

AUGUST 2018

International Relations & Diplomacy

THE KOOTNEETI

India's Own International

#TRUMPPUTINMEET

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KAPTAAN: A PAKISTAN ARMY'S APPROACH THROUGH THE BACKDOOR OF DEMOCRACY?



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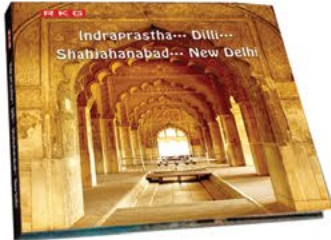
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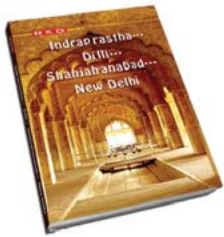
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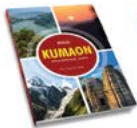


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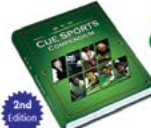


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AMRITA DHILLON

FOUNDER & BUSINESS DIRECTOR

I would like to welcome you all to the August issue of The Kootneeti Magazine. Firstly I would like to thank all the readers who showered us with appreciations and feedbacks for upcoming issues. As promised all those suggestions are incorporated in this issue. Hope you love the way it has come. Perfection never ends. So keep sending us feedback. Your feedback keeps us going. It keeps our editorial and production team motivated like nothing else and strengthens my resolve to continue in the quest for further excellence.

Coming to the August 2018 issue, we have witnessed unexpected results in the Pakistan Elections. Trump Putin Meet at Helsinki came out as a signal of global ceasefire in the ongoing Syrian crisis. India louded its voice at BRICS and marked a significant diplomatic shift in its Africa policy. We have tried to wrap all of the global events through the analysis and comments from experts and enthusiasts from all the corners of the world.

Hope you enjoy reading their wonderful accounts.

Happy Reading!



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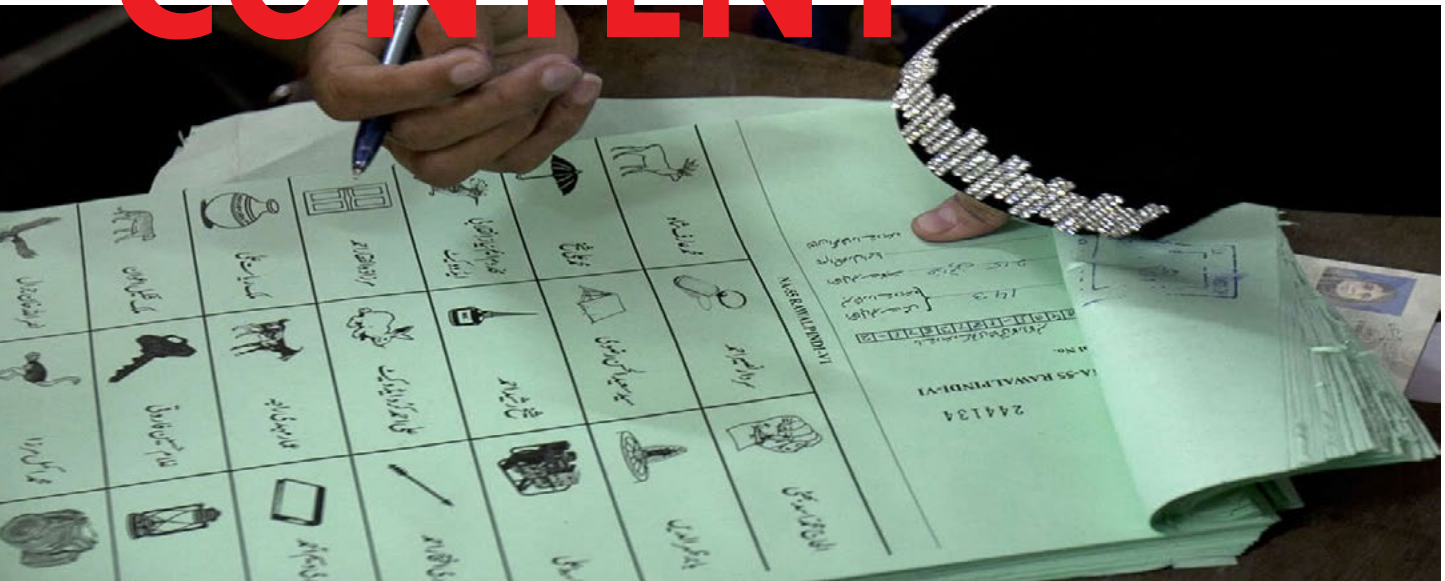
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August 2018

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In the wake of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's concentration last year of control of Saudi-owned pan-Arab media in an anti-corruption power and asset grab, Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG) this week announced a tie-up with Britain's Independent news website to launch services in Urdu, Turkish, Farsi and Arabic.

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India's sovereign foreign policy and national interests cannot be held hostage by the dominating strategy of any major power, Amrita Dhillon, Founding Editor of The Kootneeti, in an interview with Sputnik, discuss on Washington's attempts to exert pressure on India in regard to its cooperation with Russia and Iran.

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Elections



MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS- IN THE DOCKS

AMBASSADOR (RETD.) ANIL TRIGUNAYAT
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW VIVEKANAND
INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION.
FORMER AMBASSADOR TO JORDAN,
MALTA & LIBYA

Middle East Peace Process has been dormant and lying in a limbo for quite some time as a result of sporadic and non-sincere efforts, or for that matter, simple lip service. Last US initiative on reviving the peace process was stalled in 2014. The Palestinians continue to suffer and the Israelis remain ever so cautious and concerned of their security- a no winner paradox indeed. The situation has lasted for over seven decades with several wars and umpteen number of violent incidents leading to the death of innocents. No one counts the dead these days since polarisation has become so rabid.

100 years of Balfour declaration and Sykes-Picot agreement continues to haunt the generations and the legacy of imperialism. 'Divide, and let them rule or not' remained the dictum in this almost intractable Middle Eastern conflict which remains the core issue if any peace or stability is to be expected in the region. Camp David, Oslo Accords, UN Security Council Resolutions and the Quartet efforts, as well as the Arab Peace Plan, have had only incremental results. But Intifada, Gaza conflicts and the hardships to the Palestinians, and indulgent insecurity among the Israelis are there in a day-to-day discourse which has further worsened with increasing mistrust and disap

pointments with one another. For the objective observer, it is an untenable situation. Neither the brutal force of one side nor the extremist incidents perpetrated by the other can yield an acceptable outcome. Vitriolic and venom would only define the course of further destruction. Can the international community just watch the horrors with helplessness or it is just a matter of convenience? Moreover, recent developments in the region have cast a darker shadow on the prospects for a settlement or enduring peace.

USA has been the certain arbiter of security in the region given its special relationships with Israel and the Arab especially GCC countries. Several Administrations have one time or the other tried to reach a partial solution. Unfortunately more often than not these efforts have led to the more unstable environment due to local and domestic compulsions. Countries in the region trusted on the good faith of the USA despite its perceived preference for the Jewish state. However, on entering the White House, President Trump gallantly announced that he will resolve the Palestinian issue once for all through his "Deal of the Century". But, his very first visit to the region inadvertently led to the splintering of the Gulf Co

operation Council (GCC) with the expanding Qatar-Saudi-UAE spat and cancellation of the nuclear deal with Iran, thus ceding greater role for Turkey in the GCC which is also emerging as a major contender for the Palestinian cause. The equations are changing with the Shia-Sunni divide accentuating further and major Sunni states like Saudi Arabia and UAE hoping to close the loop with Israel pursuant to the US initiatives which many observers consider naïve and disruptionist, to say the least. Hence 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' appears to rule the roost.

In December, President Trump almost quashed the chances of any resumption of Middle East Peace Process when he declared that the US will shift its embassy to Jerusalem, which they did a couple of months later, leading to widespread protests and shuttle diplomacy among the Arab countries. President Erdogan of Turkey took a lead calling the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) meet and reiterating the essential ingredient that "East Jerusalem will be the capital of Palestine as agreed and reiterated in several resolutions". Arab League followed suit and other Arab and Iranian leaders decried the US move. Even the UN General Assembly castigated the move.

King Abdullah II of Jordan has been the strongest bulwark for the Palestinian cause who always maintained and reiterated his stance that, "A just and lasting solution to the Palestin





ian issue will bring peace and security to the Middle East region. That inter alia means a two-state solution in accordance with international law and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on establishing an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and living side by side with Israel in peace and security". Jordan is also the only country other than Egypt that has a Peace Treaty with Israel and feels a direct impact from related developments since almost 60 percent of its population is of Palestinian origin. But it also depends on the bounty of its Gulf brothers and that of the US, who ipso facto wield disproportionate influence over it. Jerusalem is a more sensitive issue for King Abdullah who is the 'custodian' of the third holiest Al Aqsa Mosque there, apart from the Christian religious sites. He, therefore, protested against the US move which would de facto and eventually de jure will take Jerusalem off the table in any future negotiations. But without Jordan being on board, things might just go south; he was invited to visit Washington after conferring with Kushner, and President Trump was all charm this time.

June has witnessed some significant activities with regard to the Peace Process and the Trump Plan as soon as he had dealt with his North Korean nemesis. President's son-in-law Jared Kushner and his Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt were dispatched to the region to confer with the key stakeholders. They visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Israel and Jordan before the 'grand strategy and plan' could be made public. To assuage the Jordanians, King Abdullah was invited to Washington DC and to discuss the bilateral assistance and the regional issues – most importantly the Palestinian proposal. There is a missing link in the puzzle – the current Palestinian leadership in President Abbas do not consider "US as a trusted and honest broker" any more. In the wake of US decision on Jerusalem, they have been refusing to meet the US leaders and delegations, starting with Vice President Pence. But Palestine, as it stands today, is a divided house with Hamas and Abbas becoming the two sides of the coin and so giving others a leverage. Moreover, with mixed signals emanating from their capitals the traditional

gung-ho support from the major Arab countries has turned lukewarm. The remaining lip sympathy, due to their priority in dealing with Iran at any cost, is music to the Israelis and Americans alike.

Since no one had the exact idea of the "Plan or the Vision" rumours like alternative Palestinian capital in Abu Dis or a US intent to change the recalcitrant Palestinian leadership, especially the eight-year-old Abbas, were afloat. Abbas' spokesmen and negotiators junked the Kushner-Greenblatt tourney calling it "doomed to fail". It is no wonder that in an interview to the Palestinian Al Quds newspaper, Jared Kushner stated "President Abbas says that he is committed to peace and I have no reason not to believe him. More importantly, President Trump committed to him early on that he would work to make a fair deal for the Palestinian people. However, I do question how much President Abbas has the ability to, or is willing to, lean into finishing a deal. He has his talking points which have not changed in the last 25 years. There has been no peace deal achieved in that time. To make a deal both sides will have to take a leap and meet somewhere between their stated positions. I am not sure President Abbas has the ability to do that." Although the blueprint of the Trump Plan is not yet clear, it does have Marshal Plan like ingredients for investments and developments in the region, especially in Palestinian as it will look like. Kushner tried to appeal to the Palestinians directly as the donor fatigue sets in. But the leaked details do not augur well. Meanwhile, Prince William became the first British Royal to visit Palestine last week and conferred with President Abbas as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu. Although it was not said to be a political visit it did provide a feedback from the Palestinian leadership which surely would be plugged into the game plan. In any case, the humanitarian situation in Gaza was discussed with concern by all parties. The most disconcerting question dogging every one's mind is as to how will the US Plan be successful when Palestinians are not part of it.

India has consistently supported and provided assistance to Palestinian people and was always seen as a major supporter of the cause. Prime Minister Modi's separate and highly successful visits to Israel and Palestine and the immense bonhomie he has developed with other leaders in the Middle East have raised hopes that India could emerge as a reliable and honest partner which could help find a thaw in the Peace process if the current efforts by the Trump Administration do not succeed. With enhanced regional and global role, expectations from a resurgent India are bound to be there. Already Palestinian and regional leaders expect an enhanced role for India in regional affairs. But one has to remember and be cautious that Palestine is an emotional issue and the region is a minefield of sensitivities, historic wrongs and sharp differences, and above all the prevailing distrust which is difficult to bridge. Meanwhile let's wait for Trump's "Deal of Century", as to and what it entails.

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COVER STORY

KAPTAAN: AN APPROACH BY PAKISTAN ARMY THROUGH THE BACKDOORS OF DEMOCRACY?

PAKISTAN ELECTIONS 2018

Voting at a glance

105,955,407

REGISTERED VOTERS

46,731,145

FEMALE

59,224,262

MALE

3,765

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
CANDIDATES

110

REGISTERED
POLITICAL
PARTIES

30

ACTIVE
POLITICAL
PARTIES

18

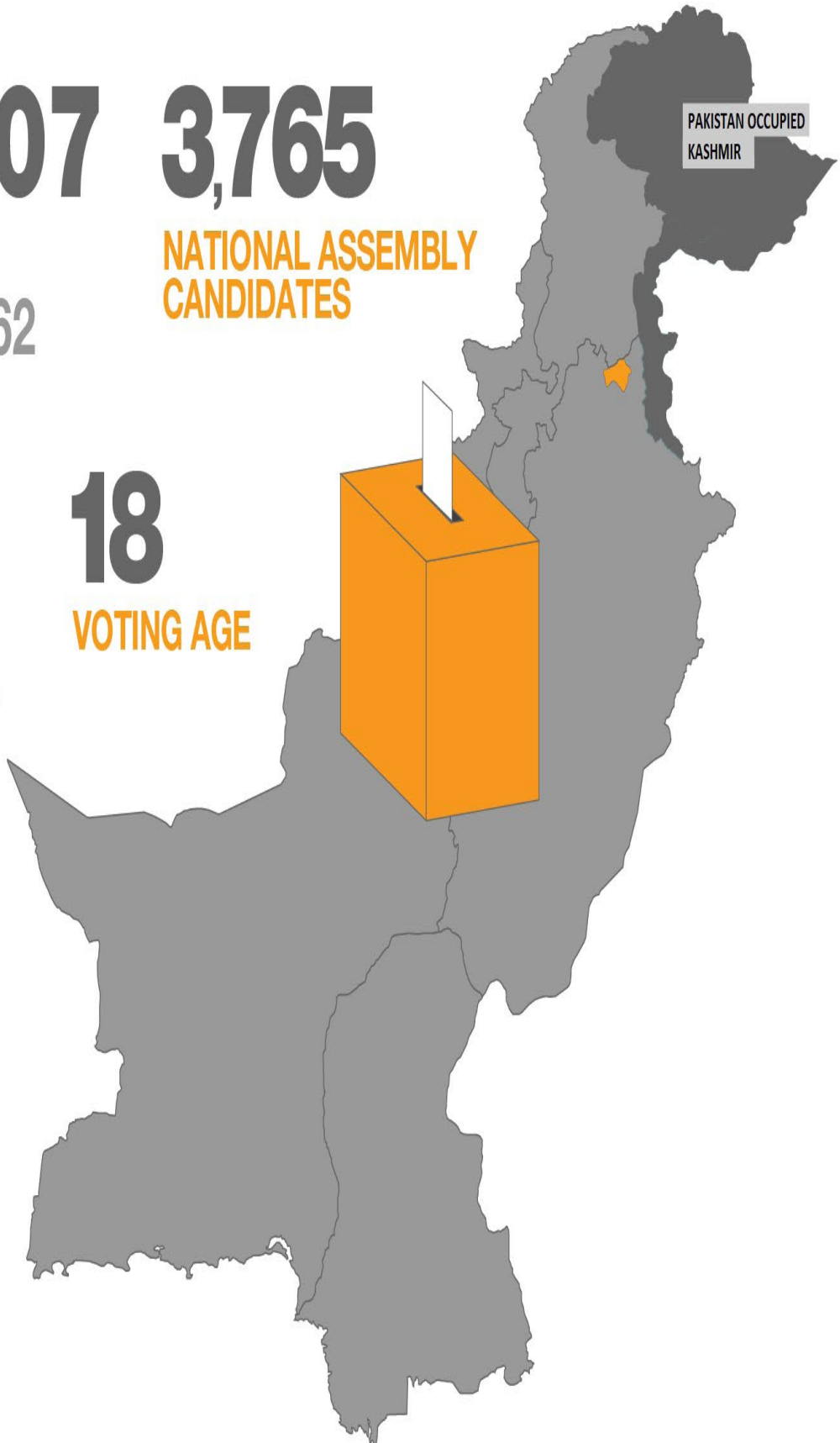
VOTING AGE

85,000

POLLING STATIONS

55%

TURNOUT IN
2013 ELECTIONS



IMRAN KHAN'S REAL POLITICAL TEST

APPROACHES: WHERE THE ELECTION STANDS

AND WHERE IT MIGHT BE HEADED

RAYAN BHATTACHARYA
RESEARCH INTERN- THE KOOTNEETI

As per the former cricketing hero turned politician Imran Khan, his party the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party (PTI) has apparently won the 2018 election in Pakistan, in spite of the official results not being declared yet and a large lobby of protesters challenging his statements on the grounds of rigging, corruption and the alleged interference of the country's military to assist Khan's victory.

After the end of his cricketing, Khan has longed to fulfil his dreams and ambitions to lead his country politically. In spite of being a former cricketing hero, who led Pakistan to a World Cup victory, everyone in his country probably does not share similar sentiments anymore, considering a large number of the country's opposition parties and even those not a part of any parties have termed the election as one of the "dirtiest election" in recent history.

Yet, even before the issues regarding corruption and rigging were raised, Pakistan's Independent Human Rights Commission had raised concerns about some blatant and undemocratic means to influence the outcome of the election, mostly by exerting pressure on the media and trying to intimidate competitor candidates. Even though the military has constantly denied their involvement in influencing the elections, it has been the perceived opinion of many that they were definitely satisfied with the exit of Nawaz Sharif's PML-N party, which apparently adopted a very aggressive stance to push back against the military's influence. Sharif, who went on to face legal challenge and being arrested now receives support from his brother Shahbaz Sharif, who ensures the party's lobby and stance in the public sphere is maintained.

However, Khan and his party also stand to benefit from the socio-political scenario itself in Pakistan. This is in line with the frustration of the country's voters with the chronic corruption and clear evidence of dynastic politics being practised during the Sharif Administration and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) administration, the latter currently under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto, the son of the assassinated Benazir Bhutto.

In the west, Khan still leaves an impression of a celebrity with a swagger. In Pakistan, he is trying to portray an image of rejuvenation where he promises to develop a new Pakistan and completely reform the systems of the past. He is trying to present himself as an outsider who is attempting to clean up dirty politics, despite coming from an upper-class privileged family himself, who is known for having the support of designated vote banks who support them irrespective of what party they represent. Surprisingly he has won the support and approval of the religious far right, promising to defend blasphemy laws and terming the Taliban's campaign in Afghanistan as a "holy war".

Even though official election results have not been declared, a survey of the results so far have shown Khan's PTI party to be in the lead. Khan's campaigning record is not encouraging, but in terms of statistics, it seems like he might be on his way to lead a country that already suffers from a variety of issues ranging from chronic corruption, violence and poverty to a collapsing economy and a tense international environment. Foreign relations with the US, India and Afghanistan continues to worsen and China's influence on the country continues to increase.

Many feel that Khan's "rebooted" version of Pakistan shall again be one which has the military playing a major role in the background, orchestrating and shaping national and international policy. Khan even claimed that the country's "umpires" would step back if he won the election. Hence from the nature of his comments and the already existing rumours of covert military involvement, the country, some feel is going down the road of the military rule once again.

The projections of an apparent "new Pakistan" some critics suggest is not going to be anything new at all but an unfortunate partial reversal to the military rule era of the country. In what already has been a controversial election, it seems like Shashi Tharoor's analysis of Pakistan as a military having a state rather than a state having a military is taking shape in the real world yet again.

DESPITE CONCERNS, CHINA SEES A POTENTIAL ALLY IN PAKISTAN'S

IMRAN KHAN

DR JAMES M. DORSEY
SENIOR FELLOW
S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Pakistani prime minister-in waiting Imran Khan's ability to chart his own course as well as his relationship with the country's powerful military is likely to be tested the moment he walks into his new office.

Pakistan's most fundamental problems loom large and are likely to demand his immediate attention. He probably will have to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a US\$ 12 billion bailout to resolve Pakistan's financial and economic crisis.

The request could muddy Mr. Khan's already ambiguous relationship with China. The IMF is likely to reinforce Mr. Khan's call for greater transparency regarding the terms and funding of projects related to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a crown jewel of the People's Republic's Belt and Road initiative and at US\$ 50 billion plus its single largest investment.

Moreover, Mr. Khan's need for a bailout is likely to give him little choice but to crack down on militant groups that have enjoyed tacit, if not overt, support of the military despite risking Pakistan being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international anti-money laundering and terrorism finance watchdog.

To be sure Mr. Khan could evade resorting to the IMF if China continues to bailout Pakistan as it has done in the past year with some US\$5 billion in loans. Alternatively, Saudi Arabia could defer payments for oil that account for one third of its imports as it did in 1998 and again in 2008.

Continued Chinese assistance or Saudi help would provide immediate relief but without a straightjacket forcing Pakistan to embark on painful reforms would do little to resolve the country's structural problem.

An IMF straightjacket may, however, solve one Chinese dilemma: backing for the Pakistani military's selective support for militants. China's support was both in response to a request by the military as well as the fact that militants focusing on India and Kashmir granted Beijing useful leverage.

China, nonetheless, has hinted several times in the past two years that it is increasingly uneasy about the policy. It did so among others by not stopping FATF from putting Pakistan on a grey list with the threat of being blacklisted if it failed to agree and implement measures to counter money laundering and funding of militants.

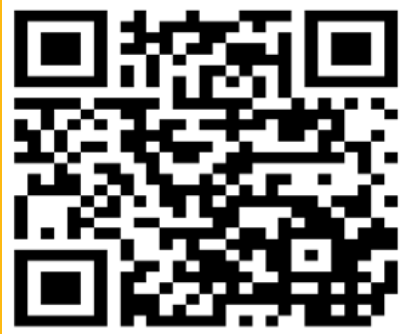
Chinese sensitivity about greater CPEC transparency was evident in Beijing's attempts to stymie Mr. Khan's criticism during the recent election campaign and when he was in opposition.

Chinese pressure on Mr. Khan and his populist Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), or Movement for Justice, to tone down their criticism produced only limited results despite China's expansion of CPEC's master plan to include the prime minister-in waiting's stronghold north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The move, however, did not stop PTI activists from continuing to portray CPEC as a modern-day equivalent of the British East India Company, which dominated the Indian sub-continent in the 19th century.

PTI denounced Chinese-funded mass transit projects in three cities in Punjab, the stronghold of the party's main rival in the election, ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as squandering of funds that could have better been invested in social spending. PTI activists suggested that the projects had involved corrupt practices.

READ EDITORIALS



China last year rejected allegations by Awami National League leader Sheikh Ahmed Rashid, a Khan ally, of corruption in a Chinese-funded bus project in the city of Multan.

Pakistani officials said PTI critics would likely get their way if the country agrees with the IMF on a bailout. "Once the IMF looks at CPEC, they are certain to ask if Pakistan can afford such a large expenditure given our present economic outlook," the Financial Times quoted a Pakistani official as saying.

CPEC was but one of several issues that have troubled China's attitude towards Mr. Khan, despite a post-election pledge to work with the prime minister-in waiting.

China was unhappy that a five-month anti-government sit-in in Islamabad in 2014 forced President Xi Jinping to delay by a year a planned visit during which he had hoped to unveil a CPEC masterplan.

Pakistani security analyst and columnist Muhammed Amir Rana, just back from a visit to China, said China was also uneasy about Mr. Khan's plan to tap the expertise of Pakistan's highly educated US and European Diaspora, who could counter the PTI's anti-US bent.

CPEC, and particularly ownership of projects related to the corridor, is likely to be one indication of Pakistan's relationship with China under a PTI government as well as the nature of Mr. Khan's rapport with the military. The issue is sensitive given expectations that Chinese investment is pushing Pakistan into a debt trap.

Mr. Rana noted that the Sharif government had resisted a military push for the creation of a separate CPEC authority. The military and the Sharif government were also at odds over the establishment of a special security force to protect Chi-



nese nationals and investments that have been repeatedly targeted in Pakistan.

The Chinese communist party's English-language organ, Global Times, was quick to declare victory in the Pakistani election. While mentioning past Chinese concerns, the Global Times pointed to the fact that Mr. Khan had unveiled a plan to adopt the 'Chinese model' to alleviate poverty.

Noting that China was the first country Mr. Khan mentioned in his first post-election speech, the Global Times gloated: "Despite a barrage of criticism he threw at Sharif's handling of Chinese investments, Khan is not a sceptic of the projects themselves... Imran Khan minced no words when his exclusive interview was published in Guangming Daily two days before the elections. Khan asserted that the CPEC will receive wide support from all sectors of Pakistani society.

Imran Khan's politico-economic views do not seem to be influenced by his Western education. He questions the practicality of capitalist economic policies. He is also a strong critic of US President Donald Trump, the US and US-led wars... Imran Khan's plan is a clear pivot by Pakistan, away from the US orbit and further into the Chinese bloc... China has a friend in Imran Khan," said a Global Times oped.

THE KOOTNEETI KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PARTNERS IN JULY



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A photograph of Donald Trump and Xi Jinping walking side-by-side on a red carpet. They are both wearing dark suits. Trump is on the left, looking towards the right, and Xi is on the right, looking towards the left. They are walking on a wide set of stone steps.

US-CHINA TRADE WAR ESCALATES: WILL CHINA MAKE IT OUT UNSCATHED?

Following up on the meet between US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, an agreement of sorts was made wherein the EU agreed to purchase soybeans and LPG in exchange for the US not going forward with its suggested 20% unilateral tariff on European auto imports for the time being. This ensured a temporary truce to keep the Trans-Atlantic alliance intact without further escalating a trade war.

Said an unnamed source, the EU and the US will discuss trade barriers related to industrial goods, with the exception of cars, and the bringing down of tariffs. They will also plan to remodel the World Trade Organization (WTO) to include China. According to US trade envoy Ambassador Dennis Shea, "China's disruptive economic model" posed the greatest threat to all other members of the WTO, on grounds the costs Beijing "extracts", and "the benefits that China receives" are astounding. Ambassador Shea added on the 26th of July that "China's Communist party runs, directs, and dictates its mercantile trade policy in violation of Beijing's multilateral trade commitments." Between 2005 and 2016, China has reaped benefits that included its stunning transformation from being the 5th largest economy to the now-2nd. It also includes a real GDP growth rate of 9.5%.

The US was backed by the EU as well as Japan in its consensus against China. The EU also suggested a reform of WTO's rules to give rise to new industrial subsidies that would tackle the "trade-distorting" practices of the Chinese state-owned companies.

The US decided to further intensify its trade war with China on two separate fronts comprising of restrictions on Chinese companies for attaining advanced western technology companies and forcing new reforms targeted at China at the World Trade Organization.

This trade war has led to various factories in China to shift parts of their production lines from the mainland to different destinations like Penang in Northern Malaysia to avoid an excess in their cost of production by bypassing the US imposed tariffs. Beijing was in high hopes that it could form a united trade front with Brussels against Washington DC.

This illusion was perhaps caused by Britain earlier leading Germany and France to join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank despite the US objecting. However, what China forgot was that no matter what small hiccups come in the relations between these countries, the Western democracy will still share the same core values.

TRADE- WAR SERIES

NEHA HARDIKAR
RESEARCH INTERN
THE KOOTNEETI

China has been operating on two factors over the last 40 or so years to commence their mammoth economic progress and their subsequent rise as an economy to be revered: the private sector being given an opportunity to thrive whilst the state sector was inefficient and using trade and investment as tools to enter into the global economy. The Chinese followed Deng Xiaoping's advice and its economic trajectory was caused mainly because of four cycles: the first included mainly, the breaking down of the commune system and granting farmers the rights to their own lands; the second started when urban commercial activities began to flourish; the third unbridled by Deng's southern tour and the fourth cycle started when China joined the World Trade Organization. The country still owes its growth to the path laid down by Deng. However, his advice on keeping a low profile in international affairs was ignored and the abandoning of political liberalisation has been executed at Beijing's risk. State-owned enterprises advanced while the private sector withdrew, owing to the Government-led growth model. This undermined one growth sector. Now, the ongoing trade war has started to weaken the other one.

This has started to cause both the factors of China's economic upsurge to waste away, posing as a great threat to this gigantic economy.

Further complications will arise if the United States, the European Union and Japan form a new kind of free-trade deal. Since China is already facing an extreme slowdown of economic progress, this deal will set it back another couple of steps and it will become more difficult to stimulate growth again. China misunderstood the implementing of tariffs by Donald Trump as a ploy ahead of the US's midterm elections but a report by the National Defence Strategy made it clear that Washington would no longer be tolerating Beijing's trade and economic practices. Dwindling of foreign trade could hurt China's economy at a much deeper level than expected and might even push China into a middle-income trap – a concept first put forward by the World Bank in 2006 to describe a situation where a middle-income economy stagnates and is unable to generate further economic momentum.

The common Chinese people definitely don't deserve to go through this middle-income trap, but unless their Government bucks up and finds a full-proof solution, this passage would be inevitable.



STEPS TOWARDS 4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: INDIAN GLIMPSES IN THE BRICS SUMMIT 2018

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The 10th BRICS Summit held in South Africa from 25th-27th July 2018, discussed a wide range of regional, geopolitical and economic affairs. These nations have pledged ever since their formation about how each country will be a contributing factor to another country. With the changing times, every economy needs to move at the same pace and a major contributing factor to such adaptation is development.

The BRICS Summit 2018 adopted the Johannesburg Declaration which highlighted common issues of regional concern and reassured the pillars of democracy, inclusiveness and a global market.

The biggest highlight of the declaration lies in the how these nations have expressed their support to China over the US-China trade war.

They pledged unity in fighting the ongoing US tariffs and its move towards a unilateral society. Economists across the globe have analysed this statement and they claim that although the weight on US's side is more in regard to these policies, the BRICS nations must continue to work towards the cause they took up. Alongside trade wars, the nations also took to continue their commitment in fulfilling the goals

of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whereby these nations try to bring out a balance between economic, social, political and economic factors. The BRICS Ministers of energy agreed with establishing the BRICS Energy Research Cooperation Platform which can further assist these countries in harnessing energy security and affordability thereby reducing the pollution issues. However, the countries too expressed their concerns over the ever-growing threats of terrorism and unanimously decided for the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly's Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, which is yet to be finalised.

This year's BRICS Summit saw India's overpowering nature in all spheres of mutual benefits when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi swore to heavily contribute in the start-up of the 4th Industrial Revolution with the help of the other nation states. The theme of the BRICS Summit 2018 revolved around inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution and the Prime Minister deeply mentioned about the government's concerns over issues that still remain a challenge in the country. He mentioned of connected policies among the nation which will help him achieve

his vision of the Industrial Revolution and greatly mentioned of all the skills, technology and multilateral cooperation that would be required in achieving the task. The fourth industrial revolution is expected to reach the deprived classes and help them uplift themselves and that an individual's 'talent' will surpass the value of 'money'. These talents will be nurtured in school and university curriculums so that they know to harness the developing technology which would make job availability in the market easier for these individuals. The challenges for India will definitely be in terms of using its main resource, its youth and therefore the BRICS Summit 2018 wasn't only the way of looking forward to another industrial revolution but also providing insights into the mechanisms that will bring the change.

Off lately, India has been under US's pressure on the whole oil import deal with Iran and also the arms import from Russia. The striking deal after the BRICS and how India has promised to help China with the trade war presents a dilemma to India. With the deadlock





VIETNAM, NEW GROWTH CENTRE OF SOUTH EAST ASIA: INDIAN COMMERCE & AVIATION MINISTER

trade war, the country might again be forced to choose sides, jeopardising the bilateral relations with both the US and China. Considering the recent military concerns, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks on better communication facilities in the border area which can help in maintaining peace and order around the bordering areas. However, looking at the positive side of this summit, India will move a step towards its developmental goals and be able to establish itself as a growing economy in the Asian sub-continent. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also met the Angolan President Joao Lourenco with whom talks were held on bilateral co-operation and people to people engagements between the two countries. The top priority of India's foreign policy has always been Africa and the Prime Minister mentioned of how much the Indian government had spent in the African economy and that the country would continue investing. The two countries also released joint stamps to celebrate the legacy of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, the two greatest examples of non-violence and discrimination.

The BRICS Summit has definitely met its objective for the year, but such summits have now become not only platforms for political and economic representation of the nations but also a platform for developing ties between the countries that go beyond their geographical and ideological boundaries.

Vietnam is one of the fastest growing economies among the ASEAN countries said Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation in New Delhi. He was speaking at an international conference on India-Vietnam economic ties. The Minister said that India values the cultural and religious similarities between the two countries but it is the "Act East Policy" initiated by the Prime Minister of India which has opened the doors to realize the tremendous potential for mutual growth.

The Minister further said that India and Vietnam hold key positions in this region in both trade, and commerce, political and security issues. As a member of ASEAN, Vietnam is an enabler for India's growing ties with rest of ASEAN, which is the focus of India's Act East Policy. Both countries have extensive economic ties in oil exploration, agriculture, manufacturing and defence and are now looking at the services sector which is the new growth engine in global trade.

India granted "Most Favoured Nation" status to Vietnam in 1975. Bilateral trade has grown tremendously since then and both nations have agreed on a target of USD 15 billion by 2020.



SHEIKH HASINA'S CHANGE OF STANCE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIA

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The latest statement of Mr Imam, political advisor to Sheikh Hasina, PM of Bangladesh that the Teesta treaty is “no longer an issue” between India and Bangladesh anymore is a clear indicator that Bangladesh, for now, has pushed the Teesta issue to the backburner. It seems to have resigned to the fact that the Teesta treaty won’t be signed anytime soon, and not, especially, before the national elections which are to be held at the end of this year.

The Indian government, which, in principle, has been willing to sign the treaty, can nevertheless heave a sigh of relief. The change in Bangladeshi stance over the Teesta has bought them, first and foremost, time to negotiate with West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee who has been opposing the current nature of the draft Teesta treaty since 2011 and win her support. It would be prudent on the central government’s part to not waste the opportunity and leverage this development as speedily and ardently as possible.

In 2011, when the then PM Manmohan Singh was slated to visit Bangladesh and sign the Teesta Treaty with Sheikh Hasina, Banerjee pulled out of the delegation last minute and the treaty could not be signed. At that time, Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress (TMC) was the single largest ally of the UPA-led coalition government at the centre, and hence, the central government had to accept her decision.

The NDA government led by PM Narendra Modi which came into power in 2014 is not dependent on allies and indeed the TMC to retain power, but getting the Teesta deal signed is still complicated. This is despite the fact that entries 10 and 14 in the Union List place powers regarding foreign affairs and signing of international treaties exclusively with the central government. Hence constitutionally, the central government does not need the consent of a state government while signing an international agreement over a transboundary water body.

However, geopolitical and domestic realities dictate otherwise. West Bengal is a border state, and its northern districts are located in the Siliguri Corridor or more popularly, 'Chicken's Neck', a narrow strip of land which connects the north-eastern states of India with the rest of the country, and shares international borders with three countries, namely Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan, with China in proximity. In terms of economy, West Bengal contributes 40% of the GDP of East and North-East India, and 79% and 82% of the national production of jute and tea respectively. Strategically, it is located on the trans-regional economic and trade route under the 'Act East' policy of India. West Bengal's geopolitical, economic and strategic importance is too eminent to be ignored and bypassed by the central government in matters, domestic or international, that affect the state directly.

The Teesta issue notwithstanding, there is significant political and ideological friction between the current central government and the West Bengal on many important issues within the country, including demonetisation of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 notes in November 2016 and the Goods & Services Tax implemented in July 2017. BJP, the biggest political party in the NDA, has historically had a weak presence in West Bengal and has recently started making rapid inroads into the state and is thus wary of taking unpopular decisions (like giving a bigger share of the Teesta to Bangladesh) that could possibly cause a dent in its progress.

As the larger, more powerful and most importantly, the upstream country, India could be inclined to not take up this opportunity with urgency; after all, despite the failure of Teesta negotiations in 2011, bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have been largely smooth. The Land Boundary Agreement and various agreements in defence, transport, electricity, education, maritime safety etc. were signed by the two neighbours over the next few years, making India's failure to sign the Teesta agreement look like a speed-bump in the otherwise smooth journey of India-Bangladesh ties. However, India should not take the Teesta matter lightly.

As the downstream and non-hegemonic riparian of the Teesta, Bangladesh clearly has higher stakes in signing the Teesta Treaty, however, India's long-term geopolitical interests too are tied with the Teesta Treaty. It is vital to secure the friendship of Bangladesh which, due to the virtue of its geographic location, is an important connector between India and its north-eastern states.



Its ports, to which India has been granted access, are the North-East's best access points to sea routes and marine trade. Bangladesh is also a strategic partner for India's 'East' policy. Under Sheikh Hasina, it has also supported India's stand on terrorism and cooperated regularly in capturing and handing over a number of terrorists who have been destabilising India's North East and contributing to the spread of Islamist terror across both countries. A Hasina-led Bangladesh is secular, supports India in the diplomatic cornering of Pakistan and views India as a 'development partner' and not an oppressor, which makes it a steadfast and valuable partner to India in an otherwise volatile and deeply distrusting South Asian neighbourhood. Not to mention, Bangladesh's friendship is vital if India has to check China's influence and strategic incursion in South Asia. In the view of these compelling factors, India cannot afford to postpone or worse, not sign the Teesta Treaty – the one treaty that Bangladesh has been insisting upon.

This is also a time to revise the terms of the treaty. The Teesta agreement in its current form is but a narrow, reductionist and state-centric approach towards sharing the Teesta's waters. There are no provisions for disaster management; climate change; groundwater management; maximising environmental flows; river conservation; efficiency in water use; cultural heritage (and consequently tourism) management; protection of the basin's ecosystems; and overall development of the basin. Taking advantage of the lull in Teesta negotiations, experts, policymakers and civil society on both sides of the border should take a long, hard look at the current draft and invest time and efforts in making it holistic and truly representative of the interests of the river and her stakeholders.

Ideally, the geopolitical consequences of the delay should push both riparians to rework the Teesta agreement speedily and strategically and give it more vision and comprehensiveness. India is less affected in the short term, hence Bangladesh needs to initiate and propel the process. However, India should also participate with equal vigour and accomplish an arrangement that is at once acceptable to domestic and Bangladeshi stakeholders, beneficial to the river, her people and her ecosystems on both sides of the border, and aligned with India's geopolitical intentions and ambitions.

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THE WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA-ASEAN COOPERATION

Introduction:

The increasing focus on the concept of Indo-Pacific and related developments including the Quadrilateral Dialogue has brought renewed interests in India's relations with its eastern neighbours. This is a simultaneous development with India's foreign policy approach which speaks for proactive engagement with the neighbours. The renaming of 'Look East Policy' to 'Act East Policy' and New Delhi's intensifying interactions with East Asia are examples of India's strong engagements with the region, to start with Southeast Asia. At the last Shangri La Dialogue, held in Singapore in June 2018, Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi reinstated on the centrality of ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India have a combined population of more than 1.85 billion, that covers a quarter of the global population and has a GDP of over US\$ 3.8 trillion.

Sectors like strategic maritime cooperation focusing on security, Blue Economy, multilateral and bilateral economic engagements with countries in the region and connectivity have become key focus areas of cooperation. In fact, a lot has been mentioned about maritime connectivity and maritime security based on the theme "Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation" at the recently held Delhi Dialogue in July 2018.

Strategic Maritime Cooperation:

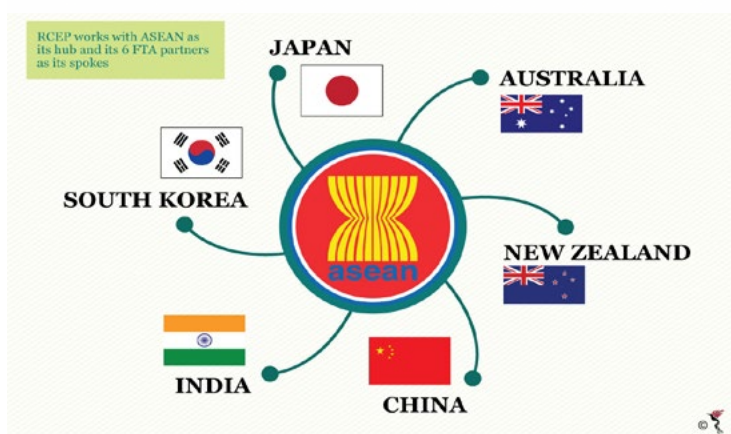
In sync with India's promotion of strengthening maritime cooperation with all its maritime neighbours, the concept like SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) has been evolved and works towards achieving the values associated with this have been initiated. The Forum for Pacific Islands Nations and the Jakarta Concord on Promoting Regional Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean, as adopted in Indonesia in March 2017 at the Indian Ocean Rim Association Summit, are instances to demonstrate India's willingness to not only participate but actively promote multilateral engagements in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, equal importance has been given to bilateral and trilateral engagements between India and its Southeast Asian neighbours. Recently, before PM Modi's visit to the region to participate at the Shangri La Dialogue, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs, Mr LuhutPandjaitan visited India and spoke highly about India's participation in a port development in Sabang, 500 km away from the Malacca Straits. India's naval ships will also be allowed to visit the port. This gives India yet another strategic presence into the region which caters to a large amount of India's maritime trade. India is also discussing trilateral exercise with Singapore and Thailand, especially in the area of conducting joint and regular naval games. This has the potential of adding flavour to India's presence as a substantial and strong player in the Indo-Pacific.

Economic Cooperation:

Economic cooperation plays a key role in enhancing India's pragmatic engagement with the region. ASEAN and India's economic cooperation has been enhanced by signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) at both regional and sub-regional forums. Ever since the signing of FTA in goods in 2009 with ASEAN, the bilateral trade between ASEAN-India has crossed US\$ 80 billion marks. India's exports to ASEAN increased about 6% from US\$ 25.15 billion in 2015-16 to US\$ 31 billion in 2016-17. However, there is a clear indication that India-ASEAN trade is negatively tilted against India. This adds to India's dilemma over concluding the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The dilemma over RCEP:

RCEP is a mega- free trade deal between ASEAN and the plus six countries including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. RCEP collectively accounts for about half the world's population, 30 per cent of its trade and a quarter of global exports. Once concluded, the RCEP will be the largest regional free trading group. However, RCEP has already missed its deadline of concluding the negotiation. Besides the progress achieved in government procurement, customs procedures and trade facilitation, the negotiation has been stalled. ASEAN countries are pushing India to close the deal at the earliest possible time, to the extent that some of the trading partners are blaming India for the slow negotiation of the RCEP. India has its own reservations to hold up the deal. It is hesitant in opening up its market to China, with whom India already has a trade deficit of about US\$ 63 billion in 2017-18. To speed up negotiations and successful conclusion of the RCEP, India's stand came out clear. That, without the inclusion or liberalisation of the higher level of services and investment in the ASEAN-India trade basket, RCEP will not move forward. For a comprehensive free trade agreement, balancing not only of goods but also of services is important, along with necessary flexibility that is feasible for all the countries. The urgency to an early conclusion of the RCEP, which some member countries hope to be completed by 2019-20, comes at a critical time of Trump's aggressive protectionist policies, and also, at a time when the global trading economies are shaken up by the huge tariff hikes announced by both US and China continuously for the past months. As the trade war ratchets up, the position of the other countries is also affected, including that of India and ASEAN. The time is right for ASEAN and India to reaffirm the commitment to multilateralism.



Cooperation in Blue Economy:

Of recent significance in the ASEAN-India partnership is the wider maritime cooperation through the "Blue economy." Blue economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth. An ocean is an abundant resource, and if harnessed efficiently, blue resources have the potential and opportunity for ASEAN-India to strengthen their collaboration to promote security, enhance commerce, and others. The Indian government stands committed to promoting the Blue economy by making a huge investment. In the first Maritime India Summit held in Mumbai in 2016, India made a commitment of US\$ 13 billion across shipping, ports and allied sectors. The government also plans to invest US\$ 190 billion over the next ten years to develop 27 industrial clusters and to improve connectivity with ports through new rail and road projects. To enhance maritime connectivity, India is working to lower logistics costs and motivate increased trade in goods and services. In this connection, India is working towards an early conclusion of the Agreement on Maritime Transport between ASEAN and India.

Connectivity is still the Buzzword:

Connectivity is another area where India has been working closely with its ASEAN partners. Two of India's much-publicised connectivity projects, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan Multimodal Transit and Transport project are expected to be completed by 2019. Both these projects will benefit landlocked Northeast India by providing the border states with an opportunity to be linked with the dynamic Southeast Asian economies. The Trilateral Highway might get an extension till Vietnam in the coming years. India has also pledged to assist the group of CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) in narrowing their developmental gaps with rest of ASEAN. In 2015, at the 13th ASEAN-India Summit, Prime Minister Modi offered USD 1 billion as Line of Credit to the CLMV to augment Indian exports to the region and enhance overall trade volumes. At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, held in January 2018, PM Modi declared that India will cooperate with the CLMV in enhancing their digital infrastructure in the rural areas. During the visit of the Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang to India in March 2018, both sides talked about direct shipping routes connecting India and Vietnam.

Conclusion:

To strengthen ASEAN and India's relations in the areas of maritime cooperation, economic partnerships and connectivity projects, both sides have expressed their commitments often enough. However, there are problems like the delayed implementation of projects from India's part and from ASEAN's side, India expects the member countries to adopt a mutually acceptable deal as far as connectivity and multilateral economic engagements are concerned respectively. Again, in blue economy, both sides need to work towards ensuring maximum utilisation of resources without harming the marine environment. They need to adopt strong and responsible initiatives to harness the potential of the ocean in a sustainable manner.

VRINDAVANI VASTRA – A KOHINOOR FROM THE NORTH-EAST INDIA

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The quiet, relaxed town at the confluence of rivers Wye and Severn is the unlikely home of a unique garment produced more than 450 years ago in colonial Calcutta with an inner fabric lining identified with the 16th century Assamese saint, Sankardeva.

Assam is over 8000 km away from there, but its sights, sounds and history have been attracting many at an exhibition titled "Hidden in the Lining: Krishna in the Garden of Assam" in the Chepstow Museum near the Wales-England border, particularly the garment lined inside-with the ancient "Vrindavani Vastra" fabric.

The art of weaving Vrindavani Vastra associated with Sankardeva is extinct in Assam; few examples survive in collections around the world. The British Museum in London has a large example of 12 pieces sewn together, sourced from Tibet in the early 20th century.

The dimensions of the fabric were large, depicted tales mainly from Lord Krishna's life, and included some verses of the iconic saint in ancient Assamese alphabets. It was produced under Sankardeva's supervision and were once used as wall hangings in "satras" (monasteries).

But the use of the fabric as the lining of a garment ("banyan") is unique. The garment was part of a Welsh family's collection that was purchased by the Chepstow Rural District Council in 1963. Its history and importance was only recently recognised.

"We feel very privileged to be the custodians of this beautiful gown and its precious woven lining that has so much meaning and importance," says, Anne Rainsbury, curator of Chepstow Museum.

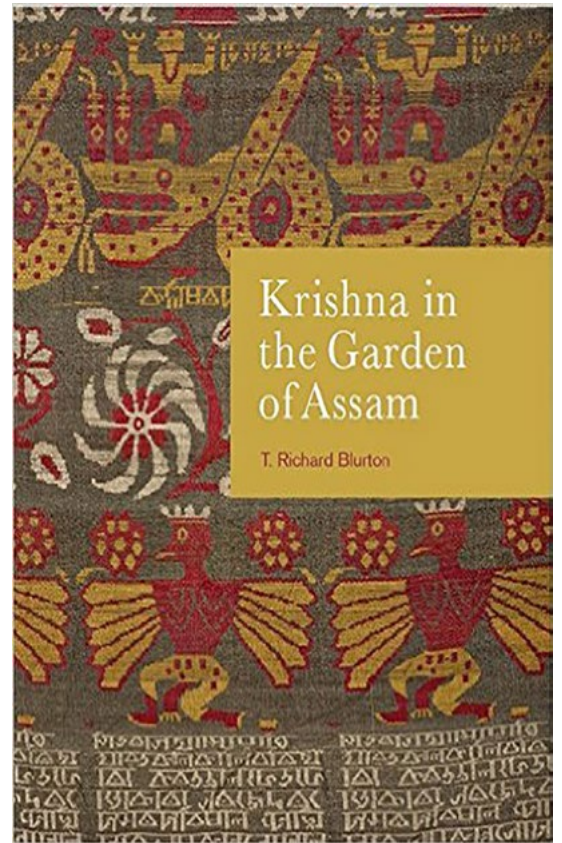
Experts believe that the garment was likely produced in colonial Calcutta. Assam is close to Calcutta and in the 18th century Chinese products were traded there for local use and onward transport to Europe.

It is most probably at Calcutta that the Chinese blue-green damask silk was put together with the Vrindavani Vastra inner lining. It is also likely that the tailor or maker may not have been literate or of the Hindu faith since in one part of the inner lining the fabric with Assamese verses and depicting Krishna tales is used upside down.

T Richard Blurton, head of South Asia at British Museum, says: "I don't know of any other example of lengths of Vrindavani Vastra-type textile being used in a garment. The Chepstow example is, I think, unique and its production must have been a one-off with no tradition of such things being established."

The garment has been carefully preserved in the museum over the decades, using temperature control and soft folds. For long, the history of how the garment reached Monmouthshire in Wales remained unknown.

But new research by local historians has established a strong connection to the garment's original ownership through the antiquarian Joseph Richard Cobb's wife's family. Emily Powys de Winton's grandfather, Jeffreys Wilkins, and her great uncle Walter Wilkins, both worked for the East India Company in the 18th century.



Walter Wilkins became the first governor of Chittagong in 1771 and returned to Wales the following year using the fortune he had made to buy Maesllwch Castle and estate.

Jeffreys Wilkins was an employee of the East India Company in Patna and joined his brother as partners in a new bank Wilkins & Co in 1778, also known as the Brecon Old Bank. They would have travelled via Calcutta and either brother could have been the original owner of the garment, local historians believe.

Rainsbury said: "We were delighted to be awarded a grant from the Textile Society to enable the conservation of the baniyan – it was the Chinese silk damask, exposed to light and wear, that had suffered and become very fragile, but the inner lining is in excellent condition."





INDIAN HERITAGE'S

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

India, with several millennia of history, boasts of a diverse and rich built heritage. Each region of our subcontinent boasts of monumental buildings and remarkable archaeology. Yet, less than 15,000 monuments and heritage structures are legally protected in India—a fraction of the 600,000 protected in the UK.

Even those structures considered to be of national/state or local importance in India and protected as such remain under threat from urban pressures, neglect, vandalism and, worse, demolition, only for the value of the land they stand upon. This poor state of preservation of a large part of our national heritage is a result of the inability of those entrusted with their care and management to unlock the economic potential of these sites and demonstrate that conservation efforts can lead to meeting development objectives in a more sustainable manner.

The first step towards this would be to ensure that visits to monuments and archaeological sites are exciting for visitors. Following decades of archaeological effort, we in India boast of several thousands of sites contemporary and even grander to the well-known Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, as well as hundreds of megalith sites—all unknown to the public

and even the tourism industry. India has 35 Unesco-designated World Heritage Sites—only a handful of countries have more. It is required, even for sites such as the Taj Mahal, that the cultural context and intangible heritage—music, food, ritual, dress, personalities, sport, festivals—associated with the sites be explained to the visitor. Cultural events that would usually attract large numbers should be organized at less visited monuments and heritage enthusiasts encouraged to buy annual passes that allow unlimited repeat visits. Funds spent on introducing such measures and facilities will quickly yield rich dividends.

If we are to pass on our built heritage to future generations in a better condition than we inherited it, liberalization of the cultural sector needs to be brought in and responsibility entrusted to private entities, universities, non-profits, even resident welfare associations. A combination of non-governmental partners engaging the specialists required and government agencies supervising conservation efforts could ensure that the highest standards are met.

Heritage buildings everywhere utilize local materials; the skills to work upon these are in the local communities. Obviously, any conservation effort then has to source locally—creating employment and eco

IN FOCUS: INDIAN HERITAGE

AMITABH KANT
CEO
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conomic opportunities. Many an Indian ruler commissioned forts, palaces and temples in times of drought as a life-saving economic incentive for the populace. "Make in India" objectives will thus be met by any well planned and implemented conservation effort while simultaneously creating an economic asset that continues to pay rich dividends for years to come.

Only a limited number of heritage buildings are tourist attractions; for the rest, new functions need to be incentivised and planned. Most of the 600,000 protected heritage structures in the UK are in private ownership—and as historic buildings are considered better built, they command high premiums. Just as the Indian government's ministry of tourism funds the tourism corporations of all states, Central government grants could be made available to fund conservation efforts by the states and private owners. Property tax waivers, permission for change of land use and transferable development rights are amongst other incentives owners of heritage buildings or those residing within the 100m "prohibited zones" of nationally protected monuments could receive. Besides being used as hotels or museums or libraries, heritage buildings could also easily be adapted to serve as schools or clinics—lending economic value to local communities. While representing a higher aesthetic and building quality, it is always more economical to convert a building than to build afresh.

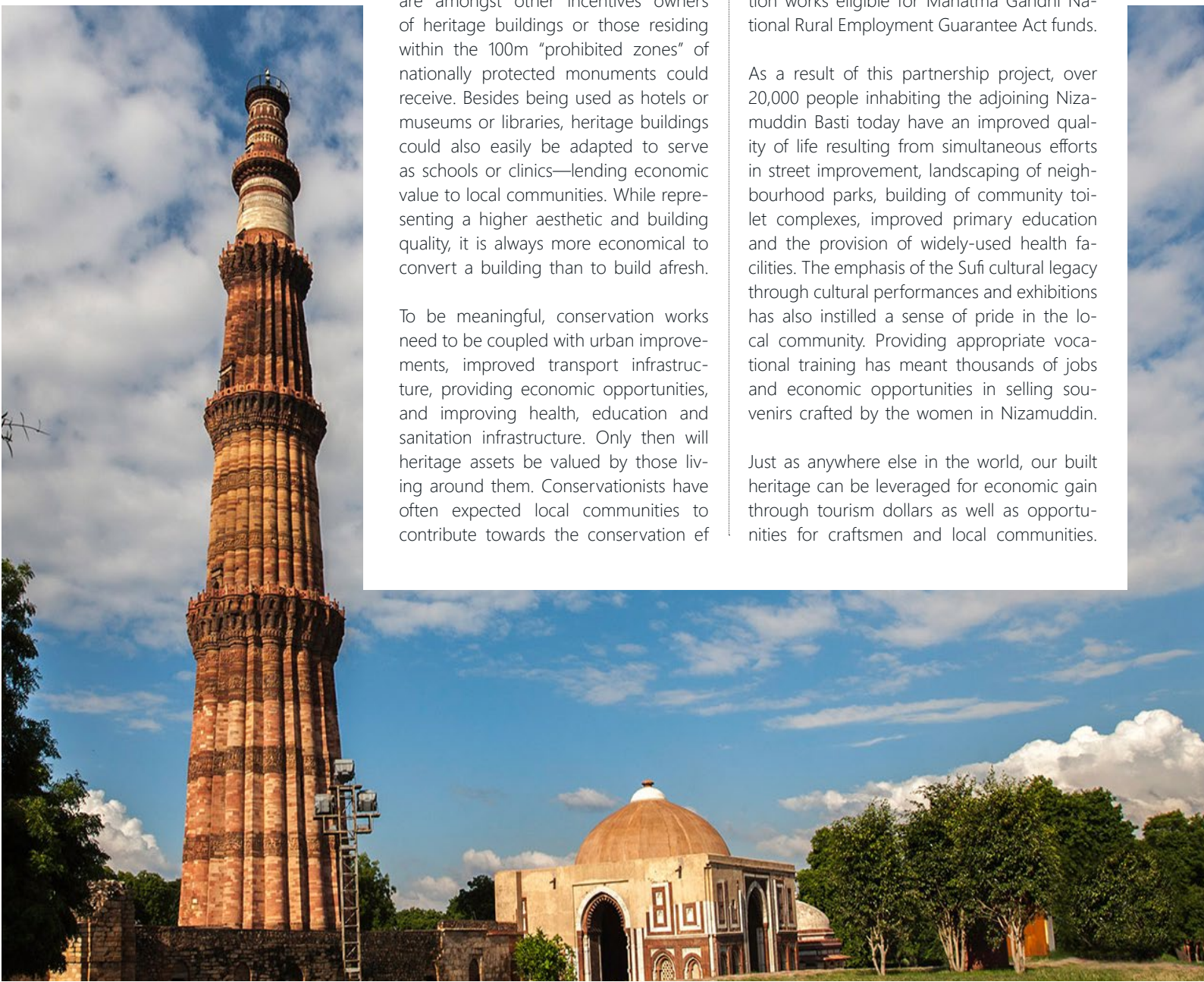
To be meaningful, conservation works need to be coupled with urban improvements, improved transport infrastructure, providing economic opportunities, and improving health, education and sanitation infrastructure. Only then will heritage assets be valued by those living around them. Conservationists have often expected local communities to contribute towards the conservation ef

fort while not offering any incentives and imposing heavy restrictions. Such an approach is never likely to succeed.

One of the world's most frequently cited conservation success stories has resulted from the non-profit partnership established by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Central Public Works Department and the South Delhi Municipal Corporation in the Capital's Humayun's Tomb-Nizamuddin area. Here, over a 10-year period, conservation works have been undertaken on over 40 structures, leading to a tenfold increase in visitor numbers and the doubling of the number of World Heritage Sites; they now number 11, in addition to Humayun's Tomb. The Aga Khan Trust has assisted the ASI in taking ownership of an additional 35 acres of land, freeing it from encroachment and implementing landscape restoration at the monuments. Over 10,000 trees have been planted in the process. With conservation work requiring 500,000 days of work for craftsmen, there is a strong case for making conservation works eligible for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act funds.

As a result of this partnership project, over 20,000 people inhabiting the adjoining Nizamuddin Basti today have an improved quality of life resulting from simultaneous efforts in street improvement, landscaping of neighbourhood parks, building of community toilet complexes, improved primary education and the provision of widely-used health facilities. The emphasis of the Sufi cultural legacy through cultural performances and exhibitions has also instilled a sense of pride in the local community. Providing appropriate vocational training has meant thousands of jobs and economic opportunities in selling souvenirs crafted by the women in Nizamuddin.

Just as anywhere else in the world, our built heritage can be leveraged for economic gain through tourism dollars as well as opportunities for craftsmen and local communities.



SAUDI-UK MEDIA TIE-UP: TARGETING THE NON- ARABIC-SPEAKING MIDDLE EAST

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Long satisfied to attempt to dominate pan-Arab media and battle it out with Qatar's state-owned Al Jazeera television network, Saudi Arabia has now set its hegemonic sights on influencing the media landscape of the non-Arabic speaking greater Middle East.

In the wake of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's concentration last year of control of Saudi-owned pan-Arab media in an anti-corruption power and asset grab, Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG) in July announced a tie-up with Britain's Independent news website to launch services in Urdu, Turkish, Farsi and Arabic.

The announcement provided no details of the business model or whether and, if so, how the SRMG-owned, independent-branded websites would become commercially viable. That may not be an issue from the Independent's perspective, given that the deal amounts to the British publication licensing its brand and content to a Saudi partner.

The bulk of the content of the new websites is slated to be produced by SRMG journalists in London, Islamabad, Istanbul and New York, with the Independent contributing only translated articles from its English-language website.

The sites, operated out of Riyadh and Dubai, would produce "highest-quality, free-thinking, independent news, insight and analysis on global affairs and local events," the Independent said.

SRMG publishes the English-language Arab News and Arabic-language Ash-Sharq al-Awsat, newspapers operating within the constraints of tight Saudi censorship that do not challenge Saudi policies.

SRMG was chaired until he recently was appointed a minister of culture by Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Farhan Al Saud. An unknown member of the Saudi ruling family, Prince Bader made headlines last year when he paid a record \$450m for a Leonardo da Vinci painting of Jesus Christ, allegedly as a proxy bidder for Prince Mohammed.

Sultan Muhammad Abuljadayel, a Saudi banker with no track record in media acquisitions, last year bought a 30 percent stake in the Independent. An executive of NCB Capital, a subsidiary of government-controlled National Commercial Bank, Mr Abuljadayel said at the time he was investing on his personal account.



A cache of Saudi diplomatic cables leaked in 2015 documented a pattern of Saudi chequebook diplomacy that aimed to buy positive coverage of the kingdom by European, Middle Eastern and African media who were encouraged to put "learned" Saudi guests on talk shows and counter "media hostile to the kingdom."

Cables by the late Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al Faisal, suggested that Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat, and another Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily, Al Hayat, refrain from criticizing Lebanon and Russia.

Saudi funding ranged from the bailout of financially troubled media to donations, the purchase of thousands of subscriptions, and all-expenses-paid trips to the kingdom. It was often driven by Saudi Arabia's covert public diplomacy war with Iran.

Saudi Arabia's near monopoly on staid pan-Arabic media was broken in 1996 with the launch of Al Jazeera and its free-wheeling, hard-hitting reporting and talk shows. Al Jazeera's disruption of conservative, Arab state broadcasting prompted Waleed



bin Ibrahim Al Ibrahim, a brother in law of the late King Fahd, to launch Al Arabiya as an antidote.

The rise of Al Jazeera cemented a realization in the kingdom that it needed to expand from print media into broadcasting. The need for broadcasting was initially driven home six years earlier when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Saudi authorities banned Saudi media from reporting the invasion only to discover on the third day that Saudis were getting their news from foreign media outlets, among which CNN.

The Saudi-Qatari battle for control of the airwaves escalated in the run-up to this year's World Cup in Russia. With Al Jazeera and beIN, the network's sports franchise, blocked in the kingdom as part of the 13-month-old Saudi-UAE-led economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar, Saudi Arabia initially turning a blind eye to beOutQ, a bootlegging operation operating out of the kingdom that used a satellite that is co-owned by the Saudi government.

Threatened by FIFA with punitive action, Saudi Arabia began cracking down on beOutQ and said it welcomed legal action in the kingdom being initiated by the world soccer body. At the same time, Saudi Arabia explored ways to challenge beIN's broadcasting rights.

The choice of languages for the Independent websites suggest that SRMG sees the deal as strengthening its brand while supporting the kingdom in its battles with Qatar and Iran and quest for regional hegemony.

The launch of a Farsi website targets the kingdom's arch-rival Iran. Leaving politics aside, Iranians, confronted with an economic crisis that is being exasperated by harsh US sanctions, are unlikely to subscribe or advertise on the website. The same is true for Saudi businesses in the absence of diplomatic relations and given Saudi backing for the sanctions.

The Independent's Turkish website will have to compete in a heavily populated media landscape that has largely been muzzled by President Recep Tayeb Erdogan. The website's significance lies in the fact that Turkey supports Qatar in the spat that pits the Gulf state against Saudi Arabia and its allies, maintains close ties to Iran, and challenges Saudi regional ambitions in Palestine as well as the Horn of Africa.

In many ways, Urdu-speaking Pakistan, one of the world's most populous Muslim nations that borders on Iran, has long supported the kingdom militarily, and is home to the world's largest Shia Muslim majority, could prove to be the most lucrative element of SRMG's tie-up with the Independent.

In contrast to Turkey, Saudi Arabia enjoys empathy in major segments of Pakistan's population, hosts a sizeable Pakistani community, has strong support among the country's religious scholars as well as ties to influential militants whom the military is seeking to ease into mainstream politics, and funds religious media outlets.

At the bottom line, the SRMG-Independent tie-up may be for the kingdom less about business and more about soft power.

"A channel is a very economical way to influence people. Bang for your buck, it's much cheaper than guns. It is about controlling the discourse, and for Saudis about being in charge," said Hugh Miles, author of *Al-Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World*. Mr Miles'



IRELAND REMAINS STILL AMIDST ALL BREXIT CHAOS

The decision of the United Kingdom to exit the 'European Union' came as a shock to the world, when a referendum was passed on Thursday 23 June 2016. The post-referendum period had witnessed a change in Britain's government with Theresa May entering into power, and ever since then, a question on her Prime Ministership was raised as to where her stance was on the whole purpose of the 'Brexit'.

The Brexit which is scheduled to happen on 29th March 2019 at 11 PM UK time, has been under scrutiny for a long time now, as the United Kingdom has to develop some negotiations and relations with the other European Union countries, termed as the 'transition period'. However, the most important objective of the whole process of negotiation stands on Ireland's position and what measures would be taken to solve the problem of the Northern Ireland border as leaving the EU would simply mean a new system of border controls. The European Union had proposed a deal of a 'common regulatory area' where Northern Ireland will be considered a part of the Customs Union, even if the UK was out. But Theresa May rejected the proposal terming it 'unacceptable' as it would break down the single market with the creation of a customs and regulatory body down the Irish Sea. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland stands with her decision as 'creating a red line by the sea' would mean going back to border issues between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The matter of Northern Ireland now stands between the UK and Brexit for two matters. An immigrant issue, where the possibility of Ireland serving as a 'backdoor' to the EU immigrants, and the other being a disruption in the movement of goods and other trade concerning the areas of the United Kingdom, Ireland and in particular Northern Ireland. Ireland wishes not to have any hard border set up on the beautiful island of Ireland.

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On Monday, the British Parliament has confirmed that there will be no 'post-Brexit' custom imposition on the Irish border, making it even more complicated for Ireland to have the borders open between Northern Ireland and Ireland for some EU customs union. Theresa May have been under pressure as now the amendments for the Brexit are open for discussion in the Parliament and she has for now been 'defeated' twice in her propaganda for the 'Brexit'.

On Monday, the British Parliament has confirmed that there will be no 'post-Brexit' custom imposition on the Irish border, making it even more complicated for Ireland to have the borders open between Northern Ireland and Ireland for some EU customs union. Theresa May have been under pressure as now the amendments for the Brexit are open for discussion in the Parliament and she has for now been 'defeated' twice in her propaganda for the 'Brexit'.

The Irish government have been considering all possible scenarios and the worst of them all would be to have a World Trade Organisation agreement on the movement of goods and imposition of tariffs if any in airports and ports. The Prime Minister has



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A photograph of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi standing on a wooden boat, looking at each other and smiling. They are positioned behind a dark wooden railing. In the background, there is a body of water, a line of green trees, and a small white bridge in the distance under a clear sky. A large red banner with white text is superimposed over the middle of the image.

DECONSTRUCTING WUHAN- THE FORMALLY INFORMAL SUMMIT?

The recent Xi Jinping- Narendra Modi bonhomie in Wuhan, billed as the 'first informal summit' between the leaders of both the countries, has generated much brouhaha in the policy-making circles across the globe. Analysts have interpreted this in their own ways depending upon their ideological situatedness. Notwithstanding their differences, they were unanimous in acknowledging the significance of this informal summit in the backdrop of Doklam standoff. Personal diplomacy was leveraged to melt the ice between both India and China.

The choice of Wuhan, on the banks of Yangtze, was made by the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, so as to showcase China's economic might. However, this rapprochement is more than what meets the eye. It took place in the backdrop of shifting geopolitical realities and thus needs to be contextualized accordingly for the comprehensive understanding of the same.

Contextualizing Wuhan

Wuhan entailed discussions on a wide range of issues confronting both the countries. This "informal" summit was the result of four months of bureaucratic effort. Rhetoric aside, this summit took

place when Indo-China relations had hit rock bottom post-Doklam. Besides Doklam, other issues which compounded the already intricate relationship was India's refusal to Join Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's veto on India's NSG (Nuclear Supplier Group) along with shielding of Pakistan from terrorism-related charges in the UN and its continuous forays into the South Asian and Indian Ocean neighborhood; Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka is the point in case. Frequent confrontations in the Himalayas, growing trade deficit in favour of China and stark divergence on the issues of regional and global importance necessitated political dialogue between both the countries.

The signs of rapprochement were visible when Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi consented to participate in the earlier postponed RIC (Russia-India-China) trilateral summit. This was followed by state councillor's Yang Jiechi meeting with National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval. However, the one which caught media glare was foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale's visit to China in February this year. Further, India was cautious not to irk China and ahead of the visit, officials were asked by cabinet secretary to not participate in 60th anniversary of

Dalai Lama's visit as it could have repercussions for Sino-India ties.

The shifting geopolitical realities, coupled with the threat of trade war with the US. The informal summit has an opportune moment for Chinese President Xi-Jinping to display its charm to India which it considers a potential US ally. The recent strain in the Indo-China relationship has forced India to drift sharply towards the US and the Indian Ocean is also witnessing quad formation. Thus, anything which could slow down the drift is in Beijing's interest, and in China's calculation, this "Informal summit" could be one of those.

Besides, the recent rapprochement in the Korean peninsula didn't involve China in any significant manner. The US stole the show. In fact, Chinese had to struggle to invite Kim- Jong-un so as to showcase its relevance. Sanctions on Iran have caused alike jitters to both China and India. For India, the sanction may further delay the operationalisation of Chabahar port while for Beijing, Tehran holds a central place in Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Thus, cooperative relations with India (without any significant diplomatic or political concessions) could be leveraged as a pressure point against these arbitrary sanctions.

With 2019 general elections approaching, Modi, who is facing the heat in domestic politics due to rising fuel prices,



PARAS RATNA
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KEY POINTS

- Wuhan summit took place when India-China relations had hit rock bottom post doklam.
- Both Modi and Xi Jinping needed it. Modi, who is facing the heat in domestic politics due to rising fuel prices, joint opposition and farm distress; tranquillity at Indo-China border is a necessity, even if it comes with a tag of appeasement.
- The shifting geopolitical realities, coupled with the threat of trade war with the US. The informal summit has an opportune moment for Chinese President Xi-Jinping to display its charm to India which it considers a potential US ally. The recent strain in the Indo-China relationship has forced India to drift sharply towards the US and the Indian Ocean is also witnessing quad formation. Thus, anything which could slow down the drift is in Beijing's interest
- Besides all rhetoric of Asian century, thorny issues remain as it is. Chinese stance on Doklam is same. No concessions were made with reference to CPEC. The trade deficit is yet to be addressed. To be fair, these issues can't be addressed overnight and requires tedious backdoor diplomacy for which moving out of an adversarial relationship is necessary and thus, Wuhan's success could be measured in that aspect.

joint opposition and farm distress; tranquillity at Indo-China border is a necessity, even if it comes with a tag of appeasement. Notwithstanding, Modi's active engagement on the diplomatic front; it has fallen short of delivering the desired results. The US is putting sanctions at the expense of India. No exemption has been made to India, be it with regards to Russia (deal with S-400) or with regards to oil imports from Iran. The recent cancellation of "2+2" events by the US citing "unavoidable reasons" has given a jolt to Indo-US relations. The uncertainty in President Trump's approach to the region further necessitated a pragmatic rapprochement with China. The neighbourhood too is witnessing significant Chinese forays resulting in subsequent shrinkage of India's strategic space in its own backyard. Very often India's neighbours play China card and vice-versa as an act of balancing. Thus, given the fragile political equilibrium, it makes sense to have a workable relationship with China. This context was essential for comprehensive understanding of dynamics at play behind the Xi-Modi bonhomie.

Wuhan and beyond: major takeaways from the summit?

Though this informal summit entailed '2 days, 7 events and 9 hours'; there wasn't any agreement signed and neither any joint statement. Post-Doklam, the emphasis of Indo-China relations is on border peace management. In this regard, both

leaders have consented to issue strategic guidance to their respective militaries.

Another significant outcome was the Indo-China expression of interest in a joint economic project in Afghanistan. This could ruffle Pakistani feathers. However, given India's opposition to BRI, it remains to be seen how it unfolds. In this case India could do well by adopting a nuanced approach; to quote Shyam Saran, Ex-Foreign Secretary "India needs to exercise pragmatism with respect to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and participate in those projects which may improve India's access to Central Asian market and resources, while raising red flag wherever it violates Indian interest". This essentially means that India shouldn't participate in CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) where its sovereignty is at stake but can collaborate with China in the regions where its sovereignty is not at stake.

On the other hand, this proposal to collaborate in Afghanistan followed by China's attempt to have China-India-Pakistan trilateral summit under the ambit of SCO points to how China wants to get its BRI ball rolling without offering much or any concession on its Part. China's reluctance to agree on the connectivity through the LAC on Kargil, Ladakh, Xinjiang and Tibet; these regions shared linkages with Central Asia in terms of history, culture and trade further corroborate the point. In fact, Beijing has refused to reopen Indian consulates in Lhasa. Thus, as evident, China's attempt is mostly to play the role of big brother by bringing these two adversaries together and flaunt itself as Asian superpower.

Besides all rhetoric of Asian century, thorny issues remain as it is. Chinese stance on Doklam is same. No concessions were made with reference to CPEC. The trade deficit is yet to be addressed. To be fair, these issues can't be addressed overnight and requires tedious backdoor diplomacy for which moving out of an adversarial relationship is necessary and thus, Wuhan's success could be measured in that aspect. As far as managing Indo-China relationship is concerned, the only way forward for India is to minimize the power gap through the sustained and speedy development of economy coupled with the strengthening of defence apparatus.



INDIA AND CHINA CONTINUE INVESTMENT IN GHANA: ANOTHER TRADE WAR IN PROGRESS?

India and China have known to maintain an unstable relation for some time now. The countries although part of the BRICS, G20 and other UN organizations, have always seemed to stand in each other's way of implementing certain policies and watching their counterpart's actions closely. Examples can be drawn from Chinese opposition to India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, India's opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Doklam Crisis cannot go unmentioned which ended when Bhutan raised its voice against the construction in a disputed area. Despite such past actions and bitterness, which still stands in making a strong bilateral relationship between the countries both India and China are now on a road to stabilize all of it and work for their own interests. But is that happening for real is what bothers the world and especially international relations enthusiasts who keep on monitoring their actions. The world is aware of the trade war that had been on between the United States and China, but with the recent investments from China and India in Ghana puts both the countries in a position of a war trade or does it?

India has been maintaining a very close and warm relationship with the African continent as they have shared a common history of colonialism. The month of July 2018 saw huge progress was made in strengthening the relations further, and this was marked when Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his first ever visit to Rwanda and the investment agreement signed between them. Earlier this month, when Minister for Foreign Affairs and regional integration of Ghana, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey visited India and a MoU was signed for strengthening cultural and trade ties. A Business Forum was held in Accra, Ghana on July 3rd, 2018 and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) and the Chamber of Marathwada Industries and Agriculture (CMIA). The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) reported that India is Ghana's second largest investor after China. The India Ghana trade was estimated at 3.5 billion dollars which might have been predicted to cross 5 billion dollars by 2020 with the recent trade advancements. News has that India is all set to participate in the Powerelec 2018 hosted by Ghana which is a multi-sectoral exhibition of

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trade. The event is expected to work on areas of sustainable development and the Indian High Commissioner to Ghana, His Excellency Birendra Singh Yadav has himself assured of a large delegation for this event, sponsored by the Federation of Indian Export Organization. Indian Businessmen have always welcomed investments in Ghana due to its stable political nature and the confidence it has expressed towards the Ghanaian trade sector. The GIPC reported that the economy is happy with all the Indian investments and the companies that show trust in their economy and that it has allowed a credit of \$150 million for agriculture and \$30 million for the Yendi Water Supply Project, which however is still in its early stages. This year in February 2018, the Indian-owned company Park Agrotech has also invested \$30 million to boost the poultry industry in Ghana.

Reverting back to Chinese investment in Ghana, the GIPC has reported of some \$15 billion dollars invested by the country in Ghana's transformation projects which include developmental projects as well. The financial model presented by China is solely based on partnerships and utilization of the energy and mineral resource of the country. On a recent visit made by Ghanaian delegation led by President Akufo Addo himself to China, the delegation was successful in explaining their development strategies and how Ghana wishes to not "strangulate the economy" by borrowing and presented to the transformative plans on agriculture as well as industries. The Exim Bank of China had also invested \$1 billion for Ghana's infrastructures and both the Governments are now focusing on prioritizing the areas which would show the results at first. Apart from investment in the corporate sector, the Chinese government has also granted \$7 million for the army and agreed on constructing 90 bridges connecting even the farthest villages within the county of Ghana. Economists across the world have expressed their concern over China's increasing investments as the debt keeps on rising too, however, statistics show that with such massive investments being made in Ghana and as well as in other African countries have helped these countries in achieving their goals towards sustainable development.

But the idea of a trade war between India and China over Ghana and other African countries came when the Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi visited Rwanda on the same day and promised the country to contribute to the projects which aim to bring development in the region. India promised a \$200 million grand loan to Rwanda alongside China. But the investments and granting of loans a far from being shaped into a trade war as highlighted by a lot of economists as the approaches of trade for the two countries are different. Moving from the focus of Ghana and bring the picture of the whole continent, it has helped in constructing 6,500 km of railways and highways, 200 schools, 80 stadiums and many ports and airports all over the continent. On the other hand, India continues to pursue its interests and had invested in countries which could fit under the Indian financing system. The GIPC has definitely mentioned of India is its second largest investor and China being its first, the approaches of the two countries vary in their own ways. The amount of investment made by China in Ghana itself is massive, and India if be said has reached just one-fourth of it. However, economists too predict that if India continues to make an investment in Ghana despite its own financial issues, a sense of competition would be created, however, a 'tug of war' or competition would not best describe the situation.





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About The Punta Christo Fortress

The Punta Christo Fortress is the biggest Austro-Hungarian fortification. Although having been long abandoned, it is the present day site for numerous concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events.

When its control of Pula commenced, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy decided to transform the town into the Monarchy's maritime centre, which meant the construction of not only numerous newly-built structures such as the arsenal, hospital or the Hydrographic Institute, but also its defensive system. Thus, a magnificent fortification system was erected, which included not only Pula but also some of its neighbouring villages such as Medulin or Fažana. In the period from 1881 until 1918, 31 structure was erected along the area of Pula and its near surrounding, including batteries and other necessary structures. The Punta Christo fortress, which is the biggest Austro-Hungarian fortress, was built in Štinjan, on the namesake Kristo peninsula. Erected in the late 19th century, it spread across more than ten thousand square meters and had as many as 270 rooms. The fortress had an excellent geographic position with a view of the entrance into the Pula Bay and the jetty from one, and of Muzil and the Brijuni islands from the other sea side. A trench was dug around it, separating it, while the passage was possible only through one of the three entrances. The interior yards of the Punta Christo fortress provide the access to its underground premises. The fortress was abandoned after the WW2. Having been neglected, abandoned and dilapidated for a number of years, it was finally cleared. Today it is used as a site for organizing concerts, exhibitions, and other cultural events.

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INDIA SIGNED MOU AMONGST BRICS NATIONS ON THE REGIONAL AVIATION PARTNERSHIP



The Union Cabinet chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Impact:

The MoU signifies an important landmark in the civil aviation relations between India and other BRICS Member States and has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

Salient features:

The objective is that BRICS countries would benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation. Among the areas of cooperation, following areas have been identified:

- **Public Policies and best practices in regional services.**
- **Regional Airports**
- **Airport infrastructure management and air navigation services**
- **Technical cooperation between regulatory agencies**
- **Innovation**
- **Environment Sustainability**
- **including deliberation of global initiatives**

TOP SPOT BAGGED BY INDIA IN ECONOMISTS POLL; ONLY RISK POSED BY OIL

Reuters conducted a poll of economists yesterday concerning the economic growth of India. India will remain the fastest-growing economy due to the Government's increased spending owing to the fast approaching general elections of 2019. However, rising oil prices will be the biggest risk to this growth.

The nosedive that the economy took after the ban on certain currency notes in 2016, followed by a seemingly hasty implementation of the Goods and Service Tax – or also known as GST – in July of last year has just started to recover. China, the world's second-largest economy is expected to grow 6.6 percent this year, according to analysts in a recently conducted Reuters poll. However, it was noted with relief that India, who recently surpassed France to become the world's sixth-largest economy, is expected to show a growth of 7.4 percent in March of this year, that is, the end of the 2019 fiscal year. According to the latest poll of nearly 70 economists conducted by Reuters, our \$2 trillion economy will show an increased growth of 7.6 percent next year.

However, over 60 percent of 41 economists further said that the recent rise in oil prices was the biggest threat to the growth percent, as that would increase the likelihood of more interest rate hikes by the Reserve Bank of India. The costs of the biggest items on India's import list, diesel and petrol, have reached a record high which, at a time when the rupee is weakening and close to a record low, have become a major burden, thus posing risks to the polls. "We think that for every 10 dollar rise in oil prices, India growth declines by 30-40 basis points. This impacts growth by lowering consumption and raising input costs," said Shashank Mendiratta, an economist at ANZ. Mr Samiran Chakraborty, senior economist at Citi added, "Relatively higher interest rates, high oil prices, uncertainties on the exchange rate, gradually building up political risks from the 2019 elections – are all headwinds that can slow down the growth momentum. Much will depend on the extent of (government) spending in the fiscal year 2019 and its multiplier effect on the rural economy."

All in all, it seems that if we don't manage to control the growing costs of oil, the effect will be seen in our economic growth.



US GRANTS STRATEGIC TRADE AUTHORISATION STATUS TO INDIA (STA-1)

The Trump administration's decision to place India in the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 list of countries, that eases export of high-tech items, acknowledges the security as well as economic relationship between the two largest democracies of the world, and boosts the defence partnership in a big way, India's top diplomat in Washington said on Monday.

"It is a sign of trust not only in the relationship but also on India's capabilities an economy and as security partner, because it also presupposes that India has the multilateral export control regime in place, which would allow the transfer of more sensitive defence technologies and dual-use technologies to India and without the risk of any proliferation," Indian Ambassador to the US, Navtej Singh Sarna, told a Washington audience soon after US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross designated India as an STA-1 country.

"This is an acknowledgement of the security as well as the economic relationship between India and the United States. This is a logical step of India being designated as a major defence partner," Sarna said.

The top Indian diplomat was responding to a question from Nisha Desai Biswal, president of US-India Business Council, during a panel discussion at the first Indo-Pacific Business Forum organised by the US Chambers of Commerce.

At the start of the first-ever India-Pacific Business Forum, Ross announced that the Trump administration has granted to India strategic trade authorisation status STA-1.

"And that's a very important change in their status under our export control regime. It acknowledges the US-India security and economic relationship. What it does is it comes under the Export Administration Rules, and it authorises the export, re-export and in-country transfer of specific items to destinations that the US regards as low risk," he said.

Currently, 36 countries, mostly all NATO nations, have this status, so it's a very elevated status from an export control point of view, he said.

"It is because India has partnered with us to improve its own export control regimes, and has met most of the multilateral export rules that we think are useful. It finally reflects India's status as a major defence partner of the US," said the commerce secretary.

Ross said STA-1 provides India greater supply chain efficiency, both for defence and for other high-tech products, that will increase activity with US systems, the interoperability of the systems, and it will reduce time and resources needed to get licensing approved.

"We calculate that it will be a competitive advantage for the US, in terms of supplying those kinds of products to India. It looks as though over the last seven years, some \$9.7 billion of products would have been affected, so it's a meaningful-sized number. And probably, it'll be much more than that because a lot of things they knew wouldn't be exportable, they didn't order from us," Ross said.

Later in a statement issued by the US Department of Commerce, Ross said this new designation reflects India's membership in three of the four multilateral export control regimes, as well the development of its national export control system.

US companies will be able to more efficiently export a much wider range of products to Indian high technology and military customers. India's new status will benefit US manufacturers while continuing to protect its national security, he asserted.

STA Tier 1 treatment, comparable to NATO allies, will expand the scope of exports subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) that can be made to India without individual licenses. This regulatory change will enhance the bilateral defence trade relationship and result in a greater volume of US exports to India.

"This testifies to our excellent record that we have had in maintaining non-proliferation of these technologies," Sarna told leaders of the US corporate sector.

It is a timely announcement as it comes ahead of the 2+2 dialogue scheduled for early September when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary James Mattis are due to visit India and meet with their counterparts, he said.

"I certainly think it fleshes out our defence partnership in a big way," Sarna said.

Later in the evening, the White House said that the Department of Commerce granting Strategic Trade Authorisation Tier 1 status to India would enable American companies to export more high-technology items under a streamlined license exception.



MILITARY TO MISSILES: TRUMP AND PUTIN MEET IN HELSINKI

ABDULLAH
ASSOCIATE CONTENT WRITER
THE KOOTNEETI TEAM

KEY POINTS

- The President's critics warned that a one-on-one meeting between Trump and his Russian counterpart would be disastrous. Trump, they said, would be outmaneuvered by the former KGB agent.
- The US President responded with typical bravado, saying he believed his meeting with Putin might be "the easiest of them all" during his European venture.
- In the days leading up to his meeting with Putin, Trump made clear he would not blame Putin's annexation of Crimea, meddling in Western elections or use of a nerve agent on UK soil for the souring of US-Russia relations.

Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin began a historic summit vowing their determination to forge a reset of troubled relations between the world's greatest nuclear powers.

Trump, bent on forging a personal bond with the Kremlin chief despite allegations of Russian meddling in US politics, went into the summit blaming "stupidity" by his predecessors for plunging ties to their present low.

Looking sombre, the two leaders exchanged a few opening remarks in front of the press at the start of their summit in Helsinki.

Putin, basking in congratulations from Trump and other world leaders for the successful staging of the World Cup in Russia, said: "The time has come to talk in a substantive way about our relations and problem areas of the world."

Before the two leaders went into the first session between just themselves and their interpreters, Trump said the summit would cover "everything from trade to military to missiles to nuclear to China".

"Frankly, we have not been getting along for the last number of years. And I really think the world

wants to see us get along. We are the two great nuclear powers," he said.

"I've not been here too long (as president), it's getting close to two years, but we'll be having an extraordinary relationship, I hope so."

'We'll do fine'

Shortly before the summit opened, Trump was asked if he would press Putin over Russia's alleged manipulation of the 2016 election that brought the mercurial property tycoon to power. He said only: "We'll do just fine."

Many US critics had called for the summit's cancellation after new revelations surrounding the alleged election meddling.

But Trump has insisted it is "a good thing to meet", as he attempts to replicate with Putin the sort of personal rapport he proclaims with the autocratic leaders of China and North Korea.

The summit may take the heat out of some of the world's most dangerous conflicts, including Syria.



But there are many points of friction that could yet spoil Trump's hoped-for friendship with the former KGB spymaster.

Trump began the day by firing a Twitter broadside at his domestic opponents, blaming the diplomatic chill on the investigation into alleged Russian election meddling.

"Our relationship with Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness and stupidity and now, the Rigged Witch Hunt!" Trump tweeted.

Russia's foreign ministry tweeted in response: "We agree."

Trump's US opponents tried, in turn, to gain traction for the hashtag #BAF (Blame America First).

'Fake news'

After a stormy NATO summit in Brussels last week, Trump was accused by critics of cosying up to Putin while undermining the transatlantic alliance.

But over breakfast with Finland's President Sauli Niinisto, he insisted NATO "has never been stronger" and "never been more together" thanks to his insistence on all allies paying their fair share.

Trump, a brash 72-year-old billionaire, has been president for 18 months while Putin, 65, has run Russia for the past 18 years.

In a weekend interview with CBS News, Trump admitted that Russia remains a foe, but he put Moscow on a par with China and the European Union as economic and diplomatic rivals.

The Kremlin has also played down hopes that the odd couple will emerge from their first formal one-on-one summit with a breakthrough.

On Friday Putin's adviser, Yuri Ushakov said: "The state of bilateral relations is very bad... We have to start to set them right."

Indeed, after the bad-tempered NATO summit and a contentious trip by Trump to Britain, anxious European leaders may be relieved if not much comes out of the Helsinki meeting.

Those leaders are already fuming over Trump's imposition of trade tariffs on various countries, including Russia.

Turning the tables, European Union President Donald Tusk said Trump was guilty of "spreading fake news" with his remark about foes, and warned that the trade tensions could spiral into violent "conflict and chaos".

"Europe and China, America and Russia, today in Beijing and in Helsinki, are jointly responsible for improving the world order, not for destroying it," he tweeted.

"I hope this message reaches Helsinki."

Protesters have been on the streets of Helsinki to denounce the policies of both Trump and Putin. Greenpeace draped a giant banner down a church tower urging: "Warm our hearts not our planet."

Giving up ground?

Trump is also under pressure from Britain to press Putin over the nerve agent poisoning of four people in southern England.

One of the victims, Dawn Sturgess, has died and her 19-year-old son Ewan Hope told the Sunday Mirror newspaper: "We need to get justice for my mum."

Many fear that Trump - in his eagerness to prove he was right to seek the summit despite US political opposition - may give up too much ground.

Trump has refused to personally commit to the US refusal to recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea, leaving open the possibility of a climbdown linked to a promise by Putin to somehow rein in Iranian influence in Syria.

If Washington were to acquiesce in Russia's 2014 land-grab, this would break with decades of US policy and send tremors through NATO's exposed eastern flank.

And there will be outrage at home if Trump does not confront Putin over the election scandal.

But the US leader would not say whether he would demand the extradition of 12 Russian intelligence officers who were indicted last week by US special prosecutor Robert Mueller.

MEETING BETWEEN PUTIN AND TRUMP: ANOTHER REASON FOR SPLIT WITHIN THE EU?

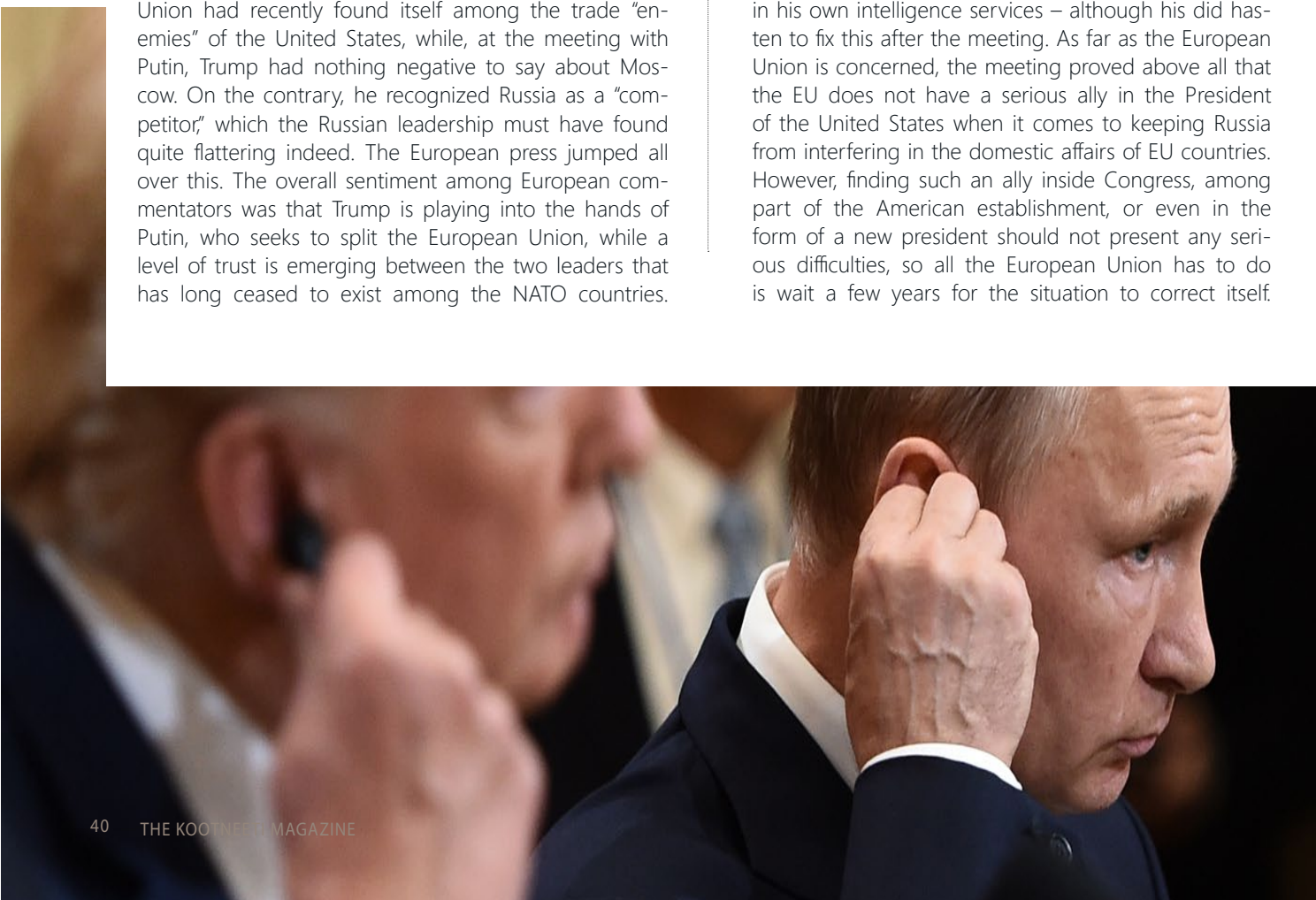
ELENA ALEKSEENKOVA
PROGRAM MANAGER
RIAC

The NATO Summit, held on July 11–12, 2018, gave Brussels and the EU countries good reason to fear any decisive steps that Donald Trump might take with regard to Moscow. There were even suggestions that the unrelentingly tense atmosphere between the NATO partners might lead Trump to sweep a metaphorical curtsey before Vladimir Putin by recognizing Crimea as a part of Russia or agreeing the relax sanctions against the country. In the end, nothing that extreme happened, although the meeting between the two presidents did cause considerable concern in Brussels and European capitals.

The meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin received various assessments across the European Union, although the main conclusion was generally the same: it went better than the recent NATO Summit, which Der Spiegel poked fun at rather emphatically. Particularly insulting for Brussels was the fact that the European Union had recently found itself among the trade “enemies” of the United States, while, at the meeting with Putin, Trump had nothing negative to say about Moscow. On the contrary, he recognized Russia as a “competitor,” which the Russian leadership must have found quite flattering indeed. The European press jumped all over this. The overall sentiment among European commentators was that Trump is playing into the hands of Putin, who seeks to split the European Union, while a level of trust is emerging between the two leaders that has long ceased to exist among the NATO countries.

However, putting all emotions aside, let us attempt to see whether it is worth worrying about the European Union. And if so, why exactly?

First. Both the United States and the European Union are equally convinced of Russia’s interference in the U.S. elections, and the European affairs and are therefore interested in obtaining guarantees from Russia that it will not interfere in the future. The United States and Brussels agreed on this issue before the meeting, which is why the European side was not pleased with the manner in which it was addressed (although they were not as disgruntled as the American establishment and intelligence services). Not only did Trump fail to chastise Putin, but he also demonstrated a lack of confidence in his own intelligence services – although he did hasten to fix this after the meeting. As far as the European Union is concerned, the meeting proved above all that the EU does not have a serious ally in the President of the United States when it comes to keeping Russia from interfering in the domestic affairs of EU countries. However, finding such an ally inside Congress, among part of the American establishment, or even in the form of a new president should not present any serious difficulties, so all the European Union has to do is wait a few years for the situation to correct itself.



Second. The President of the United States did not utter a single word about Ukraine during the meeting (not during the bit we saw, at least). This was another serious blow for the European Union, and for Berlin in particular. This silence on an issue that the European Union sees as the key reason for the conflict between Russia and the collective West means, first of all, that the United States has lost interest in the Ukrainian issue and does not see it as worthy of attention, and second, that it is ready to cooperate in other areas while this key issue is pushed into the background. Discussing other issues while ignoring the main one could be seen as the United States making a concession to Russia. In this context, there is a feeling inside the European Union that the organization is the last beacon of democracy and liberal values in the world, as its main partner has shown that it is prepared to make compromises independently without developing a coordinated approach with the European Union or reaching prior agreement with it.

Third. The meeting did not clarify the situation surrounding Nord Stream 2, which remains rather fuzzy for Brussels and Berlin. On the one hand, it was reiterated that Germany was well within its rights to settle this issue independently, and that the United States would compete with Russia for the European gas market. The use of business terminology would seemingly imply that the game will be conducted according to the rules of healthy competition; however, previous statements by Trump that Germany could become “hostage” to Russia suggest that the President of the United States does not, and will not, shy away from politicizing the matter. The European Union is well aware that, when it comes to European energy security, Russia has long since proven itself to be a reliable supplier and partner, and that the recent actions of the United States with regard to trade and economic relations with the European Union, China, and other partners force the EU to question the ability and willingness of the United States to honour their agreements. It is also likely that Washington will continue to use the “security trump card” as an instrument of pressure in economic issues – it is not for nothing that Trump claims that the United States provides 91 per cent of the financing of European security. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the Russian side promises gas transit via Ukraine, the problem of security in exchange for access to the gas market will remain.

Fourth. Trump did not mention anything during the meeting about easing sanctions against Russia. We can thus conclude that the European Union's fears were unjustified in this instance. However, there is a feeling inside the European Union that the United States and Russia can restore confidence between the two countries, something that is looking increasingly unlikely for US–EU relations. At the very least, there were far more positives to be taken from the meeting between Trump and Putin than from the recent NATO Summit. A number of European media outlets noted that Trump treated Putin as his equal, which would suggest that the



policy of isolating Russia, an approach that the European Union had been counting on since it introduced sanctions in 2014, has effectively failed.

Fifth. Brussels senses a weakening of solidarity within the European Union regarding relations with Russia and a willingness of a number of its member countries to establish a dialogue with Moscow. This is why there are growing fears inside the European Union that Donald Trump's pragmatic approach of cooperation with Russia will further strengthen the position of those in EU member states who criticize Brussels. This is all the more true given that the approach of “selective engagement” with Russia proposed by High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini has not yielded any tangible results so far, while the United States and Russia, given sufficient political will, could actually achieve something.

While the European Union's fears about the meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin did not pan out and no concrete concessions were made on either side, and the results of the meeting are already being devalued by the attitude towards the meeting within the United States itself, Brussels and Berlin still see the event as yet another step by US and Russian leaders towards undermining European and Euro-Atlantic solidarity. At the same time, a number of EU countries have welcomed the new “thaw” in relations between Moscow and Washington. For example, Minister of the Interior of Italy Matteo Salvini has said that he would be happy to hold the next meeting of the two presidents on Italian soil. Whether or not the Italian side will be able to convert the trust between Moscow and Rome into greater mutual confidence between the presidents of Russia and the United States without destroying European solidarity depends on two unknowns: 1) the level of mutual trust between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, and 2) the strength of European solidarity.

BRAZIL TO POWER UP INVESTMENTS IN STREET LIGHTING AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Can you imagine how much money and natural resources could be saved if the world adopted energy efficiency as a priority in sectors such as public lighting or industry?

Although this is an essential concept for the future of infrastructure, it's still little known in countries such as Brazil. In 2016, for example, when the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) examined policies and performance of the world's 23 top energy-consuming countries, the Latin American giant ranked 22nd.

Insufficient investment in infrastructure helps explain this outcome, as well as Brazil's lagging economic growth over the past seven years. Over the last two decades, investments were well below the estimated cost to replace or repair existing infrastructure (estimated at 3 percent of GDP). Energy saw investments decrease from above 2 percent of GDP in the 1970s to 0.7 percent of GDP in 2016, according to a recent report.

However, a new initiative – combining financing and technology innovation – can help fill this gap, and render Brazil's energy sector more

efficient and sustainable. Over the next 15 years, the World Bank's Financial Instruments for Brazil Energy Efficient Cities (FinBRAZEEC) Project will focus on two urban sectors that have the potential to attract private sector investment at scale: efficient street lighting and industrial energy efficiency.

With FinBRAZEEC, Brazilian cities can create subprojects to completely replace the current sodium-vapor lamps for LED. Also, industries will be able to update pumping systems, engines, furnaces and other types of equipment. Given Brazil's 86% urbanization rate, these initiatives have tremendous potential to reduce energy use, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

REPORT BY
MODERN DIPLOMACY TEAM
SOURCE: WORLD BANK

Risk mitigation

To enable them, FinBRAZEEC is piloting one of the most innovative financing structures the World Bank has developed to date. The World Bank will partner with Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF), the second largest state-owned financial institution in Latin America and the fourth largest bank in Brazil, as the project's financial intermediary.

Under the project, CEF will lead the co-lending arrangement comprising the Green Climate Fund (GCF), CEF, and commercial lenders to eligible efficient public street lighting and industrial energy efficiency projects.

In order to mitigate the credit risk of energy efficiency projects, commercial lenders





will benefit from a partial credit guarantee offered by CEF. The guarantee product will be backstopped by a \$200 million contingent loan from the World Bank and grants from the GCF and the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) – \$195 million and \$20 million, respectively –, providing additional credit enhancement by supporting the facility, when needed, to meet its debt obligations to commercial lenders.

Altogether, this financing facility is expected to make more than \$1 billion available for urban energy efficiency projects, leveraging the concessional financing being provided by the World Bank and other international organizations.

FinBRAZEEC is expected to serve as a demonstration model for leveraging private sector capital for clean energy investments in Brazil. Once the model is proven, it can be replicated in other countries, and in other sectors in Brazil. Moreover, it will provide an example of how Brazil's now scarce public-sector resources, particularly those of the public banks, can be used to leverage private sector capital for infrastructure investments.

Currently, while there is private investment in infrastructure, the majority – around 70 percent – comes from public sources, including state banks, where resources are increasingly limited.

Mobilizing private sector investments not only are essential to help Brazil fill its infrastructure gap: without them, meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets by 2030 will be much harder. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that developing countries alone would require annual investments of between 3.3 trillion and 4.5 trillion dollars. About 2.5 billion dollars a year are missing to fill that need.

Climate change contributions

FinBRAZEEC is expected to help Brazil avoid the equivalent of 12.5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent over the life of the project, as well as to help the country meet its goal of improving energy efficiency in the power sector by 10 percent by 2030, set as part of its Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The facility will be complemented by support for technical assistance and project preparation being provided by the GCF, the Global Infrastructure Facility, and the World Bank's Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP).

FinBRAZEEC draws on a series of lessons learned from previous World Bank experience in Brazil. ESMAP technical assistance helped identify viable business models for investment in urban street lighting, industries, transport and public buildings, providing useful tools and lessons for designing the FinBRAZEEC project.

The project also builds on the experience of another recent World Bank contingent loan for Uruguay's national power company, which provided the government with a new financial mechanism to mitigate the impact of drought – and resulting decrease in hydroelectric energy generation – on the cost of electricity and on public sector accounts.

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#SOSNICARAGUA

NICARAGUA: CONTINUITIES AND RUPTURES OF A CRISIS

Salvador Martí i Puig
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POLITICAL SCIENCE
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It's been almost a decade since the book, *Nicaragua and the FSLN: ¿What is left of the revolution?*, was published. The objective of the book was to see to what extent throughout the history of Nicaragua—going beyond regime changes—patrimonial, violent and authoritarian practices have persisted among those who have held power.

The issue of analyzing the continuities of Nicaraguan politics beyond oft-studied ruptures is especially relevant today. In a little more than a century, Nicaragua has experienced U.S. occupation, a liberal oligarchic regime, a repressive family dictatorship, a revolutionary regime of a socialist nature, a liberal democracy, and, since Daniel Ortega's return to power in 2007, a hybrid regime that has combined democratic institutions with authoritarian elections and that, as of April 2018, has mutated into a new tyranny.

What is happening this year in Nicaragua is surprising to many people, whose only reference to the country's politics were the victory (in 1979) and electoral defeat (in 1990) of the Sandinista revolution. Despite their differences, these two

episodes were exceptional for many reasons, but above all, for their intention of breaking the caudillo, revanchist and patrimonial system of Nicaraguan politics. The Sandinista Revolution was exceptional because of its multi-person leadership (consisting of nine commanders) that condemned and discarded caudillismo and the cult of personality. In addition, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) abandoned the Leninist dogma and put pluralism into practice, even offering the government the preparation it needed to hold free and fair elections, which led to the victory of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in 1990.

But after a while this exceptionality vanished. On the one hand, the FSLN failed in their attempt to democratize and quickly came under the tight control of Daniel Ortega. On the other hand, the liberal democracy inaugurated in 1990 mutated in 1997 with the rise to power of a corrupt president, Arnoldo Alemán, who had no qualms about agreeing with Ortega to un-democratize the country in 2000. From there on, Nicaraguan politics were redirected through traditional patterns; a political culture reappeared based on the concentration of power in few hands, in the cooptation (or expulsion) of the opposition, in the dismantling of institutional

counterweights, and in impunity.

Later on, with Daniel Ortega's return to power in 2007, elements of continuity with somocismo—named after the Somoza-family dictatorship, which ruled the country from 1937 to 1979—reappeared with more force, concentrating a large amount of public and private resources in the hands of Ortega's family and close associates and controlling the state apparatus, including the army, police, and supposedly independent agencies such as the electoral machinery and the courts.

The only thing that seemed to differentiate Ortega from Anastasio Somoza was that Ortega used force and repression more sporadically. As we know, a few months ago, that difference vanished. From April 18, 2018, when protests broke out, to July 26, 2018, there have been 448 deaths, 2,830 injuries, and 718 Nicaraguans reported missing. The Ortega government is to blame for 98% of those cases—based on information provided by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) and the Nicaraguan Association of Human Rights (ANPDH).

Ortega has not only co-opted the FSLN and its symbols and concentrated the power of the State in his figure (and that of his wife); he



has de-democratized the country. This means that the regime has had the capacity to rid institutions of dissent, strip institutions of legal status, and create puppet electoral machinery to weave political complicity with the appearance of plurality. In this sense, the political, social and humanitarian crisis in Nicaragua is not going to be resolved by resurrecting traditional parties (which have been co-opted), or by creating new political formations overnight. Protests in the street are one thing; competition in the electoral arena—through either early elections or in officially scheduled elections in four years—will be another challenge entirely.

The regeneration of Nicaraguan political life depends on more than organizing new elections and voting. In order to rejuvenate a functional party system, ready to compete in democratic elections, there's a lot to be done. The process of de-democratization carried out over the last decade has not only disrupted Nicaragua's electoral administration, but has also broken up all party life. Precisely for this reason, any solution to the crisis requires negotiation outside the framework of the country's broken institutions.

Like so much else in Nicaraguan politics, negotiation outside the institutional framework has been a permanent element in the history of the country. The historian Antonio Esgueva Gómez has worked extensively on the subject. Part of his hypothesis is that substantive changes that have taken place in Nicaraguan politics have been the result of negotiation outside the institutional sphere—necessarily devoid of representatives of the regime—between confronting actors who recognize themselves as interlocutors.

Among the most recent examples of negotiations of this nature are the agreements made at the end of the 1980s between the Sandinista government and the Contra; the negotiations between the Chamorro administration in 1990 for the preparation of the Protocol of Transition of the Executive Power (PTPE); and, most recently, the "Governance Agreement" (better known as "The Pact") between Alemán and Ortega with which the democratic system began to erode in 2000.

Many Nicaraguans, and outside observers, believed that May 16, 2018, when the first session of the National Dialogue Table began, would mark the start of a negotiating dynamic of a similar nature. Members of the government, universities, unions, private employers, and members of civil society sat down for negotiations mediated by the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua.

But the dialogue failed after the Ortega government failed both to put an end to the repression and agree to advance a democratizing agenda. Ortega blamed the Catholic Church for the dialogue's failure. The criticism of the Church was not accidental, because it has become the only solidly-structure institution with voice and authority that is present throughout the country. Outside the Church, only a heterogeneous coalition exists, sustained only by its rejection of the regime.

As of today, it is too early to think of a successful end to negotiations that results in peace. Nobody knows when or how this crisis will be resolved. The Ortega regime still has control over the armed forces and has enough economic resources to survive a few more months. For this reason, Ortega's speeches continue to focus on insulting opponents, denouncing "external agents" and appealing to resistance. The presence of the foreign ministers of Cuba and Venezuela in the July 19 celebrations of the anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution is a sign of where the regime wants go in the coming months: namely, political survival through a rhetoric that appeals to popular interests and the fight against imperialism. The regime's new slogan is clear: "Daniel stays."

Nowadays, nobody knows what the outcome of the crisis will be, although up to now it has reflected the build-up to past crises in Nicaragua, namely the concentration of power of resources in the hands of an autocratic leader, the use of force at critical times, and the inability of institutions to resolve conflicts. As a result of these continuities, political violence and impunity has reappeared in the country.

Until recently, Nicaragua appeared safe from the epidemic of crime present in the Northern Triangle countries. That's not to say that the future of the country is the same as that of its northern neighbors, but mistrust, government repression, and social and political polarization are bad indicators. In addition, the impact of the conflict on the Nicaraguan economy has already been felt, hundreds of thousands of citizens have already crossed the Costa Rican border, and tens of thousands more are stranded on the southern border of Mexico.

In any case, it is difficult to imagine that the crisis that began on April 18 will simply fade with time: resisting peacefully, without organization or resources, a government that does not hesitate to use force is a very difficult task. It is also hard to imagine that Ortega can continue to maintain his grip on power without the unlimited oil resources enjoyed by Maduro in Venezuela or the control devices available to the Cuban regime. As the French priest, politician, and diplomat Charles Maurice de Tayllerdand warned a couple hundred years ago: "You can do anything you like with bayonets, except sit on them."

Q & A



RED LINES: INDIA WON'T AXE S-400, IRAN PORT PROJECT TO APPEASE TRUMP – EDITORIAL INTERVIEW

This interview was originally published in Sputnik. And progressively got published in 14 countries and 6 languages.

The Trump administration's sanctions against Russia and Iran may backfire on US-India relations, which Washington is struggling to broaden. Among New Delhi's major concerns is the development of the Iranian port of Chabahar, a key point of access to Central Asia, and the purchase of Russia's S-400 air defence system.

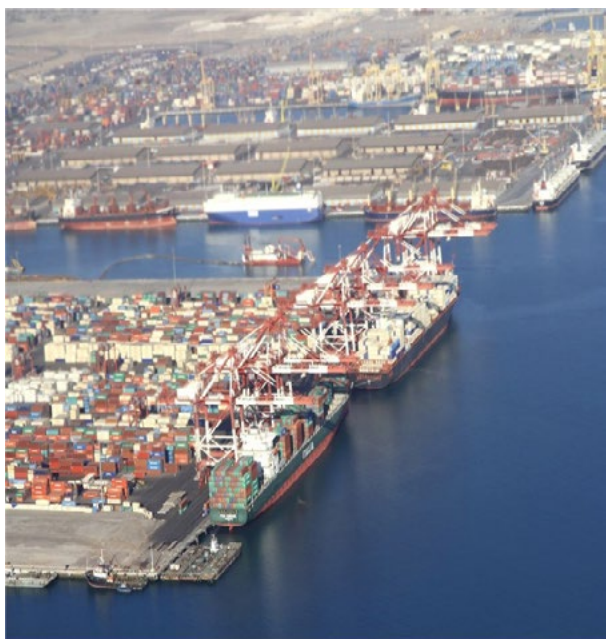
In an apparent effort to cope with burning issues, the US State Department announced on July 20 that the first US-India "2+2 dialogue" between Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and their Indian counterparts, Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Minister of Defense Nirmala Sitharaman would be held on September 6 in New Delhi. The announcement came a month after Washington postponed the summit citing "unavoidable reasons."

Sputnik: What's your take on India-US relations under Donald Trump? What could one expect from the forthcoming US-India 2+2 dialogue that is due to take place this September?

Amrita Dhillon: In Mr President's words, India-US relations are 'unprecedented' in nature, where both countries get their leaders elected with a nationalist wave. However, "America First" could be a point where bilateral relations face a bitterness, as still, the United States is one of the highly lucrative places Indians would prefer to migrate for their jobs. Another reason is bilateral disputes especially related to trade.

The 2+2 dialogue could be a game-changer for India as the major agendas will include Pakistan and China; especially the CPEC [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor] will be the focal point of discussion for the Indian side, as it is violating both India's defence and foreign policy.

Inspired by the India-Japan 2+2 dialogue, this will help both India and the US in containing China in the Pacific. However, India has to play wisely, as the US will certainly come up with an agenda to make aggressive moves against India's two major allies, Russia and Iran. Here India needs to effectively dodge the Trump administration's policies on Chabahar and Russian weapons purchases.



Sputnik: How could the resumption of anti-Iranian sanctions by the Trump administration affect India-Iran relations? Is it possible, in your opinion, that India will succumb to Washington's pressure and stop cooperating with Iran? Could it hurt New Delhi's national interests?

Amrita Dhillon: Yesterday's announcement by India's oil minister highlighting Iran as the second-biggest oil supplier to Indian state refiners between April and June is the befitting reply to the Trump administration's trade-dominating policies. Iran is India's all-weather ally in Central Asia and keeping an eye on Pakistan, India will never succumb to Washington's pressure and will continue cooperating with Iran. Chabahar port cooperation is one of India's key strategic interests to maintain the balance of geopolitics in the region. New Delhi will never kneel down there.

Sputnik: What's your take on Washington's displeasure with Indian-Russian defence cooperation? Will the US subject India to sanctions over its expected purchase of the S-400 defence system, in your opinion?

Amrita Dhillon: The anti-Iranian rhetoric obscures the US's need for an alternate route to Afghanistan and CARs [Central Asian Republics] to reduce dependency on Pakistan. While their talk with Uzbeks is ongoing, Chahbahar does provide a viable alternative.

Similarly, they realize that the countries they now need in the Indo-Pacific to counter China have long sourced weapons and equipment from the USSR/Russia.

The Kremlin is the largest supplier of military hardware to India and an all-weather strategic partner. Souring relations and giving an upper hand to the US due to CAATSA (Countering America's Adversary through Sanctions Act) with Iran and Russia is unrealistic for India.

The US has shown regular inconsistencies in its policies in the last few years. The advancement of the S-400 deal with Russia is symbolic of the fact that India's top priority lies in its national interest.

I do not observe any alteration in the continued sovereign foreign policy of India. It cannot be held hostage by the dominating policies of any major power. India has maintained good relations with most nations affected by the shift in the US's policies and will be able to continue the same with all of them including the US with waivers/concessions on CAATSA or any other similar dominating methodology.

America would need to do some fine balancing as it cannot go it alone.

India's sovereign foreign policy and national interests cannot be held hostage by the dominating strategy of any major power, Amrita Dhillon, Founding Editor of The Kootneeti, in an interview with Sputnik, discuss on Washington's attempts to exert pressure on India in regard to its cooperation with Russia and Iran.



BOLLYWOOD DAZZLES AND CHINA AWAKES TO INDIA

TOM MCGREGOR
COMMENTATOR
CCTV- CHINA

Is it time for the emergence of India as a much more powerful nation with deep influence in global affairs, international economy and demonstrating a strong diplomatic and military presence for Asia and the rest of the world? By taking a closer look at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his efforts to establish a 'Mighty India,' one can conclude that Delhi appears poised to stand tall on the world's stage.

But is India ready for showtime or will Indian glory fade as it has done so many times before when there had been a new change of governments, corruption grew more rampant or other unexpected challenges had come into play? Although India remains in flux, there's one element that provides eternal hope to the Indian spirit.

The glitz, glamour and all that dazzles in Bollywood, home base for India's film industry, has continued to shine brightly and has captured the hearts of Indians by producing over 2,000 movies annually. In earlier generations, Bollywood focused on films that were filled with actors and actresses singing and danc

ing while wearing colourful traditional Indian wardrobes, but it has evolved by producing gritty action-packed and crime-themed movies.

Yet the evolution continued as Bollywood produces films depicting real-to-life drama that hit audiences with an emotional impact. The films, known as Hindi, highlight a striking social message, which inspires viewers to reflect more on current societal conditions.

The new trend in Bollywood for powerful story-lines and tear-jerking acting hold a strong appeal for many Chinese, who are flocking to watch such films. Last summer, the movie 'Dangal' had grossed over US\$194 million after its first two months of release in China's box office.

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan has a loyal fanbase in the country, who can lay claim to having millions of followers on China's Social Media sites, such as Sina Weibo. He stays in touch with them by embarking on annual publicity tours in the country every year since 2015. The Chinese have been dubbed him, "Uncle Aamir."

Aamir Khan's soaring popularity in China that speaks volumes as a major diplomatic achievement in world affairs. The two great nations in Asia – China and India – have long remained at odds as the geopolitical and economic rivals have been seeking greater influence over the continent and the world at large. In recent decades, Beijing appears to have surpassed Delhi in the international power play games.

China's imminent rise to glory began with the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping announcing a reform and opening up policy in 1979 to spark new momentum for the economy ushering in free-market reforms and welcoming a wave of FDI (foreign direct investments) to encourage the Chinese to try to get rich.

Meanwhile, India, a neighbour to China, has not enjoyed similar success in its economy in the past four decades. But PM Modi is taking the right steps to place India on the path to a stronger and richer nation. And in regards to soft power, a country promoting its culture to support international dialogue and exchanges, India has often been more successful than China.

A number of factors are at play here. India supports democracy, greater human rights and individual liberties for its citizens, while China seems more concerned with social and political stability.

But what makes India stand out is its film industry. Bollywood has depicted Indian culture and not afraid to shine a light on the dark side of its people as well, which explains why action films with plots about crimes and corruption demonstrate how Indian society is adapting to rapid industrialization and modernization.

Urban developments do bring more wealth to a country, but along with it comes deeper societal ills, such as higher crime rates, break up of traditional family values and other disruptions.

Accordingly, Bollywood has set the tone for helping audiences better understand the fast-paced changes in India's contemporary society, but every Bollywood film has a happy ending, which gives hope to one and all.

Bollywood appeals to the Chinese since Indian film-makers are keeping it real about our world, but they show how there's still light at the end of every tunnel. When the Chinese watch a Bollywood flick they wake up to the harsh realities of life but come to terms with that when there's a happy ending.

Bollywood's rising success in China's box office will likely result in improved bilateral Sino-Indian relations as well. When a fierce border standoff had ensued on the Indian Sikkim-China's Tibet Autonomous Region border last summer, rumours were swirling that both the Chinese and Indian armies were preparing for an imminent war, while diplomatic ties were crumbling to dangerous levels.

Nonetheless, Aamir Khan released his film 'Dangal' around the same time and scored smashing records in China's Box Office. Suddenly, the Chinese stopped worrying about border issues and showed their love for a Bollywood superstar.



QUALCOMM-NXP DEAL SCRAPPED; CHINA TRYING TO SHRUG OFF THE BLAME

Talks of an increase in tensions between Washington and Beijing amplified amidst a trade-standoff that has cast a shadow over the relations between the United States of America and China.

The company, Qualcomm, which is based in the US abandoned the world's would-be largest semiconductor sector takeover when a set deadline passed without the deal-winning China's approval. Qualcomm's NXP semiconductor takeover would have listed at \$44 billion. In a statement released by China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), it was said that the proposals presented by the firms to work out Chinese antitrust trepidations were insufficient. Nevertheless, they hope to continue communicating with Qualcomm. The two companies have announced major share buybacks and Qualcomm has already paid a \$2 billion break fee to NXP. Most likely, however, this move comes too late for a resurrection of this deal.

Mr Andrew Gilholm, director of analysis for China and North Asia at consultancy Control Risks said, "Coming a day after the deadline, my guess is the SAMR statement is meant to counter perceptions the deal approval process was politicized, not to revive it. Of course, this conflicts with the view among many people following the deal that the U.S.-China situation had become the main obstacle, not the competition implications." China attempted to avoid blame after its regulators failed to go through with what would have been the largest chip acquisition in our history. "This is very classic Beijing strategy," said Isaac Stone Fish, a senior fellow at the Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations. "It gives them somewhat plausible deniability when they're having this conversation. They could say, oh yeah, we didn't have enough information from Qualcomm." This move might also, to some extent, be a show of economic power by Beijing after Donald Trump's ideas on putting tariffs on all Chinese goods came to light last week.

Of course, the concerns about China's ascendancy in the world market further fuelled this trade dispute between the world's top two economies.

BY THE KOOTNEETI TEAM

RUSSIA–TURKEY RELATIONS NEED A STRONGER FOUNDATION

DR ANDREY KORTUNOV
DIRECTOR GENERAL
RIAC

Relations between Russia and Turkey have always been and will always be a controversial subject. Even over the last couple of years, this relationship experienced dramatic ups and downs, sudden U-turns from cooperation to confrontation and back to cooperation.

First, relations between Moscow and Ankara will remain important for both sides. Russia and Turkey are neighbors with extensive and diverse bilateral ties — including trade and investments, energy and construction, as well as a vibrant social, humanitarian and cultural interaction.

Second, there will always be a mixture of common, parallel, overlapping and colliding interests driving Moscow and Ankara in dealing with each other.

Third, various external players — both global powers (the European Union, NATO, and the United States) and regional actors (Iran, Gulf States, and Israel) will continue to have a profound impact on Russia–Turkey relations.

Both sides should be interested in more stable, more predictable and less adversarial Russia–Turkey relations. Let's face it: there will be no real trust between Russia and Turkey until we deal together with the most sensitive, the most divisive, and the most unpleasant issues dividing us.

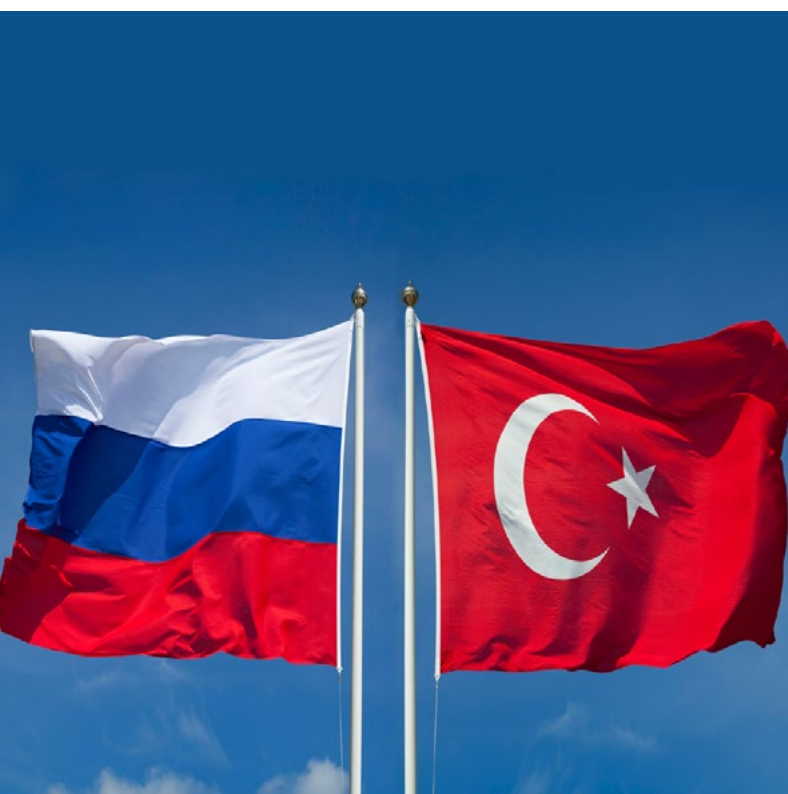
As the recent history demonstrated, the “agree to disagree” approach is not good enough to move the relationship ahead. Thinking strategically, one can even imagine a more important role for Turkey as a country that might be best suited to facilitate a renewal of the currently nearly dormant NATO–Russian Council.

Russia is not an alternative to Turkey's cooperation with the European Union; neither Turkey is a substitute for Russia working harder to resolve its problems with the United States and Europe. We need Russia–Turkey relationship to acquire a strategic depth of its own.

Relations between Russia and Turkey have always been and will always be a controversial subject. For both countries, this is a very special relationship; it contains a lot of emotions, mythology, prejudices, uneasy legacies of the past, and sometimes unrealistic hopes for the future. The glass remains half-full or half-empty, depending on how you look at it and on whether you are trying to fill it or to drain it.

Even over the last couple of years, this relationship experienced dramatic ups and downs, sudden U-turns from cooperation to confrontation and back to cooperation. The 2015 — 2016 crisis, albeit a short one, demonstrated both the fragility and the resilience of this unique set of connections linking the two countries. No doubt, in years to come we will see more of surprising developments in Russia–Turkey relations that we cannot possibly predict today. Still, there are a number of features of this relationship, which are likely to remain constant in the foreseeable future.

First, relations between Moscow and Ankara will remain important for both sides. Russia and Turkey are neighbors with extensive and diverse bilateral ties — including trade and investments, energy and construction, as well as a vibrant social, humanitarian and cultural interaction. Moreover, they share vast common neighborhood; for both countries, this neighborhood presents tempting opportunities and serious challenges at the same time. Both countries claim a special Eurasian status in world politics that puts them in a league of their own, distinguishing Russia and Turkey from other purely European or Asian states. Therefore, it is hard to imagine the two powers drifting too far away from each other and losing interest in the bilateral relationship.



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Second, there will always be a mixture of common, parallel, overlapping, and colliding interests driving Moscow and Ankara in dealing with each other. Elements of cooperation and competition (hopefully, not direct confrontation) will be blended by politicians into a single sweet and sour cocktail and offered to the Russian and Turkish public. We will continue to live with numerous paradoxes. For instance, Turkey is a NATO member, but it plans to purchase the most advanced Russian air defense systems (S-400). The two countries actively cooperate on the ground in Syria, but they have very different attitudes to the current Syrian leadership in Damascus. Russians and Turks are equally interested in stability in the South Caucasus but quite often, unfortunately, they find themselves on the opposite sides of the barricades in the region.

Third, various external players — both global powers (the European Union, NATO, and the United States) and regional actors (Iran, Gulf States, and Israel) will continue to have a profound impact on Russia–Turkey relations. External players can push Moscow and Ankara closer to each other, but they can also push Russians and Turks apart by offering either of them alternative options for strategic, political and economic cooperation. The Russia–Turkey cooperation will also rely on such independent variables as the rise of international terrorism, fluctuations of energy prices, volatility of the global economic and financial system and, more generally, on the fundamentals of the emerging world order.

Both sides should be interested in more stable, more predictable and less adversarial Russia–Turkey relations. It is particularly important today, when the international system at large is becoming less stable and less predictable. Besides, both Russia and Turkey face enormous challenges of economic, social and political modernization in a less than perfect external environment; it would be stupid to add to existing lists of their foreign policy problems a new round of Russia–Turkey confrontation.

So, is it possible to prevent colliding interests from curbing joint work on common problems? What can we do to reduce the risks of potential future crises between Moscow and Ankara? How can we mitigate negative impacts of external factors on our bilateral cooperation?

The immediate answer to these questions is clear — above all, we need to enhance our lines of communication. This is not about preparing the next Erdogan–Putin meeting, nor about generating new technical proposals for the Russian–Turkish Intergovernmental Commission. This is not about mil-to-mil contacts on the ground in Syria. The enhancement of communication should bring it far beyond serving operational needs of political leaders.

Let's face it: there will be no real trust between Russia and Turkey until we deal together with the most sensitive, the most divisive, and the most unpleasant issues dividing us. These issues include mutual historical grievances, existing suspicions about one side allegedly supporting subversive and even terrorist groups on the territory of the other side, concerns that the partner country might abruptly reconsider its commitments to cooperation, should it get a better deal from a third party, and so on. If they cannot discuss these issues at the official level today, one should start with a track two format providing for informal expert dialogues.

Even more important would be not to limit such dialogues to articulating existing disagreements and conflicting narratives, but to identify ways, in which disagreements can be bridged, and narratives reconciled. As the recent history demonstrated, the “agree to disagree” approach is not good enough to move the relationship ahead. If resolving difficult problems does not seem possible now, let us at least try to stabilize areas of potential conflict. For instance, Russia and Turkey will continue to disagree on the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, they can exercise their respective influence on both sides of the conflict in order to prevent another outbreak of military hostilities and further losses of human lives. Likewise, Moscow and Ankara are not likely to come to a common stance on Crimea. However, Turkey can play an important positive role in preventing any further cultural and civic alienation of the Crimean Tatar population in the peninsula.

Sometimes, what we routinely perceive as a part of the problem might become a part of the solution. For example, the Turkey's membership in NATO is commonly regarded in Russia as an obstacle on the way to more productive security cooperation with Ankara. Counterintuitively, it is exactly the Turkish membership, which can help to reduce risks of dangerous incidents in the Black Sea. These risks started growing in 2014, when both Russia and NATO significantly increased their naval presence here and engaged themselves into ever more frequent naval exercises. Why doesn't Ankara take an initiative in promoting more confidence-building measures between Russia and NATO in the Black Sea? Thinking strategically, one can even imagine a more important role for Turkey as a country that might be best suited to facilitate a renewal of the currently nearly dormant NATO–Russian Council.

It is also important to make sure that cooperation between Russia and Turkey is not regarded by either side as the “second best option” when the “first best option” is not available for this or that reason. Russia is not an alternative to Turkey's cooperation with the European Union; neither Turkey is a substitute for Russia working harder to resolve its problems with the United States and Europe. Situational alliances based on shared frustrations and common complexes of inferiority usually do not last. We need Russia–Turkey relationship to acquire a strategic depth of its own. To quote Saint Augustine, “the higher our structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation”.





"CREDIBLE BUT NOT FREE AND FAIR?": THE MNANGAGWA VICTORY

RAYAN BHATTACHARYA
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In what has been dubbed as a historic yet harmonized election, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the leader of the ruling Zanu-PF party, has come out victorious in the fiercely contested presidential elections in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announced early on Friday that Mnangagwa had received over 2.6 million votes, which meant 50.8% of the total 4.8 million that were cast. The leader of the opposing Movement for Democratic Change party – Nelson Chamisa won about 44.3% of the votes, but Mnangagwa successfully won more than 50% of the votes and hence avoided a runoff vote.

Mnangagwa was a close ally of Robert Mugabe, the infamous autocrat who ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years who was ousted from his Presidency by the army over nine months ago and faced action for the atrocities committed under his rule. However, the current election has not been controversy-free either. Severe human right concerns were raised when over six people were killed by security forces in a post-election demonstration on the 1st of August. Human Rights Watch released reports suggesting that the security forces in Zimbabwe are abusive as ever, lashing out with "heavy-handed" responses to the protest, with even live ammunition being fired.

The chair of the ZEC, Priscilla Chigumba, on the other hand, urged the country to move forward with the hopeful spirit of the election, beyond the "blemishes" of the violence the country witnessed on Wednesday. Mnangagwa via his Twitter account reached out to his followers and conveyed that he was "humbled" by the election results and called upon the people of Zimbabwe to join hands in peace, unity and love to build a new Zimbabwe.

However, this optimism was not shared by Chamisa, who on Friday morning showed his disapproval for the election results by calling them "fake" and called upon the Election Commission to release proper and verified numbers. He also took to Twitter to express his anguish by writing about the level of opaqueness, moral decay and truth deficiency in the system. The MDC had expressed their intentions to not accept the voting results even before they were announced. Moments before they were actually announced, Morgan Komichi, the MDC's Chairman made a statement on national television that the results that were about to be announced were "fraudulent" and would be challenged in court.

The capital city of Harare was calm on the morning the results were released. Many citizens were seen heading



towards their workplaces as the army slowly withdrew from the city. The police presence, however, was maintained with officers being armed with water cannons in case any further protests broke out. Multiple MDC supporters stopped the protests citing the reason that they had done so only to maintain the peace and calm in the city and still did not approve of the results.

Yet, there was an air of passive-aggressive agenda among the general public regarding their opinions about the election results. Many were of the opinion that protesting would not help deliver justice to the alleged unfairness of the elections. Hazel Moyo, a local supermarket cashier felt that change was needed but would come by only after waiting.

Even international observers, such as Professor Stephen Chan, from the University of London, were of the opinion that while the results were credible, the process leading up to it were not completely "free and fair". However, certain optimists from the opposing parties felt that the narrow win Mnangagwa had got was a sign that the opposition is still strong and will have a good chance the next election. With a country with a history of autocratic tendencies, whether the optimism of the opposition shall materialize in the real world is a question too far-fetched to be answered at the moment.

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VIOLENCE OVER MALI'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2018: CISSE EXPECTS RUN-OFF



Mali's Presidential Election has started and the opposition party standing against President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, SoumailaCisse ensured that the poll would be a run-off between the two parties. SoumailaCisse is representing the Union for the Republic and Democracy, who had also served as the Finance Minister in 1993. However, the entire situation of the polls didn't go well when some violent incidents halted the process in some of the country's voting polls. This year's Presidential election stands crucial for Mali as Ibrahim Boubacar Keita had sought the second term in office facing strong opposition from SoumailaCisse who had been trying to defeat his opposition by assuring the people of Mali with 'change' and a 'new hope', which has emerged as the party's top priority for the Presidential Election 2018.

But violence marred over the Presidential election and when the counting was underway. The government officials said that no ballots were cast at some 716 polling stations representing some 3% of the country's total population. The news also mentioned that these polling stations were located at the Northern and central region of Mali and have been under Islamic extremism and attacks for some time now. Election officials were beaten up, ballot boxes were burned down and election supervisors were not allowed to enter the booths and blocked by the armed groups. The voting process was very slow in the capital city of Bamako, and the turnout was even less.

Security was kept amongst the top priority of the whole election from all the parties that are up for contestation. The world is expecting for a positive result for Mali and hopes that the current unrest caused by the extremist group comes to an end and that the country can move toward its path of development without any obstacle.

BY THE KOOTNEETI TEAM

A close-up portrait of Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, wearing glasses and a dark suit. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression.

'DEATH OF DEMOCRACY'

OBSERVERS CALL CAMBODIA ELECTIONS SHAM

ABDULLAH
ASSOCIAE CONTENT WRITER
THE KOOTNEETI

Prime Minister Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) said on Monday it had won all 125 parliamentary seats up for grabs in a general election a day earlier that critics said was neither free nor fair.

Cambodia woke to another chapter of rule by strongman Hun Sen a day after an election that was heavily criticised by rights groups, the United States and other Western countries.

"The CPP won 77.5 percent of the votes and won all the parliamentary seats," CPP spokesman Sok Eysan told Reuters by telephone. "The other parties won no seats."

The White House said it would consider steps, including an expansion of visa restrictions placed on some Cambodian government members, in response to "flawed elections" in which there was no significant challenger to Hun Sen.

Critics say the election was a backward step for democracy in Cambodia following the dissolution last year of the main opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) and the jailing of its leader, Kem Sokha, on treason charges.

Former CNRP president Sam Rainsy, who lives in exile, said the election was a "hollow" victory for Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge commander who has ruled Cambodia for nearly 33 years.

The United States has imposed visa curbs on some Cambodian government members over a crackdown on critics and levied sanctions in June on a high-ranking official close to Hun Sen.

The European Union has threatened Cambodia with economic sanctions.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement Sunday's vote "failed to represent the will of the Cambodian people".

"The United States will consider additional steps to respond to the elections and other recent setbacks to democracy and human rights in Cambodia, including a significant expansion of the visa restrictions announced on December 6, 2017," Sanders said.

Government spokesman Phay Siphon said the White House statement was an attempt to intimidate Cambodia.

"This is against the Cambodians who went to vote to decide their own fate," Phay Siphon told news agency Reuters.

Even as the West criticised the process, Hun Sen still has one important ally, China, which offered warm congratulations for a smooth election.

China has poured billions of dollars in development assistance and loans into Cambodia through bilateral frameworks and its Belt and Road initiative to build a new Silk Road.

"I believe that the Cambodian parliament election is an internal matter for Cambodia," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a daily news briefing in Beijing on Monday.

"We hope that the international community can provide constructive help for Cambodia to remain stable and achieve development."

The CNRP acalled on the international community to reject the result of the election. "29 July 2018 marked the death of democracy in Cambodia, a dark new day in recent history," said CNRP vice president Mu Sochua. "The result announced by the CPP and the National Election Committee must be fully rejected by the international community."

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