

US and Evolving Strategic Shifts in the World Order: The Future of Diplomacy

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry



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Abstract

The world order that we have come to experience since the end of the Second World War is undergoing notable strategic shifts. Major power competition is intensifying. Global socio-economic norms that were negotiated through decades long diplomacy are being ignored. Advent of President Trump has expedited the pace and intensity of these emerging strategic shifts. His “America First” approach is sharpening polarization in the world. Diplomacy seems to be on the retreat in many regions, such as South Asia. One of the test cases of success or failure of diplomacy is Afghanistan, which remains in deep turmoil. Despite setbacks, diplomacy remains our best hope for a peaceful world.

Keywords: World order, Strategic shifts, Major power competition, Diplomacy, Trump, South Asia.

Introduction

The world order that had emerged after the Second World War is clearly paving the way for something that is yet to assume clear contours. Some political scientists have termed this period as a world in “disarray”.¹ Others hypothesize that the age of bipolar contestation has returned, with China ascending to become the challenger to the supremacy of the United States, taking the place of the Soviet Union. Yet others feel that we have entered a multipolar phase of world dynamics, with issue-based coalitions forming and dissolving in a perpetual motion. What is, however, indisputable, is that the world is in a state of flux, and its order and the underlying universal principles that governed it for over seventy years are crumbling. For starters, the principle of respect of sovereignty of each nation is adhered to less and less. Territorial integrity is no longer sacrosanct. The UN Charter principles of non-interference and non-intervention are notions of the past. We are now in the age of unilateral drone strikes and cyber wars; of regime changes and armed interventions, a fifth generation and hybrid wars. One need not look any further than the conflicts that have wreaked havoc in

¹ Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray* (New York: Penguin Press, 2016).

various parts across the world - from Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to Ukraine, Sudan and Libya. The world order that prevented world wars for over seven decades is quickly becoming irrelevant.

It must be said that this evolving strategic shift is not limited to inter-state relationships. The wide ranging socio-economic norms that we evolved through decades-long diplomacy after the end of the Cold War are seemingly ignored. Take for example, free trade. For decades, the international community generally held a consensus that free international trade in the absence of tariff barriers is good for all parties involved. From Kennedy Round to the Uruguay and Doha Rounds, countless meetings and difficult negotiations stitched together an elaborate framework for international trade under WTO rules. This celebrated framework is now under threat from national protectionist trends and displays of economic coercion. With President Trump announcing a series of tariffs on imports from China, and Europe and Canada, and the retaliatory reactions from the latter, it is evident that we are witnessing the beginning sparks of trade wars.

US and the Evolving Strategic Shifts

Aside from trade, the consensus on respect for fundamental human rights, another distinguished feature of the post WWII world order, and one that is, articulated magnificently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, has been shredded to pieces in places like Palestine, Kashmir, and Rakhine. Immigration that, for as long as human history can recall, infused talent, innovation, diversity, and energy into societies, is now viewed as an economic or security threat. This topic alone moves voters and political parties, and debates around it are frequently heated, particularly in the United States and countries across Europe. Moreover, the global consensus that culminated in the Paris Accord in December 2015 after years of negotiations to mitigate effects of climate change through international cooperation is all but broken. And in not only Western societies but across the planet, the pervasive forces of ultra-nationalism, racism, religious intolerance and xenophobia, continue to rear their ugly heads.

In a statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 25, 2018, Dr. Henry Kissinger has also observed a “systemic failure of the world order.”² He elaborated that the international system was eroding “in terms of sovereignty, rejection of territorial acquisition by force, expansion of mutually beneficial trade without geo-economic coercion, or encouragement of human rights.”³

Let me propose further that it is the competition between the major powers of the world that is the hallmark of this evolving strategic shift. All this has not happened suddenly. For the past several years, and particularly, since 2016, scholars and political scientists have increasingly observed and written about the notion of ‘Rising China’ and a re-awakened Russia. Some of the earliest signs became visible when the then-US Administration decided in 2011 to pivot its policy to Asia-Pacific. The rationale of this approach was elaborated by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in an article she wrote in the *Foreign Policy* journal: “One of the most important tasks of the American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment – diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise – in the Asia-Pacific region.”⁴ This was largely perceived in Asia as the China containment policy. The large and concerted effort by the US to take its relations with India to new heights only served to reinforce this perception.

With the steep rise in the economic power of China, it was becoming clear that some kind of adjustment in the balance of power would become inevitable in Asia. Lee Kuan Yew, the longtime statesman of Singapore, had predicted in a speech given at a conference in Beijing in 1999 that China would not be just another big player but in fact the “biggest player in the history of the world”⁵ that would require finding a new balance. Kevin Rudd, the former

² Dr Henry A Kissinger, *Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (US Congress, Washington DC, 2018).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century”, *Foreign Policy*, 2011,

⁵ Graham Allison, Robert D. Blackwill, and Ali Wyne, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master’s* <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>. *Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 42.

Australian Prime Minister, shared a similar sentiment, and in his 2012 article of the *New Statesman*⁶, said that the sheer pace and magnitude of China's progress is as if the English Industrial Revolution and the global information revolution combusted simultaneously and were compressed into not 300 years but 30. Kurt Campbell's 2016 book titled *The Pivot: The future of American statecraft in Asia* also spoke of the need for a great rebalance in Asia.

An explicit exposé of the competitive forces guiding major powers came from Graham Allison in his book *Destined for War*, in which he invoked Thucydides' trap to argue that "when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power, alarm bells should sound: danger ahead ..."⁷. Thucydides was a Greek historian and general from the city state of Athens who observed that the city state of Sparta, a dominant power at that time, perceived the rise of Athens as a threat and thereby both city states ended up in war. Allison cites sixteen cases in the past five hundred years in which a rising power was perceived to be a threat by the prevailing dominant power. Twelve of those cases resulted in armed conflict. Allison goes on to caution that "China and the United States are currently on a collision course for war – unless both parties take difficult and painful actions to avert it."

Trump: Diplomacy on the Retreat

It would be pertinent to explore how the advent of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has impacted these evolving strategic shifts. Let us be clear at the outset. As noted with the Asia pivot, the start of major power competition pre-dates the Trump Administration. However, Donald Trump, by dint of his unique personality and style of governance, is certainly having a catalytic effect on this competition. Trump believes in asserting what he thinks is right and then aggressively pursuing any strategy

⁶ "Kevin Rudd: The West isn't ready for the rise of China", *The New Statesman*, 2012, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/international-politics/2012/07/kevin-rudd-west-isnt-ready-rise-china>.

⁷ Graham T. Allison, *Destined For War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

that matches his conviction. His book *The Art of the Deal* leaves the reader with a distinct impression that Trump believes in aiming high and then “pushing and pushing and pushing”⁸ to achieve his objective. He has also introduced a unique style of governance by tweeting his decisions. Although he has largely stuck to what he promised in his election campaign, he has also notably dismissed several of his campaign allies and staffers and has now staffed the executive office with generals and hardliners. His “America First” foreign policy has many supporters in his country and it has sent a signal globally that nations across the world cannot simply rely on (or in his words, take for granted), the Americans to provide security and aid. The global leadership of the US for the defense of certain universal principles is seemingly no longer available. Under President Trump, the US diplomatic machinery saw itself starved of resources, instead, the military was strengthened, and immigration to the US restricted. His message continues to resonate with his wide spread electoral base, who see his efforts as a drive to put their country first and bring money and jobs back to American shores.

In many ways, the US strategy documents unveiled by the Trump Administration reveal this very mindset. In December 2017, the US National Security Strategy was announced identifying “three main sets of challengers – the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups.”⁹ The document describes China and Russia as powers that “challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity”. The political scientists who had been following the course of events in international politics were not surprised. They could see that major power competition was now intensifying. For obvious reasons, China reacted sharply to the “America First” approach that was reflected in the Strategy document and called it “completely selfish for a country to claim that its own interests are superior to the interests of other

⁸ Donald Trump and Tony Schwartz, *The Art of the Deal* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987).

⁹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017.

countries”¹⁰ Russia termed it as a document having an “imperialist character”.¹¹

Just a month later, the National Defense Strategy was announced in January 2018, in which it was stated categorically that “interstate strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security.”¹² It was argued that “China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea. Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations and pursues veto power over the economic, diplomatic, and security dimensions of its neighbors.”¹³

The US is also contemplating an Indo-Pacific Strategy, the initial contours of which have been revealed in a Department of State briefing.¹⁴ This strategy ostensibly calls for free and open Indo-Pacific, but has largely been perceived as continuation of the US strategic competition with rising China.

The “America First” approach reflected in the two strategy documents remove any lingering doubts that a new kind of major power competition, even rivalry, has set in, particularly in Asia, sweeping away the euphoria that had once been created by globalization and multilateralism.

How can diplomacy deal with these emerging strategic shifts and the enormous challenges these pose for the world at large? Social

¹⁰ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, *Remarks by the Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in the United States regarding the China-related content in the US National Security Strategy*, 2017, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmgxss/t1520605.htm>.

¹¹ Andrew Kramer, “Russia and China object to new America First security doctrine”, *New York Times*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/world/europe/russia-china-america-first-doctrine.html>.

¹² Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American military’s Competitive Edge* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2018).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, *Briefing on the Indo Pacific Strategy*, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/04/280134.htm>

scientists are struggling to determine whether diplomacy can stop the emerging major power competition from moving towards a worldwide conflict, which could be catastrophic not just for the warring nations, but for the whole world. The real challenge is that President Trump seems to be convinced of a world view where the United States is perceived as such an un-challengeable super power, that all countries would fall in line, creating a deterrence effect that results in peace. In his State of the Union address on January 30, 2018, President Trump reiterated what was already articulated in the two strategy documents. In fact, he went a step further to classify China and Russia as “rivals”¹⁵ who challenge American interests, economy and values. He argued that in confronting these dangers, “weakness is the surest path to conflict.”¹⁶ In his view, “unmatched power”¹⁷ is the surest means of safeguarding American shores. Clearly, if such an approach is pursued further, the space for diplomacy would shrink.

Already, there is growing discussion that the new US approach under President Trump could further polarize the world and undermine the usefulness of diplomacy in preserving peace. In his recent book titled *War on Peace: The end of diplomacy and the decline of American influence*, Ronan Farrow, a New York based journalist, expresses his concern on the recent measures taken by Trump Administration to under-resource State Department and its machinery.

Most analysts argue that Trump’s approach is a high-risk strategy with little or no guarantees of success. A sobering advice came from Dr. Henry Kissinger who has argued that “in a world of admitted rivalry and competition, a balance of power is necessary but not sufficient. The underlying question is whether a renewed rivalry between major powers can be kept from culminating in conflict.”¹⁸ He, therefore, proposed that “balancing world power

¹⁵ Donald Trump, “President Donald J. Trump’s State of the Union Address”, (Speech, Washington DC, 2018).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Dr Henry A Kissinger, *Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (US Congress, Washington DC, 2018).

while essential must not constitute the entirety of our (US) policy.... The concept of major power relations must include a diplomacy of world order side by side with a military element.”¹⁹

Notwithstanding the advice of Dr. Kissinger, it appears that despite the enormous diplomatic gains made since the end of the Cold War, the effective use of diplomacy is on the retreat. With American abandonment of the Climate Change Paris Accord, the Iran nuclear deal, and membership of the UN Human Rights Council, it is clear that the world faces an uphill task to preserve the remaining gains made by diplomacy. The recently held G7 meeting revealed the fissures in the Western world, even on a subject which for decades had kept the Western world unanimous (e.g. free international trade). The most spectacular failure of diplomacy in recent times remains the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, a country which remains in turmoil. The recent American reach-out to North Korean leadership could be a glimmer of hope but the jury is still out on whether this would lead to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

While the United States under President Trump is yet to demonstrate its full faith in multilateralism and global diplomacy, China seems to be making efforts to emerge as the main force behind what is left of globalization. The Belt and Road Initiative holds promise for the economies of over sixty countries across Eurasian landmass. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank launched by China is successfully financing infrastructure projects to promote connectivity. Moreover, together with Russia, China is consolidating the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an effective forum to promote regional diplomacy in Asia. Most European countries and Canada also appear to be retaining their faith in multilateralism as was evident in the recently held G7 Summit.

Regional Issues: Diplomacy Constrained

In this state of evolving power dynamics and shifting role of diplomacy, it is interesting to examine the impact felt in other various parts of the world. Take one of the most troubled regions of

¹⁹ Ibid.

the world, for example South Asia, where, too, the future of diplomacy is uncertain and persistently and severely being constrained to deliver peace dividends. India and China have what can be termed as an uneasy peace. China is suspicious of the American tilt towards India and the Indians clearly resent the growing influence of China in South Asia, as shown in their fierce opposition to the BRI and CPEC. Despite this, both have continued their limited bilateral diplomatic engagement as well as bilateral trade.

While diplomacy is not yet dead on India-China track, it certainly is in jeopardy when it comes to relations between India and Pakistan, where all doors to diplomacy remain firmly shut and the two are simply not engaging bilaterally. India believes that Pakistan harbors anti-India militant groups, like Lashkar e Tayyaba and Jaish e Mohammad, and conditions any bilateral engagement on elimination of these militant groups. Pakistan is not convinced of this logic, stating that it itself has been the victim of terrorism and that it has battled terrorism and terrorist groups like no other nation, evening losing in the process thousands of its security personnel and civilians, the enormous economic losses notwithstanding. Pakistan believes that it has demonstrated more commitment and action than anyone else to eliminate militancy and extremism, and that for it to succeed, its National Action Plan and intelligence based operation Raddal Fasaad must be given time. Pakistan believes that a better course for India is to partner with Pakistan in isolating militancy rather than calling off dialogue and providing the militants a new lease of life. Pakistan further believes that India must stop its brutalities against the people of Kashmir. It is evident that most of the Pakistan based militants derive their legitimacy to exist from their purported efforts to fight for the rights of the people of Kashmir, which remains occupied by India in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. It is argued that the Modi regime has been emboldened by the US tilt in the region and is taking a hardline approach in its relations with Pakistan, in its dealing with the people of the occupied Kashmir, and with the religious minorities in pursuit of Hindutva ideology. Two nuclear armed neighbors not talking to each other at all is not only a setback for diplomacy, but also undoubtedly a terrifying scenario.

Iran nuclear deal that was negotiated through a painstaking negotiation process and was heralded as the success of diplomacy, is now under question marks, driven primarily by the United States. This has spurred Saudi fears, and tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia have risen, manifesting in the bloody conflict in Yemen. Beyond this the broader Middle East too is still not only suffering from the scourge of terrorism, including a persistent ISIS, but also grappling with the state authority, which in most countries, remains too weak to stabilize the region.

One of the largest test cases for the future of diplomacy in South Asian region remains Afghanistan, which continues to toil in a tumultuous environment. Ever since the announcement of its South Asia strategy on August 21, 2017, the US has pursued what it calls a conditions-based approach. As per this strategy, the US is to stay in Afghanistan until peace returns. The US troops were given enhanced authority to engage the militants in the hope that this would weaken the Taliban and force them to come to the negotiating table with the Afghan government. Indeed, the US is reported to have dropped three times more munitions on Afghanistan in 2017 than it did in the year prior.²⁰ However, nearly a year since the announcement of the strategy, the security situation in Afghanistan remain precarious. According to the report of Senior Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, as of January 2018, nearly 43 percent²¹ of Afghan territory is still not in the control of Afghan security forces. What this entails is that such a huge tract of land is available not only to Taliban but also to militants of the world who have found fertile ground to carve out safe havens to plan their terrorist activities. ISIS too has reportedly made deep inroads into Afghanistan. This situation presents a complex challenge for the US, as breaking these safe havens is the very reason for which the US came to Afghanistan in the first place. The stated US objective is to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become the kind of safe haven that it

²⁰ Ivo Daalder, “Ex US NATO Ambassador: The tragic truth about America’s longest war”, *CNN International Edition*, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/01/opinions/the-tragic-truth-about-americas-longest-war-daalder/index.html>

²¹ SIGAR, *April 30, 2018 Quarterly Report to US Congress* (Washington DC: SIGAR, 2018).

was before 9/11, so that such terrorist incidents would not be planned and staged in Afghanistan by the terrorist groups. With scores of terrorist groups entrenched in Afghanistan, the US hardly seems any closer to what it had hoped to achieve through military intervention in Afghanistan.

It is in this context that countries like Pakistan and China have argued for a comprehensive political solution rather than a military solution in Afghanistan. Notably of late, the Americans have shown an inclination to move towards a political approach alongside its military offensive. Positive statements from American leaders and increased diplomatic efforts to give the peace and reconciliation process a push attest to this. The Afghan President has also announced a peace package on February 28, 2018, which promised to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate political group, and proposed²² a ceasefire and release of prisoners, among other elements as a leeway to reaching a peace agreement. US Secretary of State Pompeo welcomed the offer for peace talks with the Taliban. On the other hand, the Taliban have not rejected the offer of talks, but there are indications that they would like to talk first with the Americans and not the Afghan government. For the Taliban, the moot point appears to be the presence of foreign forces on Afghan soil.

For Pakistan, this stalemate leaves even fewer choices. Pakistan believes that it has suffered the most from the decades of the instability in Afghanistan. Four decades ago, when Soviet forces moved into Afghanistan, it was Pakistan which bore the brunt of the conflict in terms of three million Afghan refugees, who are still living on Pakistan soil. Along with this came a rampant “Kalashnikov” culture. Drugs and smuggling created black markets which have injured its economy. Pakistani leaders seem, therefore, highly keen to see peace return to Afghanistan, as any further instability would only serve to increase the costs for Pakistan. However, Pakistan appears convinced that the most feasible path towards a resolution to the Afghan conflict lies in finding a political solution, not a military one. There is a clear consensus in the

²² Ashraf Ghani, “President Ghani’s Remarks at the Second Conference of Kabul Process”, (Speech, Kabul, 2018).

political divide of Pakistan today that a peaceful, stable, and independent Afghanistan would be in Pakistan's interest. Accordingly, Pakistan has facilitated twice the reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, once in July 2015 and the second time through the Quadrilateral Coordination Group of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the US in early 2016. Unfortunately, both attempts did not succeed for one reason or the other. Now in 2018, the situation has become more complex, with the introduction of ISIS in eastern and northern Afghanistan and the involvement of other important regional and global players.

Diplomacy: The Best Bet

Given the enormous complexity of the situation in Afghanistan, diplomacy remains the best bet to bring about lasting peace in Afghanistan. However, for this to happen, several pieces of the puzzle must be put together. First and the foremost is the need to have a genuine peace and reconciliation process that is supported by all. This is necessary, but not enough. Other elements are equally important. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which for centuries has been crossed over at will, needs to be managed more effectively to interdict the cross-border movement of terrorists. Afghan refugees living in Pakistan should also be enabled to return to Afghanistan in dignity, and the drug trade must be effectively addressed. Moreover, the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan need to engage in a constructive dialogue. The Afghan government should also end its highly toxic anti Pakistan propaganda, which has pushed the two countries away from each other.

But perhaps most importantly, there should be a regional consensus that Afghan soil would not be used by anyone to advance their strategic interests. The Americans have accused²³ the Russians of supporting the Taliban and their sympathizers. The Russians have, in turn, pointed out and sought explanations²⁴ on the reports of

²³ Justin Rowlett, "Russia 'arming the Afghan Taliban', says US", *BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43500299>.

²⁴ Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's answers to media questions at News Conference held at UN Headquarters New York*, 2018,

unarmed helicopters providing supplies to ISIS militants in eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan believes that India is using Afghan soil to advance its policy of double squeeze against Pakistan and is trying to destabilize Pakistan. Unfortunately, the various regional and global meetings that have been convened to build a regional consensus have failed largely due to Afghan government's short-sighted approach to use these occasions to isolate Pakistan. This time around, it is important that the regional consensus is aimed at getting a solemn undertaking from all global and regional players to give peace a chance in Afghanistan.

For the US, options are limited. The first is to continue with the pursuit of a military solution. We hardly see any prospects for the success of this route, since victory could not be achieved when the US and NATO forces were at its peak strength of nearly 140,000²⁵ troops in 2011. How can it be guaranteed now when the US troops in Afghanistan are down to nearly 15,000 only. The second option is to go for a political solution for which cooperation of all regional players is necessary, especially Pakistan. It is important that strategic interests of all states must be respected in this regard. For instance, giving a greater role to India in Afghanistan means total insensitivity towards Pakistan's strategic interests. The political route may seem difficult, but it has the best chance of success as the alternative involves even more bloodshed and instability for the region.

The third option, which could be a wild card, is that the US gets frustrated in the face of this lingering war and decides to abruptly leave Afghanistan. This option has its obvious implications. US would have to face the embarrassment of not winning the war, at

https://afghanistan.mid.ru/en_GB/main/-/asset_publisher/53TTw6ecgBaW/content/iz-otvetov-na-voprosy-smi-ministra-inostrannyh-del-rossii-s-v-lavrova-v-hode-press-konferencii-v-stab-kvartire-oon-n-u-jork-19-anvara-2018-goda?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fafghanistan.mid.ru%3A443%2Fen_GB%2Fmain%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_53TTw6ecgBaW%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3D_118_INSTANCE_xQr9OJX0H1tH__column-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1.

²⁵ BBC News, "How many foreign troops are in Afghanistan?", 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11371138>.

home and abroad. Afghanistan could descend into a free fall of violence and terrorism. Pakistan would receive even more refugees and more militants at its border. Regional players could jostle to protect their own interests in Afghanistan. This could spell disaster for all parties involved.

Conclusion

The question of whether diplomacy will succeed in resolving fratricidal conflicts is being asked not only in Afghanistan or in South Asia, but also in several conflict situations around the world. Add to this the combustible mix of emerging strategic competition between major powers of the world, one wonders how, if ever, diplomacy would handle a more polarized and complex world. It is not yet clear where would the major power competition actually lead us all, and how this would impact the present world order. What, however, is clear that if their competition further intensifies, there would be implications for the entire world. Therefore, there is a dire need to ensure that the United States and China stay engaged and address their concerns through diplomatic engagement.

Given the high stakes involved, despite setbacks, diplomacy remains our best hope to secure peace and promote human development for our common good. To quote Dr. Kissinger once more, the major power relations can best be handled by a “diplomacy of world order side by side a military element”²⁶. Diplomacy is a process to attain peace by finding a compromise and common ground through negotiations. Conversely, war is a process to attain objectives by use of force. War, therefore, by its very definition signifies a failure of diplomacy. The present strategic shifts are pushing us towards conflict, and given tremendously disastrous consequences of any conflict, it is crucially important that states, especially major powers, stay committed to diplomacy – now, more than ever.

²⁶ Dr Henry A Kissinger, *Opening Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (US Congress, Washington DC, 2018).



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