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SVI Foresight

SVI Foresight is a monthly electronic journal. It has a multi-disciplinary perspective highlighting contemporary strategic and security studies. The Journal is envisioned to be a collection of policy-oriented articles written by the SVI Research Officers, Visiting Faculty, and professional experts. The objective is to provide the readership with a concise all-around and real-time policy-oriented discourse on contemporary strategic regional and international developments, highlighting their relevance to Pakistan.

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Editor's Note

SVI-Foresight for the month of July is a mix of analytical contributions on an array of contemporary national security and strategic developments. The NTI 2023 report lauds Pakistan for significant improvements in its nuclear security measures. As the world faces increasing complexities in nuclear security, Pakistan's progress serves as an exemplar for other nations to emulate, bringing us closer to a safer and more secure global future. Moreover, in the nuclear peaceful domain, Pakistan is excelling and is contributing much to the energy mix of the country. In the recent agreement with China, CNNC will build one-million-kilowatt-class with HPR 1000 technology at Chashma Nuclear power plant which is already hosting four nuclear power plants of the same cadre. will further enhance Pakistan's energy security, promote economic development, and improve the well-being of the local people This project has ensured the economic cooperation between both countries while focusing on cheap energy alternatives.

Covering various contemporary topics of strategic importance, it offers opinion-based short commentaries on a number of issues including the Prime Minister Modi visit of US which resulted in a number of landmark technology deals between the two states, both in the civil and defense domains, and its repercussions on Pakistan. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has been analyzed and how Pakistan tends to entail the strategic balance in the great power rivalry.

It is hoped that this issue will help readers in staying updated with the current strategic environment and they will find the analyses useful. The *SVI Foresight* team invites and highly encourages contributions from the security and strategic community in the form of opinion-based short commentaries on contemporary political, security, nuclear, and strategic issues. Any suggestions for further improvements are welcome. Please see [here](#) the copy of the *SVI Foresight* electronic journal. You can find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and can also access the [SVI website](#).

Amber Afreen Abid
Editor, SVI Foresight

Advancing Nuclear Security: Global Challenges and Pakistan's Progress

Sher Bano

For over two decades, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), an international nonprofit security organization, has been steadfast in its mission to mitigate nuclear threats. In their latest assessment, the Nuclear Security Index lauds Pakistan for significant improvements in its nuclear security measures.

Regarding Pakistan's specific scores, it received a high score of 100 in Domestic Commitments and Capacity, indicating robust commitments and capabilities in this area. In Security and Control Measures, it achieved a score of 57, while in Global Norms, it obtained a score of 44. However, in the category of Quantities and Sites, Pakistan received a score of 19. In terms of the security of its nuclear facilities, Pakistan is ranked at an impressive 32, standing alongside prominent players like Kremlin and TelAviv, and even outshining New Delhi, Tehran, and Mexico among the 47 nations on the list.

Pakistan has gained 3 points, achieving a total score of 49, while India's score remains unchanged at 40. This improvement in

Pakistan's material security score reflects the nation's commitment to bolstering safeguards concerning its weapons-usable nuclear materials and facilities. By outperforming India in this aspect, Pakistan showcases its dedication to mitigating potential risks and ensuring the safety and security of its nuclear assets. Moreover, Pakistan's ranking above India in the security of facilities category holds additional significance. This means that Pakistan has made notable progress in ensuring the protection and resiliency of its nuclear facilities, surpassing not only India but also other countries like Iran, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Despite these encouraging advancements, the NTI has expressed deep concerns over the deteriorating global nuclear security situation compared to previous years. Alarming trends have been observed in several countries, including Pakistan, France, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Russia, and the UK, where there has been an increase in stocks of nuclear materials. This distressing trend coincides with a worrisome rise in overall stockpiles of weapons-usable nuclear materials, posing a significant threat to global security. The NTI Index explicitly points out that countries and

regions with the greatest responsibility for protecting the world from catastrophic nuclear terrorism are, in the Index's terms, "derelict in their duty."

The 2023 NTI Nuclear Security Index emphasizes the need for immediate measures to cap and reduce existing plutonium inventories. Promoting non-weapons-usable alternatives to plutonium and avoiding nuclear energy technologies involving a plutonium fuel cycle are crucial steps to mitigate potential threats. India possesses excessive plutonium that could be used for weapon development. It has raised serious concerns not only within the region but also on the global stage. It underscores the importance of responsible nuclear stewardship and adherence to non-proliferation norms by all nuclear-armed states.

The report also highlights the lack of progress in enhancing security culture and preventing insider threats since 2020. Governments and nuclear operators are urged to adopt a comprehensive approach to effectively identify and mitigate insider threats, necessitating strengthened information sharing and collaboration between regulators, intelligence organizations, law enforcement, industry, and non-governmental organizations.

While the 2023 NTI Index reveals distressing trends, it also sheds light on some positive developments. Global norms against civilian use of highly enriched uranium are gradually solidifying, showcasing the potential for progress over time. These positive aspects demonstrate that concerted efforts and international cooperation can yield significant results in enhancing nuclear security.

Amidst escalating threats to nuclear security, NTI Co-Chair and CEO Ernest J. Moniz issues a compelling call to action. He urges governments, international institutions, industry stakeholders, and civil society to unite with visionary leadership to fortify the global nuclear security architecture. Preventing the unwinding of hard-fought progress on nuclear security is not just a responsibility but an obligation for leaders worldwide. The collaboration between the NTI and Economist Impact in developing the Nuclear Security Index underscores its significance as a premier resource and tool for tracking progress on global nuclear and radiological security. However, the report's findings necessitate a deeper commitment from all stakeholders to address the identified challenges effectively.

Nonetheless, Islamabad remains steadfastly committed to the objective of nuclear

security and has been actively engaging with the international community to promote nuclear safety. Pakistan's well-developed nuclear infrastructure, supported by various foreign nations, strengthens its efforts toward a secure nuclear landscape. Commendably, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has praised Pakistan's safety standards, acknowledging the country's deployment of state-of-the-art technological solutions and proactive stance on information sharing within the nuclear domain. As the world faces increasing complexities in nuclear security, Pakistan's progress serves as an exemplar for other nations to emulate, bringing us closer to a safer and more secure global future.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/21072023-advancing-nuclear-security-global-challenges-and-pakistans-progress-oped/>

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Towards Peaceful Use of Nuclear Technology; Chashma-5 (C-5) and Pakistan-China Nuclear Cooperation

Ayesha Sikandar

Recently, Pakistan received a much-needed breath of fresh air amidst its ongoing energy crisis with the signing of a groundbreaking \$4.8 billion nuclear power plant deal with China. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the China National Nuclear Cooperation (CNNC) and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) on June 20, 2023 at central city of Chashma, also considered as the birthplace of Pakistan-China civil nuclear cooperation.

As per this agreement, CNNC will build one-million-kilowatt-class with HPR 1000 technology at Chashma Nuclear power plant which is already hosting four nuclear power plants of the same cadre. HPR1000 is a third generation nuclear technology exclusively innovated and developed by China comprising of cutting-edge safety standards practiced at international level. This development is significant in China-Pakistan relations as it reinforces the notion of “unparalleled friendship” between the both countries. While Pakistan is seeking ways to overcome its energy shortages amid growing

economic crisis, Beijing is securing Pakistan as its strategic ally against India under its Balancing strategy in Asian region.

China-Pakistan cooperation on civilian use of nuclear energy dates back to late 1970s soon after the termination of Canadian assistance over civilian nuclear programme. This step by Canadian government was mainly due to new Delhi’s nuclear explosion of 1974 which violated the Full-Scale safeguards of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). India’s reluctance to follow these safeguards was immediately followed by Islamabad which compelled Canada to halt its civil nuclear cooperation with both the countries.

The first agreement on sharing of civil nuclear technology was signed by Pakistan and China in September, 1986. Under this agreement China was to share the power reactors alongside nuclear related goods and services as well as technical support for uranium enrichment. Soon after signing this agreement, China provided Pakistan with Qinshan-1 which was developed domestically by China to meet its energy and power needs during 1970s. The construction of Chashma Nuclear Power Plant-1 (C-1) started during 1990s and became operational in 2001 with a yield of around 300MW. The C-1 was enhanced to develop CHASNUPP-2

with an added yield of 5MW and it started functioning in 2011.

In the subsequent phase, development of C-3 and C-4 was announced in 2008 which faced a backlash from International community. C-1 and C-2 were signed between China and Pakistan before China became member of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2004. The members of NSG objected China's agreement with Pakistan on sharing nuclear technology to which China argued that the third and fourth unit of Chashma are grandfathered in the same way as its predecessors with no significant changes. C-3 and C-4 became effective in 2016 and 2017 respectively with a net capacity of 327MW each. The ongoing China and Pakistan's nuclear cooperation demonstrates the commitment of both states in achieving mutual developmental goals while adhering to the IAEA safeguards. Additionally, this cooperation clearly depicts a change in the perspective of Pakistan regarding use of nuclear technology as paramount significance has been attached to the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes rather than engaging itself into a nuclear arms race in the south Asian region.

The agreement on the construction of Hualong one Reactor as Chashma Unit-5 was to be signed during 2017 between CNNC and

PAEC but experienced some delays due to administrative as well as political issues. In June 2023, the agreement to develop a 1200MW nuclear power plant was signed with its expected completion around 2029. Project was inaugurated officially on 14th July, 2023 in Mianwali located in Punjab, Pakistan. Chairman of China Nuclear Cooperation Pang Chunxue remarked that civil nuclear cooperation between China and Pakistan has become integral part of "all-weather" strategic partnership between both countries.

CNNC described this deal as "milestone" in bi-lateral relations and said that this project "will further enhance Pakistan's energy security, promote economic development, and improve the well-being of the local people. It also has significant importance in building a closer China-Pakistan partnership with a shared future in the new era". Pakistan has received a discount of \$100 million on this project from Chinese side which reflected a sense of sincerity between both partners. C-5 has become the third facility to feature HPR 1000 technology (or pressurized water reactor technology) in Pakistan and becoming 7th nuclear power plant exported from China to Pakistan.

Pakistan relies heavily on import of fuel to meet its energy needs to which nuclear

energy is a viable alternative. It is also environment friendly with zero carbon emissions and “economically competitive”. Hualong one reactor has many advantages like enhanced safety measures with passive cooling mechanisms. The reactor comes with sophisticated control systems alongside upgraded containment structures. All these features increase the resilience of this reactor against any possible accidents. As per the statements disseminated by the officials, this reactor has been designed to integrate cutting-edge safety measures and a “foolproof security system”. These advanced features have been meticulously integrated to ensure the utmost safety and security, offering a high level of confidence in its operations.

This project has ensured the economic cooperation between both countries while focusing on cheap energy alternatives. Pakistan’s energy input is highly relying on the non-renewable energy resources like coal which are also inducing climate change. Shifting from fossil fuels towards nuclear

technology is not only a clean alternative but will prove to be cost-effective on already crumbling economy. Nuclear Power Plants (NNPs) are saving billions of dollars required to produce energy through other sources. During fiscal year 2022 alone, Pakistan saved \$3.035 billion with respect to oil, \$2.207 billion on Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) and \$1.586 billion with reference to coal. The shift from carbon based energy resources towards nuclear energy is a savior for already crumbling economy of Pakistan. By 2030, Pakistan aims to produce 8,800MWe through nuclear resources to meet its energy needs under government’s Energy Security Plan. The agreement on C-5 has also opened gates for future cooperation between China and Pakistan while ensuring mutual benefits and win-win cooperation.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/02082023-towards-peaceful-use-of-nuclear-technology-chashma-5-c-5-and-pakistan-china-nuclear-cooperation-oped/>

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Growing India-US Technology Collaboration: Implications for Pakistan

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States was historic for a number of reasons. Not only did the U.S. and India affirm themselves as being "among the closest partners in the world," but a number of landmark technology-related deals were announced through their joint statement on June 22. The deals covered nearly all technological domains: cyberspace, space, quantum computing, artificial intelligence (AI), and more.

This partnership did not simply materialize overnight; it was an amalgamation of decades of growing technology collaboration between the two states. However, the number of deals signed and the intent behind them signal the beginning of a new chapter in the India-U.S. relationship. The nature of these deals largely focused on improving India's indigenous technological capabilities, as well as its global stature.

Although not targeted directly toward Pakistan, the growing India-U.S. technology collaboration will certainly have a number of implications for India's western neighbor, and will adversely affect South Asian strategic stability.

India-U.S. Technology Cooperation

During Modi's visit, a number of landmark technology deals were announced between the United States and India, both in the civil and defense domains. These deals followed in the spirit of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) signed between the National Security Councils of both states in January 2023, which aims to "elevate and expand their strategic technology partnership and defense industrial cooperation."

Under the theme "powering a next generation defense partnership," three major deals were announced. The first was an MoU signed between General Electric (GE) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the manufacture of GE F-414 jet engines in India, for the HAL Light Combat Aircraft Mk 2. Second, an estimated \$3 billion deal was announced for India to procure General Atomics MQ-9B High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which would also be assembled in India. Third, and perhaps most significant, was the India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X), which would facilitate joint defense technology innovation, and co-production of advanced defense technology between the respective industries of the two countries.

Besides these defense deals, India-U.S. technology cooperation in the civil domain was also significant, with most of these deals also having dual-use prospects. In terms of U.S.-India space cooperation, both the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) agreed to develop a strategic framework for human spaceflight cooperation by 2023. India also joined the U.S.-led Artemis Accords, through which the United States hopes to explore the moon and beyond. An MoU was also signed on the Semiconductor Supply Chain and Innovation Partnership, through which Micron Technology, Inc. agreed to invest up to \$825 million to build a new semiconductor assembly and test facility in India. Several other deals were signed as well, ranging from AI to quantum technology, cyberspace, and more.

Overall, the India-U.S. growing technology collaboration paints a clear picture of the future of bilateral relations. With the United States seeing India as a counterweight to China, while simultaneously aiming to decouple from China, U.S. investment in India's indigenous technological capabilities will only grow. These technology deals also give a clear indication of how the U.S. now

views India, as an irreplaceable strategic partner, from the “seas to the stars.”

Implications for Pakistan and Recommendations

It is pertinent to note that the technology cooperation taking place between the United States and India is targeted at China. However, it will have implications for Pakistan considering the tense history of both countries, and the conventional as well as technological disparity between India and Pakistan. In this context, the transfer of cutting-edge technologies will not only threaten the national security of Pakistan but also destabilize the already volatile South Asian region.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, responding to the media queries on India-U.S. joint statement, stated: “Pakistan is also deeply concerned over the planned transfer of advanced military technologies to India. Such steps are accentuating military imbalance in the region and undermining strategic stability. They remain unhelpful in achieving the objective of a durable peace in South Asia.”

The proponents of the Revolution in Military Affairs argue that the risk of escalation is manageable due to technology. Likewise, in the case of the U.S. transfers of cutting-edge

technology to India, New Delhi is likely to believe that its risk is manageable. Keeping this in view, India might develop a false sense of security and go for another Balakot-type incident, sowing the seeds of conflict in the region.

Although the primary objective of this technology collaboration is to equip India to act as a counterweight to China, in the past India has been aggressive in its dealings with Pakistan. With the technology transfer bolstering India's capabilities, this assertiveness might further increase. This could potentially include deployment of MQ-9B drones. Washington likely envisioned the drones would be used in India's efforts to push back against China on their disputed border. However, media reports suggest that India will deploy the newly purchased U.S. Predator drones in areas near Pakistan as well.

Similarly, it is likely that New Delhi will direct other military procurements toward Pakistan. Thus the U.S. transfer of technology is likely to initiate an arms race in South Asia, ultimately compelling Pakistan to maintain balance vis-à-vis India. This collaboration will further burden Pakistan's already struggling economy.

Apart from this, the India-U.S. joint statement also mentioned terrorism, with specific reference to Pakistan. This signals that the United States is likely to shift its policy from mediation to ensure stability toward supporting New Delhi in times of crisis in future. This development might have an impact on future mediation efforts of the United States in managing escalation in South Asia, making the region more volatile.

Keeping in view the evolving situation, it is important that India and Pakistan work toward establishing confidence-building measures. Pakistan has already taken a positive step, as its foreign minister visited India for the first time in 12 years to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in early May. Establishing confidence-building measures between both states would ultimately lead to a decrease in the likelihood of conflict escalation.

It is also important that major powers like the United States should keep a balanced approach toward mediation, keeping in view the regional dynamics.

Finally, although Pakistan is not presently in the ideal position to indulge in an unwanted arms race, it is still important to initiate investment in the technological domain in

order to close the gap with India. Since most of the technologies being pursued in contemporary times are dual-use, it will be appropriate for Pakistan to invest in such technologies to reap the benefits in both the civil as well as military domains. For now, it is important for Pakistan to focus on developing conventional counter-tactics to be better prepared for emerging threats emanating from India.

<https://thediplomat.com/2023/07/growing-india-us-technology-collaboration-implications-for-pakistan/>

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Reflecting on US-India Strategic Partnership Following Modi's Visit

Komal Khan

The U.S.-India joint statement issued by the White House during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States outlines the high-level diplomatic engagement of India. It reflects areas of mutual interest, cooperation, and strategic goals, as well as specific commitments that entail with their interest-based strategic alignment and that both states would be bound to fulfill during their course of partnership. The United States and India have affirmed a collaborative mechanism of being among the closest partners in the world, and specifically not allies, to foster a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

The language of the joint statement, when analyzed, matters a lot as it differs significantly from the collaborative statements released by the U.S. and its allies, Australia, ROK, and Japan, given the same objective of preserving a rule-based Indo-Pacific order in the Indo-Pacific. The US-India relationship is characterized by a strategic focus on interoperability as partners, with a primary emphasis on issue-based collaboration, as in technology, space and

nuclear domains. While both countries work together to enhance capabilities and pursue common objectives, they do not have an integrated deterrence framework which the U.S. has prioritized in its strategy for its security partners in the Asia-Pacific. This distinct approach sets the U.S. policy towards India apart from its defense partners and allies in the region, as traditional alliances prioritize collective defense and integrated deterrence. Instead, the US-India partnership prioritizes issue-specific cooperation, particularly in advancing clean energy initiative to justify nuclear power plants deals, space exploration and technology sale. By capitalizing on bilateral strengths and priorities, this relationship carves out a specialized niche in the U.S. regional engagement, demonstrating a pragmatic and tailored approach to strategic cooperation.

The preamble of the statement concludes by featuring on 'development of human enterprise' as the focus of the partnership and the bonds of family and friends have been prioritized as their mode of carrying out the relationship. Notably, PM Modi's delegation was composed of the Indian business community and was publicized by the Indian business advocacy group, the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) to the American businessmen. Together, these

elements indicate a focus on the Indian economy, human resource, and the soft-power potential that can of benefit to American capitalists and as an alternate to China in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. Moreover, the emphasis on human rights, democracy, freedom, and rule of law indicates a commitment to creating an enabling environment for economic interests.

Interestingly, the reactors and fighter jet engines deal strategically supplements the American economy by effectively leveraging India's economic potential to establish a lucrative market. One of the reasons behind the India-U.S. nuclear deal was that the American nuclear industry was going bankrupt. Therefore, the U.S. considered India as an emerging market for power reactors. This provided India with an NSG waiver and a de-facto recognition of India's nuclear programme as a nuclear weapon state outside the NPT with none of the obligations of the NPT signatories. However, the co-production of advanced defense systems and India's clean energy market would be a significant add up to the Indian economy.

The U.S. strategic approach to partner with India aims at containing China's influence by leveraging India's soft power, economy, and technological capabilities. The focus lies in utilizing India's economic strength to bolster

its technological advancements, positioning it as a viable alternative to China in key sectors such as telecommunications, resilient supply chains, and global digital inclusion, particularly in the context of 5G/6G technologies. This strategic initiative aims to tap into India's soft power influence, leveraging its cultural and diplomatic assets to enhance its standing in the international arena. Similarly, India also seeks to position itself as a viable and attractive partner for global stakeholders, thereby presenting an alternative option to China. Strengthening India's capabilities in these areas enables it to offer competitive solutions and services, potentially attracting businesses and governments seeking to diversify their partnerships and reduce dependence on China.

Likewise, the space cooperation between India and the U.S. serves two distinct purposes. Firstly, for India, it aligns with its objective of bolstering its space economy. Secondly, for the United States, it serves the purpose of establishing proximity to China, while simultaneously strengthening India's already capable potential as a space power. The United States recognition of China's space capabilities as a threat to the U.S and NATO underscores the strategic significance of this cooperative partnership. The timing of

India signing the Artemis accords holds significance, as it presents a non-binding set of practical guidelines for space economy and lunar exploration. Herein, India stands to gain without bearing significant risks. Additionally, as space technology has historically been dual-use, the spillover effect into defense capabilities in space is expected to be substantial.

The reliability of the US-India relationship depends on India's alignment with and service to the U.S. interests. The characteristic of South Asia as a grey zone is already a concern for the U.S., leading to a cautious approach in collaboration with India to safeguard critical technology, defense, and nuclear power interests. The limitations of the Indo-U.S. partnership are evident in defense cooperation, with a focus on technological assembling rather than transfer, to retain US control over sensitive technologies. Overall, the US-India relationship operates within a cautious framework to safeguard mutual interests in critical domains.

Hence, the joint statement signifies a significant milestone in US-India relations, emphasizing a “give-and-take” framework. The partnership aims to leverage India's economic potential, human resources, and global diplomatic influence to benefit the US

economically and strategically, given India's proximity to China. While the statement indicates a shift towards an India-centric approach, it raises concerns about a potential arms race, and disruption in the region's status quo, leading to increased competition at regional level. Lastly, the joint statement also reflects a complex dynamic with broader implications for South Asia by exacerbating technological disparity in the region.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/28072023-reflecting-on-us-india-strategic-partnership-following-modis-visit-oped/>

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Ukraine's Counter-Offensive: Delayed Response?

Usman Haider

In the initial period of June 2023, Ukraine initiated its highly anticipated counter-offensive to reclaim its occupied territories of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions.

“The commencement of the offensive brought an end to a hiatus lasting several months, during which Ukraine was engaged in preparations for the offensive.”

The launch occurred after Ukraine acquired the required quantity of armaments from its allies. The new tranche of weapons included Storm Shadow long-range missiles, attack drones, Leopard main battle tanks, and Bradley armored vehicles. The ongoing conflict persists, with Ukrainian forces currently engaged in hostilities against Russian forces along a sprawling front line spanning approximately 1,000 kilometers. Nevertheless, the pace of the Ukrainian operation is currently proceeding at a relatively slow rate, as acknowledged by Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, who conceded that the operation's advancement has fallen short of initial expectations. This

viewpoint was recently reiterated by Ukrainian General Zaluzhny, who posited that the situation is not merely a spectacle, but rather necessitates an increased provision of supplies to expedite the pace of operations. Nevertheless, the primary goal of the counteroffensive is to systematically weaken the robustness of Russia's intricate fortification networks and forcefully ouster them from their fortified defensive positions. Currently, the operation in Ukraine has achieved only modest success due to the extensive fortification efforts undertaken by Russia over several months along the nearly 1000 km frontline spanning approximately 100,000 sq. km of the occupied territory.

It's too soon to assess the counteroffensive progress and the upcoming weeks will decide the fate of the offensive, once Ukraine will deploy all the foreign-trained 36,000 troops on the battlefield.

The assault force consists of 36,000 troops is organized into nine brigades and received training from the United States and its allies. It was not part of the preliminary phase of the Counteroffensive. Moreover, the Ukrainian administration has high expectations for these brigades, as they anticipate these units to adopt the American approach to warfare and eventually succeed in their primary mission of reclaiming their occupied regions.

This approach is characterized by the use of combined arms, and synchronized tactics, led by a decentralized command structure. The aforementioned approach according to Ukrainian is widely more advantageous compared to the Russian approach, which is distinguished by a highly centralized command structure.

Besides, air superiority and close air support are critical to achieve success on the battlefield but the Ukrainian military lacked air superiority that hindered its counteroffensive significantly. The Ukrainian air force has been unable to support its advancing men and machines by targeting Russian fortifications. Further, it hasn't been able to deny the Russian air force the space over the skies of the battlefield. However, the Ukrainian air force (Ukrf) only operates with a limited amount of 79 combat aircraft approximately. These are the old Soviet-era fighters including 20 MiG-29 Fulcrum, 30 Su-27 Flanker B for air superiority role and 5 Su-24M Fencer, and 20 Su-25 Frogfoot for ground attack role. Russian air force on the other hand has an upper hand Vis a Vis quantity and its attack helicopters are giving a tough time to Ukrainian amour.

Now comes the important question of why Ukraine has been unable to achieve rapid

penetration into Russian defenses and failed to oust them. This happened because, by the conclusion of 2023, the Russian military has adopted the echelon defense strategy, which draws inspiration from the defensive tactics employed by the Soviet Union during World War II.

“The defensive strategy comprises multiple layers, commencing with the implementation of Anti-tank ditches, followed by the establishment of trenches and barbed wire.”

Subsequently, minefields and Dragon's teeth are employed, culminating in the utilization of mechanized infantry as the final layer of defense. A UK intelligence report released earlier this year called it “the most extensive systems of military defensive works seen anywhere in the world for many decades.” Moreover, Marina Miron, a post-doctoral researcher affiliated with the War Studies department at King's College London, argued that Russia currently possesses a stronger position to hold its ground and Ukrainian offensive will have to face tremendous challenges because of its layered defenses. This was because Russia had ample time to construct these defenses as Ukraine launched its counter-offensive later than sooner. Russia effectively utilize this pause and employed its old horse, BTM-3 Trenching Machine for digging 5-foot-deep

trenches with half a mile per hour speed. Besides it engaged labor to work on trenches with a daily salary of more than \$90 a day.

Ukrainian Counteroffensive, despite facing fierce resistance from Russians placed in fortified positions, hindrance caused by the echelon trench system and unavailability of essential air cover to advancing columns is still not out of the game. The Russian military is holding its grounds in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, and Ukraine couldn't retake large areas. It has only been able to retake several small villages and not a single large city. The counteroffensive at the moment is rather a stalemate. However, reports coming from Ukraine indicate that the battlefield will see a new fresh wave of the counteroffensive, and the new wave will be composed of foreign-trained 36,000 troopers on which Ukraine has high hopes. So, it's rational to say that it is not too little or too late but before passing any judgment, one has to wait for the results coming from the battlefield in upcoming weeks.

<https://stratheaia.com/ukraines-counter-offensive-delayed-response/>

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Strategic Neutrality: Pakistan's Balancing Act in Great Power Rivalry

Muhammad Abu Bakar

Pakistan's political leadership consistently reiterated the nation's stated policy that Pakistan does not want to be sucked into any great power rivalry. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari during his four-day visit to Japan highlighted and reaffirmed Pakistan's policy of not subscribing to bloc politics. He said, "As a developing country facing serious economic and environmental challenges, Pakistan has no time for the Cold-War styled bloc politics that appears to be making a comeback". Before Foreign Minister's visit, Minister of State Hina Rabbani Khar had already made a similar statement during a notable interview with Washington-based news outlet Politico. She insisted that Pakistan does not want the added "headache" of a new Cold War between China and the United States.

"By rejecting the entrapment of bloc politics, Islamabad sets itself apart from the escalating rivalry between the US and China. Moreover, this stance suits Pakistan to maintain a balanced approach, while avoiding unnecessary entanglements that might jeopardize its national interests."

At present, Pakistan is trying to sustain and nurture mutually beneficial relationships with both the US and China. However, the growing competition between these two global powers, coupled with the bipartisan opposition towards China in the US, has presented a precarious situation for Pakistan. An all-out rupture between the two powers will negatively impact Pakistan. A recent statement from the Defense Minister Khawaja Asif serves as an acknowledgment that Pakistan finds itself in a difficult position, striving to maintain equilibrium and navigate the complexities of the rivalry. He stated that it has been very difficult for Pakistan over the last many decades to maintain a "balancing act" in its relationship with the United States and with regional powers like China.

This statement shed light on the fact that preserving national interests and avoiding becoming overly reliant on or overly aligned with either side is indeed a formidable task. Moreover, Pakistan's recent decision to remain neutral and abstain from voting on the resolution denouncing Russian conduct in the Russia-Ukraine conflict showcases its strategic approach to avoid taking sides in international disputes. In addition to that, Pakistan's choice to opt out of the "Democracy Summit" in Washington can

also be viewed as a balancing act. By skipping the Summit, Pakistan signaled to prevent any potential strain on its longstanding friendship with China, as Taiwan was invited to participate.

Furthermore, Pakistan's approach reflects a desire to maintain relationships with both the US and China, recognizing the realities and benefits of cooperation with each. The relationship between the US and Pakistan has been characterized as a rollercoaster journey, with its fair share of ups & downs. While facing various challenges in the form of trust deficit & unrealistic expectations both nations have managed to sustain a level of cooperation and collaboration across multiple fronts. The US remains Pakistan's largest export destination, a crucial military partner, and has recently approved substantial equipment sales of \$450 million worth to support Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets. Moreover, the US has played a pivotal role as Pakistan's largest economic partner, a steadfast ally in the war against terrorism, and a valuable source of support during times of crisis, such as the devastating floods in 2022. Additionally, the US assisted Pakistan in securing a recent IMF deal, underscoring the depth of collaboration in diverse fields. Indeed, it appears that both the US and Pakistan have made significant efforts to

mend their relationship and have successfully resumed a positive trajectory.

On the other hand, Pakistan's relationship with China is multifaceted, driven by a mutual desire to counter the strategic alliance between the US and India, as well as address China's regional interests. Additionally, China has proven to be a time-tested friend of Pakistan, offering security, diplomatic, and moral support to protect Pakistan's territorial integrity and the maintenance of a regional balance of power in South Asia. Furthermore, China has emerged as Pakistan's primary arms supplier, playing a key role in bolstering defense capabilities. It helps Pakistan enhance its operational capabilities & military readiness. Moreover, China is positively contributing to Pakistan's economic uplift via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is valued at an estimated \$62 billion. This initiative has so far received \$25.4 billion in direct Chinese investment to enhance economic growth, infrastructure development, and connectivity between the two nations. In addition to that, Pakistan relies on China for consistent support in countering the asymmetrical rivalry with India and internationalizing the Kashmir issue – an aspect where the US side has not provided similar backing. These

factors highlight the deepening relations between the two Asian neighbors.

The aforementioned realities highlight that Pakistan cannot afford to align itself with a single bloc and opting for a US or Chinese bloc would be a disastrous and self-destructive policy.

“Pakistan should continue its policy of maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with both sides without undermining its core national interests.”

If ever questioned about which side Pakistan stands on, the answer should be “On the side of national interest”. It emphasizes that Pakistan rejects the idea of subscribing to bloc politics and being entrapped in another great power rivalry.

<https://stratheaia.com/strategic-neutrality-pakistans-balancing-act-in-great-power-rivalry/>

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The Issue of UNSC Reforms and India's Ambition for Permanent Membership

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Recent intergovernmental negotiations for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms where G-4 (India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil) states are striving to become permanent members of the Security Council were held in the Seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The verbal negotiations are yet to be transformed into text-based negotiations. The lukewarm response from the international community is deeply frustrating the Indian ambitions to secure a seat at the big table. India never shied away from its ambition to book a permanent seat in the most powerful UN organ. India consistently raises the matter of its permanent membership. In their most recent statement in May 2023, India expressed discontent over the prolonged negotiations and termed it a “wasted opportunity.”

India is the most preferred nation out of G-4 states to enter the UNSC. It is supported by 44 UN member states, including 4 permanent members of the UNSC. However, India is only interested in negotiations that will

benefit its aspirations to become a permanent member of the UNSC. If the negotiations on UNSC reform do not produce any fruitful results, India is likely to be ever more frustrated. This is because India has been a strong advocate for reform of the UNSC, and India believes that it deserves a permanent seat on the Council. India is unlikely to find any negotiations acceptable unless they result in a permanent seat for the country on the Council.

The presence of the existing 5 permanent members and 10 non-permanent members necessitates institutional reforms to renew the Security Council. The inter-governmental talk about the reforms initiated in 2007 has identified five specified areas, however, any way forward has since been on the slower side. Currently, there are no existing prerequisites for attaining permanent membership at the UNSC, although any future negotiations in this regard would likely foster a competitive atmosphere among states competing to join this exclusive club of global security decision-making body.

Uniting for Consensus (UfC), also known as the Coffee Club, was formed under the leadership of Italy, along with Pakistan, Mexico, and Egypt, and garnered support from around 50 states. Their common stance revolves around opposing the proposition to

expand the number of permanent members in the UNSC. It instead encourages the increase in number of non-permanent members in the Security Council. The line of argument for UfC is increasing permanent members will further increase the disparity among member states and the series of privileges which UNSC member enjoys will open spill gates for other states. UfC stresses that the selection of new members will affect other UN organs.

A similar stance is displayed by Pakistan as part of UfC that instead of adding a permanent member to the UNSC, 11 temporary members should be elected for a longer period. Pakistan also stresses that small and medium-sized states need to be heard and equitably represented, instead the powerful permanent members in the UNSC have taken it upon themselves to form other larger states generally their allies as permanent members. Pakistan also stresses there is no value addition for adding more permanent member states. As UNSC still displays paralysis on major underlying global issues, adding more permanent members will further complicate important global issues. In the case of delayed negotiation, Pakistan states without naming any state that “Inflexibility is shown by a few states with pre-determined goals.”

Moreover, historical instances such as the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, where the U.S. blocked the UN peacekeeping response, highlight the detrimental consequences. Similarly, the inclusion of more permanent members would only worsen uncertainties in addressing future international emergencies where a timely and effective U.N. response would be necessary. Given India’s human rights records, particularly in the context of the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, prioritizing the attainment of a permanent seat in the UN’s most influential and powerful organ should be enough for member states to rethink their India’s inclusion into the premier body of UN.

Although institutional reforms are needed in the UN Security Council, however the addition of a permanent member to the Security Council is not beneficial for global peace and stability. Instead, a UN charter-based approach is needed for reforms that are both democratic and cooperative. The UNSC structure is outdated and needs reforms based on merit and democratic values, however, it will most probably be a political decision justified by powerful UNSC permanent member states rather than democratic reforms. However, one thing to note is that India’s permanent seat at UNSC would affect

the dynamic of South Asia which may further destabilize the already hostile region.

There should be meaningful reforms around the UNSC body with equal representation from all regions rather than powerful states supporting other powerful states to create a global world order of their liking. India should bring something new to the table of the UNSC rather than getting frustrated over the lack of progress and debate by UN members. The UNSC has instead bent to benefit the interests of P-5 states rather than addressing threats in global international crises. The addition of India without any meaningful reforms would contribute nothing but create more international crises which would further destabilize the South Asian region as well as create further paralysis in global decision-making. This in response would create crises that go beyond the region of South Asia.

However, the timely implementation of reforms as per the UfC frame of reference becomes crucial to effectively address the potential influence exerted by India as a leading contender for permanent membership. Timely reforms are necessary to counter any attempts made by G-4 states and especially India, to sway UN member states towards alignment with its interests. Failure to act promptly could inadvertently

grant G-4 states an advantageous position during negotiations, potentially clearing the path for their permanent seat in the UNSC.

Looking at the geopolitical divide, constant opposition from members of UfC, and opposition of one permanent UNSC member, China, the dream of Indian aspirations to become a permanent member of the most elite club is unlikely to be realized soon. If the majority supports the permanent seat of India at UNSC, at best it could create another shaky Westphalia and at worst create a catastrophe. Any criteria for joining the UNSC may in response create an environment of competition among member states to join the UNSC which would be detrimental for both the UNSC and the UN as a whole.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/25072023-the-issue-of-uns-c-reforms-and-indias-ambition-for-permanent-membership-oped/>

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Duplicity of West: The Case of Wagner and Tactical Nuclear Weapons

Akash Shah

In a recent development, Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, made a bold claim last week. He stated that a contingent of the Wagner group had reached Voronezh-45 on June 24th during their revolt, intending to acquire 'tactical nukes' stored at the site, in an attempt to "raise the stakes" between the Wagner group and the Russian state. However, Budanov failed to provide any evidence to support his claim, mentioning that the storage doors were closed, and the Wagner forces did not gain access to the technical section.

The Voronezh-45 nuclear facility is under the operation and protection of the Russian Defense Ministry's 12th Main Directorate, entrusted with safeguarding Russia's stockpile of nuclear weapons. While the Russian Defense Ministry's website and publicly accessible records confirm this, the specific contents of the facility remain shrouded in secrecy. Russia has never officially acknowledged the presence of nuclear weapons at Voronezh-45, with such information only emerging through reports from foreign sources. Reports indicate that on

June 24th the main column of the Wagner forces was marching northbound towards Moscow, while a contingent diverted eastward towards the Voronezh-45 base. Skirmishes with Russian troops occurred at Elizavetovka, and a Russian Army helicopter was downed at Talovaya during this movement.

Despite the lack of evidence and corroboration from allies such as the U.S., Budanov's claim is significant due to the growing rift between Wagner Chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Kremlin's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Prigozhin accused Shoigu of ordering a rocket attack on Wagner's field camps in Ukraine, where his troops were fighting on behalf of Russia. Prigozhin ordered his troops to march towards Moscow with hundreds of vehicles, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery and anti-aircrafts guns seen in the videos emerging on social media as part of the convey. At Pavlovsk, the main Wagner Column continued its journey towards Moscow in the north while a small convey headed east. As per the Ukrainian chief of military intelligence, the objective of this small force was to capture few tactical nuclear weapons stored at Voronezh-45 base. Despite having a Russian military base at Buturlinovka, Wagner troops faced little

resistance along the way, reaching Talovaya where they stayed until an agreement was reached between Russia and Prigozhin.

Analyzing the Open-Source Information

According to Reuters, videos and on-ground sources suggest that a faction of the main Wagner force did move eastward. Geotagging indicated the presence of at least 75 vehicles, including armored personnel carriers, ambulances, and an artillery gun towed behind a truck, on the outskirts of a town. Reuters tracked this convoy to Talovaya, which is approximately 120 km from the Voronezh-45 base. Local reports suggest that the convoy did not proceed further, and an agreement was reached between the Kremlin and Prigozhin, leading to the announcement of troop withdrawal.

Analysing the situation, the Wagner forces' eastward movement does indicate an intention to reach Voronezh-45 since there isn't any other significant strategic installation in the direction of this movement. However, the claim that they successfully reached the base seems far-fetched and likely part of the ongoing information warfare between Russia and Ukraine. Given its limited number of troops, supplies and without air power, it was evidently clear that

Wagner could not emerge victorious after taking Kremlin head on. In case of active combat, it would have been a suicide mission for Wagner troops if the confrontation prolonged. Hence, the most plausible explanation for this eastward undertaking could have been to exert pressure on Moscow for a settlement, rather than seizing the tactical nuclear weapons.

This assessment is reinforced by, as reported by Reuters, a source close to the Kremlin. This source claimed that a Wagner contingent “managed to get into a zone of special interest, as a result of which the Americans got agitated because nuclear munitions are stored there.” This revelation caused concern in the Kremlin, leading to a hastily negotiated end to the rebellion on June 24, brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Furthermore, even if the Wagner fighters had gained access to tactical nuclear weapons, operating them would be a separate challenge altogether. Matt Korda, from the Federation of American Scientists, explained that the weapons are stored in an incomplete state and require specialized equipment and cooperation from the responsible directorate for unlocking permissive action links. Thus, the technical knowledge required makes it

highly unlikely that Wagner could successfully operate the weapons.

Western Double Standards

The lukewarm response from Western officials regarding this news is noteworthy. White House spokesperson Adam Hodge stated that the U.S. had no indication that nuclear weapons were ever at risk. Similarly, other Western allies of Ukraine, such as the UK, Germany, and France, remained silent on the matter. This double standard raises questions about how even hypothetical incidents involving other countries, such as Pakistan, receive overwhelming attention, despite the same fundamentals of nuclear security as elaborated by Matt Korda. Even in the highly unlikely scenario of a non-state actor gaining access to Pakistan's nuclear weapons, the operational expertise required is beyond the capabilities of a ragtag militia force.

Moreover, the ability of Wagner troops to capture military bases without resistance from Russian forces, something that never happened in Pakistan, should raise concerns about the security of nuclear weapons. It is worth considering a situation where a disgruntled group of Russian army personnel responsible for nuclear safety could have colluded with Wagner, offering technical

operational assistance. Yet, this scenario received a fraction of the attention it would have garnered had it involved a country like Pakistan. It speaks volumes about the insincerity of western governments to hype up or hush down matters based on their own geopolitical interests rather than merits of the issue at hand.

Nuclear security is a serious matter that demands nuanced handling, rather than being used as a tool to enhance geopolitical agendas. As events continue to unfold, it is essential to prioritize factual evidence over unfounded claims, ensuring a balanced and informed understanding of the situation.

<https://strafasia.com/duplicity-of-west-the-case-of-wagner-and-tactical-nuclear-weapons/>

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Expansion of NATO In Asia Pacific: Are We Receding Towards Conventional Cold-War Politics?

Ayesha Shaikh

History has a habit of repeating itself, if not erected. Discourse regarding transition in the world order has been in sight for more than a decade now. What started from pivot (or rebalance) to Asia, has resulted in expansion of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in the Asia Pacific.

Considering the developments in Asia Pacific as a matter of global concern, July 2023 summit of the NATO was for the second time that the key allies of US from the Asia Pacific (Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) joined NATO as observer states. Secretary General of NATO not only claimed Asia Pacific states as prime partners, but also declared intention to launch liaison office in Japan.

These developments have raised questions about the scope of as determined by its name (North-Atlantic Treaty Organization), and attracted prompt disapproval from China. Chinese mission to EU (European Union) stated “We firmly oppose and reject this, Any act that jeopardizes China’s legitimate rights

and interests will be met with a resolute response.”

Amid all these developments, the question regarding revival of Cold-war has surged up again; Are we receding towards the Cold-war politics, between US and China? In point of fact, world is not likely to recede towards the conventional cold war politics due to certain ostensibly irreversible developments. Consequently, if the situation escalates in future, the dynamics of conflict will be unfamiliar with the history for the following reasons:

Firstly, the existing world order does not have clearly demarcated poles. Alongside the friction between US and China, the conflict staged in Eastern Europe between Russia and Ukraine has diffused the pivot of western attention. US and its allies are explicitly supporting Ukraine. Position of China, however, is equivocal.

On the one hand, China has tried to dilute the impact of sanctions over Russia by sustaining trade with it, while on the other hand it has raised concerns about the respect of the Sovereignty of states as a universal law, in support of Ukraine. China’s positioning in world affairs, like the case of Russia-Ukraine war, is not ideology bound. Hence, antagonism between US and China is not

marked by ideological rivalry, like that of cold-war.

Furthermore, China lacks the advantage of attracting ideology-driven allies, unlike US (Quad; alliance of democracies). Therefore, the world cannot be precisely divided into the American and the Chinese (or the anti-American) blocs, like it did during cold-war.

Secondly, China being the second largest economy of the world, with largest share in global GDP (18.7%), is the largest trading partner of 120 states and largest exporter with 14.7% of share of global exports of goods, has altered the rules of the game. The trade war between US and China as well as the recent friction over the exchange of semiconductor chips, indicates that the theater of the conflict has been shifted to economic and technological spheres.

In October 2022, US imposed tech blockade over China to contain exports of cutting-edge technology to China. China retaliated by blacklisting and banning US based tech companies, and by restricting exports of germanium and gallium (raw material used for making chips). The impacts of both these developments have reached even the farthest corner of the world, indicating an increase in the cost of conflict. Unlike the conventional proxy-wars of cold-war period, antagonism

between US and China will affect the globally integrated web of economic and technological cooperation, altering choices of the states.

Thirdly, great powers are not the only actors in the system, middle powers and small states also have a role to play. During the cold-war, US provided marshal plan for the western European states, so that they could completely rely upon US for their economic and security preferences. In the contemporary realm, nevertheless, the battlefield is Asia Pacific, beyond the western hemisphere.

Furthermore, economic and security preferences of the states are divergent and therefore they are too cautious to pick sides. The closest strategic allies of US in the Asia Pacific are economically integrated with China. US is the top most trading partner of China (trade worth 582.8 billion USD), whereas Japan, South Korea, India and Australia are third, fourth, sixth and thirteenth largest trading partners of China respectively. Considering this deep economic entanglement with China, despite the treat factor due to its rise, isolation or confrontation is not an option for the allies of US residing in Asia Pacific.

Finally, the rise of China is an out product of the Liberal International Order, Chinese economy has benefited from liberal principles of market economy and free-trade, therefore China would not want to over-turn the system entirely. Moreover, China has benefited from the stability maintained by the US, as it has only been able to focus on the economic growth because it did not have to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining stability.

Lastly, China does not even have any alternative ideology or approach to replace the Liberal International Order. during the last decade, restrain on behalf of US created space for China to extend its influence in the domain of global governance. However, the limited institutional order proposed by China in the form of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), does not propose any alternative to the existing Liberal International order. Nonetheless, rise of China cannot be completely denied as a factor reshaping the world order, as AIIB has provided an alternative to IMF and World bank, for the Asian states to rely upon. Chinese voice on the matter of global governance, for instance trade, climate, cyber security, is louder than it has ever been. In addition to the Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI), China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as proposed by Xi Jinping, has appeared to gain some ground of approval in the Middle East, as China has mediated rapprochement between two arch-rivals of the region (Saudi Arabia and Iran).

The expansion of NATO towards the Asia Pacific indicates that US is relying upon traditional approach of countering the eastern challenge. However, the dynamics require revised attention. China, unlike Soviet Union, has excelled in the domain of technology and economy. Expansion of strategic influence in the Asia-Pacific, through Quad (Quadrilateral security dialogue), AUKUS (Australia, United-Kingdom, United States alliance) or NATO, can generate pressure over China but the irreversible evolution of conflict in the domains of economy and technology cannot be contained. Therefore, we are not receding towards the conventional cold-war, but there is a possibility of an un-conventional one.

The future of the un-conventional conflict is likely to be determined by two primary factors; firstly, the practical response of China if the NATO actually inaugurates its liaison office in Japan, will set the tone of conflict. If China use economic coercion or technology politics, the conflict will operate in non-traditional domain, but with wider

implications. Secondly, the approach of Asia Pacific states, to strike a balance between their economic and strategic preferences will determine, whether US or China will have the hold in the region. Hence, the international order is currently witnessing a bargain, where both the US and China are trying to maximize their respective shares in shaping the world order that is yet to emerge.

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