**President Biden and South Asia**

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President Biden will find a vastly changed South Asia than the one he dealt with earlier as a Senator, Chairman Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and as Vice President of the US. South Asia has undergone striking paradigm shifts in the geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic dimensions throwing up very complex challenges for the US.

He will find three inter-linked centres of conflict in South Asia that he must tackle simultaneously—the Afghan quagmire, the unrelenting Indo-Pakistan hostility and the Indo-China bust up. All will directly or indirectly impact his pursuit of US’ vital national interest in Asia—the containment of China. At the moment, there is a Mexican standoff in the larger Kashmir region with China, India and Pakistan at the verge of an ominous conventional-nuclear war!

Afghanistan, which is conjoined with South Asia, writhes in chaos, unrest and instability. The Afghan Peace Process is stuck in a rut. The intra-Afghan dialogue is stalling while ferocious clashes between the Afghan Taliban and the ANDSF persist. Terrorist groups thrive unchallenged. RAW and NDS, the Indian and Afghan intelligence organisations, continue to compound internal and regional instability by launching state sponsored terrorist attacks into Pakistan from Afghanistan and Iran. The US remains undecided on how to bring its badly misfiring Afghan Campaign to a viable closure. Afghanistan’s volatility contributes directly to the region’s instability.

[Bitcoin hits a new record, increasing up to $48,481](https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2021/bitcoin-hits-a-new-record-increasing-up-to-dollar-48-481)

Pakistan’s democracy continues to gain root as the BRI-CPEC boosts its economic credentials and viability. It is successfully fighting off the multidimensional hybrid war unleashed by India. It has defeated the scourge of terrorism expelling all terrorist groups from its territories. However, threats on its western and eastern borders still persevere menacingly. The RAW-NDS launched terrorist attacks from Afghan and Iranian soils continue unabated. It has maintained its strategic composure and balance on both western and eastern fronts. It has emerged as a very self-confident and formidable military-nuclear power in the region, denying India the status of the regional hegemon. It has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic better than most in the world with its economy on the rebound. Its multidimensional partnership with China has acquired phenomenal, irreversible proportions. This Sino-Pak alliance checks Indian belligerence effectively and brings vital stability to the region.

India, has degenerated into a fascist, extremist, Hindutva-crazed country led by an ultra-nationalist RSS-BJP inspired regime. Not only has the RSS-BJP government tried to implement its extremist and ultranationalist policies within the country but has also senselessly tried to enforce them in the region too. Resultantly, India now finds itself truly isolated within South Asia as all its neighbours have refused to accept its malign conduct and policies. India is fast imploding under the centrifugal forces unleashed by the divisive policies of the RSS-BJP Government. It is fast splintering on religious, ethnic, sectarian, linguistic et al fault lines as all its minorities, especially the Indian Muslims, feel the unbearable heat of the RSS-BJP government’s contentious policies. The Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir Region (IIOJ&KR), in particular, reels under savage and unfettered Indian repression. The Kashmiri Muslims have been held incommunicado since August 2019 and have been denied all civil freedoms and human rights. Ironically, the so-called free world led by the US itself has chosen to turn a blind eye towards it. The CAA, the NCR, the NPR, the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A from the Indian Constitution, the demolition of the Babri Mosque and the construction of a Ram Temple in its stead, the violent subjugation of the mostly Sikh farmers in Indian Punjab (giving impetus to the call for an independent Khalistan) all present a picture of a country divided on itself and moving headlong into a vortex of instability and disintegration. A tanking economy during the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened its woes. Most alarmingly, President Biden will find an India facing two very formidable military-nuclear powers on its north-eastern (LAC) and north-western (LOC) extremities, courtesy its disastrous megalomania and Hindutva-crazed policies. India is essentially at war; with itself, its neighbours and with the region at large.

[Lost in love](https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2021/lost-in-love)

The other South Asian countries too, find the benefits of the BRI, irresistible. Chinese ingress into Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives even Myanmar has created an economic stake in their ties with it. India’s neighbours are now more positively inclined towards China than it. India is worried. China has clearly outmanoeuvred the US in interconnecting with South Asia and creating mutually beneficial economic interdependence. India, however, sits on the side-lines and sulks as the region moves rapidly towards economic development and prosperity.

China has made a massive ingress into South Asia through the BRI-CPEC and has emphatically expanded its sphere of influence and strategic reach to encompass the region and beyond. The CPEC, the flagship project of the BRI, is progressing rapidly and very well. China now is not only an Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean power but also truly the most dominant South Asian power as well. It threatens to supersede the US as the major net security provider in the region at large. India has always been vying for ascendance in this region however, its ambitions to become the regional hegemon have been summarily circumscribed and overwhelmed by China, or say the Sino-Pak Combine. China is now well poised to dominate and manage South Asia.

[Pakistan is secure for sports: Dr Firdous Ashiq](https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2021/pakistan-is-secure-for-sports-dr-firdous-ashiq)

President Biden will have to be cognisant of the changed ground realities in South Asia and the fragile peace that prevails there. India was never the hegemon of the region and is increasingly less likely to ever acquire that mantle. He must comprehend India’s real position and status in South Asia and re-evaluate his policy objectives accordingly. He must realistically perceive the latent dangers that lurk within a thoroughly destabilised South Asia, in particular, in the larger Kashmir region—the most probable nuclear flashpoint in the world! It is here that the vital interests of China, India, Pakistan and perhaps even the US (?) clash.

President Biden will thus start his engagement with South Asia from an unfavourable position. Will he sue for peace or turn the obtaining strategic environment around to his advantage?

(To be continued.)