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Communist China Iron Grip

As CCP celebrates 100th
year, there are reasons
for global worry

CONTENTS

Indian Army supply chain administration model: Present day relevance

Because of a massive restructuring of the armed forces on the anvil, the supply chain management which includes logistics must also undergo a transformation. P 05

Growing enemy presence in Himalayan Terrai: India must counter China in Nepal

This growing influence of China in Nepal especially towards the Terrai bordering India, where it has been given the responsibility of creating or remodeling Lumbini into a world peace city could be a major challenge for India to maintain a balance between the two neighbours. P 09



Indian Army should draw tactical, strategic lessons post-Galwan incident

In the specific domain of weapons and equipment, it may be prudent to work concomitantly on the incremental short-term as well as a long-term approach. P 16



Accrual of China: Threat to world peace and stability

Geopolitical change is about one country, China. The key upshot is that China translates its economic power into military and political power. P 19



Afghan crisis: India shows the way, but to no avail

Had the western power followed India's policies supporting Afghanistan, the situation might have improved, if not become fully normal, by now. P 22



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PAKISTAN DEFENCE BUDGET

Guns vs Butter argument subverted in land of pure

By Anis Farooqui

Amidst mayhem that included hurling of chairs and the choicest Punjabi expletives in the Pakistani Parliament - a third world country living on loans from the IMF, unable to guarantee the basic necessities of life to its people, and is now selling brides to hungry Chinese men - passed its defence budget without any parliamentary debate.

On a more serious note, noted Pakistani economist and former member of the Prime Minister's economic advisory panel, Sakib Sherani reports the macro-economic picture in the daily Dawn, "Pakistan has been struggling with low economic growth for three decades. Since 1990, real GDP growth has averaged 4.2 per cent. By comparison, South Asia has averaged economic growth of

6% over the same period. In the past three years, Pakistan's annual GDP growth rate has fallen even further to an average of 1.9%, due to the combined effects of the 2018 balance of payments crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic."

The credibility of the budget has also been called to question. The doyen of economists in Pakistan, Hafiz Pasha, suggests old fashioned figure fudging to present a rosy picture of the economy, something that defuses some of the political pressure on the Imran Khan government and also helps it to negotiate softer terms with the IMF.

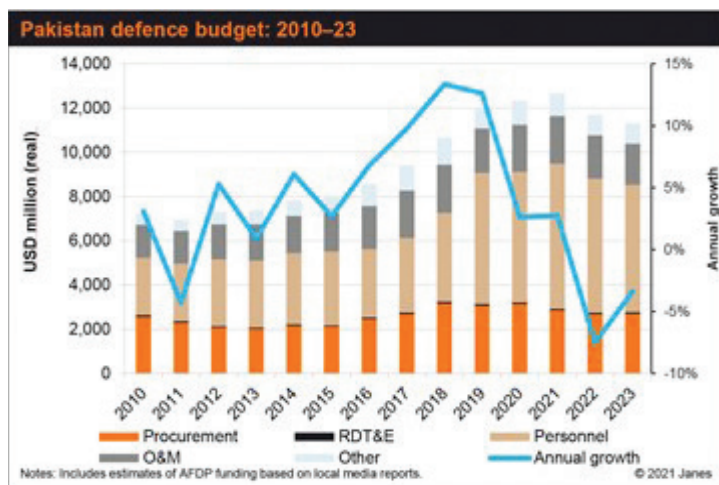
Notwithstanding these substantial arguments on the credibility of the data, this article aims to highlight the fact elucidated by the Indian commentator, Sushant Sareen, who expounds,

"even if the Pak federal government is able to get the entire budgeted net revenue of PKR 4.5 trillion, it still doesn't solve the problem. Almost the entire net revenue is accounted for by debt servicing of PKR 3.1 trillion and defence expenditure of PKR 1.37 trillion".

The rest of the Government expenditure will be undertaken through raising additional debt - and this is where the aforementioned IMF has to step-in.

So, even in this bleak economic scenario, the fact that should be noticed is that Pakistan has managed to increase the defence budget by 6% with an announced budget of PKR 1.37 trillion (USD 8.78 billion) for fiscal year (FY) 2021-22. As mentioned above, this allocation will represent about 16% of the government's total expenditure for FY

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH



2021–22.

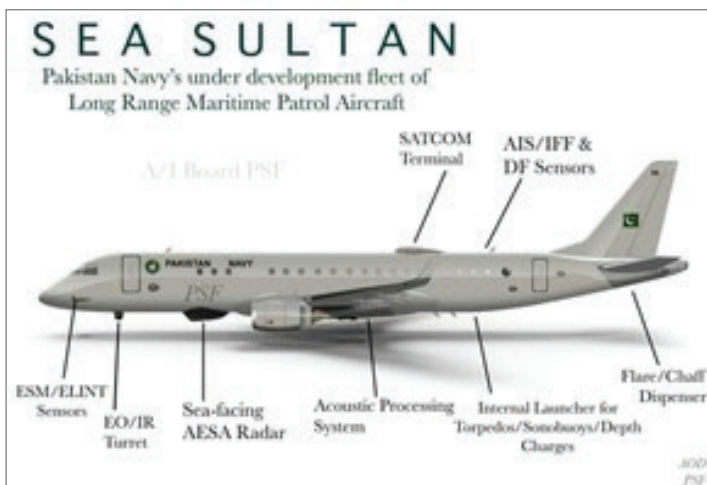
For some inexplicable reason, Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted that the Pak Armed Forces had voluntarily sought a cut in their spending, but the allocations above indicate a palpable increase. In addition, this military expenditure amounts to 2.6% of Pakistan's projected GDP for the next fiscal. In terms of a GDP based comparison, this is more than what 'existential threat' India spends on its military which has been languishing at about 2.16% of the GDP for nearly a decade and also more than 'all-weather brother' China which assures the comity of nations that it has restricted defence expenditure to 1.3% of GDP.

Addressing the Guns v/s Butter argument, Dr Farah Naz justifies the share of expenditure writing in the popular Pakistani daily *The Nation*, "Pakistan's current security environment faces various challenges that includes challenges at the western front, eastern front as well as facing domestic terrorism". Like many other Pakistani strategic analysts, she seeks a greater allocation saying that this meagre outlay is insufficient to meet the strategic requirements of Pakistan. In addition, it is quite certain that like the previous fiscal, the Pak Armed Forces will receive additional allocations at a later stage in the fiscal year.

So, what will each service get? Writing for the *Janes*, Andrew Macdonald highlights "In terms of the armed services, the Pakistan Army will receive PKR 651.5 billion in 2021–

22 (or nearly 48% of the total), while the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy have been allocated PKR 291.1 billion and PKR 148.7 billion (or 21% and 11%) respectively. The majority of the remainder is allocated for defence-wide requirements." Further Macdonald appends, "In a separate appropriation, Pakistan's Defence Production Division, which supports the national defence industry, will receive PKR 1.74 billion in 2021–22, an increase of nearly 11%."

What are the major projects that are being funded through the Pak budget? The Pak Army which traditionally gets the lions share, is looking at the upgradation of its mechanised forces and artillery. Unhappy with the locally made Al-Khalid tank, the Pak COAS visited Ukraine in end May 2021 and was seen reviewing the Ukrainian T-84 'Oplot-M' MBT. The Pak Airforce is wedded to the JF-17 fighter and looks towards China to meet future requirements. There is certainty in the fact that the PAF is covertly receiving some soft loans from Chinese Banks to fund the acquisition for the JF-17s which is locally assembled from engines and avionics of Chinese make. That leaves the Pak Navy which aspires to complete the acquisition and retrofitting through European vendors of ten Embraer Lineage platforms into the 'Sea Sultan' LRMP to replace the PC3 Orion's delivered by the USA in 2012–14. The PN is also likely to Commission the first of class Type 054 frigate from Chi-



na again probably through soft loans from China's EXIM Bank. Reports also allude to the fact that the PN is probably tired of unreliable Chinese weapons and has ordered warships built in Turkish shipyards for \$1.5Billion for which staggered payments are being made from the current budget.

Drawing lessons from the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the Pak armed forces are also looking towards the acquisition of drones. Here, as revealed by Sara Scorchier in the *National Journal*, "the earlier Pak investment in handing over crashed/ damaged US drones to China's has helped as the Chinese Rainbow CH-3 UAV is known to have benefited from reverse-engineering of U.S. drones, and this technology was also transmitted back to Islamabad for Pakistan's nominally indigenous Burraq and Shahpar UAVs."

Whilst the projects enumerated above are not all inclusive, but it does show that the Pak Armed Forces still retain that innate desire to match up with their traditional rivals – India. Policy makers tend to lower monetary provisions and approvals for acquisitions when a cease-fire is holding in J&K. But then, it is the wise who keep their powder dry and prepare for an uncertain future.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a well-respected social and civil right activist. He is very vocal on Human Right violations in South Asia. He works as Host/Producer (Current Affairs) at a leading news channel of North America)

Indian Army supply chain administration model: Present day relevance

By Major General Rajan Kochhar

The Indian Army, with its geographical spread across twenty-nine states of the country, probably has the most overstretched logistics chain amongst all armies of the world.

In order for the army to serve its objective, that is to win a war, it needs to keep on evolving enhanced capabilities considering the ever-growing threat and an extremely sensitive operating environment.

However, the acquisition of such capabilities requires much more than

just hardware. Hence, Supply Chain Management plays an important role to provide a resource to our users in real-time.

Present Supply Chain Model of Ordnance Corps

The Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) is the premier logistics organisation of the Indian Army, which performs a huge role in supplying the needs of men, material, and equipment. It has a supply chain model which is multi-echelon based with larger depots like Cen-

tral Ordnance Depots and then others like Ordnance depots, Divisional Ordnance Units, Brigade Ordnance Units and so on.

The model is interspersed with manufacturing agencies such as Ordnance Factories, Defence Public Sector Undertakings, Defence Research and Development Organisation and the private industry.

The inventory has recently been digitalised centrally and interfaced with a robust SAP/ERP based system lending better transparency and visibility to the



DEFENCE MANAGEMENT

entire inventory management process.

The supply chain model envisages a mix of a 'pull and push' model, wherein the requirements of formations/units are met through a robust three-dimensional supply chain system comprising of land, air, and rail.

The military supply chain has no parallel to any commercial supply chain, both in terms of scope and the criticality of the operations. The advance winter stocking of units in Leh and Ladakh, as well as the recent logistic build-up due to the Chinese threat, are a testimony to the fact that the supply chain model has delivered and stood the test of time.

The proper functioning of such support services is paramount for the soldiers at war and even small delays could result in catastrophic consequences to the security of the nation.

The military supply chain can be divided into three distinct chains. The first chain encompasses fast and light stores, the second chain deals with heavy equipment and the third chain deals with the deployment and move of soldiers/men. Unlike any commercial supply chain, the army supply chain is known to have reverse and lateral flows.

Upgradation and Modernisation

We have in recent times seen the Army Ordnance Corps undergoing a sea change in the upgradation of its processes and modernisation of its depots by the integration of computer technology and adoption of flexibility in its structure.

It is doing away with unproductive practices and outsourcing them to private players in the market. The various maintenance and upgradation contracts with private players are an initiative to bring inefficient resource management.

Today, the entire process from provisioning to procurement and finally to the delivery is totally automated and available to the head of the organisation for a better decision-making process.

It is extremely important to remain



Bridge Tracks

ahead of the OODA cycle in order to achieve the required objective with success. We need to give this upgradation and modernisation a further fillip to include all the 100-odd units of the Army Ordnance Corps in a phased manner.

Global Practices and Imperatives for Change

We have seen in recent times how the industry has adapted itself to employ innovative methods of cost-cutting and improved efficiencies. One such measure has been to concentrate on the core activities and outsource the non-core activities.

Individual companies have ensured that their supply chains are more resilient and competitive. It is important to note that if any one link in the supply chain is disturbed, the entire supply chain gets stalled.

For example, in the case for the manufacture of gears; automotive production of mesh parts takes place in

Pune, sub-assemblies are made in Hosur, and the final assembling is done at Manesar.

If anyone activity is shut down at any one place, the entire supply chain gets stalled. Therefore, every supply chain model will have to have a contingency plan inbuilt.

Resilient capabilities will have to be developed in order to respond to uncertainties. Warehouses will relocate closer to customers. The private industry has adapted well to this model.

Drive India Enterprise Solutions Limited, a leading provider of integrated logistics solutions to a wide range of industries, have over 165 warehouses connecting 7,000 towns across India. These warehouses are linked, and requirements met for all the towns through an integrated system of a transportation model using linear programming tools.

It has also integrated third-party logistics (3PL) in its functioning and



services like transportation, warehousing, cross-docking, inventory management, packaging and freight forwarding are all amalgamated. According to a report, companies in India currently outsource an estimated 62 per cent of their logistics requirement.

Supply chain management is considered a function crucial to a large number of industries to achieve and maintain its global competitiveness. For instance, in the airlines industry, logistics is not only the scheduling of flights and passengers but also meticulous planning, implementing, and control of a variety of activities, such as scheduling for crews, ground support, airport scheduling, preventive maintenance, luggage, and meals.

Global supply chain management is most crucial to the competitiveness of global retailers, such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour, and e-retailers like Amazon.com. Nike does not own a complete manufacturing facility in any part of

the world but gets all its products manufactured by sub-contracting in various parts of the world.

Nike focuses primarily upon design, supply chain management, and marketing. Supply chain management aims at minimisation and elimination of all wastes through vertical integration of all functional activities in managing the suppliers' suppliers all the way through to managing the customers' customers and focusing on scheduling and time efficiency.

The government can play a major role in supporting the logistics sector by giving focus on the development of infrastructure like roads, railways, ports, airports, logistic parks, warehousing and inland container depots. This would help to improve the storage and handling of goods and materials by providing facilities to logistics companies at reasonable costs.

Adopting Best Practices

It is well recognised that the Indian Army operates in some of the most adverse environmental conditions. The existing multi-echelon system based on manual store keeping needs to be urgently modernised.

There is excessive provisioning at each store holding echelon and huge costs are incurred on account of an idle inventory. To some extent, the CICP (Computerised Inventory Control Project) model would help resolve this issue.

Another area of concern is the warranty issue. In most cases, by the time a spare part or sub-assembly is actually used, its warranty period is over and no claim can be raised for any defect or premature failure. This is particularly true for tyres, tubes, and batteries.

Therefore, state-of-the-art supply chain management tools need to be employed to minimise idling inventory to a bare minimum, perhaps to the level of war wastage reserves.

Adopting technology into supply chain processes is no longer considered proactive, but a standard operation. The trick is to choose a platform that meets your needs. Platforms, such

as ERPs and SAPs, are a great tool to streamline processes, increase visibility, minimize paperwork, and automate certain activities.

Transportation management systems and transportation spend management systems are ideal tools for the bigger picture in the supply chain—they help increase efficiency, reduce risk, and provide data-driven insights into business decisions. A strong platform helps streamline supply chain management and works in tandem with the laid-out strategy.

In the last two decades, the logistics distribution networks of Indian Original Equipment Manufacturers have significantly improved especially of the common user items. We need to have maximum items under a centralised "rate contract" (RC).

The action already initiated on this needs to be stepped up to increase the range and depth of items under RC. This would be far cheaper than the costs associated with idling inventory.

Once successfully implemented, stocking norms can be reviewed and inventory carrying costs reduced significantly. We also have a number of items on the transportation model. The scope of this could be widened and numbers of items enhanced and thereby ensure all stock holding echelons right to the formation level are covered.

Areas for Outsourcing

The provisioning of clothing and general stores, as required by the Indian Army is the responsibility of the Army Ordnance Corps. The army is largely dependent on Ordnance Factories that provide the complete range of clothing items; as a matter of fact, 80 percent of the items manufactured by Ordnance Factories are based on the requirements projected by the Indian Army.

A performance evaluation by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its report for the year 2019 on the Ordnance Factory Board highlights a few of the lacunae, which ails this organisation.

- Overheads constitute a staggering 33 percent of the overall allotted



budget for the year. The major contributors being supervision costs and indirect labour costs.

- The Ordnance Factories achieved production targets for only 49 per cent of the items. A significant quantity of Indian Army demand for principal ammunition items remained outstanding.

- More than half the inventory (52 percent) was the store-in-hand procured for the manufacture but not used within the year by the factories. This has serious implications on the professionalism of this organisation wherein no scientific management techniques like selective inventory control, and forecasting were used.

- Work-in-progress (unfinished items lying on the shop floor) constituted 32 percent of the inventory. Orders as old as the year 2009-10 were yet to be delivered, a delay of ten years. Apple graduated from iPhone 4 to iPhone 11 within this period and here we are still in a primitive state of functioning.

- A total inventory of Rs 1,055 crore (\$142 million) pertains to slow and non-moving items, which were still lying for further disposal.

- It would be worthwhile to move away from our clothing requirements to the private sector to enable improvements in availability and quality.

Performance Based Logistics

The military should—and can—operate more efficiently. One area that has potential for major savings is logistics. As combat capabilities grow, the logistics

system must adapt.

Performance-based logistics is an approach that organizes logistics around these increasing combat capabilities, offering huge savings in the process. Performance-based logistics changes the metric by which the effectiveness of the logistics system is gauged in order to drive an alternative approach to manage the system.

The new method involves taking bids and hiring private contractors for jobs that used to be performed using government workers. Since a private company could precisely control manufacturing and delivery costs, this method cuts waste and improves resource availability.

Since processes are itemized, individual accounts became responsible for specific activities. This system could be explored for its efficacy and applicability to the Indian armed forces especially when theaterisation takes place.

Impact of Theaterisation of Commands

Gone are the days when battles dragged on for years. Now battles are instant. It's all about striking swiftly and stealthily. And to do this, you need instant decision making and state-of-the-art weaponry.

Hence, amongst the defence reforms, which have been announced, theaterisation of commands is a major one. This will largely impact the chain of command and duplication of work.

In today's environment, a person in

charge of an operation doesn't have full control of all the assets. The army will always have to requisition for close air support. Therefore, like all major armies of the world have done, theaterisation has become a necessity.

With the coming in of theaterisation, the logistics will have to undergo a major change. The first step would entail digitalisation and networking of the logistics elements of the three services. Every item will need to be given a unique identification code common to the three services employing techniques like radio frequency identification.

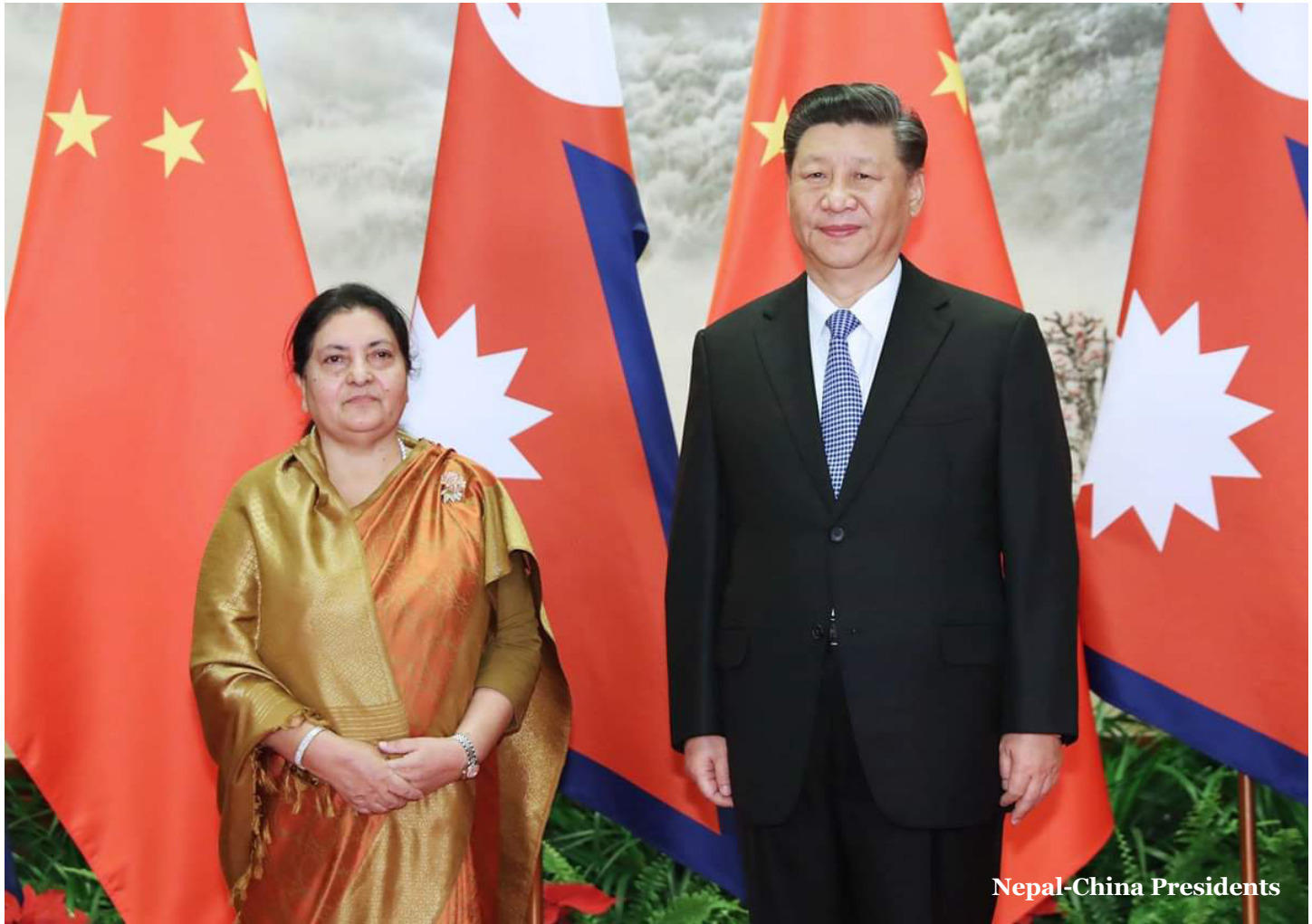
There would also be a requirement for a separate Defence Logistics Agency to take on the requirement for the three services. We may also look to have a roll-on budget instead of a yearly budget. This will facilitate the procurement process and proper utilisation of the allotments made. These are some of the issues which would need greater deliberation.

Conclusion

It is imperative that the Army Ordnance Corps keeps pace with the constantly changing technological environment in our country. On account of a massive restructuring of the armed forces on the anvil, the supply chain management which includes logistics must also undergo a transformation.

A de novo look needs to be given and concepts and best practices need to be adopted to synergise the logistics towards our military and national aim. The time for reckoning is drawing near. As is often said, "Innovation and best practices can be sown throughout an organisation – but only when they fall on fertile ground."

(The writer retired from the Indian Army as Major General Army Ordnance Corps of the Lucknow-based Central Command. He holds a doctorate in Emotional Intelligence and is a reputed expert on logistics and supply chain management. Published in arrangement with Defence Research and Studies. The article is available on dras.in)



Nepal-China Presidents

Growing enemy presence in Himalayan Terrai: India must counter China in Nepal

By Lieutenant General Shokin Chauhan

The 1950–1951 invasion of Tibet by the People's Liberation Army resulted in significant changes in the Chinese relationship with Nepal. China ordered restrictions on the entry of Nepalese pilgrims and contacts with Tibet and increased its support for the Communist Party of Nepal, which was opposed to the continuation of the Nepalese monarchy.

Mao repeatedly stated from 1950

onwards that Taiwan, Tibet, and Hainan Islands were Chinese territories and would be repossessed in time and the predominant trait in this claim was the sudden appearance of “existing maps showing large parts of Korea, Indo-China, Mongolia, Burma, Malaysia, Eastern Turkestan, India, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan as Chinese territories.”

Later, Mao stated publicly that Tibet was the palm of a hand, and its

five fingers were Ladakh, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, and North-East Frontier Agency. Worried by this statement in 1952, King Tribhuvan of Nepal invited an Indian Military Mission (IMM) to reorganise and modernise his army which earlier was kept part-time and when not on duty followed other professions. Periodically, they were called for parades in Kathmandu and were ill-equipped and ill-paid.

The IMM arrived at Kathmandu

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

“on February 28, 1952, and was tasked to assist in the reorganisation of the Nepali Army, formulating defence plans against internal and external threats, and improving intelligence and administrative establishments.

The IMM consisted of a Major General, assisted by 20 Indian Army officers. In December 1953, its strength was a total of 197, all ranks. On its recommendations, by April 1952, the RNA was downsized from 25,000 ill-organised soldiers to 6,000 well trained and equipped ones.

In September 1951, 17 check posts were established along Nepal's borders with China and were manned jointly by 75 Indian technicians and Nepalese Army personnel. Unfortunately, under pressure domestically and from China, in mid-1958, the King asked India to withdraw the IMM.

As a result, India agreed to reduce its strength to 23 in all and to retain it in Nepal under the name of the Indian Military Training and Advisory Group (IMTAG). Further, on June 5, 1969, the Nepalese Prime Minister asked for the withdrawal of all the check posts and the IMTAG. The withdrawal of the IMM was completed by August 1970.

India continued to supply arms, ammunition, and equipment to the entire Nepalese Army of 17,000 personnel, comprising four re-organised brigades. It catered for the replacement of existing weapons as well as training.

After the restoration of amicable relations, post-1989 crisis, the Nepalese sought India's help in raising large-scale military formations by re-organising the existing army from its battalions and independent companies into brigades and divisions.

By 1998, a simmering Maoist insurgency in Nepal forced the Government of Nepal to relook at the equipping of its army and make it capable of fighting these Maoists. Once again Nepal requested assistance from India and a host of other nations including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and China, the European Union, and Pakistan, all of whom reacted in various ways and to equip Ne-



pal with diverse military equipment.

From India, under a 70 per cent assistance scheme, and through a series of defence-purchase negotiations, the Nepal Army (NA) received more than 26,000 weapons of various kinds including 21,000 Indian-made INSAS rifles, 81- and 51-mm mortars and other military hardware including landmines, detonators, safety fuses and time pencils. India also provided four Advanced Light Helicopters.

Post the 'Jan Andolan' and the agreement of the Government of Nepal and the Maoists, India had supplied non-lethal equipment to include 216 light vehicles, 154 heavy vehicles, including 58 trucks of 7.5 tons capacity, 67 trucks of 2.5 tons capacity, four ambulances, and 25 multi-purpose armoured vehicles, among others.

India's Security Concerns in Nepal

Geographical position and historical

development are largely determining factors of Nepal's foreign policy that regardless of the kaleidoscopic change of contemporary events, and no matter what form of government or what political party may be in power, no government in Nepal can ignore the fundamentals of geography.

In the end, it must return again and again to the same general and fundamental alignment. This is applicable both in the Indo-Nepalese and the Nepal-China context and is evident in its political relations since the establishment of the modern State of Nepal.

This unique location of Nepal is of immense strategic value to India as well as to China. India has traditionally looked at its northern frontiers with China as the Himalayan watershed. The Himalayan watershed forms formidable military barriers that can be crossed at selected places only and therefore lend itself for a strong defence line requiring significantly less-



er resources to defend.

Any Chinese military or ideological influx or influence south of this watershed would be inimical to Indian interests and since the mountains of Nepal open out to the great Indian plains, it becomes crucial to safeguard the military interests of India.

China, on the other hand, views its borders with Nepal, as the soft underbelly of Tibet. It, therefore, finds it necessary to ensure that it retains adequate political, strategic, and economic leverage in Nepal so that its security is not compromised.

Nepal's southern borders with India do not have geographical barriers and are open, porous and in places difficult to monitor by the security personnel. Any anti-India activity in Nepalese border areas will find easy access to a poorly guarded and insecure Indian heartland.

These activities could be Inter-Services Intelligence-sponsored violence,

smuggling, drug running, and other economic offences. Now with the increase in Chinese influence within Nepal and further its movement towards the Terai belt bordering the Indo-Gangetic heartland, it's only a matter of time that China would utilise this open border and exploit this weakness of the Indian state and take advantage of it.

The Chinese Creep into Nepal

"China is many things at once in Nepal today. It is a superpower, a beneficent aid-giver, a friend in need, an essential provider, a demanding neighbour, an older brother, a competitor, a model of development and a vision of a developed future. China is changing regional and global dynamics in an unprecedented way than Nepal. As China declares itself on the world stage, Nepal wants to tag along for the ride. Relations have never been better than in the contemporary era, but they need to be sustained, nurtured, and developed as they evolve. It is in Nepal's interest to do so, and imperative to do it in a way that acknowledged its own aspirations," said Amish Raj Mulmi.

This growing influence of China in Nepal especially towards the Terai bordering India, where it has been given the responsibility of creating or remodelling Lumbini into a world peace city could be a major challenge for India to maintain a balance between the two neighbours.

The Inherent Dangers of the Lumbini Proposal

Lumbini is just 30 km from the Indian border town of Sunauli and at an extremely strategic and critical part of India's Indo-Gangetic heartland. A Chinese company bringing in Chinese labour which could consist of PLA in disguise is definitely a clear and present danger for India, regardless of the plan to transform Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, into an international tourist hub and a 'Mecca' for Buddhist pilgrims.

What does seem suspect is that a country like China, which has done its utmost to destroy Buddhism and

peace in Tibet, has been charged with the responsibility to build infrastructure surrounding Lumbini, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, so as to attract Buddhist pilgrims from over the world.

Changing Perceptions About the Chinese in Nepal

Recently, the Kathmandu Post, an English-language newspaper in Nepal, ruffled Chinese feathers in February when it published an article criticising Beijing's handling of the COVID-19 virus outbreak. The article blamed China's authoritarian political system for contributing to the spread of the virus and turning it into a pandemic.

The Chinese Embassy in Nepal immediately put out a statement condemning the Kathmandu Post for its scathing editorial. The embassy threatened to take further action against the newspaper and singled out Anup Kaphle, its editor-in-chief, for being "biased on China-related issues."

China's harsh response toward the Nepali newspaper came at a time when Beijing has greatly ramped up its investments in Nepal. Further, the Kathmandu Post alleged that Chinese aid to Nepal comes with "strings attached."

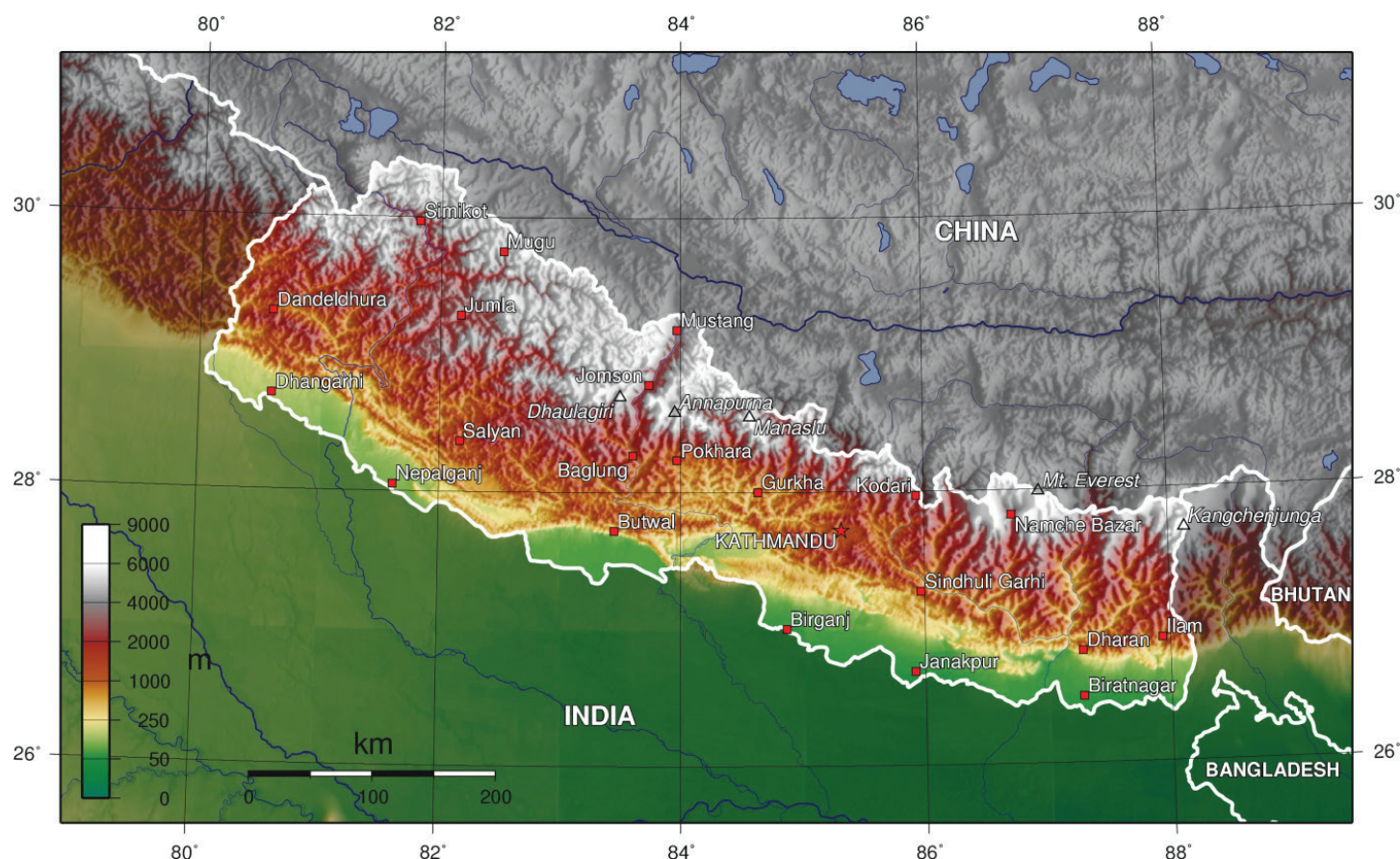
However, a respected academic, Kapil Shrestha, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, agreed with the paper's view and stated that "Nepalis interpret the embassy's statement as unwarranted interference in the sovereignty of Nepal. It's an act of intimidation to the extent that it blackmails Nepal."

Upgrading Existing Trade with Tibet Autonomous Region

Since independence, Nepal was dependent on Indian ports for its commerce, with two-thirds of goods to and from Nepal passing through them. However, in a bid to cut back on this reliance, Kathmandu signed a transit protocol with Beijing in 2017.

This protocol, which came into force on February 1, 2018, gave Nepal access to four seaports and three

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH



land ports in China and was inked just months after India had normalised the supply of essential items such as fuel and medicines to Nepal. This transit protocol would result in the border between Nepal and China becoming more porous and could be a potential security risk for India.

Conclusion

Post-colonial India wanted a special relationship based on its security umbrella over all three of its Himalayan neighbour-states, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Prime Minister Nehru, in a 1950 speech to the Indian Parliament outlined the Himalayas as India's "magnificent frontier", and stated: "We have been inheritors of many good things from the days of British rule, and many bad things also; and our relations with our neighbouring countries grew up sometimes in an expansive phase of British policy, of British imperialism. Naturally, and quite frankly, we do not like, and we do not propose to like, any foreign in-

terference in Nepal. So, our relationship is intimate, and no other country's relationship with Nepal can be as intimate, and every other country must have realised and appreciated this intimate geographical, cultural and other relationship of India and Nepal. There is no way out except by realising this fact."

Chinese presence in Nepal and its dubious plans are a real security threat to India. The relations of Nepal with China and Tibet reflect, in their vicissitudes, the greater events of Central Asia. Nepal today marks the extreme limit to where Chinese influence has extended southwards.

Nepal, being a sovereign country would like to deal with India on an equitable basis. Given the geographically contiguous, culturally similar, and economically closer relationship with India, Nepal perhaps also realises that it would be quite impractical to ignore its southern giant at the behest of building strategic ties with the northern giant.

With globalisation, shifting Asian balance of power, the rise of China and the emergence of India, Nepal is likely to opt for a balanced approach with both India and China, which it hopes would eventually pave the path for its own economic growth and stability.

For India, the challenge is to keep Nepal within its sphere of influence without being seen as domineering. In fact, India must deftly handle its Nepal policy keeping in mind the growing Chinese presence in Nepal and deal deftly and swiftly with the emerging security threat to our heartland, the Indo-Gangetic Basin. There are no soft options left on the table anymore.

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China's aggressive expansionism is no balm for Century of Humiliation

By N. C. Bipindra

The fourth-largest empire in the world at its time, the Qing dynasty lasted for almost three centuries commencing 1634. It was not only the largest but also the last dynasty in Imperial Chinese history.

Its true downfall began in 1839 when it lost to the British in the First Opium War. Soon, the French, Russians, Japanese and Germans nibbled various parts of China. The final nail in the coffin of humiliation came about with the Eight-Nation Alliance comprising Germany, Russia, Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, the United States, and Italy quelling the Boxer Rebellion 1900.

The Chinese Communist Party or CCP has been propagating the theory that the period 1839 to 1949 was a Century of Humiliation. The CCP also wants the world to believe that it was CCP alone that brought an end to this subjugation in 1949 completely deleting any references to the giant contributions made by Sun Tat-sen or Chiang Kai-shek or the Kuomintang in the first half of the 1900s.

Since 1949, the CCP has gone all out to publicise the injustices meted to it during the Century of Humiliation. The CCP itself was founded in 1921. An accurate reading of history would reveal China does not have the

exclusive tag to the harshness of colonial history.

Most poor countries of the 18th to 20th Century experienced similar or worse conditions by the colonial powers. Whether it was South America, Asia or Africa, colonies were exploited and humiliated in their lands.

While today there are no colonies, many are still recovering. The British were the largest colonisers and today have a Commonwealth of Nations in its attempt to heal injuries it inflicted.

The French too have been following the healing approach with former colonies. It is but natural that any country which experienced such torrid



times would want to be an ambassador against colonisation; championing the cause of mutual trust and dignity. Modern ex-colonies such as Vietnam, Brazil, India, Indonesia, China, South Africa, and many more would perhaps be expected to lead such a cause.

It is 2021 now. The centenary of the CCP. While propagating exaggerated versions of the Century of Humiliation and how the CCP freed the Chinese from it, one wonders what exactly the CCP has done to prevent a repetition of such colonial atrocities or how it has campaigned for human dignity and values.

A peek into giants of CCP since 1949 and their attitudes would enable us to understand the present and the future that CCP has to offer the world. Mao Tse-tung, the CCP founder, strongman and first Chairman famously quipped, “Political power grows out of the barrel of the gun.”

And Mao was himself the architect of one of the ugliest genocides perpetrated anywhere in the world. His ‘Great Leap Forward’ followed shortly by the ‘Cultural Revolution’ resulted in an estimated 70 million deaths – all Chinese. The figure is comparable to the death toll all over the world due to World War II. For many Chinese, it appeared Mao was aiming at 100 million deaths to compete with the Century of Humiliation.

After Mao’s demise, Deng Xiaoping’s 24-character strategy prophe-sized “Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.”

China saw an economic boom during this period, shedding its Communist ideologies and moving more towards a free-market Capitalist approach. If there was one blot on Deng, it was the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre.

The world moved away from China and isolated it consequently. The Chinese history books have conven-

iently erased all mention of the massacre though. The 1990s witnessed Jiang Zemin laying low and biding China’s time initiating military reforms with his three principles of ‘Modernisation, National Reunification, and Safeguarding World Peace and Common Development.’

Hong Kong too changed flags from a British Protectorate to a Chinese Special Administrative Region during the period. In the 2000s, Hu Jintao executed military modernisation with his concept of scientific harmonisation (kexue fazhanguan).

The period also saw world powers attempting to reconcile with China and letting the Tiananmen Square incident no longer affect the present. Finally, the world was hoping, that China would be a proponent of Human Rights along with development.

The world was in for a rude shock. After assuming full control of China, Xi Jinping, not only emphasised the need to return to Mao’s principles by ordering mass re-prints of his famous ‘Little Red Book’ (that contained a realist Mao’s policies of the world within and outside China) but has also stressed the eventual realization of the great Chinese Dream.

This intractable desire is evident in the early indoctrination of impressionable school children whose textbooks contain elaborate stories of how unfair the world has been and how it is a question of honour to reclaim what is rightfully theirs’.

Today, there is everything from school competitions to television shows that actively attempt to realize the Chinese dreams of Xi Jinping. Such impregnation of passionate ideology stoking Chinese nationalism can be loosely compared to the indoctrination of young Islamic students in the name of ‘jihad’. The Chinese version dwells more on the nationalist need to reclaim their rightful place in history.

Xi, it appears wants to not just return to Mao’s principles but outdo Mao in every metric feasible. He

intends to remain the President for life, just like Mao – not just of the CCP, but also China.

If Mao was responsible for over 70 million deaths, Xi has started in earnest by subjecting inhuman unspeakable atrocities against the Uyghurs. From mass internment, organ harvesting, forced religious conversions, forced marriages, et al – indeed Xi has arrived.

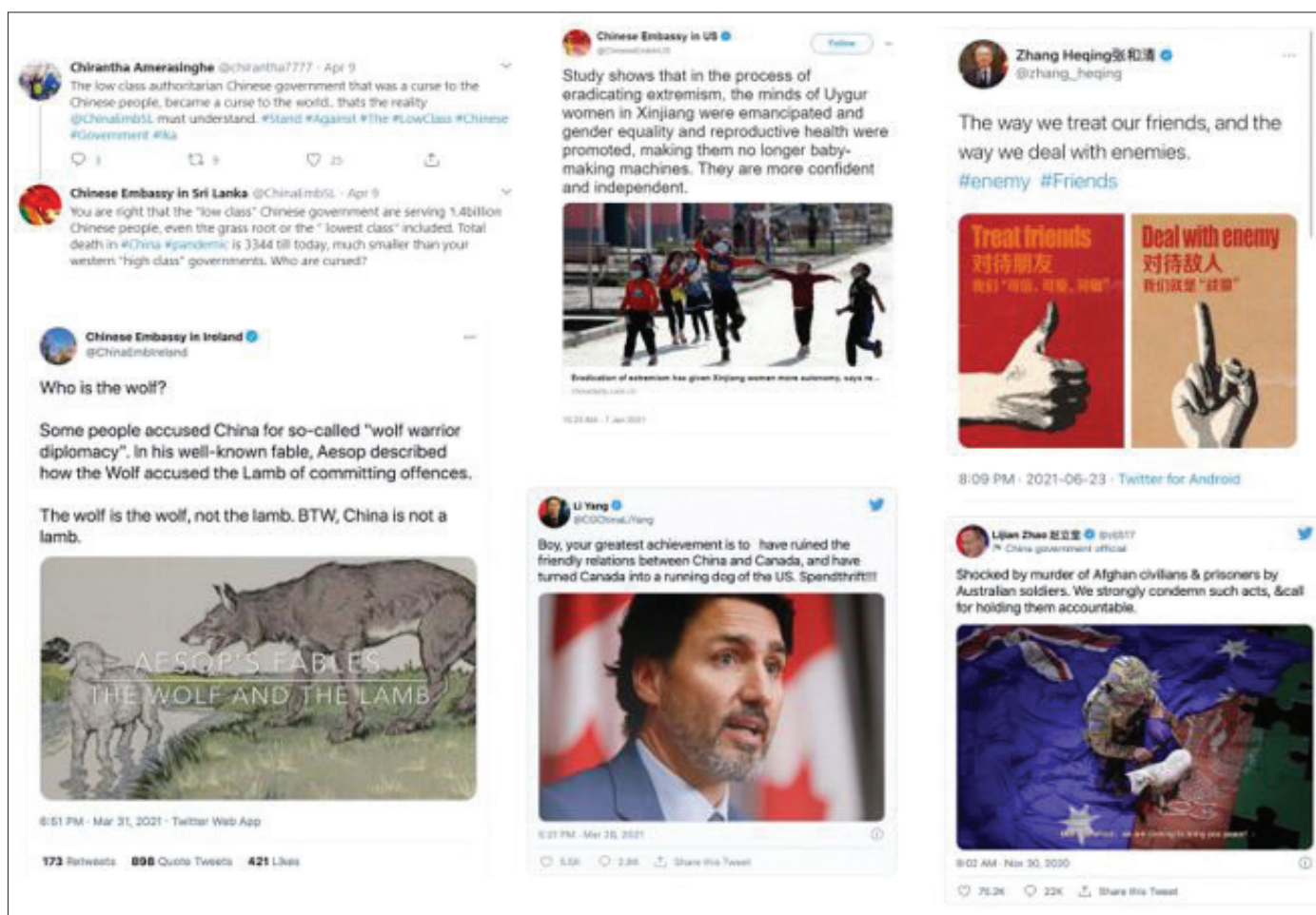
Today, CCP’s China boasts the highest per capita cameras in the world for monitoring its population. Every citizen is mandatorily required to install a variety of applications on their mobile phones so that the CCP can monitor every move of yours. Non-compliance is rewarded by prompt arrest. CCP’s centenary celebrations can claim the undisputed title of the ultimate surveillance state in the world.

All the above could always be brushed below the carpet under the guise of foreign propaganda against the peaceful rise of the Chinese. Approaching gullible smaller countries in the name of development and aid, just as the colonial powers did in the 18th and 19th centuries, Chinese commerce is being followed up by its Flag.

The CCP is diligently gobbling up small countries through its debt-trap diplomacy. And where the countries do not bend, strong-arm tactics are employed through blackmail, stoppage of developmental work and other means.

In its elaborate plan, it is not just debts that are employed. Taking over of local telecommunications, transport and perhaps most importantly control of the media have become the standard tools to colonise the host countries.

From Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu; from Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Djibouti, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa; from Ecuador, Venezuela to Argentina; from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Mongolia, Laos, Maldives, Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Tajikistan to Indo-



nesia; from Montenegro to Ukraine and counting, CCP it seems is giving the 21st Century a lesson in neo-colonialism.

The behaviour is witnessed by the world not restricted to combative words, but in aggressive actions too. In early April 2020, a Vietnamese fishing trawler near the Paracel Islands was rammed and sunk by a Chinese coastguard ship.

In May 2021, when there were photographs of Indian cremations consequent to COVID-19 deaths, instead of providing solace as a mature neighbour, Weibo, the Chinese official website compared how Hindus in India light pyres while the Chinese ignite their rockets to launch satellites to outer space.

Recently, Ukraine was pressured into withdrawing its support for a United Nations Human Rights

Council in Geneva that called for scrutiny of the treatment of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region.

The threat was simple. Ukraine was first forced to purchase Chinese-made 500,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines which itself are under scrutiny for their efficacy. Once Ukraine supported the UNHCR resolution, CCP threatened to not deliver on the doses which were already paid for. The examples would perhaps run into more pages than all volumes of Encyclopaedia Britannica put together.

Of late, the CCP has gotten into a 'Wolf Warrior' mode through its diplomats. Wolf Warrior is a 2015 Chinese movie on its Special Forces. Perhaps CCP diplomats have assumed everyone other than themselves are thugs and opine that CCP behaviour too must be thug-like!

When arrogance fills up, it spills over out in the open. Sample all the tweets by CCP's official diplomats and foreign ministry spokespersons. CCP diplomats, it appears, are proud of their trolling than any form of maturity or healing nature on social media platforms.

It is time someone reminded the CCP that having endured the miseries of colonialism, one would expect a 21st Century China to heal itself and other past colonies, with a humane approach; instead of turning into the Marshal of the very same devouring behaviour and mete out the exact treatment to lesser privileged.

Humiliating one's population and subjecting others to neo-colonialism is no balm to heal the century of humiliation is perhaps the most important lesson that the CCP needs to draw as it commemorates its centenary.

Indian Army should draw tactical, strategic lessons post-Galwan incident

By Major General Rajan Kochhar

It was April 2020 and there was peace and tranquility on the Indian post somewhere in eastern Ladakh. The nation was grappling with the aftermath of COVID-19 and the Indian Army had curtailed its major training exercises to combat this newfound viral threat.

All training establishments had virtually closed down and the focus remained to maintain maximum safety measures to contain the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, the Chinese leadership, under its head of the Central Military Commission (CMC) Xi Jinping, had different ideas.

The PLA Western Command under Gen General Zhao Zongqi -- the man known for the 2017 Doklam skirmish -- was tasked to build up his forces in strategic areas of eastern Ladakh at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and thereby, disturb the existing status quo. The rest is history.

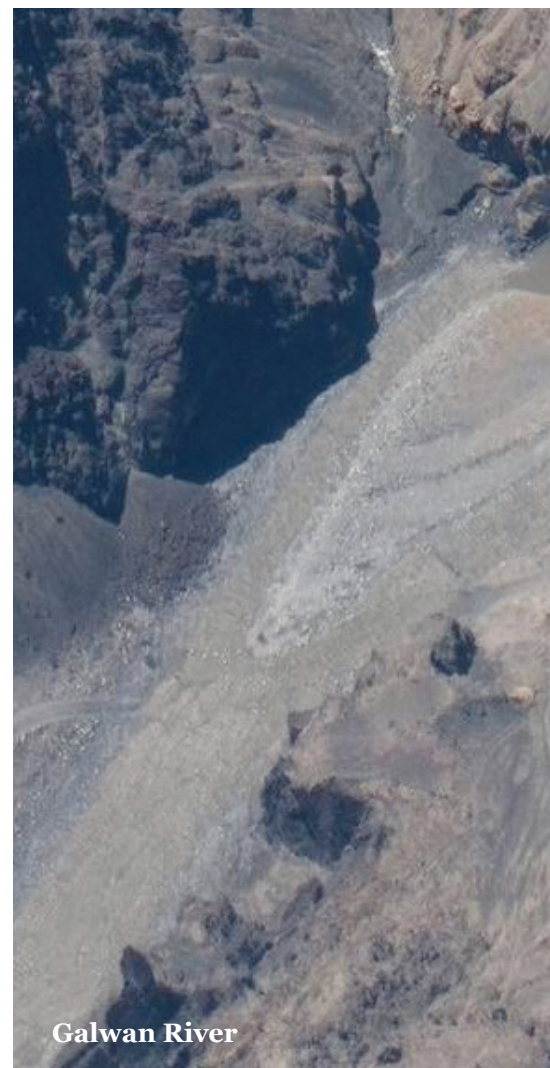
A Well Thought out PLA Strategy

As it was evident, the Indian Army seemed oblivious of these major developments including the move of more than 10,000 People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops in their designated areas of South bank of Pangong Tso lake up to Finger 4, Gogra Hot Springs, Galwan Valley, and Depsang.

Thereafter, beginning May 5, 2020, the Chinese commenced their well-known strategy of engaging Indian troops in aggressive melee, face-offs, and skirmishes at locations all along the Sino-Indian border including the disputed Pangong Lake in Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous Region. Additional clashes also took place at locations in eastern Ladakh along the LAC.

The Chinese Transgression

After a few scuffles at few points along LAC earlier in May, which were cases of response to transgressions, China



Galwan River

transgressed at multiple points with a large number of troops, pitched tents and made some bunkers.

Indian troops had also positioned themselves in large numbers, which led to a standoff at multiple places in Galwan Area and at Finger 4 in the Pangong Tso area.



Galwan Clash



This was followed by some military build-up by both sides, as they got ready for an extended standoff. Indian Army continued with infrastructure development in its own territory, during faceoff and local level talks, to support important posts like Daulat Beg Oldi and Hot spring.

The Galwan Incident

Then on June 15, 2020, Galwan clashes happened. Colonel B. Santosh Babu, Commanding Officer, 16 Bihar regiment, led the Quick Reaction Force and attached troops tasked to evict the PLA OP from general area of Y Nala and move further to Patrolling Point 14 (PP14).

The column successfully evicted the PLA OP from Y Nala and reached PP14, where a fierce skirmish broke out between the Indian and the Chinese troops. Colonel Santosh Babu led from the front and his troops fought gallantly in hand-to-hand combat, causing heavy casualties to the PLA. In the ensuing fight, 20 “Gallants of Galwan” achieved martyrdom.

Intelligence Failure

As we reflect upon the entire developments since this Galwan episode, some serious strategic and tactical lessons get unfolded. It seems we still haven’t much learnt our lessons since Kargil happened in 1999. The foremost lesson which has emerged was an Intelligence failure.

We often boast of our high calibre of intelligence resources such as Research and Analysis Wing, Intelligence Bureau, Military Intelligence, Defence Intelligence Agency and so on. Yet, time and again, we fail to interpret the early signs and designs of the enemy.

Today, our country has been a pioneer in space research and technology. We are yet to have a dedicated military satellite. Our major surveillance inputs are still being obtained from the United States.

We severely lack surveillance resources and effective 360-degree coverage in our areas of interest. The need of the hour is to have an all-weather Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and intelligence ca-

pability, greater mobility by tactical heli-lift and by using Artificial Intelligence for smart management of the counter-infiltration grid.

There is a requirement of extensive deployment of weapon locating radars, use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and third-generation thermal/image intensification Night Vision Devices.

Reactionary Procurement

The skirmishes and standoff have caused reactionary purchases by India. This includes the Indian Air Force starting the process for emergency procurement of 12 Sukhoi-30 MKI and 21 Mikoyan MiG-29 from Russia.

In July 2020, The Print reported that post-Galwan, the Indian armed forces were working on over 100 emergency procurement contracts. In July, it was reported that India was looking for light-weight tanks that could be used in Ladakh. While light-weight tanks for Ladakh have been noted since 2009, the 2020 China tensions created a sense of urgency.

Russia offered its Sprut SDM1



Galwan Tribute

lightweight tanks while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was in Russia in June 2020. On 14 September 2020, media reports claimed that the F-15EX fighter jet had been offered to India.

On 28 September 2020, the Defence Acquisition Council, Ministry of Defence, under fast-tracked procurement, ordered an additional 72,400 SIG 716 for troops in Ladakh; the first batch of SIG Sauer rifles had been ordered in 2019 and has already been delivered to the army.

Emergency purchases also included DRDO Smart Anti Airfield Weapons under the Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) category.

We go through our acquisition and planning process every year and make five- and ten-years perspective plans. We undertake a great deal of scientific and strategic assessment in forecasting our requirement to modernise. But, unfortunately, nothing fructifies as our procedures are fraught with bureaucratic roadblocks and mistrust built at each level.

The lack of synergy between the civil and military officials is a known factor in spite of us calling ourselves an Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence. Therefore, such reactionary procurement was avoidable as it leads to a lack of long-term perspective as well as an escalated cost which at times is almost five times the actual procurement cost of a weapon system.

Lack of Strategic Vision

For the past many years, the Indian Army has been crying hoarse for a Ladakh Strike Corps. What we eventually got was a truncated Mountain Strike Corps, which lacked the essential weaponry for firepower and mobility.

Thereafter, this capability has been built up now due to these accentuating circumstances. This reflects on our lack of strategic vision and faulty threat assessment.

Rules of Engagement

It seems to be again quite ironic that at the tactical level, we adopted a policy of equipping our soldiers with a stick to fight a well-trained enemy. Under the previous rules of engagement based on agreements signed in 1996 and 2005, troops from neither side could open fire on the other to prevent any escalation.

The two countries had also agreed not to use blasting explosives or firearms within two kilometres of either side of the LAC. As per the new Rules of Engagement, commanders deployed at LAC can give soldiers “complete freedom of action” to handle situations at the tactical level.

The commanders can allow the use of firearms and have full authority to respond to extraordinary situations using all resources at their disposal. Possibly, if we would have given serious thought to this earlier, the Galwan incident could have been avoided.

Summary

The just-completed disengagement at Pangong Tso and areas to its North and South is a welcome step and should go a long way in paving the way for de-escalation in other areas.

The military, meanwhile, should document the lessons learned during this unprecedented deployment and identify capability gaps both in infrastructure and equipment, working out a strategic plan to shore up existing capabilities and roll-out projects for the future. In the specific domain of weapons and equipment, it may be prudent to work concomitantly on the incremental short term as well as a long-term approach.

The differential in equipment capabilities – specifically sustained capacity is large and the military may well identify gaps and plug the same. The PLA has been on a sustained modernization path for the past three decades and therefore an integrated approach to readiness is called for and we must resolve internal differences and theaterise our forces without much delay.

(The writer retired from the Indian Army as a Major General in Army Ordnance Corps. He holds a doctorate in Emotional Intelligence and is a reputed expert on logistics and supply chain management. Published in arrangement with Defence Research and Studies. The article is available on dras.in)

Accrual of China: Threat to world peace and stability

By Pintu Kumar Mahla

Today, political revamp is only about one country, China. It should come as no stupefaction that Beijing has increasingly become the omphalos of the western world's geopolitical calculus.

United States of America's then Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made this apparent in 2011. She wrote a good opinion piece in 'Foreign Policy' magazine. In this opinion, she said that the Asia-Pacific has become the primal expression of geopolitics.

The primal upshot is that only Beijing clearly restates its heightened eco-

nomie grip on the military and therefore political power in the Asia-Pacific. Now, it is felicitous to hark back that Beijing was the mightiest country until the Middle Ages.

Until 1820, China was truly the supreme economy. But at the time of the Industrial Revolution, the western sphere's rapid advancement left Beijing in the dust. But historically, this is a recent upshot.

So, for historical, psychological, and political grounds, the Beijing leadership ruminates China's accrual as the only revival of a mighty to its

condign abode under the sun.

In fact, The Chinese word for China, Zhong Guo, exactly translates to middle country, the country at the locus of the globe. Consequently, some indicators like China's defence white paper and its resource imperialism indicate the rise of China in this multi-polar world.

China's White Paper on Defence 2013

China's accrual is about retrieving what it sees as its rightful abode in history. This is psychologically and



GEOPOLITICS

politically very imperious when we try to decipher China.

China's 2013 defence white paper recognised the shifting geopolitical centre of gravity towards the East. Based on the white paper, The Asia-Pacific region has become an important base for world economic development and strategic communication between major powers holders.

The U.S. is adjusting its Asia-Pacific security strategy, and the regional landscape is undergoing profound changes, from this defence strategy. Moreover, the white paper, or the defence strategy, identified signs of accumulating hegemonism, power politics, neo-individualism, and the knowledge that this could lead to competition in the international military sphere.

At the same time, there was also a close affiliation between China and the West. For instance, in February 2012, European Union officials went to Beijing in search of a Chinese contribution to the Euro-Zone Rescue Fund.

In addition, China invests strategically in Europe's infrastructure and high-tech industry. Due to its interventions to save the Euro, growing trade relations, increasing indirect investments, and huge dollar research, China plays an increasingly primal role in the western world.

What then could be the cradle of schism? Well, in the first place industrialised and industrialising nations alike need reliable and unrestricted ingress to resources, particularly energy supplies, clamant materials, and food. This is imperative for continued economic progress and social-political stability.

Access to Resources

Between 2000 and 2008, China's consumption of metals such as aluminum, copper, lead, nickel, tin, and zinc grew by an average of 16 percent a year, whereas the demand for these minerals in the rest of the world grew by only 1 percent. Therefore, access to resources is a significant driver for China's foreign policy. This raised greater competition with other states around the world.

Food security is of particular significance. Very small increases in food prices could have consummate repercussions. For example, it could create social ferment. When food becomes scarcer in countries with a high food dependency rate, the cost of living to people can increase hugely almost overnight.

This entails a high risk of popular ferment and civil instability. In recent years climate change and pollution are already affecting food production in China. Consequently, China bought arable land in Africa and other parts of the world.

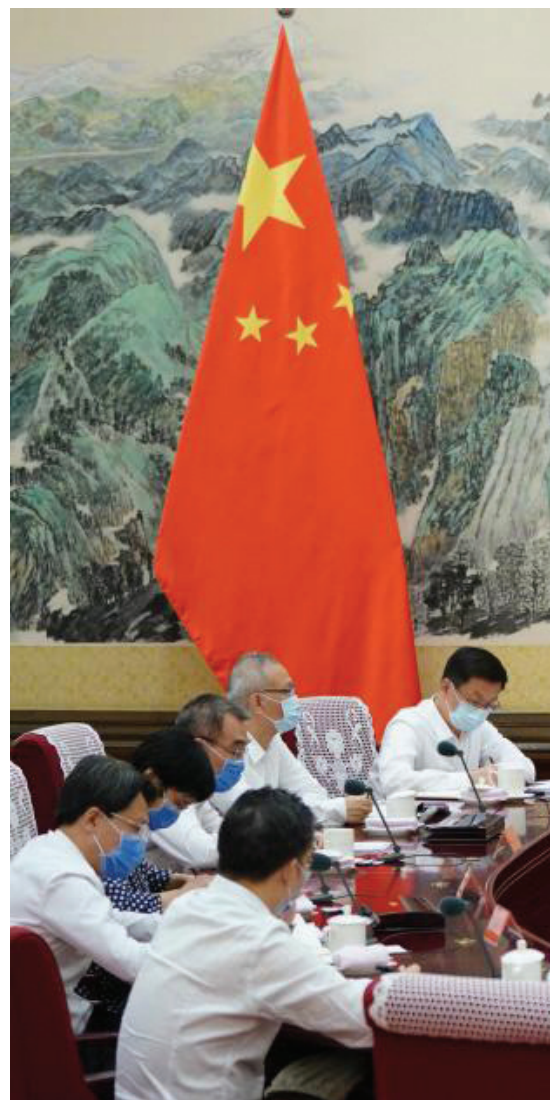
The key upshot is that with China's accrual, its global concerns grow with it. China needs annual economic growth of over 8 percent a year to accommodate the domestic growth, to satisfy domestic needs.

A downturn in such progress could result in social ferment, which would spark instability and ultimately, political fires. Uprisings or revolutions have been an imperative part and recurring part of China's history. The Chinese leadership is, of course, sentient of this and therefore takes extreme care to purport its social contract with the people.

Access to raw materials and resource nationalism are two sides of the same coin. A notable instance is China's export quota for rare earth minerals. China produces 97 percent of the world's rare earth metals, seventy elements clamant to high-tech and green-tech manufacturing. Resource nationalism and high-power politics are two sides of the same coin as well.

Beijing is already pursuing increasingly emphatic policies in an attempt to gain access to raw materials in Africa. Countries could try to acquire bases in resource-rich countries and could transfer arms to resource-rich or transit countries. China is one of the biggest arms suppliers to resource-rich African states such as Sudan and Zimbabwe. This development could turn the Indian Ocean into the extremity of future geopolitical schism.

China's Investment in Defence



China's desire for resources demystified numerous incidents with regional powers around the South China Sea and with Japan. This underscores the significance of the security of strategic routes, as there are numerous potential flashpoints.

Some observers argue that war cannot be ruled out. Chinese rhetoric is supported by investments in the build of its armed forces. Chinese defence expenditure grew more than most other countries, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Between 1998 and 2010, the military expenditure on the global level was at an increasing pace. With double-digit growth rates for the last two decades, China has had the fastest growing defence budget by far.

In March 2014, President Xi Jinping of China announced China's biggest accrual in military spending in three years. The official figure would budget at a 12.2 percent increase. China seeks to hammer out more high-



tech weapons and to beef up coastal and air defences.

In 2010, the faux pas started over extra-regional concerns. This marked a shift from a brown water navy into a blue-water navy to operate in distant places. The deployment of a Chinese warship off the coast of Somalia to join the battle against piracy is an apparent articulation of the new policy.

If we have an eye on the Chinese navy, it possesses major combatant vessels. Moreover, to support its future expeditionary abilities, China is producing force projection capabilities. This hedges the first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning.

In 2019, China and India were, respectively, the second- and third-largest military spenders in the world. China's military expenditure reached \$261 billion in 2019, a 5.1 percent increase compared with 2018, while India's grew by 6.8 percent to \$71.1 billion.

"India's tensions and rivalry with both Pakistan and China are among the major drivers for its increased

military spending," says Siemon T. Wezeman, SIPRI Senior Researcher.

In addition to China and India, Japan (\$47.6 billion) and South Korea (\$43.9 billion) were the largest military spenders in Asia and Oceania. Military expenditure in the region has risen every year since at least 1989.

China on a Collision Course

It doesn't mean that China is aiming at a mod kind of contentious or imperial world prepotency. China ruminates on itself as a reliable world leader. It prefers soft power, and it puts the ameliorating welfare of its own people first before interfering with world affairs.

The Chinese leadership stresses peaceful rights. In the early 21st century, President Hu Jintao, and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, acknowledged that the accrual of the mod power often results in challenges to global political order and even war. Yet both leaders accentuated that China's accrual will not pose a threat to peace and stability and those other nations

will benefit from it.

Finally, the Chinese model of autocracy and state capitalism is extremely ravishing for other governments. In the eyes of some global actors, the financial crisis of 2008 emphasises that China's model is far superior to the western neo-liberal capitalist system.

Indeed, this suggests that in China, wealth growth, based on soft power, could eventually come to replace America's and Europe's soft power. So, geopolitical change is about one country, China. The key upshot is that China translates its economic power into military and political power.

(The writer is a Research Scholar at the Department of National Security Studies, Central University of Jammu. He is a post-graduate in Political Science, from the University of Rajasthan, and got graduated in Social Science from Sardar Patel University of Police and Security. Published in arrangement with Defence Research and Studies. The article is available on dras.in)

Afghan crisis: India shows the way, but to no avail

By Bimal Prasad Mohapatra

Now, it is clear that the American forces along with its NATO allies are leaving bag and baggage from Afghanistan by the 20th anniversary of the Taliban-facilitated Al-Qaeda terror attack in 2001 on the world's then only superpower, the United States.

And this is about to happen without accomplishing the forces' much tommotmed assignment of cleaning the landlocked nation from the clutches of dreaded Islamic terror such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic warlords and recently added ISIS spread over the length and breadth of mountainous country, and setting up the sustainable administrative and security mechanisms along with democratic governance.

It is not that during the long two decades of external forces presence in the civil war-ravaged country, no attempt has been made to bring normalcy in Afghanistan. Among the major achievements of the forces were ferreting out Arab Islamic terror organisation Al-Qaeda's head Osama bin Laden -- responsible for planning, coordinating and executing September 11, 2001 attacks -- leaving with his family in Waziristan Haveli 1,300 meters away from high profile Pakistan Military Academy and surrounded by houses of Pakistan army's retired officers in Bilal Town, Abbottabad, and gunning down of him apart from setting up national security set up, democratic government and democratic governance mechanism.

Meanwhile, many supporting infrastructures such as Parliament House, hospitals, dams, educational institutions, and sports complexes have been built with enthusiastic support from the majority of the country's population.

Western/NATO forces, under the leadership US forces, have tried their

best to remove and destroy the terror elements and terror infrastructures through direct fights wherever and whenever necessary, that caused 2,500 deaths among them, and through hundreds of raids based on available intelligence, that caused huge loss of lives of both terrorists and innocent civilians at a cost of more than \$800 billion to the US alone so far.

But it failed to bring the much-shouted normalcy mostly due to (1) uncompromising commitment of Sunni Islamic terrorists to Islamic religious philosophy -- scripted based on 7th Century Arab peninsula social value- they have been wedded to, (2) land-locked uneven terrain which greatly supports dreaded Islamic guerrilla warfare, and (3) continued political, diplomatic, fi-

nancial, logistic, intelligence and military support to terror elements from the vested interest that is Pakistan, which has long mountainous porous border and border dispute with terror ravaged country.

As a last-ditch effort to bring normalcy or one can say as the last resort -- may be purposefully to save US taxpayers money and lives of allies' men in uniforms, later is found very unpopular, wasted in assumed no-win war, the Donald Trump Administration had initiated a negotiation with leading terror outfit that is Taliban ignoring country's elected government objection.

Even the Trump administration during the last months of its presence in The White House post-2020 Presidential election -- he lost -- had pressurised



the unwilling Afghan government to let loose hundreds of dreaded Taliban terrorists under its captivity in Kabul's high-security jail though the terror attacks have not been eased.

When no power in the world sincerely interested to bring normalcy in Afghanistan can't do anything in so far as the geographical character (Ref: point 2 above) of the nation that immensely supportive to terror activities, the same could do a lot in so far as the religious de-radicalisation of Afghanistan rural pockets that has been fertile ground for recruitment of terror foot soldiers by terrorist outfits (Ref: point 1.) and could force vested interest Pakistan (Ref: point 3.) to stop supports to the rugged elements.

These efforts may not be fruitful in a short period. However, the western powers had not tried their hands on these issues -- for reasons best known to them -- during their long two decades of presence relying on only military solution despite knowledge of Islamist Arab has deep-rooted hatred towards them.

Meanwhile, India invested approximately \$3 billion in building Repub-

lic's Parliament, economic and social infrastructures such as dams, hospitals, roads, schools, facilitating livelihood projects, and even sponsoring the nation's cricket teams, training the country's youths and organising their matches back in India.

In the process, although India won the hearts of Afghans, yet New Delhi was not spared from mock of superpower's President Donald Trump who had gone to the extent of saying, "You know what that is? That's like five hours of what we spend. And we're supposed to say, 'Oh, thank you for the library.' I don't know who's using it in Afghanistan."

It is not that India's achievements were possible without the security supports of the western forces backed Afghan Military and Police. But this author's point is: Had the western power followed India's policies supporting Afghanistan social, political, economic, and cultural developments along with security provisioning to fight terrorists, fundamentalists and their support bases, the situation might have improved if not fully normal by now.

Now, the US leaves the hapless fragile Republic creating a vacuum to be certainly filled by the Taliban, supported by the latter's mentor that is Pakistan Army, like seen in the mid-1990s within few years of the Red Army departure of its one-and-half centuries' failed occupation that founded the nation's civil war which killed lakhs of Afghans, wounded lakhs, displaced millions and destroyed the social life, economic, and cultural of the once vibrant peaceful nation beyond recognition, and yet to cool down despite more than four decades of ravage.

But, unlike the 1990s, this time another force is about to join the Taliban and Pakistan Army (the de facto ruler of Pakistan) duo that is Communist China -- known as Pakistan's iron brother -- which has already entrenched bankrupt Pakistan government through doles of billions of dollars.

As per several sources, a nexus among the three -- known for their disregards for human rights, international peace and tranquility and international rules and regulations -- is building up.

Lately, China is found much interested in the crisis as Beijing is looking for a land transit to Iran on the western border of Afghanistan where she has under her Belt and Road Initiative an investment plan of \$400 billion.

But here the potent question is: will Islamist Taliban and highly Islamised Pakistan population appreciate China having control over infrastructures in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is a known fact that the influential Islamists in Pakistan oppose Chinese projects in their country accusing China of de-radicalisation of Muslims in the country's western Xinjiang (East Turkestan) province.

For the time being, the Taliban and its sympathisers in Pakistan may join hands with China and Pakistan Army to get rid of western forces from the region. After that, the fight among them may not be ruled out resulting expansion of the civil war not only in Afghanistan but also in the additional geography that is Pakistan.

Going by Soviet Union occupation history in Afghanistan, it is difficult to predict Chinese success fighting against Islamic terrorists in the rugged territory of Afghanistan and in western provinces of Pakistan through which much of the Chinese BRI project will pass through.

And, again, will the US and her allies, which entered the region in the early 1980s to stop Soviet Russia's march towards the strategically significant Indian Ocean via Afghanistan, remain silent when Communist China marches to the same via Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran?

In view of this, how long peace and tranquility of the region will continue to remain elusive nobody can say now. Therefore, it is suggested to solve the Afghanistan crisis, why not try India's shown path halting the western troops' withdrawal for a few years?

(The writer is an academician, novelist, and columnist is a post-graduate in Journalism and Mass Communication and Master of Business Administration. Published in arrangement with Defence Research and Studies. The article is available on dras.in)



Afghanistan in Turmoil

**US forces withdraw,
as Taliban gains
upper hand**

