

## The South China Sea and Pakistan

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**Geopolitics** is **dynamic** متحرک and **inconsistent** متضاد. The power play by great powers continues to **enhance** اضافہ کرنا their **influence** اثرورسوخ in military, energy, trade, and information management. The US focus remains on **strengthening** مضبوط کرنا ties with **NATO**, pick and choose in middle eastern as well as south Asian and south-east Asian nations. China and Russia continue their **quest** جستجو، تلاش for **consensus** اتفاق رائے and cooperation on global issues to **counter** مقابلہ کرنا the US and also enhance **bilateral** دوطرفہ trade, particularly energy. Thus, the war for global **supremacy** بالادستی continues in various regions of the world.

With the weakening of global order in a **unipolar world**, regional politics and **disputes** تنازعات have got **prominence** اہمیت. The Russia-Ukraine war might prove to be a major power play, immediately after Covid19, providing an opportunity for the US to **exploit** اٹھانا فائدہ استحصال، the post-conflict global energy crisis and Chinese trade markets.

The security of South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the most significant regions of **Eurasia** has **consistently** مسلسل been threatened due to external influences. US role in the region has been **prominent** نمایاں to **counter** مقابلہ کرنا Chinese expanding influence through **Belt and Road Initiative** and support India for a check on China in regional conflicts, particularly Indo-Pacific region.

South China sea (SCS) is historically a **contested** **منازعه** area since the 19th century. It is the most frequently used global trade route. An **approximately** **تقريباً** \$5 trillion trade passes through it.

The dispute in SCS is about three issues, **territorial** **علاقائی** **sovereignty** **خودمختاری**, **maritime** **بحری** and geopolitics. South China sea is rich in oil, gas and fish reserves. It is housing 11 billion barrels of oil, 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 8% of the world's fishery resources. The sea is at the heart of a rapidly changing Asia Pacific, which accounts for a larger share of global trade and economic activity each year, an estimated 30 per cent of the global maritime trade passes through the South China Sea on its way to Southeast Asian ports. SCS is the gateway to the **strait of Malacca** and the **port** **بندرگاه** of Singapore, one of the world's most important **merchant** **تاجر** shipping routes; a **stranglehold** **گرفت** **پکڑ** on the Paracel and the Spratly islands also ensures control over the supply route of Northeast Asia.

There are two major **territorial** **علاقائی** **disputes** **تنازعات** and a minor dispute in SCS. Major disputes are over Paracel and Spratly islands. There are three **claimants** **دعویدار** of Paracel, China, Vietnam and Taiwan. The **contested** **منازعه** islands occupied by China have been converted into **fortified** **قلعه بند یا** **مضبوط** military and communication bases with airfields, roads, buildings, and **launching pads** for missile systems. Most of the current problems stem from the 1951 **San Francisco Treaty**, which followed Japan's defeat in World War II. Within the terms of its **surrender** **ہتھیار ڈالنے**, Japan gave up its rights to its islands in the South China Sea, leaving a **power vacuum** in the

region. No country was explicitly واضح طور پر granted عطا کیا sovereignty خودمختاری over these waters, and China asserted its advantage by submitting the now infamous “nine-dotted line” claim covering almost the entire South China Sea in 1947. This line became China’s official claim and is known today as the “Nine-Dash Line”.

Spratly Island has six claimants دعویدار, some claiming all of the island and some part of it. A minor dispute is over Scarborough Shoal island between China and the Philippines. The second issue in SCS is the claim over maritime resources. This dispute has no specific point of the contest rather claims are based on self-created logic and reasoning about fish in disputed areas. The major contest is geopolitics which revolves around influence in the SCS and is obviously between two giants China and US. Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam are siding with US and Cambodia and Macao are siding with China in this power play but this rivalry دشمنی is a threat to peace and security in the Asia Pacific.

Territorial disputes in the south China sea are a continuous threat not only to international security but also to regional countries. Any conflict will put an end to آگے بڑھانے furthering economic ties in south-east Asian countries. Territorial disputes in the south china sea have serious implications اثرات for global peace and stability particularly for Asia-pacific states including Pakistan. Recently نمایاں یا نمائش کرنا exhibited the US پرزور over-emphasized interest in Taiwan and China’s آڑ یا بھیس میں garb posture جنگجو belligerence of military exercises indicates that in case of any شدت, escalation, how things will unfold آنا سامنے in the region. Due to its

geo-strategic location and military prowess طاقت, Pakistan is not a country which could be ignored by any of the world powers, nor Pakistan can ignore the development in its proximity قربت. Recent posturing by the US, China and Taiwan has become problematic for Pakistan to maintain a balanced relationship with stakeholders فریقین in SCS, particularly China and US. Pakistan's economic vulnerability کمزوری makes it difficult for her to maintain a balanced relationship with both great powers. CPEC which is the flagship سب سے اہم یا بہترین program of BRI is contributing immensely زیادہ to Pakistan's infrastructure and energy sectors. On the other hand, the US has complete influence over the IMF and World Bank which has just bailed Pakistan out مالی معاونت کی of its default position and FATF. Both great powers have significant leverage فائدہ over Pakistan's economy.

Pakistan is desperately سے شدت trying to maintain a balance in its foreign policy options and avoid block politics. Neither it can abandon چھوڑنا America, nor it can show a hand to China. Abandoning the US will bring Pakistan to face multifaceted کثیرجہتی issues in the evolving new Cold War between the US, China, and Russia. Over the years, Pakistan has established strong relations with the US in counter-terrorism دہشتگردی کو. The recent withdrawal انخلاء، رخصتی of the US from Afghanistan and the post-withdrawal position also demand a close watch in troubled Afghanistan by both US and Pakistan.

After the exit from Afghanistan, the US has been relying انحصار on India to contain روکنا China. But the Indian quest for an

autonomous خودمختار foreign policy and growing trade with China, which is approximately تقریباً touching \$127 billion, provides an opportunity for Pakistan to exploit اٹھانا the vacuum خلا and force the US to bring Pakistan into the fold of their new Asia pacific policy. At the same time, hick-ups مسائل in the progress of CPEC are bad indicators of the Pak-China trade relationship.

Maintaining cordial خوشگوار relations with China and the United States is imperative لازمی for Pakistan's national security. However, the Sino-US spiralling بڑھتے ہوئے systematic rivalry and competition shrink سکینا، گھٹانا Islamabad's space for manoeuvring جوڑ توڑ کرنا between them to cater for its economic and security needs without upsetting anyone. Pakistan needs to adopt a hedging policy instead of a bandwagon or balance of power. Experts explain that hedging strategy necessitates لازم کرنا the avoidance of binaries دوہرے پن in international politics, prioritizes ترجیح دینا its economic gains and stabilizes domestic politics. Pakistan needs to manoeuvre جوڑ توڑ between US and China to maximize its security and economic needs. Pakistan has very less space to make big detours راستے owing to سے وجہ سے its internal political unrest and bad economic condition.

The writer holds a PhD in international relations

## The age of uncertainty

Maleeha Lodhi Published September 19, 2022

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK & UN.

IN the **midst** درمیان of the worst catastrophe Pakistan has faced in **living memory, uncertainty** غیر یقینی صورتحال **looms** about the future. But with that comes an opportunity to rebuild lives and make the country **resistant** to the **ravages** تباہ کاریاں of climate change.

The challenge is to plan for a future in which this threat to human security is **mitigated** کم ہونا and managed effectively. Along with **navigating** نمٹنا a crisis that has **aggravated** بڑھایا the country's economic **predicament** مصیبت، حالت، the task ahead is to reverse the **setback** دھچکا to human development experienced by the country in recent years.

The latest Human Development Report (2021-2022) points out that the past two years have had a devastating impact on countries across the world. For the first time, human development has **declined** کمی ہوئی in nine out of 10 countries.

The **UNDP** report describes features of the current **fraught** پریشان کن، تکلیف سے بھرا and unsettled environment that also **prevail** پھیلنا in Pakistan. "We live in a world of worry," says the report. Reversals in human development have taken place almost everywhere due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with more human suffering occurring **in the wake of** کے بعد یا کی وجہ سے the Ukraine conflict. For two consecutive years, the global Human

Development Index (HDI) value declined. A “cost-of-living crisis” is afflicting nations, regional conflicts continue and record-breaking temperatures and storms reflect the extreme stress the planet is under.

The report, *Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives*, says this kind of “uncertainty complex” has never been witnessed in the past. It has three volatile and interacting elements: destabilising planetary pressures of the Anthropocene, pursuit of sweeping societal transformations to ease those pressures, and intensifying polarisation. This is described as the new normal.

The report also underscores that even before the pandemic, the world saw the erosion of democracy, increase in people’s insecurity, as well as alienation with their political systems. In a finding that will be familiar to people in Pakistan, the report warns of the peril of “new uncertainties” in insecurities, demagoguery and polarisation evident in many countries. Trust is declining, hyperinformation is sowing division, political extremism is increasing, while paralysis has emerged as the paradox of our age.

With devastating floods adding to the **cascading** economic and political crisis in Pakistan, the country's ranking on the global human development index may fall even further. The report shows Pakistan has already dropped seven places to 161 out of 191 countries and now joins the world's 32 low human development countries.

In 2020, Pakistan's ranking was 154 of 189 countries. Sri Lanka is ranked 73, Bangladesh 129 and India is at 132. HDI is a measure that **evaluates** تشخیص، جانچنا long-term progress in three aspects of human development: a long and healthy life, **access** رسائی to knowledge, and a reasonable standard of living. Pakistan's low ranking is a reminder of the long way the country has to go in this regard.

UNDP's Human Development Reports have always produced quality analysis and **shone a light** on how to address challenges in this **critical** اہم area. But the latest report surpasses گہرائی سے، پچھلے چھوڑنا previous ones for its **insightful** جائزہ of the state of play (current situation), rich discussion of a range of **contemporary** عصر phenomena **fuelling** ہوا دینا our age of uncertainty, and what to do about it. The report also contains thoughtful essays by an **array** صف of experts on wide-ranging issues **germane** متعلق to human security and development.

The report considers the rise in polarisation within and across countries. Its discussion of the drivers and **consequences** نتائج of polarisation is especially **instructive** سبق آموز. Uncertainties of different kinds, human **insecurity** عدم تحفظ and an unsettled



environment increase polarisation. **Inequalities** عدم مساوات and **disruptive** خلل ڈالنے والے changes in information systems also **sharpen** تیز کرنا polarisation. One consequence of the “**confluence** ملاپ of **heightened** بڑھی ہوئی uncertainty with high inequality” is the rise in support for **authoritarian** آمرانہ leaders.

Seen as an **impediment** رکاوٹ to **purposeful** بامقصد action to address challenges, **intensifying** شدت political and social polarisation has a **paralysing** مفلوج یا غیرفعال کرنے والا effect and **undermines** نقصان پہنچانا the ability to act collectively. Above all, it delays action to **curb** روکنا human pressures on the planet.

So even when problems and solutions are clear, there is “a failure to act”. The report **argues** دلیل دیتی ہے that “polarisation can take dangerous forms when different groups **operate** کام کرنا with entirely different sets of facts and, thus, realities, especially when those realities are **bound up** منسلک with group identities”. This is enabled by new digital technologies.

Polarisation at the **elite** ممتاز لوگ level leads to polarised views among people, who then become “more **tolerant** روادار of undemocratic behaviour”. What the report calls ‘hyperinformation’ is seen as “**powering** طاقتور بنانے social division and polarisation”.

There is much here that **resonates** گونجتا ہے in Pakistan, where

the **interplay** پر اثر رکھنا between political **unpredictability** غیر متوقع, multiple **deprivations** محرومیوں and insecurities, economic hardship and rising inequalities have provided an enabling environment for heightened polarisation and for the growing influence of **populism**. The populist narrative that **taps** استعمال یا استحصال کرنا into declining public trust in institutions by **portraying** پیش کرنا them as **'elitist** اشرافیہ and **unresponsive** غیر ذمہ دارانہ to people's needs finds widespread **traction** گرفت in our society.

Digital and social media is further **reinforcing** تقویت دینا divisiveness and polarisation. Its disruptive impact here, as elsewhere, comes from non-fact-based information and the fake news it so easily spreads. The crisis of national unity that political polarisation has created **casts a long shadow** over Pakistan's future – and its ability to meet the complex challenges it has to **negotiate** نمٹنا .

**Divisive** منقسم politics during the **ongoing** جاری climate calamity ہوا دینا, which has also involved some parties **stoking** , آفت **denuded** تردید کی controversy over flood donations, has **denuded** the country of a **coordinated** مربوط and unified response.

To return to the report, the most important **takeaway** نکتہ is its central **argument** دلیل that **harnessing** بروے کار لانا human development is the **surest** سب سے یقینی means to **navigate** گزرنا, uncertain times, as they open possibilities for **transformative** تغیراتی change. This is because at such

moments, people see the need for change and also because of new opportunities offered by technological **innovation** جدت and advances in science and medicine. Shocks, it suggests, creates openings for policy change.

The report calls for policies that focus on investment, insurance and innovation to help people **negotiate** نمٹنے **uncertainties** غیر یقینی صورتحال, keeping in mind the **ineluctable** reality that people are the real wealth of a country. Wise **counsel** مشورہ that needs to be acted on.

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Published in Dawn, September 19th, 2022

## **geopolitics**

noun

politics, especially international relations, as influenced by geographical factors

Collective defence: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (**NATO**) was founded in 1949 and is a group of 30 countries from Europe and North America that exists to protect the people and territory of its members

In the international political system, the **unipolar world** order is a power distribution in which only one state dominates most

of the economic, social, cultural, and military influence over the globe. The unipolar world should not be confused with monarchy بادشاهت or empire.

**Eurasia** is the largest continental area on Earth, comprising all of Europe and Asia. Primarily in the Northern and Eastern Hemispheres, it spans from the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula in the west to the Japanese archipelago and the Russian Far East in the east.

The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, or B&R), formerly known as One Belt One Road or OBOR for short, is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in nearly 150 countries and international organizations. It is considered a centerpiece of the Chinese paramount leader Xi Jinping's foreign policy. The BRI forms a central component of Xi's "Major Country Diplomacy" strategy, which calls for China to assume a greater leadership role for global affairs in accordance with its rising power and status. As of August 2022, 149 countries were listed as having signed up to the BRI.

The **South China Sea (SCS)** is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean. It is bounded in the north by the shores of South China (hence the name), in the west by the Indochinese Peninsula, in the east by the islands of Taiwan and northwestern Philippines (mainly Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan),

and in the south by Borneo, eastern Sumatra and the Bangka Belitung Islands, encompassing an area of around 3,500,000 km<sup>2</sup> (1,400,000 sq mi). It communicates with the East China Sea via the Taiwan Strait, the Philippine Sea via the Luzon Strait, the Sulu Sea via the straits around Palawan (e.g. the Mindoro and Balabac Strait), the Strait of Malacca via the Strait of Singapore, and the Java Sea via the Karimata and Bangka Strait. The Gulf of Thailand and the Gulf of Tonkin are also part of the South China Sea. The shallow waters south of the Riau Islands are also known as the Natuna Sea.

The **Strait of Malacca** is a narrow stretch of water, 500 mi long and from 40 to 155 mi wide, between the Malay Peninsula to the northeast and the Indonesian island of Sumatra to the southwest, connecting the Andaman Sea and the South China Sea.

: **launching pad**

the area on which a rocket stands for launching, typically consisting of a platform with a supporting structure

The **Treaty of San Francisco**, also called the Treaty of Peace with Japan, re-established peaceful relations between Japan and the Allied Powers on behalf of the United Nations by ending the legal state of war and providing for redress for hostile actions up to and including World War II.

Location: San Francisco

Start date: September 8, 1951

Effective: 28 April 1952; 70 years ago

## Power vacuum

In political science and political history, the term power vacuum, also known as a power void, is an analogy between a physical vacuum to the political condition "when someone in a place of power, has lost control of something and no one has replaced them

The **nine-dash line**, at various times also referred to as the ten-dash line and the eleven-dash line (by the ROC), is a set of line segments on various maps that accompanied the claims of the People's Republic of China (PRC, "mainland China") and the Republic of China (ROC, "Taiwan") in the South China Sea.

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** works to achieve **sustainable growth and prosperity** for all of its 190 member countries. It does so by supporting economic policies that promote financial stability and monetary cooperation, which are essential to increase productivity, job creation, and economic well-being.

The **World Bank** is an international financial institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of low- and middle-income countries for the purpose of pursuing capital projects.

President: David Malpass

Headquarters: Washington, D.C., United States

Founded: July 1944,

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. The inter-governmental body sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society. As a policy-making body, the FATF works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

### cold war

noun

a state of political hostility between countries characterized by threats, propaganda, and other measures short of open warfare.

the state of hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the Western powers from 1945 to 1990

### bandwagon مقبول رجحان

noun

1.

used in reference to an activity, cause, etc. that is currently fashionable or popular and attracting increasing support

Hedging is a strategy that tries to limit risks in financial assets. It uses financial instruments or market strategies to offset the risk of any adverse price movements. Put another way, investors hedge one investment by making a trade in another.

## in living memory

(idiomatic) In recent history, in recorded history amongst the lifespan of extant people; events or situations which can be remembered by people that are still alive

## UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme is a United Nations agency tasked with helping countries eliminate poverty and achieve sustainable economic growth and human development. Headquartered in New York City, it is the largest UN development aid agency, with offices in 170 countries. Headquarters: New York, New York, United States  
Founded: November 22, 1965

The Human Development Index (**HDI**) is a statistic composite index of life expectancy, education (mean years of schooling completed and expected years of schooling upon entering the education system), and per capita income indicators, which is used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. A country scores a higher level of HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher, and the gross national income GNI (PPP) per capita is higher. It was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and was further used to measure a country's development by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Report Office.

## Anthropocene

adjective

relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as



the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment

A **cascading effect** is an unforeseen chain of events that occurs when an event in a system has a negative impact on other, related systems

**shone a light**

The idiom 'to shine a light on' something means to reveal or expose something or making something clear or easier to understand. You can shine a light on something by providing an explanation, explaining something, or giving additional information. You can use this idiom in both social and professional contexts

**populism**

noun

a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups

the quality of appealing to or being aimed at ordinary people