald Trump had earlier declared that it would leave the Paris Agreement.

Actions related to the Paris Agreement are intended for 2020-2030. However, the pre-2020 period is part of the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol. Both the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol (**2005-2012**) and the second (**2013-2020**) principally laid out the responsibilities for reducing emissions by rich countries. However, there has been little progress and the 2012 Doha Amendment, the agreement concerning the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol, has not been ratified by a sufficient number of countries to enter into force.

Under pressure from poor and emerging economies, actions on the pre-2020 Kyoto period were added to the agenda in the first week of the Bonn meeting. As a result, in 2018 and 2019 there will be additional stocktaking on progress made on the Kyoto Protocol. There will also be climate finance assessments and all of these will be part of the overall process undertaken before 2020. It is reported that several countries have since expressed interest in ratifying the Doha Amendment and all these changes indicate some advancement.

Another aspect of the obligations that **need** to be fulfilled by big emitters is related to economic and non-economic losses under the work programme on loss and damage. In Warsaw, Poland, COP-19 established the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage to address the destruction likely from climate change, including extreme events (such as severe storms) and slow-onset events (such as sea-level rise). This track of negotiations recognised that even if the world were to drastically reduce its emissions, anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions already in the atmosphere would cause warming. This would severely affect the poorest countries that are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

It is important that such countries have access to economic and non-economic support, especially since their actions have not led to these increased concentrations of harmful greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement recognises loss and damage and calls for enhanced action and support from the parties. However, loss and damage was not included in the agenda for the Paris rule book, and this was rightly a big bone of contention with poor and developing economies. There are no funds currently available for this stream and the discussion on this has been

postponed to 2018. This is alarming given that the world has already faced the wrath of numerous extreme events just in the last couple of years.

A third aspect of the support from rich countries is about providing finance, technology, and building capacity for poorer countries, both to protect themselves from the effects of climate change and to help them move along a low-carbon pathway. There were conflicts on financial support at various points, and on this topic, COP-23 was a failure. Without the means of implementation, the targets set by each country in Paris will not be achieved. There is also the promise of \$100 billion each year by 2020 into the Green Climate Fund, which has not seen much inflow to meet the goal. There was therefore little progress on the key issue of finance and several important decisions were moved forward to be discussed at the next meeting to be held in Katowice, Poland in 2018.

There have been a number of advances in renewable energy over the last several years. These were highlighted at various side events at COP-23. There were also several state and substate actors from the U.S. at Bonn, some of whom tried to distance themselves from the actions and statements of the Trump administration, along with a series of colourful protests and interactions.

On the plus side, negotiators did move forward on developing other details for the Paris Agreement implementation, a process that is carried out under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement and a policy should be ready in 2018. There was also a draft of a document integrating positions from parties on information needed to communicate the Nationally Determined Contributions. Steps were also taken to spell out the details of the global stock-taking that will occur every five years starting in 2023 and on transparency measures that are part of the overall process.

Nevertheless, the science on climate change has been grim this year. Greenhouse gas emissions which appeared to have stabilised for a few years, probably for economic reasons, rose by 2% in 2017, perhaps due to additional electricity drawn from coal power plants in China. When coal will be phased out globally was a major question. In fact, there were protests organised by activists at Europe's largest open pit coal mine near the Hambach Forest in Germany, not far from the COP-23. Clearly, greater ambition on clamping down on fossil fuels is needed for the Paris Agreement to be successful. The Bonn meeting saw the launch of the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which was led by Canada and the U.K., and joined by numerous countries and substate actors.

There was small but significant headway made regarding agriculture where a work plan was proposed by Parties on items related to climate change and agriculture, including improvements in soil fertility and carbon, management of land use and livestock maintenance. For India, these developments could be an excellent opportunity for learning from others and sharing local knowledge.

Much more needs to be done for the international community to truly grapple with climate change — we are still far from keeping the world safe from its harmful consequences. And for India, there is unfortunately no time left for delaying action on multiple fronts on the landscape of sustainable development, which itself will be derailed by a warming world.

Sujatha Byravan is a scientist who studies science, technology and development policy.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Opening the door

The election of Justice [Dalveer Bhandari](#) to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is a victory crafted by India for all non-P 5 members of the United Nations, and a symbolic moment in the years of discussion on United Nations Security Council reform. Bhandari, who has been at the ICJ from 2012, won a place in the 15-judge court after Britain withdrew its nominee.

The ICJ election was for five seats and Bhandari was the Asia nominee who defeated the candidate put up by Lebanon in the early rounds. In the normal course, Bhandari and the British candidate, Christopher Greenwood, would not have been competing for the same seat. But the two were locked in an unusual run-off for the last vacant seat after each one failed to win enough votes — Bhandari in the Security Council, and Greenwood in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Their run-off, too, was deadlocked over several rounds of voting for the same reason. To win, a candidate must secure majorities in both the Security Council and UNGA. The British decision to withdraw Greenwood from the race seems to have been based on the possibility that Bhandari might garner two-thirds of the votes in the UNGA.

This was the first time that a P-5 candidate could not get enough votes in the UNGA, and the first time a P-5 country will not be represented in the ICJ, a privilege taken for granted until now. It is a clear indictment of the closed club of the Security Council, and its accumulated failures to ensure peace. On its part, India pushed the right diplomatic buttons, lobbying hard for Bhandari among UNGA members at each round of voting, and the Ministry of External Affairs can pat itself on the back for some deft footwork for what could well go down as a turning point at the UN. The British withdrawal also served to highlight the country's own post-Brexit emaciated international standing.

However, it should be clear that the Indian victory in no way means that India has planted its flag at the ICJ. As a member of the court, Bhandari does not serve India's interests but those of international law. The expectation that having an Indian representative at the ICJ will help India in the [Kulbhushan Jadhav](#) case with Pakistan, is misguided. Under ICJ rules, if the bench in a case includes a judge who is a national of one of the parties, the other may nominate an ad hoc judge to the bench. Last month, Pakistan appointed its former chief justice, Tassaduq Jilani to the ICJ. Having taken the case to the ICJ, India has to now play by its rules.

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Cabinet approves agreement between India and Philippines on co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters

Cabinet approves agreement between India and Philippines on co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing and ratifying of an Agreement between India and Philippines on co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters.

The Agreement will help in the availability of relevant information for the prevention and investigation of Customs offences. The Agreement is also expected to facilitate trade and ensure efficient clearance of goods traded between the countries.

This Agreement shall enter into force after the necessary national legal requirements for entry into force of this Agreement have been fulfilled by both the countries.

Background:

The Agreement would provide a legal framework for sharing of information and intelligence between the Customs authorities of the two countries. It would help in the proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs offences and the facilitation of legitimate trade. The draft text of the proposed Agreement has been finalized with the concurrence of the two Customs Administrations. The draft Agreement takes care of Indian Customs' concerns and requirements, particularly in the area of exchange of information on the correctness of the Customs value declared and authenticity of certificates of origin of the goods traded between the two countries.

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Cabinet approves India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

Cabinet approves India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD)

Necessary steps will be initiated by the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance to acquire the membership of the EBRD.

Impact:

- Membership of EBRD would enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests. Access to EBRD's Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.
- India's investment opportunities would get a boost.
- It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- EBRD's core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation. The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
- This would contribute to an improved investment climate in the country.
- The membership of EBRD would enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other.
- Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential.
- It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.

Financial Implications:

The minimum initial investment towards the membership of EBRD will be approximately €1 (one) million. However, this assumption is based on India deciding to buy the minimum number of shares (100) required for obtaining the membership. If India were to buy a higher number of Bank shares, the financial implications could be higher. In-principle approval of the Cabinet at this stage is being obtained for joining the Bank.

Background

The issue relating to acquiring the membership of the "European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD)" had been under consideration of the Government. With the country's impressive economic growth over the years and enhanced international political profile, it was considered appropriate that India should expand its presence on the global developmental landscape beyond its association with the Multi-lateral Development Banks (MDBs) such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank. The decision to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) was taken earlier in this backdrop.

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Cabinet approves signing of India - Russia Agreement on cooperation in combating terrorism and organized crime

Cabinet approves signing of India - Russia Agreement on cooperation in combating terrorism and organized crime

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for signing an Agreement on Cooperation between India and Russia in the field of combating all forms of terrorism and organized crime.

The Agreement is proposed to be signed during the upcoming visit of Indian Delegation, led by Home Minister, to Russia from 27-29 November, 2017.

Background:

India and Russia have a long history of close cooperation in international fora on matters of mutual interest. With the rise in terrorism and organized crime across the world, it is imperative for countries to work together to combat all forms of terrorism. The proposed Agreement, which will replace the Agreement of October, 1993, is a step towards consolidating the benefits accrued in the field of security and seeks to jointly fight the new and evolving risks and threats. The Agreement would reinforce the relationship between India and Russia through exchange and sharing of information, expertise, best practices and would help in curbing terrorism and enhancing, security in the region.

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Rohingya repatriation deal signed

Homecoming beckons:Rohingya refugee children await food at a distribution centre in Thankhali refugee camp in the Bangladeshi district of Ukhia on Thursday.AFP

Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed a memorandum of understanding on Thursday on the return of Rohingya people who fled the Rakhine state in the wake of a military crackdown.

The deal was signed by Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmud Ali and Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw. At least 600,000 Rohingya people have fled Myanmar to the neighbouring Bangladesh since the army started an operation in August following an attack by Rohingya militants.

Under the deal, the repatriation process is expected to begin in two months, diplomatic sources in Dhaka told *The Hindu* .

Primary step

"This is a primary step. (They) will take back (Rohingya). Now we have to start working," Foreign Minister Ali told a Bangladesh TV channel. "We will give details of the deal once we return to Dhaka."

Asked when the repatriation will start, the Minister said: "We have to start the process. The houses there have been torched... levelled. They need to be rebuilt." "We are ready to take them back as soon as possible after Bangladesh sends the forms back to us," said Myint Kyaing, a permanent secretary at Myanmar's Ministry of Labour, referring to the registration forms the Rohingya must fill in with personal details.

Just before signing the deal, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina renewed her call to Myanmar to immediately start the repatriation of Rohingya. "We're continuing our bilateral talks with Myanmar so that these Myanmar nationals could return to their country...," she said.

Diplomatic sources said Bangladesh wanted a time frame for the beginning and end of repatriation which Myanmar did not agree to. Dhaka also sought the involvement of UN agencies in the verification process, which was also rejected by the other side.

Joint working group

"We've agreed on many things though our expectation is not met fully. It's not possible in any negotiation," a senior Bangladesh official told a Bangladesh news agency.

The two countries, however, agreed to form a joint working group at the Foreign Secretary-level to start the repatriation process.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary M. Shahidul Haque, the country's envoy to Myanmar, M. Sufiur Rahman, and representatives from the Home Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office also attended the meeting.

Ms. Suu Kyi's office called Thursday's agreement a "win-win situation for both countries", saying the issue should be "resolved amicably through bilateral negotiations".

Rights groups have raised concerns about the process, including where the minority will be

resettled after hundreds of their villages were razed, and how their safety will be ensured in a country where anti-Muslim sentiment is surging.

'Ethnic cleansing'

On Wednesday, the U.S., in what appeared to be a policy reversal, called the military operation in Rakhine "ethnic cleansing" and threatened targeted sanctions against those responsible for it.

"The situation in northern Rakhine state constitutes ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya," U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in a statement.

The stateless Rohingya have been the target of communal violence and vicious anti-Muslim sentiment in mainly Buddhist Myanmar for years.

They have also been systematically oppressed by the government, which stripped the minority of citizenship and severely restricts their movement, as well as their access to basic services.

(With AFP inputs)

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China, Djibouti forge 'strategic' ties

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Djibouti's visiting leader Omar Ismail Guelleh, whose African nation is hosting China's first overseas military base, agreed on Thursday to elevate their nations' diplomatic relations.

The two countries agreed to form a "strategic partnership" as Mr. Guelleh held talks with Mr. Xi at the imposing Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

China has described the base on the Horn of Africa, which opened in August, as "defensive in nature", saying it will provide support for naval escorts, UN peacekeeping, anti-piracy and evacuating Chinese nationals from the region in emergencies.

Mr. Xi said relations between the two countries exemplify "the solidarity and mutual assistance among developing countries." The Chinese leader thanked Mr. Guelleh for his congratulations sent after he was re-appointed head of the Communist Party last month.

"I am a great friend of China," Mr. Guelleh said. "I would like to recall the geostrategic place of Djibouti and its importance in this part of the world as an islet of stability and a crossroads of Asia, Africa and the West Asia."

'Growing influence'

The Chinese base is just a few kilometres from Camp Lemonnier, the United States' only permanent base in Africa.

A Pentagon report said the strategically-sited camp, "along with regular naval vessel visits to foreign ports, both reflects and amplifies China's growing influence, extending the reach of its armed forces."

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The new bipolarity in Asia

The dichotomy in the rule-based global order is becoming increasingly evident with the passage of time. U.S. President Donald Trump, for instance, makes no secret of the fact that he believes in a world governed by self-interest, with little room for shared responsibility, or lofty ideas about the spread of democracy. In contrast, Chinese President Xi Jinping is taking the high road, disdaining the transactional approach favoured by the U.S. President. Instead, he is projecting himself as a firm believer in globalisation and free trade. Today, the former confronts major opposition to his policies within the U.S. The latter's grip on China is, if anything, stronger than before.

It is against this backdrop that there are signs of a new bipolarity taking shape in Asia. It appears freshly sculpted, given the steady rise and rise of China in Asia. It possibly seeks to replace similar attempts by the U.S. previously — such as the pivot to Asia — to counter China and its aggressive designs in the region. Implicitly, though not as yet explicitly, it seeks to create a coalition of all those willing to align with the U.S. against China's expanding ambitions and its inexorable march towards dominance in Asia.

In recent weeks, there has been some activity suggestive of action being taken to achieve this objective. For instance, a reluctant India is being gradually inveigled into a newly minted design of what many perceive as an anti-China coalition, though none of them are willing to project it as such. Talks held recently at the level of officials between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India (the Quadrilateral) are seen as an indication of this. It marks an important shift in India's attitude, and could be a prologue to what is in store. As China's expansionist attitudes intensify, more countries in East and Southeast Asia are expected to align with the Quadrilateral group of countries. Vietnam could be one such country, but quite a few other countries in the region could follow suit.

The recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings provided a further glimpse of attitudinal changes that are in the making. Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi made use of this occasion to announce that the two countries were prepared to work together for the future of Asia — an euphemism for what many see as keeping a check on China's aggressive designs in the region. It is, perhaps, for the first time that India has indicated a resolve to align openly with the U.S. to tackle broader issues in the Indo-Pacific region. Its implications go much further than mere deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries or enhancing their cooperation as major defence partners. The reference that “two of the world's great democracies should also have the world's greatest militaries” is capable of being interpreted in several ways, including that it is aimed at China. What it does signify, unambiguously, is a quantum leap in their special relationship, with both sides committed to deepening their engagement in several directions.

Mr. Modi demonstrated a willingness on this occasion to go still further, asserting that India will stand by ASEAN in its quest for a rules-based regional security architecture. This can again be interpreted as implicit criticism of China's attitude and stance with regard to disputes in the South China Sea.

If China was the target of the U.S., India and other like-minded countries of Asia, the recent 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress signified that China is more than willing to accept the challenge. The Party Congress placed special emphasis on a strong military “capable of winning wars”. The deliberations left little room for any adjustment or compromise to accommodate the concerns of other countries of Asia, or for that matter the U.S. If anything, the deliberations of the Party Congress have further emboldened China to pursue its preferred course of action.

Several aspects of the Party Congress deserve to be carefully considered in this context. The

Congress reinforced Mr. Xi's status as the paramount leader, who in turn made no secret of China's ambitions to restore its global leadership and dominate the region. In his long opening address, he described China as a great power at least 25 times. Every initiative pronounced was attuned to China's global ambitions.

The Party Congress, and Mr. Xi in particular, adopted a hard line on many of the issues that have been bones of contention with countries in the region and beyond. A major preoccupation of the Party Congress was to build global combat capabilities to safeguard China's overseas interests. It mentioned that the Chinese Military had been reorganised and that more changes were promised in the next five years aiming to make China's military "world class" in every way.

The message emanating from the Party Congress is loud and clear. China is in no mood to compromise, and any attempt to contain or check China would be effectively met. The reality also is that apart from its massive military build-up, China is positioned most advantageously as far as economic aspects are concerned. It is today the most important trading partner for over 90 countries. It is a major lender across the world. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has caught the imagination of the world, including that of Europe. While the economic benefits of the BRI are still in dispute, most countries of Asia and Europe, including many of India's neighbours, do not seem to have a problem with the BRI.

Sustaining bipolarity and having one set of Asian nations ranged against China is, however, not going to be easy in the prevailing circumstances. There exist far too many imponderables at present. Latent concerns about Chinese expansionism have not prevented several Asian nations from endorsing and backing the BRI. Most Asian nations also show no inclination or desire to blame China for siding with Pakistan, which continues to shelter high-ranking global terrorists, including Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar. China, for its part, has embarked on a charm offensive to win the support of Asian nations through lavish aid offers and other financial inducements. Even Mr. Trump, during his recent visit to China, seemed to have softened his criticism of China, after China produced some attractive mega deals. All this only exposes the vulnerabilities of bipolarity in the extant situation today.

In Asia, India, Japan and, to an extent, Vietnam appear willing to endorse the U.S. initiative to build up opposition to China's designs. India has become increasingly vocal in this regard. It has lately taken up issues well beyond South Asia, such as North Korea and China's actions in the South China Sea. This was again manifest during the recent ASEAN deliberations. Currently, India is emerging as one of the countries in the region firmly committed to freedom of navigation and over-flight, and for unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. This puts it in direct confrontation with China, as also in opposing China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific.

The Quadrilateral idea, which has since begun to take shape with India's implicit acceptance of the concept, is likely to further irk China. China has consistently opposed the idea viewing it as an example of anti-China consolidation. For the present, China has been circumspect in its opposition to the move, limiting itself to questioning its rationale and whether it is directed at a third party with the potential to disturb regional peace and stability. This may not, however, last for much longer.

As the outlines of a new bipolarity in Asia become clearer, and with the formal setting up of the Quadrilateral, China is certain to regard all this as an attempt to encircle it. This will pave the way for a new round of turmoil. China is almost certain to take effective steps to break this so-called encirclement, and use both force and inducements to win more and more Asian countries to its side. The consequences of this could be quite significant for peace and stability in the Asian region.

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

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Reaching out to neighbours

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is among the world's largest regional intergovernmental organisations. Since its inception, the countries in the region have become more integrated through enhanced intraregional trade and connectivity. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), geographically proximate to ASEAN, started its journey in 1985 with similar aspirations but over time has failed to deliver. It has been unable to integrate the region through trade and connectivity and continues to be stuck in the quagmire of regional politics and rivalry and stagnates from historical distrust and old animosity.

In its first two decades, ASEAN focussed on a limited range of issues, but over time its mandate expanded and now includes climate change, disaster management, counterterrorism, drugs and human trafficking. ASEAN's greatest success has been its ability to deftly resolve disputes. In the early years, for instance, its unity was challenged by the Philippines-Malaysia dispute over Sabah, but the founding members found a peaceful mechanism to mitigate opposing claims. In the case of SAARC, political squabbles, deep mistrust and military conflict between India and Pakistan have frustrated regional cooperation. The whole region is suffering from lost potential due to India-Pakistan hostility which hit a new low when India boycotted the 19th SAARC summit as a result of the Uri terrorist attack, with Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan following suit, eventually resulting in cancellation of the summit.

Trade in ASEAN has grown rapidly and it has focussed on promoting rapid economic growth and modernisation. It has created the Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA), which ensures liberalisation and protection of cross-border investments operations, together with best practices for the treatment of foreign investors and investments. On the other hand, trade amongst the SAARC members stands at 3.5% of their total volume of trade. Initiatives under the South Asian Free Trade Association have failed to make much headway. Subregional initiatives like the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement also have stalled.

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations (FATA) has called on the ASEAN nations to waive entry requirements amongst the member states. A feasibility study has been conducted on the development of a rail link from Singapore to Kunming in southern China to enhance seamless connectivity among the ASEAN nations to boost intraregional trade and people-to-people connectivity. Projects aimed at promoting the region as a tourist destination have also been undertaken. On the other hand, the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme only allows certain categories of dignitaries to be exempt from visas, excluding ordinary citizens from accessing unimpeded travel in the region. It is difficult for Indians to enter Pakistan and vice versa. Even citizens of other SAARC countries who have visited either India or Pakistan before and now wish to travel to the other face hassles during visa issuance by either country. And SAARC infrastructural problems plague connectivity.

As the biggest country of SAARC, India is trying to exert leadership by forming subregional initiatives like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Another objective is to isolate Pakistan. Such attempts to forge sub-regional ties at the cost of jeopardising the regional vision for unity have not been witnessed in ASEAN. When ASEAN was criticised for taking in Myanmar in spite of its military rule, the grouping emphasised the importance of keeping open the channels of communication and engagement as a better means to influence the regime. Bilateral bickering never got in the way of trade and travel.

On the political and economic continuum, ASEAN has behaved pragmatically and sensibly whereas South Asia has been bogged down by bilateral animosity and the bitter legacy of partition. ASEAN members have avoided showing outward hostility against each other and have

tried to resolve differences through dialogue, engagement and cooperation. Politicians in SAARC have mostly catered to their domestic constituents without having any broad regional vision, so that it takes years to sign agreements and even more time to implement them. As a regional organisation, while ASEAN has grown from strength to strength. Unless there is a serious and concerted effort by the political leadership of SAARC, led primarily by India and Pakistan, to revitalise the regional body, it will continue to be what it always has been: a utopian idea existing only in summit documents.

Syed Munir Khasru is the Chairman of the international think tank, the Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance. munir.khasru@ipag.org

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Quad confusion

More than 10 days after the Quadrilateral meeting, or 'Quad', involving secretary-level officials of India, Japan, Australia and the U.S., the dust is yet to settle on just what was decided among them. To begin with, the four participants issued not one but four separate statements after their meeting in Manila. A cursory look at these statements reveals the basic differences in intent: while all four referred to keeping a "free and open Indo-Pacific", the Ministry of External Affairs statement did not mention upholding "maritime security" as an objective, while the statements of the U.S., Australia and Japan did. Similarly, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs made no mention of enhancing "connectivity" as an aim, which the other three did.

The import of these omissions is clear. The Quad is yet to decide what its real aim is: maritime security, connectivity, countering China's moves in the Indo-Pacific and on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or a combination of all three. Adding to the confusion were U.S. President Donald Trump's own moves in Beijing. He lavished praise on Chinese President Xi Jinping and the two signed a slew of agreements, including one for a joint fund for the \$40 billion Silk Road Fund meant to finance BRI projects. Despite all the concerns expressed by the countries of the Quad, India remains the only one to openly oppose the BRI.

On the maritime front, India gave out confusing signals. It is the only country in the Quad that is not part of a military alliance. In June, India declined Australia's request to join the Malabar exercises, and just days before the Quad, Naval Chief Sunil Lanba told *The Hindu* that there were no plans for joint patrols with the U.S., or any country that is not a "maritime neighbour" of India, which would rule out Australia and Japan too. If India's intentions are only to patrol the Indian Ocean part of the Indo-Pacific, it remains to be seen what reciprocal value the Quad would have.

Then there is the question of where the government stands on India's position in the world. While rejecting "non-alignment" in a unipolar world, the government has decided a course that wins the country a foot in the door to every membership club. While that may seem wise, the practicalities in an increasingly polarised world are difficult: how would India explain not joining a security cooperation arrangement within the Quad, for example, even though it joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation this year?

If India is willing to brave all of these contradictions and steer the course towards a closer Quad arrangement, then the final question to be answered is, to what end? A few years ago, a South Block mandarin said the basic difference between India and the U.S. was that the U.S. wanted India's assistance, along with Japan and Australia, "to the East", while India wanted the U.S.'s assistance in matters "to its West". As a result, giving in to demands for greater engagement in the East with the Quad will need to be calibrated with concrete outcomes on India's concerns with terror from Pakistan, and a free hand to pursue ties with Iran.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Prime Minister of Sri Lanka calls on the President**Prime Minister of Sri Lanka calls on the President**

His Excellency Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, called on the President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (November 23, 2017).

Welcoming the Sri Lankan Prime Minister to India, the President said that India supports his vision to create a stable and prosperous Sri Lanka. The President also appreciated Mr Wickremesinghe's positive role in Sri Lanka's active engagement with the world.

The President said that relations between India and Sri Lanka are unique, warm and friendly. They are based upon shared historical, cultural, ethnic and civilizational ties and extensive people-to-people linkages.

The President said that development cooperation forms an important part of India-Sri Lanka bilateral engagement. India is keen to strengthen the economic pillar of its relationship with Sri Lanka. There is a lot that can be achieved, given the synergy and economic complementarities between the two countries. The President iterated India's firm commitment to partner with Sri Lanka on projects of mutual interest.

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Arrest Hafiz Saeed, U.S. tells Pakistan

Hafiz Saeed

Pakistan should ensure that Hafiz Saeed, mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, is arrested and charged for his crimes, the U.S. said a day after he was released from house arrest. Saeed is a designated global terrorist and the U.S. has declared a bounty of \$10 million on his head.

The Pakistani authorities had put him under house arrest in January this year, which was widely interpreted as an attempt by them to ward off pressure from the Donald Trump administration that had just taken charge in the U.S. Pakistan had detained him several times since the Mumbai attack, but he has largely remained free, addressing rallies and giving interviews.

“The United States is deeply concerned that Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) leader Hafiz Saeed has been released from house arrest in Pakistan. The LeT is a designated foreign terrorist organisation responsible for the death of hundreds of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks, including a number of American citizens. The Pakistani government should make sure that he is arrested and charged for his crimes,” said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert.

Saeed’s release came days after the Trump administration pushed back against attempts by U.S. lawmakers to put the LeT and the Haqqani Network in the same category in the recently passed National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA). A significant portion of U.S. aid to Pakistan is tied to certification by the Secretary of State that it is taking adequate action against the Haqqani Network. With the Secretary unable to issue this certification, the U.S. has held back large sums in recent years. The Senate version of the NDAA proposed such certification requirement with regard to action against the LeT also, but the Pentagon objected to it. The final version of the law does not have that provision.

‘Act against LeT’

The U.S. has, however, repeatedly asked Pakistan to act against the LeT. “In May 2008, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Saeed as a specially designated global terrorist under Executive Order 13224. Saeed was also individually designated by the UN under UNSCR 1267 in December 2008 following the November 2008 Mumbai attack in which 166 people, including six American citizens, were killed,” said Ms. Nauert. “The LeT and several of its front organisations, leaders and operatives remain under both State Department and Treasury Department sanctions. Since 2012, the U.S. has offered a \$10 million reward for information that brings Saeed to justice.”

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The China plan — On Myanmar-Bangladesh deal on Rohingya

The [agreement reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh to repatriate Rohingya](#) refugees suggests that the Chinese proposal has found some traction as a solution to the crisis. It has been sealed after a three-month military operation by Myanmar in Rakhine, which resulted in around 600,000 Rohingya fleeing the province to Bangladesh, leading to a humanitarian crisis and a war of words between Dhaka and Naypyidaw. It is against this background that China stepped in with its three-point plan. Earlier this month, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi travelled to Bangladesh and Myanmar with the proposal; Beijing later claimed both countries had accepted it. Under the plan, Myanmar and Bangladesh were to hold bilateral talks and reach a repatriation agreement – which has been achieved. However, the first step in Beijing's approach – which involved a declaration of ceasefire in Rakhine to halt further displacement and bringing immediate relief to the state's devastated Rohingya – has not taken effect. If this were to happen, the third part of the proposal will presumably take effect, with China providing economic assistance for the development of the Rakhine region as part of a long-term solution.

China, which has historically been wary of stepping into domestic conflicts in other countries, is being proactive in this case. Its own interest is at stake. Beijing enjoys good relations with both Bangladesh and Myanmar; also, Rakhine is an important link in its Belt and Road Initiative. China is building a \$7.3 billion deep-water port in the province and has invested \$2.45 billion to build an oil and gas pipeline connecting coastal Rakhine to Yunnan. China has put pressure on Myanmar because a protracted conflict in Rakhine will be decidedly against Beijing's economic interests. The signing of a repatriation deal suggests this pressure tactic is working. But details of the agreement, including the number of Rohingya who will be sent back, and the timeline, have not been revealed. It is also not clear whether the refugees themselves want to go back to a place they had fled in such perilous circumstances. Or in the event they do, where they will be resettled. From the details of the plan it is clear that China sees the Rohingya crisis as an economic problem, given that its solution is centred on development. While economic assistance is essential, the real problem is arguably deeply political, and there needs to be an accompanying political solution. Any proposal can only make limited headway unless Myanmar is willing to roll back the institutional barriers that render Rohingya second-class people. Unless they are accepted as equal citizens, there is unlikely to be a long-term solution to the Rakhine unrest.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC Chief of The Naval Staff Visits Bangladesh

Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC Chief of The Naval Staff Visits Bangladesh

Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy is visiting Bangladesh on an invitation of Bangladesh for participation in International Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) being held at Bangladesh from 26 to 28 November 2017 under the aegis of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

IONS, an initiative which was started by Indian Navy in 2008, has grown into a formidable organisation with 23 'Member' nations and 'Nine' observer countries. Continuing with the active engagement within IONS, Bangladesh, the current 'Chair' of IONS is conducting the first ever operational exercise called 'IMMSAREX', under the IONS Charter. The exercise will be inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh on 27 November 2017 in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh. Indian Naval Ships Ranvir, Sahyadri, Gharial and Sukanya along with one Maritime Patrol Aircraft P-8I will be participating in the exercise. In-addition to the conduct of the exercise, an 'Extraordinary Conclave of Chiefs (ECoC)' meeting of IONS is also scheduled on 28 November 2017, at Cox Bazar, which would also be attended by the Chiefs of the Navy. The ECoC would deliberate upon activities being undertaken by IONS in-addition to reviewing the progress made by three IONS Working Group (IWG) namely 'HADR', 'Maritime Security' & 'Information Exchange and Interoperability'.

The visit is also aimed at consolidating bilateral naval relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation. Admiral Sunil Lanba will also hold bilateral discussions with Chief of the Naval Staff, Bangladesh Navy on 27 November 2017, and other participating 'Chiefs of Navy/ Head of Maritime Agencies'.

Indian Navy regularly interacts with Bangladesh Navy through the medium of 'Staff Talks' and other interactions, which include operational interactions including Port Visits, Passage Exercises, Training, Shipbuilding Cooperation besides regular participation by Indian Navy serving and retired officers in Victory Day Celebrations, held in Bangladesh to commemorate 'Liberation War' of 1971.

The CNS during his visit to Bangladesh would also be gifting 'War Memorabilia' for 'Liberation War Museum' of Bangladesh.

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China bets on mega projects in Tibet

China's well-tested mantra that has powered its economic rise — build quality infrastructure and the rest will follow — is in full play in Tibet. The Qinghai-Tibet railway, the 1,956-km track passing over bridges and through tunnels, has already made history. An offshoot of that railway, also called Lari railway, is now being stretched from Lhasa to the extremities of Tibet. Trains have already reached Xigaze, the terminus of this line. That is not far from Tibet's border with Nepal. Another track from Xigaze will head towards Yadong, a Chumbi valley town made famous by the 1904 Tibet expedition led by Francis Younghusband, a colonel in the British Indian Army. Yadong is on the doorstep of Sikkim. The Nathu La, the point of entry in Sikkim, is only 34 km away, approachable by a road from Yadong.

Apart from railways and roads, Chinese planners are also focussing on hydropower plants. Tibet is well-known as the water tower of the world. Several major rivers — the Yangtze, the Yellow river, the Lancang (better known as the Mekong), the Nu river and the Yarlung Zangpo, which becomes the Brahmaputra once it enters India — originate in Tibet. Chinese plans for massive hydro projects have triggered much concern among environmentalists, who are worried about the possible damage that this may cause to a fragile ecosystem in this natural wonderland.

Those inclined to view change purely within the spectrum of geopolitics are also nervous about Beijing's plans. They fear that water can become a weapon for exercising China's influence over countries that share these rivers. The Yarlung Zangpo flows into Bangladesh and India. The Lancang is the lifeline of much of Southeast Asia. The Nu flows into the Andaman Sea through Myanmar.

In tune with its plans, China has announced the construction of the Suwalong hydropower station on the Jinsha river, which forms the upper reaches of the Yangtze. The Suwalong project is located in Southwest China — on the border of Tibet's Mangkam county and Batang county of the neighbouring Sichuan province.

Colourful history

Incidentally, Mangkam county, especially its Yanjing valley, has a colourful history. It is known for its traditional salt wells and over a 100 hot springs, of much therapeutic value. The area also hosted part of the famous trans-Himalayan Tea-Horse trade route that wound its way from China's Yunnan province *en route* Tibet to India. With trade, came culture and religion. Earlier this year, Chinese archeologists unearthed eight Buddhist statues in Mangkam county.

Once completed, the Suwalong project would generate 2,000 MW of power, which would be channelled into the country's well-off eastern region. The Suwalong project's design capacity is double that of the Zangmu hydropower plant, established on the Yarlung Zangpo river. State media is signalling that right now, the Nu and Lancang could be the immediate focus of hydro projects in Tibet, rather than the Yarlung Zangpo (Brahmaputra) — the bone of contention between China and India.

Nu and Lancang rivers converge in the Mangkam county, which could well become one of Tibet's energy production hubs. According to other official media reports, China's ongoing 13th five-year plan is concentrating on hydropower development along the Jinsha, Nu and Lancang rivers, in view of lower electric transmission costs to high demand zones in neighbouring provinces.

In tune with its infrastructure plans for Tibet, China has announced the construction of the Suwalong hydropower station on the Jinsha river, which could generate 2,000 MW of power

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Smart-balancing China: a clear vision for regional order

How do you deal with an inscrutable, revisionist and rising superpower next door with whom you have had a historical rivalry and whose brazen inroads into your traditional sphere of influence leave you embittered, but whose trading relationship is important to you? There are no easy answers even though we often come across many 'simple and straightforward' solutions: ranging from military options to cutting off trade ties. The recent revival of the 'Quadilateral' (or Quad) and the consequent talk of an 'Asian NATO' have brought the India-China rivalry back to the limelight. Let's be clear: how to 'balance' China will occupy a great deal of India's strategic attention in the years ahead as China charts its course towards superpower status. Any such strategising by India needs to be prudently thought out.

For President Xi Jinping's new China, the days of "hiding capabilities and biding time" of the Deng era are finally over — it's time to become "a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence". If it utilises the power vacuum left by Donald Trump's 'reluctant superpower', China's superpower ambitions are bound to have a system-shaping impact on the Asian region. There will be China-led alliances, Chinese client states and the establishment of Chinese spheres of influence. The alleged China connection to the recent 'regime change' in Zimbabwe is perhaps a harbinger of things to come.

Quad confusion

Moreover, it would ensure that its access to overseas resources/markets and the oceanic trade routes are unhindered. In doing so, it is increasingly seeking to build military facilities overseas and offset the U.S.-led coalition in the region. In this big picture of Chinese grand strategy, New Delhi, seen increasingly aligned with the U.S., is a spoiler. Denying India entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group, repeatedly blocking UN sanctions against Pakistan-based terrorists, and ignoring India's sensitivity over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor are outcomes of this vision.

There are several sources of increasing Sinophobia in India. For one, Chinese revisionist claims in the land and oceanic space have been a major source of concern. Beijing's deployment of naval assets to enforce its claims across the South China Sea, construction of artificial islands in the region, and the rejection of a UN tribunal judgment on a complaint filed by the Philippines, last year have only strengthened this feeling. China has also been increasing its naval presence, including dispatching its nuclear submarines on patrol, in the Indian Ocean. Would this eventually lead to a more permanent Chinese naval presence in the region? It is in this broader context that China's revisionist statements on Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are worryingly viewed in New Delhi.

Second, along with military assertion, Beijing has also been stepping up its political and economic footprint in the region, dismissing New Delhi's protests. Third, and perhaps most importantly, what worries New Delhi is the ever-strengthening China-Pakistan military alliance and its implications for the country: the insecurity stemming from a so-called 'nutcracker' situation.

The current Indian strategies to 'checkmate' China seem more zero-sum and less efficient. To be sure, New Delhi has chosen to adopt an unequivocal U.S.-centric strategy to deal with Beijing, most recently the Quad. There are several problems with this approach: the U.S. is a quickly-receding extra-regional power whose long-term commitment to the region is increasingly indeterminate and unsure; U.S.-China relations are far more complex than we generally assume; and Australia is caught between the U.S. and China. While India may have shed its traditional reticence about a strategic partnership with the U.S., it would still not be what Japan is to the U.S., nor should it.

The second broad policy direction seems to be to compete with China for regional influence in South Asia. Let's be realistic: trying to match the powerful yuan, backed by vigorous political support from Beijing, with our humble rupee is a losing battle. Military preparedness to offset any potential Chinese aggression is something that India can and should invest in. But again, Chinese military aggression has really not been India's central concern, but a China-dominated region in which India is hemmed in and forced to play second fiddle. Military preparedness, in which we will inevitably lag behind China, alone cannot address such a concern.

Some have suggested that India should use its \$70 billion-strong trading relationship with China as a bargaining chip to check Chinese behaviour. However, doing so would hurt both sides. While it is true that India-China bilateral trade is heavily skewed in favour of China, let's not forget that China's exports to India comprise under 3% of its total exports (and India's exports to China is 3.6% of its total exports). Boycotting Chinese goods would also mean Indian consumers paying more to get them from elsewhere. Clearly then, trade as a bargaining chip *vis-à-vis* China is just a popular urban myth.

So what then are our options? Adopting a straightforward balancing strategy (which is what states normally do when faced with a stronger neighbour) may become costly, counter-productive, and not deliver the desired results. Bandwagoning (jumping on board the wave of the future, in this case, China), on the other hand, may be both undesirable and insufficient for obvious reasons. Neither of these two mutually exclusive options are ideal for serving India's current and future interests *vis-à-vis* China. Hence New Delhi would be better served by adopting a more nuanced balancing strategy, a strategy of 'smart-balancing', towards Beijing, one that involves deep engagements and carefully calibrated balancing, at the same time.

Let's examine some elements of such a strategy. First of all, it would involve co-binding China in a bilateral/regional security complex: that is, view China as part of the solution to the region's challenges (including terrorism, climate change, piracy, infrastructural/developmental needs) than as part of the problem, or the problem itself. Some efforts in this direction are already under way such as India-China joint anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden. The two countries could consider initiating regular, structured consultations in this regard. In other words, enhancing security cooperation with China is a sure way of alleviating the persistent security dilemma between them. A mutual 'complex interdependence' in economic, security and other domains should be strengthened and front-loaded over zero-sum competition.

This security cooperation should most certainly be enhanced in the Indo-Pacific where India should, even while being part of the Quad, talk of cooperating with China. Language is important: talk about security community and joint efforts than containing China.

Second, India should cooperate with and trust China while at the same time keeping its (gun) power dry, for after all, in the anarchic international system that we inhabit, the role of military strength in guaranteeing national security cannot be underestimated.

Third, New Delhi's response to Beijing's refusal to act against Pakistan-based terrorists needn't be strait-laced. However, while Beijing is unlikely to make Islamabad politically uncomfortable by public terror-shaming, the more China gets involved in Pakistan, the less it can afford to ignore terrorism within Pakistan. Around 30,000 Chinese nationals currently reside in Pakistan (and over 71,000 Chinese nationals visited Pakistan last year) and these numbers will only increase over time which will perforce motivate Beijing to 'work with' Islamabad on the terror question. That is precisely where New Delhi should use its diplomatic skills to make an impact.

India urgently needs to develop a clear vision for a stable regional security order and work out what role India would like China to play in that vision and how it can nudge China towards that.

Keeping China out of the regional security order is not realistic, letting China dominate it is not desirable: smart-balancing China within such an order is indeed the optimal strategy.

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China's vision for the next 30 years

Every five years, the Communist Party of China (CPC) convenes a National Congress, where two key decisions are made: who will lead China for the next five years, and what path to development those leaders will follow. The CPC's recently completed 19th National Congress did all that and more.

Beyond choosing the next politburo standing committee, the 19th party congress re-elected President Xi Jinping as the CPC's leader and added his eponymous ideology—"Xi Jinping Thought"—to the party's charter. The congress also produced a blueprint for the country's future development until 2050, one that reflects the changes that economic reform and opening have brought to China.

In his address to the 19th party congress, Xi declared that, because China can largely deliver basic necessities to its people, the goal now should be to improve their quality of life. With that in mind, the 19th congress charted a new road map, based on the "two centennial goals" inherited from the 18th congress. The first centennial goal is to build a "moderately prosperous society" (*xiao-kang*) by 2021, the 100th anniversary of the CPC's founding. The key here is to ensure broad prosperity, with poverty all but eliminated.

The second centennial goal is to transform China into a "fully developed and advanced nation" by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. The vision, confirmed at the congress, is for China to be a prosperous, civilized, harmonious, and modern socialist society, boasting strong governance. Such a China would be a leading global power, ranking high among the advanced economies.

The 19th party congress went some way toward marking the path between these two goals, asserting that once the first centennial goal is realized, China's next task will be to modernize Chinese society by 2035. Such a modern China would be a world leader in innovation, with a clean environment, a large middle class, and a much narrower gap between rural and urban growth, public services, and living standards.

Achieving these goals will require, first and foremost, that China's leadership understands where in the development process China is. In this sense, it is promising that China's leaders admitted at the latest congress that China is and will remain in the primary phase of socialism. China must, therefore, put development first, with the expectation that economic growth will solve the country's problems.

Given this, China's top leaders promised that they would continue implementing structural reforms and advancing economic liberalization. This builds on a resolution, adopted at the third plenary session of the 18th CPC central committee in 2013, to give the market the "decisive role" in allocating resources.

As the 19th party congress acknowledged, honouring these commitments will require China to protect private property rights and entrepreneurship. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that the private sector contributes more than 60% of China's GDP, 50% of its taxes, 70% of its technological and product innovations, and 80% of its jobs, despite accounting for less than 40% of inputs.

As for liberalization, China is committed to implementing policies to open up further its markets to trade and foreign investment, while protecting the legitimate rights and interests of foreign investors. As part of this effort, the government is authorizing further free-trade zones, and

exploring the possibility of free-trade ports in selected locations.

It is believed that China is on track to achieve its goal of becoming a high-income economy by 2035. But it will have to sustain labour productivity growth of at least 5% annually for the next 15-20 years—an outcome that will depend on rising urbanization and deepening technological progress.

The key to success will be a Chinese leadership that adapts effectively to changing internal and external conditions and manages the risks that have accumulated in recent decades. For example, it must tackle growing income inequality, driven largely by the massive disparity between urban and rural incomes, though the income gap among urban residents is also widening. In 2014, per capita income was CN¥53,300 (\$8,024) for the top 5% households and just CN¥1,600 for the poorest 5%.

China also faces increasing wealth disparity. In 1988 and 1995, China's Gini coefficient of household wealth was just 0.34 and 0.4, respectively. But the coefficient has grown, peaking at 0.739 in 2010. By 2014, the poorest 25% of households owned less than 2% of the country's total wealth, while the top 1% owned one third.

If China fails to contain inequality, its long-term growth could suffer. But with a clear development blueprint and a powerful leader whose political clout all but guarantees continued reform, China might be in a strong position to address the challenges it faces and sustain its unprecedented economic success.

Yet, even if China achieves its goals for 2050, the challenge will not be over, as China's leaders will then have to contend with an ageing population. By 2050, 36.5% of China's population will be over the age of 60, according to the 2017 revision of the United Nations' World Population Prospects. The median age may be as high as 49.6, quite close to Japan's 53.3 and higher than in the Sweden, the UK, European Union as a whole, and the US. This makes it all the more crucial for China's leaders to make the right decisions and put their country on a stable footing by 2050.

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Zhang Jun is professor of economics and director of the China Center for Economic Studies at Fudan University.

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Smart-balancing China: a clear vision for regional order

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There are several sources of increasing Sinophobia in India. For one, Chinese revisionist claims in the land and oceanic space have been a major source of concern. Beijing's deployment of naval assets to enforce its claims across the South China Sea, construction of artificial islands in the region, and the rejection of a UN tribunal judgment on a complaint filed by the Philippines, last year have only strengthened this feeling. China has also been increasing its naval presence, including dispatching its nuclear submarines on patrol, in the Indian Ocean. Would this eventually lead to a more permanent Chinese naval presence in the region? It is in this broader context that China's revisionist statements on Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are worryingly viewed in New Delhi.

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Road to chaos: Pakistan's face-off with extremists

The long stand-off between the authorities and Islamist protesters on the edges of Islamabad, once again, has exposed the vulnerability of the Pakistan government while dealing with extremist groups. The protesters, led by a little-known group, Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLY) paralysed the city by [blocking the main road from Rawalpindi for three weeks](#), demanding the resignation of Law Minister Zahid Hamid. The demonstrations were purportedly a response to a proposed change in the oath for lawmakers that moderated the mention of the Prophet. Islamist groups, with Khadim Hussain Rizvi, the chief of Tehreek-i-Labaik, taking the lead, alleged that this amounted to blasphemy. Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi appeared to have no idea how to find a way out. He withdrew the proposed amendment in the wake of Islamist protests, hoping that it would pacify them. When the crowd started blocking the road to Islamabad, the government first ignored it, clearly underestimating Tehreek-i-Labaik's capacity to sustain the demonstrations. When the protesters persisted, the authorities offered to hold talks. When that failed and its handling of the crisis came under judicial criticism, the government decided to use force, resulting in violent clashes between security personnel and protesters on Saturday, in which at least six people were killed and over 100 injured. Even then, the civilian leadership had to seek the Army's help to broker a deal with the protesters. It was after Mr. Hamid resigned as Law Minister that Mr. Rizvi finally asked his supporters to disperse.

The way the government handled the crisis and its final capitulation, under military mediation, to the protesters' ultimatum clearly point to the continuing erosion of executive authority. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) government, which suffered a massive setback in July when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was disqualified, is yet to recover its equilibrium. Mr. Abbasi must take part of the blame for what happened in Islamabad. He failed to act swiftly when the crisis broke. Instead, he waited and watched as the capital city was paralysed. By the time things came to a head, the military played its hand not just to help resolve the crisis but also to project the civilian leadership as being clueless. An equally worrying sign for Pakistan is that a political upstart with extremist views has showed it can hold the government to ransom. It is not clear whether Tehreek-i-Labaik has the support of the ruling party's rivals. But the pace at which thousands of supporters were mobilised in Islamabad against the government reinforces the sensitivity of the blasphemy issue in the country's politics. The growing street power of Islamist fringe groups, the reluctance of the government to take them on and the mediatory role the Army plays at a time when divisions among political parties run deep, all confirm the risk of instability in Pakistan.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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Raja Mandala: Saudi Arabia and the ghosts of 1979

Mohammad bin Salman, the bold crown prince of Saudi Arabia, has been making waves with a muscular foreign policy, an ambitious economic agenda to wean the kingdom away from oil, the will to destroy the domestic political order and plans for social liberalisation. Conventional wisdom warns pursuing any one of these four elements would be politically suicidal. But the 32-year old crown prince, promoted out of turn by his father King Salman, is pressing ahead.

Not all his exertions have succeeded. The Saudi intervention in Yemen has turned out to be prolonged and costly. His attempts to punish Qatar have not brought Doha to its knees. The recent arrest of 200 top royals, officials and business tycoons on charges of corruption, has been viewed by many as marking a political coup by Mohammad bin Salman, widely known as MbS.

It will be a while before his economic plans can be implemented and generate real results. His social reforms, such as letting women drive and calls for “moderate Islam”, are undermining the foundation of the modern Saudi state — an alliance between the House of Saud and Wahhabi clerics. Although MbS has been seen abroad as impatient and impetuous, he seems to have considerable support from the younger generation of Saudis that is fed-up with social oppression and economic stagnation.

Speaking at an investors conference in Riyadh last month, MbS said, “We are returning to what we were before — a country of moderate Islam that is open to all religions and to the world. We will not spend the next 30 years of our lives dealing with destructive ideas. We will destroy them today.” In an interview to The New York Times last week, MbS said, “Do not write that we are ‘reinterpreting’ Islam — we are ‘restoring’ Islam to its origins — and our biggest tools are the Prophet’s practices and [daily life in] Saudi Arabia before 1979.”

Other Arab leaders in the region including Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, the president of Egypt and Mohammed bin Zayed al Nayhan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and the deputy supreme commander of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, have been pushing for moderate Islam over the last few years. But coming from Saudi Arabia, which is the centre of the Islamic world, and its royal family whose legitimacy rests on the claim to be custodian of the holy sites, Mecca and Medina, it is significant.

Why is MbS constantly harping on 1979 — and the times before and after? It was indeed a critical year that transformed the Middle East and had powerful consequences for the whole world, especially the Indian Subcontinent. The first among the three pivotal events was the seizure of the grand mosque in Mecca by a group of zealots, who accused the Saudi royalty of abandoning Islam and selling its soul to the West.

From then on, the House of Saud moved rapidly towards conservatism. To counter the extremist flank from the right, it pandered to the Wahhabi clergy at home and promoted extremist groups abroad. But the Sunni flank has become ever more radical and sees the House of Saud as the most important political target.

The second event was the Islamic revolution in Iran that overthrew Shah Reza Pahlavi in Tehran. Claiming to be the true guardian of Islam, Ayatollah Khomeini presented a big political threat to Saudi Arabia’s leadership role in the Islamic world. The Saudi rivalry with the Islamic Republic of Iran for influence in the Islamic world, inevitably acquired a sectarian colour (Sunni versus Shia) as well as an ethnic dimension (Arab versus Persian).

The third event was the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan at the end of 1979. As US-Russian

detente of the 1970s collapsed, Washington stepped in to mobilise a jihad against godless Russian communists with the help of the Saudis and the Pakistan Army. The Russian bear was pushed out of Afghanistan a decade later, but radical political Islam had been legitimised.

If the Middle East paid a huge price for the turmoil generated by 1979, so did the Subcontinent. Before 1979, the Subcontinent was a very different place. It had no dearth of economic and political problems. But violent religious extremism was not one of those. This is an awful legacy from 1979. General Zia-ul-Haque's imposition of conservative Islam on Pakistani society and the promotion of religious radicalism to achieve political objectives in Afghanistan, India and Bangladesh has radically transformed the Subcontinent's political dynamic.

But can MbS put the genie back in the bottle? Sceptics will caution against too much hope, for a strong resistance to the new agenda of "moderate Islam" is inevitable. Even among those who think MbS is on the right path, there will be much political disputation on how to exorcise the ghosts of 1979.

Delhi though must cheer on MbS and his effort to take religion back from the extremists. The ideas of religious moderation and social modernisation have been steadily pushed on the defensive in the four decades since 1979. Any effort to reverse 1979, therefore, must be welcomed wholeheartedly in the Subcontinent.

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Closing down a country: the nature of democratic politics in Pakistan

Around three thousand unarmed men, of a recently founded group, the Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLY), have been able to [close down key parts of Pakistan's main cities, which include Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi](#). On account of state action taken against this very tiny group of Islamic protesters on Saturday near Islamabad, the Government of Pakistan closed down all television news channels for a day, except Pakistan Television (PTV), and shut down Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Moreover, in Islamabad and Lahore, education institutions have had to be closed for two days, one day in Karachi.

The fact that the three-week-long dharna, even by just 3,000 unarmed men, has created such a [major crisis for a government](#) which is trying to stabilise itself under a new Prime Minister shows how a minuscule political entity can have such major consequences. Either non-mainstream actors and parties now do politics outside the rules of democratic politics or, the rules of democratic politics have changed to include disruptive and threatening gestures which might completely destabilise democracy itself.

In the case of Pakistan, in particular, the threat of destabilising democracy by extra-democratic means, has loomed large since the ouster of the military and the return to democracy in 2008. In 2014, a dharna organised by cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri, a cleric who lives in Canada and flies into Pakistan at times of political crises, lasted four months. Much evidence since that time clearly suggests that the dharna was supported by very senior members of Pakistan's Army, who had clear designs to use the agitation as a means to dismiss Nawaz Sharif and his government. The fact that the then Chief of Army Staff, Raheel Sharif, decided not to intervene and dismiss the government may have been on the basis of expediency and prudence, rather than the military's support for democratic practices.

The Imran Khan/Tahirul Qadri dharna was peaceful, had many tens of thousands of participants including women, and did not cause any death on account of it. The current protest, in contrast, is tiny, but accounted for at least six deaths and 187 cases of injuries. Moreover, the 2014 dharna was confined largely to Islamabad (with some protest in Lahore), while the consequences of police action on this current protest in Rawalpindi and Islamabad instantly mobilised TLY group members and sympathisers in many cities across Pakistan, paralysing parts of Lahore, Faisalabad and Karachi, and even parts of Sindh and Balochistan.

For a small, apparently insignificant group, to be so well coordinated across diverse cities suggests that it has a cadre which responds well and quickly when members of the group need support. Of course, such well-coordinated action also gives rise to speculation that it is actually the military which is behind the protest of the TLY and is trying to further destabilise a weak government. Of course, nothing could be farther from such fantasy.

The background and the reasons for the protests in Rawalpindi and Islamabad — which have brought much of Islamabad to a standstill since key routes in and out of the city have been blocked — rests on the demand for the Law Minister to resign on account of a supposed change made in the oath by Members of Parliament about the finality of Prophet Muhammad, as per the Elections Act 2017. A change was made by Parliament in the oath to be taken, where the old "I solemnly swear ...", was replaced by "I believe...", and where the legal consequences remain the same. Parliament even realised that it had apparently made a "mistake" in approving this change, and opted to reverse its decision going back to the earlier wording. Islamists accused the Law Minister of blasphemy for this change in the wording of the electoral oath, and called for his blood. He refused to resign and they started their protests.

As happens in such stand-offs, it was expected that through some cajoling and over time, the protesters would disperse. They did not despite the rain that came and stayed put. The government then decided to push the protesters out, and security personnel were called in to remove them. Clashes occurred and the government soon backed off, leaving the protesters holding firm, with protests launched in other cities as well. The civilian government called in the military “for law and order duty according to the Constitution” but the military was nowhere to be seen, a clear act of disobedience.

The government has been criticised for taking such a long time in removing the protesters and making a mess of the situation. With swift action it could have chased off the protesters. Instead, the organisation consolidated itself, gaining strength and support as it continued to resist.

The reporting and analysis in the English language press has been indicative of the strong reaction towards the Islamist group. They have been called “zealots”, “fanatics”, “hard-line Islamists”, “bigots”, that they have “dark passions”, are “hot blooded”, and much worse. What is also interesting is how Pakistan’s Interior Minister, Ahsan Iqbal, has quite bizarrely stated that his government has evidence that the protesters have “contacted India” and was “investigating the matter”.

Before social media went off the air, there was strong reaction to the numerous remarks made by military spokesmen as well as the Chief of the Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa. Before the actions against the protesters started, Gen. Bajwa said that violence should be avoided “by both sides”, i.e., the protesters and the government, which got a strong reaction from many on social media, pointing out that it was the protesters who were being violent, not the government. When the civilian government asked for the military’s help in removing the protesters, he said that since the people “loved the Army”, the Army could not become part of any such action. He stated that the Army “cannot take action against its own people”, a statement which invited a barrage of criticism reminding the General of the military’s action against its own people, in East Pakistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Balochistan, Karachi, and against the Okara peasants.

The protest, or siege as many called it, ended on Sunday night following an agreement between the protesters and the government. The agreement was mediated by a Major General of the Inter-Services Intelligence, and the Law Minister resigned. The signed agreement concludes with: “we are thankful to him [Gen Bajwa] for saving the nation from a big catastrophe”, crediting the Army Chief and his representative team for their “special efforts”. The Islamabad High Court in its proceedings on Monday morning criticised the Interior Minister for giving the military the role of “mediator”, especially since the military had turned down the civilian government’s request to intervene earlier. The judge asked: “Where does the law assign this role to a general?” The rather brave judge said that this was “proof of the military’s involvement”.

Even this tiny incident in Islamabad allows one to make a number of observations about the political economy of Pakistan: religious groups and parties are far better organised and committed than their liberal cousins, and civil society; the present government is suffering from the absence of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister, and the current leadership is weak; the military overrules its chief executive, the civilian government; and the military is needed to ensure agreements between the government and protesters. The role of Imran Khan and his party has been particularly opportunistic and pro-military in this encounter. It seems now that the nature of democratic politics in Pakistan is also changing, and even though elections are to be held next year, the ballot box will no longer be the only forum to determine political outcomes.

S. Akbar Zaidi is a political economist based in Karachi. He teaches at Columbia University in New York, and at the IBA in Karachi

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Shri Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart sign an Agreement on Cooperation in Moscow

Joint Action Plan signed for countering threat posed by narcotics

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh arrived in Moscow, Russia yesterday on a three day (27th-29th November) visit there. He was received by Mr. Igor Zubov, State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation at Vnukovo International Airport, Moscow.

Shri Rajnath Singh met Mr. Vladimir Kolokoltsev, Minister for Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, today during which the Ministers emphasized the strength of the relationship between India and Russia that has been consolidated in the past 70 years in all areas. The Ministers underlined that cooperation in the field of security is an important aspect of this bilateral relationship further strengthen cooperation to combat terrorism, extremism and radicalism. They agreed that terrorism must be fought unitedly and there were no good or bad terrorists.

They also agreed to cooperate in combating new challenges, enhance exchange of information, cooperate in building a data base, and in training of police and investigative agencies. Both sides agreed to hold the next Joint Working Group to counter terrorism between India and Russia in 2018.

An updated and more comprehensive agreement on Cooperation on Security between Ministry of Home Affairs of India and the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation was signed by the two Ministers. This agreement provides a comprehensive approach for cooperation in security related issues, including Information Technology Crimes, Counterfeiting currency, Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Trafficking in Human Beings, Economic Crimes, Crimes related to Intellectual Property, Cultural Property amongst others.

A Joint Action Plan between the Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs of India and the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation for the period 2018-20 was also signed by Shri Pankaj Saran, Ambassador of India to the Russian Federation and Mr. Igor Zubov, State Secretary and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation on this occasion.

During his visit, Shri Rajnath Singh will also hold meetings with Mr Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary, Security Council of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Puchkov, Minister of Civil Defence, Emergency Situations and Disaster Relief of the Russian Federation and Mr. Alexander Bortnikov, Director, Federal Security Service of Russia. He will also pay a visit to the National Crisis Management Centre (EMERCOM) under Russia's Ministry of Situations.

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