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S.No	ARTICLE	AUTHOR
1	Time to re-think India-Japan nuclear policy	C Raja Mohan
2	Lessons on navigating the evolving geopolitics in the Middle East	C Raja Mohan
3	India's new West Asia approach	C Raja Mohan
4	Obstacles to a diplomatic solution in Ukraine	Pratap Bhanu Mehta
5	India's approach towards Myanmar	Harsh V Pant
6	Impact of Russia-Ukraine war on Indo-Pacific	Lisa Curtis
7	Ending the Ukraine war in an imperfect world	Rakesh Sood
8	G-20 A multilateral platform in a polarized world	Suhasini Haider
9	Should India worry about international criticism?	Suhasini Haider
10	India Seeks to Escape an Asian Future Led by China	C Raja Mohan

Time to re-think India-Japan nuclear policy

-C Raja Mohan

Introduction

India and Japan may have had good reasons until now to take a relaxed view of Chinese nuclear weapons. Both believed China's modest nuclear arsenal does not pose an existential challenge to either of them. But three factors compel them to rethink this complacent calculus.

Factors-

1. First, **China is modernizing and expanding its nuclear arsenal** as part of the general military transformation. Some estimates say China's arsenal could grow to 1,000 warheads by 2030 from about 350 now.
2. Second, Xi Jinping's **China has taken a more muscular approach to its territorial disputes**, including with India and Japan. China's tactics of salami slicing and coercive diplomacy have come into sharp view in the East China Sea that Beijing shares with Japan and the vast Himalayan frontier with India.
3. Third, the **Ukraine crisis has revealed that if a nuclear weapon power invades and seizes the territory of a Neighbour, the rest of the world is reluctant to directly confront the aggression** for fear of an escalation to the nuclear level. Russia made this amply clear with its threat to use nuclear weapons if the US and NATO decide to join the war.

Current status-

- While **Tokyo has woken up to the full implications of nuclear-armed Russia's aggression** against Ukraine, **Delhi's strategic discourse is yet to dive deep** into the emerging challenges of deterring a nuclear China.
- One factor seems obvious — **India is a nuclear weapon power and Japan is not**. But that only presents a partial picture. While Japan does not have nuclear weapons, it relies on the US nuclear umbrella for its security.
- But Indian and Japanese **capacity to deter China is eroding steadily** thanks to the problems with India's minimum deterrence posture and the US nuclear umbrella over Japan.
- The **traditional nuclear narratives** in India and Japan are part of the problem. But **China is puncturing the nuclear moralpolitik** in both Tokyo and Delhi.
- India and Japan have long presented themselves as **champions of nuclear disarmament**. Both Indian and Japanese positions are imbued with deep ambivalence.
- Despite its call for total nuclear disarmament, **India never agreed to give up its own nuclear weapons**. Japan, as the world's victim of nuclear bombing, had even a **higher moral claim** than India as the champion for the global abolition of nuclear weapons. But Japan's narrative is shaded by one reality—**Tokyo's reliance on the US nuclear umbrella**.

- Today neither Delhi nor Tokyo is ready to sign the 2017 Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Current problems-

- The real issue is not the gap between the disarmament rhetoric and the importance of nuclear weapons for the security of India and Japan. It is the problem presented by the expanding Chinese nuclear arsenal and its growing sophistication. Locked in a confrontation with the US, China is determined to raise its nuclear profile.
- As China closes the economic and military gap with the US, there is a darkening shadow over the credibility of the US-extended deterrence for Japan. This uncertainty is transforming the Japanese security debate.
- For India, the question is whether its nuclear restraint and policy of minimum deterrence are enough to prevent China's bullying. In his report "Striking Asymmetries: Nuclear Transitions in Southern Asia", Tellis explores the emerging challenges to the Indian posture from China's nuclear modernization.

Steps taken by Japan-

- In Japan, former prime minister Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated earlier this month, called for a fresh look at Japan's nuclear policy. He was by no means asking Japan to make its own nuclear weapons. He was suggesting that Tokyo must consider "nuclear weapon sharing" with the US.
- The model is Europe, where several countries including Belgium, Italy, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands have arrangements to participate in the US nuclear weapon deployment and use.
- Kishida, however, was quick to reject the proposal. At his speech at the NPT review conference next week, Kishida is expected to affirm the enduring Japanese commitment to nuclear disarmament.
- Reason- Kishida is elected to the lower House of the Japanese parliament from Hiroshima which saw the first use of nuclear weapons on August 6, 1945. For Kishida, nuclear abolition is a deep personal conviction.
- While rejecting nuclear solutions to Japan's problem of deterring China, Kishida's focus has been on raising the defence expenditure, developing sophisticated conventional weapons, beefing up the alliance with the US and widening the circle of Asian as well as European military partners.

Steps taken by India-

- Unlike Japan, India has no constraints on its nuclear weapons programme except the ones it has imposed on itself. The idea of "minimum deterrence" is one of those.
- In the wake of the nuclear tests of 1998, India quickly announced a policy of minimum deterrence and a doctrine of no-first-use of nuclear weapons. Tellis points to India's extraordinary restraint and a reluctance to rush into building an ever-larger nuclear arsenal since 1998.
- The big question is whether this conservatism in India's nuclear posture can or should be sustained in the face of China's military modernization, nuclear expansion and strategic assertiveness. The Tellis report, detailed and technical, should provide a basis for a fresh Indian debate about its nuclear weapons policies.

- Tellis also **calls on the US to revise its attitudes to India's nuclear weapons programme.** In the past, the US insisted on constraining India's nuclear weapon programme. Today a **strong Indian nuclear deterrent against China is critical for the geopolitical stability of Asia** and the Indo-Pacific and in the US interest.

Role of USA-

- Tellis suggests that the **US should be prepared to facilitate India's development of more sophisticated nuclear warheads** as well as improve the survivability of the Indian deterrent against the expanding Chinese nuclear arsenal.
- He suggests that the **US should midwife an agreement under which France would help India accelerate the development of an Indian underwater deterrent** based on ballistic missile carrying submarines (SSBN) as well as nuclear attack submarines (SSN).
- The **"INFRUS" agreement — between India, France and the US** — would be even more ambitious than "AUKUS" in which the US and UK have agreed to help Australia build nuclear-powered submarines (SSN). Unlike Australia, India is a nuclear weapon state.

Conclusion

Tellis is calling both Delhi and Washington to reconsider entrenched nuclear assumptions in the two capitals. While the resistance to his ideas will be strong, **Delhi and Washington will have to respond, sooner than later, to the dramatic changes in the global environment** triggered by the rise and assertion of China. Meanwhile, the **US and Japan are moving swiftly to rework their strategies** to deter China. While Japan's priority is to transform its conventional forces, India might need to consider both conventional and nuclear modernization.

Lessons on navigating the evolving geopolitics in the Middle East

- C Raja Mohan

Introduction

For an India that is recasting its engagement with the Middle East, the lessons from US President Joe Biden's trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia are doubly important. Biden's visit highlights not only some new trends that are reshaping the region but also eternal truths about international politics that are lost in the din of public discourse about the Middle East.

What does it signify?

- **USA will not abandon middle east-** Contrary to the popular perception in the US, the region, and India, the **US is not about to abandon the Middle East.** Until recently, it became quite a common conviction among liberals as well as conservatives in the US that **the time has come for American retrenchment from the messy politics of the region.**

- Many in the US political class believed that given **America's oil independence from the Middle East** — thanks to the dramatic expansion of hydrocarbon production in the US in recent years — **Washington no longer needed the region.**
- The precipitous **American withdrawal from Afghanistan** last year intensified these concerns and the region looked for alternative means to secure itself. But as in the Indo-Pacific and Europe, the Biden Administration has concluded that it **can't cede its regional primacy in the Middle East** and is ready to reclaim its leadership.
- As Biden told Arab leaders at a summit in Jeddah, the US is not leaving the Middle East and that **America "will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran"**.
- **Changing nature of USA's engagement-** While the US will stay put in the Middle East, it is certainly **changing the manner in which it acts.**
- In the past, the US saw itself as the **sole provider of regional security** and was ready to send its troops frequently into the region. Biden told the Arab leaders that his trip was the **"first time since 9/11, an American President is visiting this region without American troops being engaged in a combat mission in the region"**.
- While the US does not want to be drawn directly into the region's wars, it is **determined to help its partners develop capabilities to secure themselves.**
- Equally important is the **effort to produce greater reconciliation among Arabs and Israel** and create stronger networks within and beyond the region to strengthen deterrence against adversaries.
- The current effort to craft a **Middle East Air Defence coalition** is an example of this. Under the MEAD, the **US, Israel and some of the Arab nations** are collaborating to prevent missile and other aerial attacks.
- The **I2U2** signals that the **US no longer views the Middle East in isolation** from its neighborhood.
- **Democracy vs autocracy-** Biden had to **modify his sweeping rhetoric** about the **"conflict between democracies and autocracies"** as the principal contradiction in the world. To sustain the US position in the region, Biden had **no option but to sit with leaders of monarchies and autocracies** that are America's long-standing partners. Sweeping ideological propositions rarely work in practice. **The Middle East, in particular, is a place where ideologies come to die.**
- **Interest over values-** Fourth, even more consequentially, Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia demonstrated that **"interests" generally tend to triumph over "values"** in the conduct of foreign policy.
- During his campaign for the presidency, Biden **vowed to isolate the Saudi state** from the global community. Biden was responding to the outrage in the US against the **killing of Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents** in the Istanbul consulate in 2018.
- Biden's words seemed to have little cost when he said them. But now, as US President, he had the acute discomfort of publicly eating those words during his trip to the region, agreeing to a fist bump with the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.
- **With domestic media and political opponents focusing on his past rhetoric, Biden put his head down to do what was right for the US** — to repair the relationship with Saudi Arabia — amidst the pressing need to cool down the global oil market and ease domestic inflation just months before the midterm elections in America.

- **Focus on national interest**- Fifth, Biden's focus on national interest found an echo in the Middle East, which is **learning to put nation above other identities such as ethnicity and religion**. In the past, the region seemed immune to nationalism as it focused on transcendental notions of "**pan Arabism**" and "**pan Islamism**".

What is the current state of geo-politics-

- A critical section of the Arabs, long seen as irreconcilably opposed to Israel, are now **joining hands with the Jewish state to counter threats to their national security from Iran**. Their shared Islamic identity with Iran does not translate into common perceptions of regional security. In fact, the **contradiction between Arabs and Iran has emerged as a major fault line** in the region.
- **Consider the case of Iraq too**- The **US invasion of Iraq in 2003 to oust Saddam Hussein** led to the **empowerment of the Shia majority** in the country. Arabs who had backed the US invasion watched warily as Shia Iran rapidly gained influence inside Iraq. But **Baghdad has been unwilling to subordinate its Iraqi identity or Arab ethnicity to Shia solidarity** with Iran.
- **Iraq, which is both Shia and Arab**, has found that it can play the role of an independent bridge between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- Many Gulf kingdoms, including **Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are now consciously promoting a national identity among their peoples**. They are celebrating "national days" and creating greater popular awareness of national histories and heritage.
- While the Gulf kingdoms have no reason to discard their pan-Arab or pan-Islamic positions, the **pursuit of their national interests acquires a higher priority**. Once you define yourself as a nation-state, your **focus is less on identity politics and more on state interests**. This, in turn, leads to shifting geopolitical coalitions over time and space. It is this new reality that dominates the region.

What can we take away from this-

- There was a time when **Israel aligned with non-Arab Muslim states** like Iran and Turkey to enhance its room for maneuver against the Arabs. Today, it is **championing the cause of Arabs against Iran**.
- **Turkey**, a NATO ally of the West, **collaborates with Russia on some issues and competes with it on others**. Despite shared religion, Turkey's leader Recep Erdogan has in recent years sought to **undermine many of the Arab regimes**. Qatar has often found itself closer to non-Arab Turkey and in opposition to its Gulf Arab Neighbours.

Conclusion

The Middle East was **never an easy place** for those spouting ideologies of various kinds or those with a weak appetite for geopolitical hard work in the region. Its **politics has become even more complex in recent years**. Delhi, whose Middle East policy today is imbued with greater realism, can hopefully discard the inherited ideological inertia, avoid the temptation of seeing the Middle East through a religious lens, and strive hard to realize the full possibilities awaiting India in the region.

India's new West Asia approach

- C Raja Mohan

Introduction

The first summit this week of the awkwardly-named forum I2U2 – which brings together India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States – is exploratory in nature. The virtual summit between the leaders of the four countries is expected to take place on Thursday during Joe Biden's visit to Israel. But it is by no means the main objective of the US President's visit to the Middle East.

Understanding the current scenario-

- The visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia will see **Biden pursue several challenging goals**. These include-
 1. **Getting Saudi support** for reducing the pressure on global oil prices in the wake of the Ukraine war
 2. **Recalibrating US ties with Saudi Arabia** which Biden had promised to make into a "pariah"
 3. Deepening the **normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab states**
 4. **Persuading Israel to seek reconciliation with the Palestinians**
 5. **Renewing American engagement with the Palestinian Authority**.

India's contribution-

Squeezing the I2U2 summit into this already demanding visit underlines the US bet that **India can contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in the region**. It also underlines a new political will in Delhi to break the old taboos on India's West Asian engagement. The I2U2 marks the **consolidation of a number of new trends in India's Middle East policy** that acquired greater momentum under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

About I2U2- The I2U2 was launched in **October 2021** when the foreign ministers of the four countries met when External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Israel.

- The summit this week puts the top leadership's political imprimatur on the forum. What stands out sharply in India's new thinking in the Middle East is that the **summit involves three countries that Delhi had traditionally kept a safe political distance from**.

With respect to ISRAEL-

- Although India was **one of the first countries to extend recognition to Israel in 1950**, Jawaharlal **Nehru held back from establishing full diplomatic relations** with the Jewish state.
- **PV Narasimha Rao reversed that policy in 1992** but a defensive Congress was hesitant to "own" the relationship. **Rao did not travel to Israel** nor did he receive an Israeli prime minister.

- Atal Bihari **Vajpayee** of the BJP, which had a more empathetic view of Israel, **hosted Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in 2003**. In the decade-long rule of the UPA (2004-14), there were no prime ministerial visits in either direction.
- While the relationship steadily expanded, there was **ideological reluctance in Delhi** to give the partnership a political profile.
- **Modi**, in contrast, came to power with a determination to **impart a political character** to the Israel ties. If the Congress feared open engagement with Israel might complicate relations with the Arab partners, Modi recognized that the **region was going through sweeping political changes, and shifting away from old shibboleths**.
- His bet paid off, with **little negative Arab or Muslim reaction** to the more open pursuit of India's ties with Israel.
- The **problem was never with the Middle East but Delhi's ideological preconceptions** that distorted India's view of the region. None of them was more consequential than the belief that the **contradiction between Israel and the Muslim world is enduring and irreconcilable**.
- But the regional reality was always more complex. **Turkey**, now a champion of political Islam, had **diplomatic ties with Israel since 1949**.
- **Egypt normalized ties in 1980**.
- Under the **Abrahamic accords** promoted by the Trump Administration, the **UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco set up formal ties with Israel in 2020**.

India's stand on Israel-

Modi's decisiveness in engaging Israel was matched by his **effort to deepen India's ties with the Arab world**. During his first visit to Israel in 2018, he also **became the first Indian PM to visit Palestine**. Even more important has been the transformation of India's relations with the Gulf Kingdoms, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

- India's traditional preference in the Arab world was **for engaging the republics**. India's ties to the monarchies were more deeply rooted and became **rather important since the 1970s** as the **main source of hydrocarbons, the main destination for Indian labor exports, and a major source of hard currency remittances**.
- Yet, Delhi remained wary of engagement with the monarchies, telling itself that they were pro-Pakistan.
- **No Indian PM visited Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 2010 and UAE between 1981 and 2015**. On his part, Modi found a way to build a **personal rapport with the rulers of Saudi and UAE** and develop strong ties with these governments without a reference to Pakistan.

Is middle east a priority for India?

- Despite Delhi's ideological posturing, the Middle East had long **ceased to be a political priority for India**. Paying lip service to old causes had overtaken the calculated pursuit of national interests in a complex region.
- Through his decade-long tenure, **Manmohan Singh travelled to the region only four times** — two of those journeys were to attend non-aligned summits.
- The **UAE was not part of those trips** despite its growing economic significance.

- PM **Modi**, in contrast, has travelled **four times to the UAE alone**, negotiated a free trade agreement with it, and has ambitious plans for the transformation of bilateral relations.
- The **UAE has also backed India's 2019 constitutional changes in Kashmir** and is ready to invest in the union territory.

Importance of USA for India in middle east-

- For political Delhi, the **US and Western policies in the region were a main part of the problem**. The immediate focus of Nehru's policy after independence was to **actively oppose US moves** in the region in the name of promoting an "area of peace".
- That policy had **no lasting impact** as many regional countries sought active economic, political, and security cooperation with the US and the West.
- The I2U2 then marks a **big break from the anti-Western tradition** in India's approach to the region.
- Even those who supported India's engagement with the US in the Indo-Pacific through the Quad in recent years **had insisted that there was no room for working with Washington in the Middle East**.
- The Modi government has bet otherwise. If Congress governments argued that standing up to the West in the Middle East was a sacred obligation for India, the **Modi government is now prepared to confidently negotiate the terms of a joint engagement**.

Conclusion

India's participation in the West Asian Quad brings Delhi in line with other major powers– including Europe, China, and Russia – to try and engage all parties in the region. **India's past ideologically driven exclusion of regional partners was a strange aberration**. The I2U2 sets the stage for a new and dynamic phase in India's relations with the Middle East.

Obstacles to a diplomatic solution in Ukraine **- Pratap Bhanu Mehta**

Introduction

The world is hurtling towards a far-reaching geopolitical and economic crisis, in part precipitated by the war in Ukraine. The **secondary effects of the war are now reverberating across the world**. The risks of escalation are increasing. The **first priority of the international community has to be finding a creative solution that ends this war**. But it is becoming equally clear that the world is in the grip of a deadly combination of denial, surrealism and opportunism.

Understanding the ongoing debate-

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a moral abomination of the highest order. What else can one call the will to destroy a nation of 40 million? There is **no justification for this invasion**. Even Putin does not take recourse to the pretexts that his apologists in Indian circles provide.

- It is **difficult to predict the course of the war**. But it has been clear for a long time that **neither Ukraine nor Russia will achieve the objectives** they have stated will count as a victory any time soon.
- The **Ukrainian resistance is heroic**; but they will not be able to fully dislodge Russia from Ukrainian territory. The Russian military has not suffered losses that are unsustainable, **Russia's economy has not been brought to its knees**, and the political stakes of a defeat are too high for Putin to let go.
- It is unconscionable for anyone to ask Ukraine that has sacrificed so much to defend its rights, to simply give up and appease Putin. But the **war has dragged on long enough** that the human cost of the war will become a factor in Ukraine's calculation.

Challenges to diplomatic solutions of war-

Now one might think this is a good time for diplomacy, and many well-meaning people have called on the G-20 to be the forum to take an active role. But there are **three challenges** with the diplomatic route.

1. The first is simply that **no one quite knows Putin's endgame**, and his political definition of a victory here. He has shown a kind of ruthlessness and expansive ambition, and staked so much nationalist pride on this that the threshold of what it will take to diplomatically pacify him is probably very high already. It's funny that none of the calls for diplomacy are directed at Putin.
 2. Second, there is the **chicken and egg problem**. Diplomacy requires the **cessation of hostilities**, or at the very least, it will require the **West slowing down military support for Ukraine**. But that in turn could simply be a ruse that **allows Russia to reconsolidate** and break whatever momentum Ukraine has. It is hard to see Putin negotiating without demanding some immediate gesture that asymmetrically disadvantages Ukraine. The question is, who will take this risk?
 3. Third, there is the brute fact that **Putin has no incentive to negotiate**. In Western Europe and the rest of the world, the **secondary effects of the war are already strengthening Putin's hand**, he will be hoping that a combination of fatigue, energy disruptions and inflation gives him the upper hand.
- Biden's approval ratings are plummeting, and it is more likely that the **war causes more regime changes in the West than in Russia**. It is also often the case that a regime that has the ruthlessness to optimize on just one outcome has an advantage: It can direct all its energies and resources to that outcome.

Importance of conflict for west-

- For the West, on the other hand, Ukraine is just **one amongst many things it is trying to achieve**, and consequently it can also be made vulnerable in a number of ways.
- Western support for Ukraine is **entirely warranted**. But it has been **in complete denial** about the effectiveness of sanctions, and its inability to carry the rest of the world along.

Role of India and China in “diplomatic solution”

- **India and China have been consistently calling for a diplomatic settlement.** But let us be brutally honest. At this historical juncture, **India and China are the obstacle** to a possible diplomatic solution.
- There is an argument out there that diplomacy can succeed only if there is a reservoir of **goodwill**; that a good mediator needs to ingratiate themselves with the contending parties. But in Putin’s case it is not clear that goodwill will count for anything. There are **no carrots to offer Putin** either that will deflect him from inflicting suffering on Ukraine.
- So, the only condition under which diplomacy might succeed with Putin is if there is a possibility of sufficient penalties if diplomacy fails. It will have to be **a form of diplomacy that is backed with pressure.**
- This is where India and China are an obstacle. They have **morally equivocated on Ukraine’s claims.** But they have also, in effect, bailed out Putin. **So long as Russia can effectively trade with China and India, it can ride out Western sanctions and has no reason to come to the table.**
- So, in effect, China and India are not helping the cause of peace and an honorable settlement in Ukraine by effectively reducing Putin’s incentive to negotiate. There are no guarantees of success with Putin, but surely the fact that **we are economically bailing him out makes a difference.** All talk of diplomatic initiatives is simply cheap talk if they don’t recognize this fact.

Understanding the impacts of various stakeholders-

- The West has its history of imperial crimes. The **US badly misjudged how the way it went about sanctions on Russia** would lead to a splintering of the world system.
- **India’s creation of a facility to settle trade in rupees** is arguably not just a response to Russia, and hitching our star to Russian oil. It also comes from a legitimate fear that the **US can now widen the arc of sanctions.** So, we are right to look for alternatives to SWIFT.
- The **Chinese position** is also more consequential than ours. **Russia is more dependent on them.** China is also the biggest strategic beneficiary of the prolonged war in Ukraine and in all likelihood has an incentive to prolong the conflict.

Conclusion

So, it is all too easy to talk of diplomacy. **But diplomacy will have to get India and China aligned on putting pressure on Russia.** Otherwise, diplomacy with Russia is a non-starter. It will then have to traverse that difficult terrain of a settlement that does not constitute a humiliation for Russia or a defeat for Ukraine. Is anybody going to bet that these conditions can be met? There is no option but to try. But **diplomacy in G-20 is now about deflecting blame rather than coming together to solve a problem.** The world is hurtling towards a precipice.

India's approach towards Myanmar

- Harsh V Pant

Introduction

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla was in Myanmar this week to assess the ground situation and to nudge various sides **to seek mutually acceptable solutions to the multiple crises** marring one of India's most important Neighbours. New Delhi, of course, has vital interests in Myanmar that it would like to protect and enhance.

Understanding situation in Myanmar-

- While the **West has made democracy the sole prism of its Myanmar policy**, India doesn't have that luxury.
- Much like most other immediate Neighbours of Myanmar, **India has been keen to push back against the Myanmar military's authoritarian tendencies** even as its multiple interests have ensured that it keeps its channels of communication open with all stakeholders.
- Myanmar has been in turmoil since February when the **military seized control of the country in a coup and detained Aung San Suu Kyi** and other leaders of her National League for Democracy (NLD).
- **India had been categorical from the very beginning** that the gains made by Myanmar over the last decades on the path towards democracy should not be undermined.
- Earlier this month, after **Suu Kyi was sentenced to four years (later reduced to two years) in jail for provoking dissent against the military** and breaching Covid-19 rules, **New Delhi responded by expressing its "deep concern"** over "any development that undermines these processes and accentuates differences" and expressed its hope that "keeping their nation's future in mind, efforts **would be made by all sides to advance the path of dialogue.**"

Challenges for India from Myanmar-

- But for India, challenges emanating from Myanmar and adjoining areas do not cease depending upon the complexion of the government. And **direct engagement with the State Administration Council (SAC)** and other stakeholders can **no longer be put on hold.**
- Last month's **deadly attack on an Assam Rifles convoy near the Myanmar border in Manipur** was a reminder about the proclivity of China for creating trouble in the Northeast, especially at a time when border tensions along the LAC remain high.
- The **Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact** because of the porous border between India and Myanmar.
- For India, a **humanitarian crisis** as a result of the pandemic-induced economic crisis in Myanmar would be a **lose-lose situation** and it should be prevented with the utmost urgency.

Growing India's role in engaging with Myanmar Army-

- India as the only major democratic country bordering Myanmar, **should insist on demonstrable progress on the road to democratic transition**, but being a Neighbour, it is also aware that Myanmar has never responded well to international pressures.
- The **role of Myanmar's army would be key** to the unfolding of any democratic transition there, so an active engagement would be needed. Even as it continues to call for a restoration of the democratic process, both bilaterally and at various multilateral fora, **New Delhi has to engage with the army in Myanmar to address Indian concerns** as well as to make it a stakeholder that can deliver on the democratic front, including the release of political prisoners.
- **Marginalizing the army will only push it into China's arms**, which only has its economic and defence interests to secure from Naypyidaw. Ever since the coup, China's economic grip over Myanmar has only become tighter with a special focus on **projects critical for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor**.

Role of other stakeholders-

- While the **West continues to condemn and sanction, China is investing and pulling Myanmar into its orbit**. The US has continued to use the overused threat of ever more sanctions, though to little avail.
- Myanmar's army seems to have ceased bothering about the rhetoric from the West. It is the **neighboring countries that have to shape the behavior of the military junta** in a constructive manner.
- It is not surprising that **countries like Japan, South Korea and most ASEAN members have all moved forward with engaging the military junta in Myanmar**.
- The **Cambodian prime minister, the incoming chair of the ASEAN, is scheduled to visit Myanmar next month** and is likely to set new terms of engagement.

Conclusion

It is, therefore, imperative that **New Delhi too reaches out and shapes its own trajectory in Myanmar**. The foreign secretary's visit will allow him to meet the main political parties to understand their expectations from the world's largest democracy even as he works with the military authorities to ensure that the democratic process get off the ground at the earliest. **In international relations, black and white binaries never really work**. The complexity of India's regional security and neighborhood demands that **India adopt a more nuanced position on Myanmar**. New Delhi should not lose its essential pragmatism in engaging Myanmar.

Impact of Russia-Ukraine war on Indo-Pacific

- Lisa Curtis

Introduction

Russia's war in Ukraine—which was **preceded by the announcement of a historical pact** between Moscow and Beijing on February 4—will have far-reaching global strategic implications, **particularly in the Indo-Pacific where China's growing influence is already shifting the regional order.** The situation is still playing out with all eyes focused on whether China will provide Russia military support or bail out the Russian economy as it is increasingly squeezed by western sanctions.

USA's Indo-Pacific document-

- US President **Joe Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy document** gives a clear indication of the value the US places on its strategic partnership with India and **its vision for New Delhi to play a central role in this vital region** that is increasingly subject to Chinese aggression and coercion.
- However, **Russia's invasion of Ukraine and India's disappointing response** has raised questions about India's overall reliability as a strategic partner of the US and its adaptability to consequential global developments that require leadership and unity among democratic powers.

US Prioritizes Indo-Pacific

- The White House Indo-Pacific strategy—released one week after the **Moscow-Beijing Joint Statement** and two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine—makes clear that the **defining long-term national security priority for the US remains strategic competition with China.**
- The strategy was forthright about the threats and challenges posed by a **rising and increasingly aggressive China** yet also focused on an affirmative US agenda with the goal of sustaining the region's free, open, transparent, and inclusive order.
- While Russian aggression in Eastern Europe demands Washington's immediate attention, US policymakers remain keenly aware that **China could use the crisis in Ukraine to undermine American influence in the Indo-Pacific** and establish itself as the undisputed regional hegemon.
- Just as the Trump administration's Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework singled out India for an important role, so too does Biden's strategy highlight the **US-India bilateral relationship as a major component of its overall Indo-Pacific strategy.**
- Former US President **Donald Trump's framework was more explicit about the US goal to accelerate India's rise,** while Biden's strategy **recognizes India as a "leader in South Asia and the Indian Ocean,** active in and connected to Southeast Asia, a driving force of the Quad and other regional fora, and an engine for regional growth and development."

Focus on QUAD in Indo-Pacific-

- Biden's Indo-Pacific strategy also spotlights the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) as a "premier regional grouping"** that will take collective action on issues like vaccines, critical and emerging technologies, climate change, infrastructure, cyber security, and space.

- The **third Quad summit in less than a year was held on 3 March 2022**, providing an opportunity for India to explain its position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the other members (US, Australia and Japan), and for the four leaders to **demonstrate the continued importance they place on the grouping**, despite differences over Russia.

Test for US-India Ties

- The **US has so far shown tremendous forbearance toward India** on its tepid response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and lack of support for sanctioning Moscow, but there are signs Washington's frustration is growing.
- During a visit to New Delhi in late March, US Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics Daleep Singh made clear that **Washington expected New Delhi to refrain from taking advantage of Russia's offer to sell India oil at highly discounted prices**.
- Moscow has also proposed that **New Delhi agree to a rupee-ruble payments mechanism** to avoid dollar-denominated transactions that could trigger US sanctions.
- While India rightly argues that **Europe also continues to buy Russian oil** and India purchases only about one percent of its total energy needs from Russia, any Indian effort to help Russia escape the impact of sanctions will irk US officials.
- It will also make it increasingly difficult to argue in Favour of a **Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act waiver for India over its purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system**, for which New Delhi began taking deliveries last December.
- Nevertheless, the **2+2 dialogue** between the Indian external affairs and defence ministers and the US secretaries of state and defence that was held on 11 April in Washington **reaffirmed the two countries' strong ties, despite differences over Russia**.
- An **unexpected virtual meeting between Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** at the top of the 2+2 meetings as well as the **lengthy and comprehensive joint statement released following the dialogue** demonstrated both countries' determination to not allow their divergent positions on Russia to disrupt their strategic ties.

The Russia-China-India Dance

- One major development weighing heavily on Indian decision-making is the **Moscow-Beijing manifesto unveiled** in February following a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the opening day of the Beijing Olympics.
- The manifesto, the strongest statement on Russia-China relations in over 70 years, says the **world is entering "a new era of rapid development and profound transformation"** with trends toward a **new "redistribution of power in the world"**.
- The joint statement signals Putin and Xi believe the **time is ripe to join forces to counter US global power** and influence and to make their mutual goal known to the world.
- In the 5,000-plus word statement, **Russia firmly supports the Chinese position on Taiwan**, while **both sides oppose NATO enlargement**, express concern about AUKUS, and **criticize the US Indo-Pacific strategy**.
- The Russia-China document also seeks to **redefine democracy** and makes an absurd claim that democratic governance is currently in practice in Russia and China.

- Still, the Russia-China pact almost certainly has worried Indian officials who carefully strive to keep a wedge between the two global powers to meet New Delhi's own strategic compulsions.
- Having faced off against Chinese forces along their disputed boundary in June 2020 and with the prospect of continued border tensions for the foreseeable future, **New Delhi needs to keep Moscow on friendly terms** in case of another India-China border flare-up.

Impact of growing sanctions on Russia-

- Now that Russia is facing crushing western sanctions, Indian officials will have to consider the fact that **Russia's dependence on China is likely to grow**, allowing Beijing to increasingly call the shots.
- **Moscow will have a declining ability to persuade China on much of anything**, including border tensions with India. If India is counting on its lack of criticism of Russia over its invasion of Ukraine to buy its Russian support vis a vis its border disputes with China, it may be disappointed.
- **India will also likely face direct negative consequences on its own defence industry** as western sanctions against Russia kick in, given its continued reliance on Russian military equipment. According to estimates, **Russian equipment accounted for around 50 percent of Indian arms imports from 2016-2020**.

US Global Responsibilities and India's Tough Choices

- To preserve a rules-based order in which countries maintain their sovereignty and independence, Washington **does not have the luxury** of choosing between whether it will focus its resources and attention on either Europe or the Indo-Pacific.
- It **must engage in both regions** and increasingly rely on partners and allies to help it face down Russian aggression in Europe and Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific.
- **India's refusal to condemn Russian aggression and willingness to provide Russia an economic lifeline is straining Washington's ties to New Delhi** and has raised questions about the future of the Quad and whether it can truly provide a credible counterweight to Chinese hegemony in the Indo-Pacific when its members are divided over developments in Europe.
- The **US is counting on India to play a significant role in the Indo-Pacific** and to increasingly contribute to balancing Chinese power in the region. However, **continued Indian dependence on Russian military gear could weaken India's ability to play an effective role in the Indo-Pacific**, not to mention impact the Quad's ability to cooperate on important issues like maritime domain awareness.

Conclusion

India has important strategic decisions to make in 2022 that will have consequences not only for bilateral ties with the US but also for its broader national security interest's vis a vis China and the Indo-Pacific. Russia's war in Ukraine is making it increasingly difficult—perhaps impossible— for India to be able to straddle the US-Russia divide for much longer.

Ending the Ukraine war in an imperfect world

- Rakesh Sood

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has been underway for over four months. **What began as a European conflict has had global repercussions.** Of course, Ukraine and its people have borne the maximum brunt. **More than five million Ukrainians have left the country and over eight million are internally displaced.** Rising casualties and large-scale destruction have set back the country by decades. Recent estimates for rebuilding the destroyed cities and infrastructure are as high as \$750 billion.

Rising secondary impacts of war and COVID-

- During 2020-21, most economies that could afford to, provided generous financial support to its citizens in the form of **direct payments and subsidized food** to tide over the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Supply chains suffered disruptions, aggravated by politics.** Economic recovery has generated demand, creating inflationary pressures.
- Today, **inflation rates are rising across the world** and in the largest economies have reached levels not seen since the early 1980s. As these countries tighten money supply, **fears of recession** loom large.
- The **war in Ukraine has aggravated the situation for the poorer countries** by creating food and fertilizer shortages. The sharp surge in energy prices threatens the prospects of economic recovery. Prospects of collective global action to deal with these challenges appear remote, given growing tensions among major powers.

Understanding the timeline of the inevitable conflict-

- It is a fact that **Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022** in gross **violation of the United Nations Charter and international law**; it is equally true that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (**NATO**) is not an innocent bystander.
- **In 2022, Russia is the guilty one but NATO's folly was to forget** that the cost of its expansion goes up as it gets closer to the Russian border. Its strategic error was in concluding that Russia was in terminal decline and adopting an 'open door' policy.
- **By 2005, 11 former East European and Baltic states had joined NATO.** Addressing the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin described NATO's decision of moving eastwards and deploying forces closer to Russian borders, "a **serious provocation**". The warning was ignored.
- At the NATO summit in early 2008, the **United States pushed for opening membership for Ukraine and Georgia.** France and Germany, sensitive to Russian concerns, successfully blocked a time-frame for implementation.
- As a compromise, it was the **worst of both worlds.** It convinced Russia of NATO's hostility and dangled prospects for Georgia and Ukraine that NATO could not fulfil.

- Later that year, **Russia intervened in Georgia on the grounds of protecting the Russian minorities**, taking over the neighboring provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
- In 2014, following the **Euromaidan protests in Kiev against President Viktor Yanukovich**, who was pro-Russian, **Russia annexed Crimea** and pro-Russian separatists, assisted by Russian mercenaries, created autonomous regions in eastern Ukraine. The fuse, lit in 2008, was now shouldering.
- **Post-2014, NATO continued to strengthen its relationship with Ukraine** by providing it training and equipment, formalizing it in 2020 by making Ukraine a NATO Enhanced Opportunity Partner. The **presence of warships from Britain and the United States began to increase in the Black Sea**.
- In **2019, the United Kingdom entered into a cooperation agreement with Ukraine** to develop **two new naval ports, Ochakiv on the Black Sea and Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov**, a move that Russia saw as potentially threatening. The die was cast.

Liberalism trumps realism

- Neither side wanted war. **NATO members insist that Ukraine would not be joining NATO but remains unable to walk back from its 2008 statement**. This would be seen as **'appeasement'**. In diplomacy, appeasement had long been accepted as an honorable route to ensuring peace, practiced by the British since the mid-19th century in its dealings with European powers and especially the U.S. as it sought to enforce the Monroe Doctrine.
- **Neville Chamberlain** too **used appeasement to negotiate "peace in our times"** in 1938 but Winston Churchill employed it to pillory him and the term never regained respectability thereafter.
- An equivalent term surfaced — **sensitivity for each other's core interests** — practiced during the Cold War to prevent the U.S. and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from getting into conflict.
- With the **end of the Cold War, this became history**. The liberal school, having vanquished the Marxist school of thought, was now convinced of the righteousness of its cause. **If only the rest of the world could be made to see reason, democracy would flourish**, free markets ensure prosperity and a western-led rule-based order prevail.
- The triumph of liberalism **led the neo-con believers towards interventionism** (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Color Revolutions, Syria); others, attracted by the prospects of the Chinese and Russian markets, deluded themselves that economic growth would lead to political openings.
- The **realist school of thought cautioned against military interventions backed by a one-size-fits-all democratic prescription** and the risks of excessive economic dependence on China but these voices were dismissed. Many U.S. scholars and strategic thinkers cautioned against NATO enlargement, warning that Russia may be weak but it would be reckless to ignore its security interests; they were charged with 'appeasement'. Liberalism was upholding 'moral values'; amoral realism was easy to reject as immoral.

How wars end

- **Wars often develop their own momentum** and the Ukraine war is no exception. **Russia possibly anticipated a short, sharp conflict, a collapse of the Kiev regime** (perhaps similar to what

happened in Kabul last August), and a lack of NATO cohesion. It has had to readjust its aims as it has settled down to a long and brutal war.

- The **G-7, the European Union (EU) and NATO have displayed unusual cohesion and Ukrainians have shown exemplary grit and motivation.** Russia is in a bind. Even its limited war aims of controlling Donbas and the Black Sea coast have been a slog.
- **Finland and Sweden joining NATO will squeeze it further in the Baltic Sea.** Ukraine's ability to fight **depends on how long western funds and military hardware keep flowing.**
- In a moral world, there is a right and wrong and Russia should be held to account. But in the real world, other factors come into play. A blame game or establishing the root cause will not help end the crisis. **Eventually, talks will need to take place,** between Ukraine and Russia and with NATO and the U.S. playing an outsize role behind the scenes. This means acknowledging Russia's security interests in its neighborhood.
- The problem is that the **war is now being cast in binaries** — a **battle between freedom and tyranny, between democracy and autocracy, a choice between rule-based order and brute force.** This makes compromise difficult. And Russia cannot be defeated unless NATO wants to engage in a full-scale war.

Conclusion

The longer the war continues, the greater the suffering for the Ukrainians. The more territory Ukraine loses, the weaker will be its bargaining position at the table. And the longer the war continues, the greater the risk of an inadvertent escalation. **History tells us that when faced with choices, major powers have a propensity to double down.** The nuclear taboo has held since 1945; sane voices need to ensure that it is not breached. The sooner the war ceases, the better it is for Ukrainians, Russians and the world. It is an imperfect world but we do not have another.

G-20 | A multilateral platform in a polarized world - Suhasini Haider

Introduction

In a world **where multilateralism appears to be gasping for breath, the G-20 Foreign Minister's meeting in Bali dealt a few more blows.** "We cannot deny that it has become more difficult for the world to sit together," said Retno Marsudi, Indonesian Foreign Minister who hosted the meeting this week, even as G-7 countries skipped a welcome reception and concert to protest the presence of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Mr. Lavrov walked out of one meeting over comments made by Western countries about the war in Ukraine, and another, just before the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, a special invitee to the session on food security, began to speak.

Rising concerns over Russia vs Ukraine in G-20 meet

- It seems the road between the Foreign Ministers' meeting, expected to be followed by an equally acrimonious G-20 Finance Ministers' meeting on July 15-16, which will finalize the agenda, **can only lead to an even more contentious G-20 summit** four months later, on November 15-16, where **Russian President Vladimir Putin has been invited and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to address the gathering as a special invitee.**
- The **U.S. has already demanded Mr. Putin be disinvented,** or U.S. and European countries would boycott his address.
- Sensing the difficulties, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who attended the G-7 summit in Germany as a special invitee, also travelled to Kyiv and Moscow last month, and met with both leaders in the hope of keeping the G-20 together, as it faces what is **probably its greatest organizational challenge in 23 years of its existence.**
- **India, which will assume the Presidency of the G-20 in December,** will have to bear the burden of ensuring the G-20's continued existence in a globally polarized world through 2023.
- In many ways, (minus the Russia-Ukraine war), **the present moment reflects many of the crises that led to the creation of the G-20 in the first place in 1999.**
- At the time, the geo-economic multilateral order was dominated by the G-8 countries (now the G-7, after the ouster of Russia), and it was clear that they were **ineffective in dealing with the Mexican, Asian and Russian Financial Crises of 1997-98.**

How and why was G-20 formed?

- The larger global economic grouping at the time, the 38-member **OECD that was created out of the post-World War reconstruction effort, was equally unworkable,** and weighted towards the U.S. and Europe. This led to the first G-20 meeting, of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, to look at the world through a more "Global South" perspective.
- Two men in particular, **Canadian Finance Minister (and later PM) Paul Martin, and U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers were credited with the push for this larger grouping,** which they said would move beyond the "denizens of Davos" to people who work in "Detroit and Düsseldorf", referring to manufacturing hubs of the time.
- Along with economists from the OECD, which remains the G-20's strategic adviser, they chose from a **basket of emerging economies (all BRICS countries are in G-20) to create the G-20 as a "perfect mix" of the old world and new, of the first world and the developing world;** of the traditional, ageing global elites, and the more populous, bustling and growing economies.
- The G-20 has **no fixed headquarters,** and the **secretariat moves by rotation** between the countries hosting or assuming Presidency of the grouping each year. The members are divided into five groups (India is in Group 2, along with Russia, South Africa and Turkey).
- The G-20 agenda that **still depends heavily on the guidance of Finance Ministers and central Governors** is finalized by a unique system of '**Sherpas**', who are special envoys of G-20 leaders. Another feature of the G-20 is '**Troika**' meetings, comprising the countries presiding over the G-20 in the past year, present year, and next year. At present, the Troika is made up of Italy, Indonesia and India.
- The G-20's next big leap came during the **global financial crisis in 2007.** It was clearly a time for leadership to step in, and the first G-20 summit was held in 2008 in Washington DC, hosted by U.S. President George W. Bush.

- Experts saw the G-20 agreements in 2008 and 2009, where the grouping agreed to revive economies with a **spending boost worth \$4 trillion, lowering trade barriers and implementing economic and governance reforms**, as proof that the new grouping could actually work, and even save the global financial system through concerted action.

Global priorities

- That enthusiasm didn't last, and the **next decade brought with it new challenges**, as **China's strategic rise, NATO's expansion and Russia's territorial aggression in Georgia and Crimea** changed global priorities.
- Today, the world **continues to struggle with sharpening geopolitical rivalries**, and a possible **dilution of the dollar-based system** post-Ukraine sanctions, even as it deals with the new realities of post-COVID economics.
- Globalization is no longer a cool word, and **multilateral organizations have a credibility crisis as countries around the world pick being 'G-zero'** (a term coined by political commentator Ian Bremmer to denote 'Every Nation for Itself') over the G-7, G-20, BRICS, P-5 (UNSC Permanent Members) and others.

G-20 challenges for India-

- For India, the G-20's challenges come with the **prestige of hosting the Summit next November**, when global leaders will descend on New Delhi, and meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi just months before national elections in 2024.
- In the past few weeks, **India has been more vocal about working with Indonesia to build a consensus for the Bali agenda**, and has also begun the process of setting up G-20 structures here. Former NITI Ayog CEO Amitabh Kant has been appointed the PM's G-20 Sherpa, and **former Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla will be the G-20 Coordinator**.
- The government plans to hold 100 preparatory meetings in different parts of the country, which led to a controversy over whether the G-20 summit or Ministerial level meetings would be held in Jammu Kashmir.

Conclusion

Amid **protests from Pakistan and China**, the MEA has clarified that no decisions have been made yet. The G-20 venue is likely to be at Delhi's Pragati Maidan, where the construction of roads, conference halls, hotels and landscaping is under way. **The bigger challenges, however, will remain for India to assist Indonesia in protecting the idea of the G-20**, and keeping it from fragmentation in the face of geopolitical fissures, where leaders are loath to hear each other speak, or even sit in the same room together.

Should India worry about international criticism?

- Suhasini Haider

Context-

With increasing regularity, **India is facing comments from abroad expressing concern and criticizing the government for failing to keep its commitments on democratic freedoms, religious freedoms, media freedoms**, and so on.

Just in the past week there were a number of such statements- many of them eliciting strong reactions from the Ministry of External Affairs:

1. **UN High Commission for Human Rights criticized India's detention of 3 activists** who had criticized the government over the 2002 Gujarat riots investigation
 - The MEA issued a statement calling the comments **"unwarranted" and an "interference"** in India's judicial system.
2. US Commission on International Religious Freedom tweeted three comments on India, calling for India to be **designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC)** by the US State department- referring to detentions of human rights advocates and a fact checking website founder
 - An MEA statement called the commission **motivated** and said the concerns showed a severe **lack of understanding of India** and its constitutional framework, its plurality and its democratic ethos.
3. Four US Congress representatives- Ilhan Omar and 3 others introduced resolution 1196 in the US House that will **"condemn human rights violations and violations of international religious freedom in India, including those targeting Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, Adivasis, and other religious and cultural minorities.** Another resolution this week came from Congressman Juan Vargas, seeking to commemorate activist and Jesuit priest Stan Swamy who died in police custody in India last year
 - The government has **not yet responded to the resolutions.**
 - In 2019, External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar had refused to attend a US House Foreign Affairs Committee meeting** as a Democratic Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal was present- as she had introduced a resolution calling on India to restore internet freedoms in Jammu and Kashmir and release political prisoners
4. The US ambassador at large for religious freedoms Rashad Hussain, who is a US government official- addressed a conference in Washington saying that **India is even at the risk of seeing a genocide**
 - The comments were a follow up to an International Religious Freedom Report issued by US Secretary of State Blinken and Amb Hussain at the beginning of June- which the MEA had slammed the US government for, **calling it the practice of "vote bank politics" on the international stage**
5. The German Foreign Ministry then said it is also concerned about the **arrest of the fact-checker – Muhammad Zubair**, adding that its embassy is monitoring the situation in India and coordinating with the EU on this.
6. And then there was a UK-hosted **international conference on the Freedom of Religion and Belief-** India was not mentioned directly at the conference, but neither was India among the 30 countries that attended. In addition, reports suggest that India put off a visit by British Minister Tariq Ahmed

who hosted the conference and was due to visit Delhi in Mid-June to invite India to join. That visit **now rescheduled** to end-July.

So why is this interest in India's domestic matters increasing recently?

1. As **India grows in prominence on the international stage**- a growing number of events in India are catching international attention- While earlier, this was primarily concern about **hate crimes** in India by various groups, since 2019- the concerns have been about government decisions and judicial processes- the **reorganization of Jammu Kashmir, CAA, Farm bill and action against protests, Hijab ban, Use of bulldozers against protestors, arrests of activists, journalists and human rights advocates** and so on
2. In the US, the **Democratic administration under President Biden has taken a more traditionally proactive stance on global human rights**. As a result, even during the Blinken Jaishankar meetings, we see references to human rights concerns coming through.
 - As the US makes this its policy, other partner countries like the UK, European Union members, Canada, Germany are **all also becoming more vocal**.
 - Remember, one of Mr. Biden's initiatives is the **Democracy Summit** he held in December 2021. In December 2022, the US plans a bigger summit- and will call to account countries for the commitments they made last year. The UK ForB conference in July is also a precursor to the December Summit.
3. In the past decade, the **government has also acted against international NGOs under the Foreign Contribution Regulatory Act (FCRA)**, stopping foreign funding for different causes in India, and this has led to the shutdown of many international NGOs- these include **Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Compassion International, Oxfam**- about 12,000 NGOs in all have lost their licenses to receive funding here as of 2022.
 - Some of these decisions have been reversed- as in the case of Ford Foundation and the Missionaries of Charity, but for the rest, the fact that they now operate from overseas makes them **even more likely to express their concerns abroad and to governments in the countries that they are based**.
4. Then there is the **upcoming review of India's Human Rights record at the United Nations Human Rights Council**. The Universal Period Review, or UPR of India is expected to begin in November 2022, and **India is due to give its own report at the end of August**. As a result, the vocal concerns being expressed in Western capitals may actually increase.
5. The growing interest in Human Rights in India is also linked to the **growing polarization in the Global world order- as US-Europe and other allies pit themselves against the Russia-China combine**, as a fight between democracies and authoritarian regimes.
 - In the past few years, the **US even tried to turn the G-7 into a D-10 of 10 Democracies** with large economies as a counter.
 - The **Quad is a coalition of Indo-Pacific democracies**. This is what led to a statement of "Resilient Democracies" signed at the G-7 outreach in Germany last month- a statement PM Modi and other invitees also signed on to.

6. Finally, the concerns are **being amplified by Pakistan**, given tense ties between the two countries. For the past few years, former **PM Imran Khan would devote much of his UNGA speech to India**, the ruling party's ideology and Islamophobia.
 - Pakistan hosted Ilhan Omar shortly before the US Congresswoman brought her resolution out, and **Pakistan has been pushing for India to be held accountable at the UN Human Rights Council**- especially after the UN OHCHR brought out a report on Jammu Kashmir that was very critical of New Delhi's actions.

Way forward for India-

1. **Ties with the US could be deeply impacted if there is any action on the basis of its International Religious Freedom Act of 1998**- Under it, the US President is required to annually review the status of religious freedom in every country in the world and designate each country the government of which has engaged in or tolerated "particularly severe violations of religious freedom" as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC).
 - At present there are **10 countries on the list**, as of November 2021: Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. There is also a **Special Watch List of 4 countries**: Algeria, Comoros, Cuba, and Nicaragua.
2. In addition, the **USCIRF can recommend sanctions against specific officials under the IRFA**- in 2005, the then Bush administration decided **to revoke PM Narendra Modi's visit**, who was then Gujarat Chief Minister under Section 212 (a) (2) (g) of the US Immigration and Nationality Act that makes any foreign government official who "was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom" ineligible for a visa to the United States.
3. Then there are what are called **Global Magnitsky Sanctions** that work for **accountability for human rights violations worldwide**. **Sergei Magnitsky** was a Russian tax advisor and whistleblower who was beaten in custody and died of injuries in 2009, and since **his death there has been an international campaign to put financial sanctions against officials involved in HR violations**.
 - The US, UK, Canada, Australia and the EU countries **all have Magnitsky sanctions**. About 300 individuals and entities from 40 countries have been designated thus far- mostly from China, Russia and Saudi Arabia. Last year the US put Bangladeshi police officials including the Rapid Action Battalion anti-terror force on its list as well.
4. It is also necessary **to watch for the economic impact of these sanctions** or designations- as **private companies in the US and Europe have begun to follow their foreign policies**- During the Trump administration- many US companies pulled out of China unilaterally, During the Russia Ukraine war, dozens of western companies have pulled out of Russia voluntarily- amidst worries that **Human rights violations can lead to MNCs working there being penalized back home**.
5. Finally, **Western foreign policy is fickle**- There have been **flip flops** over Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey in the past decade that show that when ties with the West are good, Human rights concerns are often brushed to the background. With India too, while **India's ties with the US and Europe are gaining strength**, and the need for India as a bulwark against China in the Indo-Pacific remains, such laws, sanctions and human rights concerns may not make as much of a difference.

Conclusion

While the government is correct that international concerns are interference into India's internal matters, it must be remembered that India is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights- and the government has a duty to ensure human rights, religious freedoms, media freedoms to its people.

Eventually, any impact of global concerns on India's foreign policy will be transitory, but the impact of government actions- and its fulfilment of commitment to stand up for these rights domestically is lasting- as is the impact on India's goodwill in the world as a pluralistic inclusive democracy- and not a reactive authoritarian regime.

India Seeks to Escape an Asian Future Led by China - C Raja Mohan

Introduction

Jan 2022's launch of formal trade talks between India and the United Kingdom, with the declared ambition to ink a smaller deal in the next few months and a comprehensive agreement by the end of the year, is not much of a surprise. After all, Britain has made no secret of its desperate search for any and all partners to keep trade flowing after it walked out on the European Union.

India's interest in UK-

- But if one shifts focus to India and its reasons for pursuing a deal with Britain, things suddenly get more interesting.
- Even if Britain isn't among India's biggest trade partners, the start of talks marks nothing less than several major shifts in India's foreign and economic policies. If Britain is seeking an economic future beyond Europe, India is looking westward to escape the growing prospect of a Chinese-led Asia.
- Although India embraced globalization at the turn of the 1990s, there was little domestic support for liberalizing trade. Opposing free trade agreements united the left and the right; even more powerful was the resistance from an Indian capitalist class reluctant to open its captive market for foreign producers.
- In the limited political space, they thus had, the weak coalition governments ruling India until 2014 managed to negotiate just a small handful of free trade agreements—mostly with Asian partners, such as Japan, South Korea, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Changes after 2014 regime-

- When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the Bhartiya Janata Party to power in 2014 with a majority in parliament, his government ordered a review of all the free trade deals India had signed.
- Despite a strongly held view across India that the agreements worked to the disadvantage of Indian industry, Modi continued to participate in the Asia-wide free trade negotiations that

would eventually produce the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), but he pulled out at the very last moment in 2019.

- If New Delhi's decision generated deep disappointment among its Asian partners, there was also strong domestic criticism of having isolated India in the global trade domain—a sea change compared to the debate over previous decades.
- Over the last year, Modi has ended India's blanket opposition to free trade agreements and returned to bilateral free trade talks with several blocks, including the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The shift wasn't just toward a new attitude on trade but toward a new set of countries: India's natural economic partners, especially those in the Anglosphere and the West.

Growing potential of relations between India and UK-

- Britain has not traditionally been on the list of countries the Indian establishment has been comfortable with. During the Cold War and afterward, Britain's presumed tilt toward Pakistan chipped away at New Delhi's goodwill for London.
- But the Modi government has transcended hesitations and invested political capital in expanding the partnership by focusing on potential areas of convergence. Trade liberalization has emerged as a major priority with Britain.
- In walking away from the RCEP in 2019, India signaled its reluctance to be part of an Asian economic integration led by China. The sharpening border conflict with Beijing as well as the fear of the Indian manufacturing sector being wiped out by cheap Chinese imports contributed to the decision. In the spring of 2020, Chinese aggression in eastern Ladakh reinforced India's decision.

Changing approach with other stakeholders-

- As it turned its back on the East, New Delhi began to look to the West for trade partnerships, and the Anglosphere seemed the most responsive. It's not just post-Brexit Britain that began to take a fresh look at India. Australia, reeling under the economic coercion imposed by China, also sought to revive moribund trade talks with India.
- New Delhi's positive approach to trade with Canberra goes hand in hand with a deepening bilateral and multilateral strategic partnership. Australia appointed former Prime Minister Tony Abbott as a special envoy on trade. Abbott has made frequent trips to New Delhi in the last few months, and the two sides are said to be close to signing an interim agreement in the coming weeks.
- In the last few weeks, New Delhi has also intensified talks on trade liberalization with a number of countries including Canada and Israel. A trade deal with the United Arab Emirates is said to be ready for signature.
- All this is small fry compared to the importance of the EU and the United States. Brussels and Washington contribute more than 10 percent each of India's annual global trade in goods, which totals close to \$1 trillion.
- Until last year, Brussels was not even interested in engaging New Delhi on trade discussions; that decision stemmed from a failed effort to negotiate a trade deal with India between 2007 and 2013. A major political effort at revitalizing the Indian-EU partnership in the last two years has resulted in a formal political decision in May 2021 to renew the talks. As the two sides prepare

for the negotiations, there will be many hurdles to overcome, and no one is denying the difficulty of arriving at an agreement.

- The United States, on the other hand, is not negotiating free trade agreements with anyone at this stage but is engaged with India in overcoming multiple trade disputes that peaked during the Trump years. Despite these difficulties, **the bilateral goods trade has continued to grow, reaching close to \$110 billion in 2021.**

India's growing relations with west-

- While an Indian-U.S. free trade agreement is not in the cards, there is a **recognition at both countries' highest political levels that they need to urgently complement their growing security partnership** with "an ambitious, shared vision for the future of the trade relationship," as a White House statement put it this past September.
- The Modi government and the Biden administration have **revived the joint trade policy forum**, and there is a renewed effort to overcome many disputes.
- India's new enthusiasm for trading with the West has not escaped Beijing's attention. Reviewing **India's new trade activism**, the state-controlled Global Times said New Delhi can't turn its back on commercial engagement with China. It pointed to the **growing volume of bilateral trade**, which hit \$126 billion in 2021—up by nearly 44 percent over 2020 despite continuing military tensions and New Delhi's policies aiming to reduce economic exposure to Beijing.

Imbalanced trade for India-

- But India can't ignore the fact that its trade **remains massively unbalanced. China's \$70 billion bilateral surplus in 2021** is driven by the fact that India exports mostly raw materials to China and imports mostly manufactured goods.
- Although **India can't immediately lessen its economic dependence on China, it can certainly deepen economic integration with the West.** At home, India can also revive its manufacturing sector to reduce imports from China.
- Over the last year, **New Delhi has outlined a series of incentives to promote manufacturing capacity in India**, and access to Western machine tools and production technology will play an important role. Some of the early reviews of these policies are positive, but the full impact will be felt only in a few years.
- New Delhi's post-independence inward economic turn, **policy of import substitution, and delusions of autarky** saw the steady erosion of India's trade and investment ties with the West. In the economic reform era that began in 1991, the West has returned to leading positions in India's trade profile.
- But New Delhi has **long struggled to seize the new possibilities with the West**, even as China raced ahead to benefit from its growing access to Western capital, markets, and technology.

Way forward for India-

- India's political energies went into arguing with the West on first principles, seeking to **redefine multilateralism and challenging its leadership of the global trading system.** Rather than build on

economic complementarity with the West, New Delhi turned to economies in the east that were similar to—and competing with—India's.

- India is now trying to **reverse this by finding ways to integrate with its Western partners** through free trade agreements. It is also interested in building resilient supply chains among trusted political partners.
- The **economic fallout from Chinese-Western political tensions provides a new geopolitical context for India's economic realignment**. Of course, New Delhi is aware that the West can't easily reverse the deep interdependence with China that has emerged over the last four decades.

Conclusion

The jury is still out on how well India and the West can translate their new geoeconomic convergence into concrete outcomes. For one, **India's trade negotiators are notoriously recalcitrant**. In the West, trade bureaucracies have been attached to the mantra of universally open markets; we have yet to see whether they can shift to selective globalization among like-minded countries and take a strategic approach to commercial engagement with India. The Indian-British trade talks will provide some early answers.