**Winds of change**

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Change of leadership in the United States is beginning to show its shade across the world. Splitting atoms from his isolationist predecessor, the Biden Presidency has vowed to reassert its (soft and hard) influence beyond its borders. How effective will post-Trump America be at the international stage, is yet to be seen. However, with the rise of China and Russia in the East, it is unlikely that Washington will enjoy the kind of hegemony over global power-politics that it had gotten used to since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But even if America is unable to reclaim the heights of its past glory in global politics, its influence will not be ignorable in the foreseeable future. Especially for countries and governments that had hitched all their bogies to Trump’s bandwagon—i.e. Netenyahu’s Israel, Modi’s India, and Mohammad Bin Salman’s Saudi Arabia.

Let’s parse this claim further.

[Zlatan Ibrahimović to miss Man Utd Europa League due to injury](https://nation.com.pk/02-Mar-2021/zlatan-ibrahimovi-to-miss-man-utd-europa-league-due-to-injury)

The ‘Howdi Modi’ and ‘Namaste Trump’ campaign has already hit unavoidable pitfalls. Biden’s campaign statements on Kashmir, coupled with a sudden interest of the State Department in India’s human-rights abuses concerning Sikh farmers, Dalits, and immigrants, has gotten the Modi-Shah-Doval trio spooked. Talk of creating ‘akhund Bharat’ has been replaced by Yoga lessons. Hate-spewing speeches against Indian Muslims have been substituted by a more inclusive stance about minorities. Internet and media connectivity is gradually returning to Kashmir. And, having suffered loss of life and land at the hands of China, with no Biden support in sight, the Indian Army has decided to observe the 2003 ceasefire agreement at the Line of Control with Pakistan.

In Israel, the talk of Abraham Accords—through which the Muslim Middle East was going to recognize Israel, by stepping on the graves of Palestinian martyrs—has all but disappeared from public media. Netanyahu’s own future, in terms of criminal charges and reelection, is uncertain to say the least. Without Jared Kushner and Trump pulling strings behind the scenes, it is unlikely that Netanyahu will be able to hang on to his Zionist brand of politics for too long. And those who signed on to the Abraham Accords are already ruing their decision of betting on Trump. For the UAE, the ‘unwritten’ condition of Abraham Accords—concerning sale of F-35 Raptors by the US to the UAE—is already being ‘reconsidered’ by President Biden. Dealing an even deeper blow, President Biden has started to re engage Iran, without bringing Israel, UAE or Saudi Arabia in the equation. None of this was conceivable in Trump’s America.

[ECP to make final decision regarding ballot papers today](https://nation.com.pk/02-Mar-2021/ecp-to-make-final-decision-regarding-ballot-papers-today)

But the most dramatic turn of events, likely to have cataclysmic impact for the Middle East, is President Biden’s decision to release CIA’s report concerning the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, during his visit to the Saudi consulate in Turkey in 2018. The details of Khashoggi’s gruesome murder, resulting in his body being dismembered and never fully recovered, are too horrific to recount. However, despite the fact that this incident took place in the Saudi consulate, resulting in much hue and cry from the international community, Donald Trump’s Whitehouse protected the Saudi Crown Prince. In fact, over the past two (plus) years, many across the international community had started to move past what happened to Khashoggi, or who ordered it.

But President Biden had made a campaign promise that, if elected, he would release the Khashoggi report, prepared by American intelligence agencies. And on Friday, after speaking to the Saudi King over the phone, President Biden did exactly that.

[MQM-P to support PTI in Senate elections: Amin-ul-Haque](https://nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2021/mqm-p-to-support-pti-in-senate-elections-amin-ul-haque)

The released report, redacted in large parts, concludes that “Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman approved an operation in Istanbul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi”. There—simple and unambiguous. And just like that, the entire love affair of the Trump era, between Washington and MBS, came crashing down.

From hereon, there are three possible scenarios that could develop in the Middle East.

One: nothing happens. The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia—both strategic partners—becomes tense, but nothing substantial comes of it. All sides let this be the final episode in the Khashoggi saga. Unlikely, but possible.

Two: the pressure on Saudi Arabia and MBS increases to a point that it is no longer in the Kingdom’s interest to continue with MBS as its Crown Prince. And suddenly, all the dissident princes in the Royal family become contenders to replace MBS as the next King. This is likely, not because Saudi Arabia cares much about human rights or Jamal Khashoggi; but because there is already enough discontent within the Saudi Royal family (evidenced by recent imprisonment of other Royal family members) for the King to reconsider his choice of successor.

[UN Syria commission calls for immediate cease-fire](https://nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2021/un-syria-commission-calls-for-immediate-cease-fire)

Three: Israel uses this new pressure on MBS to negotiate Saudi Arabia’s signatures on the Abraham Accords. And in return for ‘bagging’ Saudi Arabia’s recognition, Israel uses its influence in Washington (and elsewhere in the world) to bail out MBS. This, from the perspective of the Muslim world, would be the worst possible outcome. If only for because it would completely capitulate the Palestinian cause, delivering a debilitating blow to an 80-year long struggle.

These are tumultuous times in international power politics. Many argue that we are living through the creation of a ‘new world order’—one, that is no longer unipolar and bent towards the West.

In the circumstances, Pakistan will have tread carefully, and balance its deep-rooted relationships in the Middle East with the new matrix of the twenty-first century. We can position ourselves as a bridge between the East, the Middle-East, and the West, providing a conduit for exchange of information, goods, services and capital. But all that will only be possible if can first rid ourselves of the petty politics can consume our national attention.