**The simmering cold war**

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The Joe Biden Administration has made a very perceptible paradigm shift in the strategic orientation of US’ foreign policy. It has apparently swung its focus from the Greater Middle East Region (GMER) to the European and Indo-Pacific regions. On a comparative basis, the GMER now emerges as a minor area of interest while the European and the Indo-Pacific regions (IPR) gain emphasis as the major ones. The US abandoned Afghanistan rather unceremoniously to confront the twin-threats that it perceives from a fast-rising China in the Indo-Pacific and an increasingly assertive Russia in Europe.

US’ apparent grand strategic design entails a two-pronged approach to deter, circumscribe and neutralise their respectively evolving spheres of influence and strategic reach that threaten its singular position as the global hegemon.

The US has thus operationalised its European Deterrence (EDI) and Pacific Deterrence Initiatives (PDI) to attain that desired end state. Through these comprehensive, all-encompassing initiatives the US intends to retain a decisive edge in these two evolving theatres of geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomics strife. They entail a very forward leaning posture and pre-positioning of troops, logistics, stocks of weapons, munitions, equipment etc in both potential theatres of war to deter and defeat aggression, as needed.

[Pakistan reports 1,649 COVID-19 cases in single day](https://nation.com.pk/10-Jan-2022/pakistan-reports-1-649-covid-19-cases-in-single-day)

Contingency planning of joint and combined operations will be an integral part of these forward deployments. The US intends to further boost the military capacities and capabilities of its allies and partners in the regions through the sale/provision of the latest military technologies and by conducting massive exercises that aim to improve their combat potential, create interoperability and boost synergy in joint and combined operations. Furthermore, the US will invest in creating and improving infrastructure in the regions to facilitate future operations. Thus, it is intended to present and confront both the Chinese and the Russians with credible and potent forces to deter them from threatening US interests in either or both regions.

NATO’s relentless move into eastern Europe, into Russia’s perceived sphere of influence, has rankled the Russians who have come out vociferously against this aggressive expansionism. NATO seems to be creeping ominously close to the Russian borders and seriously questioning Russia’s regional policies and assertiveness.

[19 killed, including 9 children, in New York apartment fire](https://nation.com.pk/10-Jan-2022/19-killed-including-9-children-in-new-york-apartment-fire)

In particular, NATO wants to forestall any potential Russian invasion of Ukraine, which apparently falls in the Russians’ perceived security perimeter/zone. The Russians want that no former Soviet republic be made part of NATO and that no offensive weapon systems be deployed close to its borders. Presidents Biden and Putin are seized of this issue, have already spoken about the dangerous situation evolving and further talks are planned.

In the IPR, the US considers China to be the “pacing challenge” and feels particularly incensed with its presence and assertiveness in the East and South China Seas/IPR. It views the military infrastructure that China has and continues to build on the islands in the South China Sea as threats to a rules-based international order and an essentially free and open IPR. Through the PDI the US intends to demonstrate its commitment to preserving a free and open IPR by reinforcing its military superiority in the region, deterring China and the maverick North Korea.

[Murree Incident: Zardari slammed federal govt over death of citizens](https://nation.com.pk/09-Jan-2022/murree-incident-zardari-slammed-federal-govt-over-death-of-citizens)

To win in an IPR theatre contingency the US plans to have a force that is lethal, resilient and capable of protecting its and its allies and partners’ interests. It further intends to maintain military effectiveness to deter aggression and prevent conflict by providing robust and ready forces that are postured to respond to any aggression.

It will further help develop alliances and partnerships which ensure collective responses to common challenges in the region. Most importantly, the US views the creation of advanced and asymmetric capabilities and capacities to operate in an anti-access/area denial environment as central to deterrence in the IPR. Under the PDI therefore, the US intends to invest in long range munitions, advanced strike platforms, expanded forward posture and resiliency, enhanced capabilities and capacities of its allies and partners, carrying out innovative military exercises and achieving technical, tactical, operational and strategic superiority in all domains of warfare.

[Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) proposed amendments](https://nation.com.pk/09-Jan-2022/women-in-struggle-for-empowerment-wise-proposed-amendments)

A high stakes cold war simmers!

India, a strategic partner of the US and a member of the QUAD, is thus getting inexorably sucked into this seething cold war; a tussle which might well be beyond its capacities and capabilities to comprehend and handle. The US will not be averse to pitching it against China and inevitably Pakistan, (strategy of Offshore Balancing). In a two-pronged stratagem the US and its allies could attempt to block off China in the Malacca Straits/IPR and task India to delay, disrupt and/or destroy the BRI-CPEC which provides China with an alternate albeit vital and critical access to the Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean Region, GMER and beyond. Thus, a critical blow could be struck at the BRI-CPEC by severely upending its time and space matrix. India will have two options to comply with such potential US diktat.

One, it could directly go across the LOC/working boundary/international border with Pakistan and/or challenge China across the LAC and face the fearful, unwinnable spectre of a two-front war. The Indian military strategists and saner political wizards are seriously worried about this potential operational vulnerability and may thus be hesitant to jump into the fray, willingly.

[Aged woman dragged, beaten up on Sialkot street](https://nation.com.pk/09-Jan-2022/aged-woman-dragged-beaten-up-on-sialkot-street)

However, the mercurial, eccentric, megalomanic, egotistic Hindutva-driven PM Modi may yet surprise himself, his nation and the world by taking the plunge. Two, it could employ Terrorism Central, (terrorist groups still safely ensconced in Afghanistan), to start attacking the CPEC all along its length and in particular at Gwadar and in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The strategic environment within Afghanistan however has undergone a massive turnaround and the Afghan Taliban will be hard pressed to find common cause with India against Pakistan and China’s BRI-CPEC. They ought to be aware of the costs thereof. It will thus become imperative for China that its two-ocean capability is never compromised. The security and completion of the BRI-CPEC thus emerges as a vital national interest for both.

Will these US initiatives force a Sino-Russian (or larger) alliance at the global and a formal defence arrangement between China and Pakistan at the regional levels?