

EDITOR'S NOTE

The global geostrategic action remains centred around South and East China Sea and Afghanistan. US President Joe Biden met Chinese President Xi Jinping virtually on November 15, 2021. The two leaders discussed the complex nature of relations between the two countries and the importance of managing competition responsibly. As per the press release, the exchanges were candid and straightforward and covered areas where their interests align, and areas where interests, values, and perspectives diverge. President Biden underscored the need for free, open, and fair international system. Concerns about China's human rights issues in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong were highlighted. Also, unfair trade and economic practices, and need for free and open Indo-Pacific were conveyed. On Taiwan, while the USA was committed to the "one-China" policy, but guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States strongly opposed unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The importance of managing strategic risks emerged clearly. The two leaders also exchanged views on other regional challenges, including North Korea, Afghanistan, and Iran.

After the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban took control from August 15, 2021. President Ghani fled Afghanistan. The initial resistance by Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud was crushed and the Panjshir province came under Taliban control by mid-September. The resistance leaders fled to neighbouring Tajikistan, for a possible regroup later. The supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and acting Prime Minister Hasan Akhund, took office on September 7, 2021. Like in the previous Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, the United Nations has not recognised the current

regime. Western nations have suspended most humanitarian aid to Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund also halted payments. More than half of Afghanistan's 39 million people are currently facing acute food shortage, as they approach winter. Also, Afghanistan was facing widespread famine due to a collapsed economy and broken banking system. Pakistan has finally allowed India to send a humanitarian shipment of 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan through its territory after the finalisation of the transit modalities. Last year too India assisted Afghanistan with 75,000 metric tonnes, as part of its developmental and humanitarian support. Beijing's primary focus for now is to ensure stability on its western border and sustain its relationship with the new Taliban government in Kabul. China has pledged 200 million yuan (\$31 million) aid to Afghanistan, including food supplies and Coronavirus vaccines. China will try and close up with the Taliban, and also become the biggest spender and investor in Afghanistan, but would extract its price. With the Taliban back in power in Afghanistan, Pakistan may have come closer to achieving its long-sought "strategic depth" with respect to India. But the Taliban's victory is also seriously testing Pakistan's long fraught bilateral relationship with America. For the last 20 years, US-Pakistan relations have been defined by the needs of the US war in Afghanistan. With that war having ended, and with the Taliban in control, the relationship is at a clear crossroads. A bill moved in the US Senate seeking to assess Pakistan's alleged role in Afghanistan before and after the fall of Kabul has set alarm bells ringing in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan was retained on the FATF 'grey list' for failing to effectively implement the global FATF standards and over its lack of progress on investigation and prosecution of senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terror groups. Pakistan also continues to face multiple sources of internal conflict. Extremism and intolerance of diversity has grown. The armed groups active in Pakistan include Taliban-affiliated groups in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and independence fighters in Baluchistan. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is known for its protests in opposition to any change to Pakistan's blasphemy law. Most of the party's members belong to the Barelvi movement and

it secured over 2.2 million votes in 2018 elections. Despite being banned TLP was allowed to contest the elections and secured third place in Karachi by-elections. The party organised the 2021 Pakistani protests. On November 7, 2021, Government of Pakistan lifted the ban on TLP's proscribed status and rehabilitated its status. This is viewed as the Pakistan Army's means of using the group to keep in check the civilian government.

The 13th round of the India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on October 10, 2021. There was no resolution of the remaining areas. Both China and India continue to strengthen infrastructure along the border. The troops on both sides are preparing to hold ground during the forthcoming harsh winter. Meanwhile China has reportedly built 628 "xiaokang" villages along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC), stretching from eastern Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. A United States Department of Defence report mentioned that China had built a 100-home civilian village inside India's Arunachal Pradesh state. The Himalayas have now become a dangerous flashpoint.

India is currently celebrating the Golden anniversary of the victory in the 1971 India-Pakistan war that resulted in the liberation of Bangladesh. 'Swarnim Vijay' events are being held across the country. We in CAPS published a book, *The 1971 Indo-Pak Air War—Reflections and Projections*, and organised a National Seminar.

This issue of *Defence and Diplomacy* has three articles covering important aspects of air war of 1971 Indo-Pak conflict. There is an overview of the air war as seen by the then Air Chief P. C. Lal and covers details of the ground situation and prosecution at macro level. Air Marshal Diptendu Choudhury covers the operational role, training, perceptions, and psyche of Pakistan Air Force, and how they tried surmounting the challenges during the 1971 war while facing a very formidable Indian Air Force.

Air Marshal Bharat Kumar writes on "The Battle of Longewala: The Quick Response and Decisive Impact of Air Power". The Battle of Longewala was one of the most significant air actions, and perhaps brought victory and laurels to India in the shortest possible time. It put paid to the Pakistani plan of launching a Corps-level offensive supported by the entire Pakistan Air Force in the central sector. What

got reaffirmed was that "Airpower may or may not ensure your victory, but its lack will certainly bring you to defeat." AVM Anil Golani writes on the military diplomacy and the role of the soldier diplomat, and how military diplomacy could be effectively utilised as a tool of statecraft to further national interests in the 21st century. Technology has allowed an environment of "No war no peace" and this in turn requires a new approach to military diplomacy. Group Captain Anand Rao looks at Indo-US cooperation in Space Situational Awareness (SSA). Space is the ultimate enabler for many civil and military applications. With congruence of geostrategic interests, critical emerging technologies like space are areas of joint work between the two nations. As a major space power, India has a great contribution to make in global SSA.

Wg Cdr Swaim Prakash Singh writes on the possible revival of SAARC, and explains why it may not be held hostage to India-Pakistan relations. He feels that stronger cooperation between members could slow the Chinese inroads into the region.

Dr. Uday Pratap Singh writes about Maoist insurgency in Nepal, and its security challenges for India. Of special concern is the increasing Chinese influence in Nepal. Also of concern is the possible coordination between Maoists in India and Nepal, and the need to contain it.

The world is focusing on green energy. We in CAPS are looking at nuclear programmes of all the countries. Zoya Akhter traces the development of Bangladesh's civil nuclear power programme. Bangladesh is scheduled to have its first reactor go critical by 2023, and has targeted to generate about 9 per cent of its electricity from nuclear energy by the next decade. India is likely to have a significant role as part of India-Bangladesh-Russia tripartite nuclear cooperation.

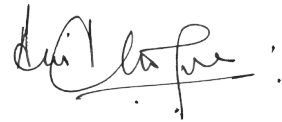
Anand Rao has analysed the Indo-US cooperation in Space Situational Awareness, and its necessity. During Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States in September 2021, among the many technology and security related issues that were discussed, space was a key area of interest. It was decided to work towards the finalisation of a Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will help in sharing space object data and services towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer

space activities. There are tens of thousands of objects in Earth orbit, including operational space assets, that pose a potential threat to satellites and launches. SSA refers to keeping track of objects in orbit and predicting where they will be at any given time. India has a Space Situational Awareness Control Centre at Peenya, Bengaluru. The control centre would host a range of activities pertaining to protection of Indian Space assets from inactive satellites, pieces of orbiting objects, near earth asteroids and adverse space weather conditions.

Defence and Diplomacy is a journal that covers contemporary geostrategic subjects. Geostrategy is where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity. Geostrategy is about the exercise of power, and about crafting a political presence over the international system. It is aimed at enhancing one's security and prosperity, and about shaping rather than being shaped. It requires military power and presence, and also requires global and regional friends.

Through our journals, we in CAPS encourage strategic thinking and writing. We also encourage reading and imbibing strategic thought. Acquiring knowledge makes one more aware and in turn increases self-confidence. Thirst for knowledge has to be inculcated. Make your reading time your favourite time of day. We also request all our readers to inculcate the habit of analytical writing, and CAPS will be happy to support such endeavours.

Enjoy Reading!



Air Marshal **Anil Chopra**
Director General, CAPS