

- ❑ Vietnam-Bangladesh Relations: Sharing Similarities, Towards Bright Future
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A handout photograph from the German government shows a group of leaders at the Group of Seven summit, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Trump, in Canada on June 9, 2018.

Rising Asia

July-September 2018 Issue 14

Erdoğan the Magnificent



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife Emine Erdoğan greet supporters at the AKP headquarters in Ankara, Turkey June 25, 2018. (AFP)

In Pictures: 18th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Qingdao, Shandong Province, China on June 9-10, 2018.





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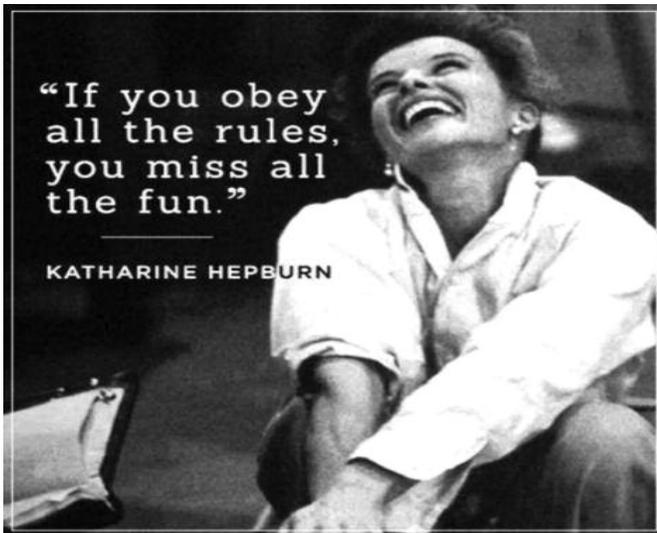
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Beautiful Quotes



“

Politics is an art and not a science, and what is required for its mastery is not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and the moral strength of the statesman.”

—
Hans Morgenthau



Editor's Note



In Asia, the World Bank has supported and facilitated the Mekong River Commission and the Indus Waters Treaty to promote cooperation among riparian states. Furthermore, development agencies emphasize the importance of management of trans-boundary water institutions to prevent conflict and promote regional cooperation. Thus hydro-diplomacy and its perspective are on the rise. There is a growing need for countries to strengthen their capabilities to participate in preventive diplomacy focusing on water. Greater coordination among relevant government ministries is required to support water conservation and management.

Transparency and sharing of data are quite essential in developing trans-boundary water resource management and preventing conflicts. In many countries such as Bangladesh, India and others, water information is collected in a fragmented manner. Lack of data on water resources makes it difficult for donors and facilitators to develop treaties on the use of shared water resources. Water problems are not new, however, water demands are rising, our ability to pollute is global, our societies are interlinked, and many more issues are involved.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is one of the first and earliest organizations that firmly advocated for fighting terrorism. In 2001, SCO member states signed the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism at its summit. In the past 17 years, with close cooperation among the member states, it helped prevent several hundred cases of terror attacks, seized and arrested a large number of internationally wanted terrorists, and destroyed many training bases set up in the region by terror groups. The SCO also pays close attention to the convergence of regional drug production and terror crimes, weapon smuggling, and other terror cases that endanger regional social stability and security. Economic cooperation among SCO members has been smooth, and within the SCO framework, there is no room for trade protectionism. The SCO has progressed to the stage of maturity, and function of global governance is its benchmark. In theory, global governance means a practice for common management of global affairs in line with multi-polarization and economic globalization. Global governance involves a variety of sectors.

Best Regards

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Vietnam – Bangladesh relations: Sharing similarities, towards bright future

H.E. Mr. Tran Van Khoa



Vietnam and Bangladesh share many similarities in economic, cultural and social background, and are located at two vital locations in South East Asia and South Asia respectively, and are the bridge between the Asia-Pacific and the South Asia-Indian Ocean regions.

Bangladesh is not only a traditional friend, but also an important partner of Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnam attaches much importance to relations with Bangladesh.

Political relations

Vietnam and Bangladesh enjoy an excellent traditional friendship on the basis of historical similarities and the shared values of independence, peace, cooperation and development. In the past, our two countries have always expressed solidarity and mutual support. Vietnam was among the first countries to recognize the independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh as early as in 1971. Bangladesh was also one of the first Asian countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam immediately following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.

Throughout 45 years of diplomatic relations, the leaders and people of our two countries have always cherished and preserved this precious tradition for strengthening cooperation so as to advance our bilateral relations. Currently, our traditional friendship has been continually improved with the frequent exchange of high-level visits, especially the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina to Vietnam in 2012, Hon'ble President Md. Abdul Hamid to Vietnam in 2015, Hon'ble Speaker of the House of Nation Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury to Vietnam in 2017 and H.E. President of Vietnam Tran Dai Quang to Bangladesh in March 2018. During the visit, Leaders of the two countries agreed to further promote and develop our excellent friendship relations. In 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the two countries also organised successfully the First Foreign Office Consultation to review the current developments in bilateral relations and propose the next steps to further consolidate and promote cooperation. Besides, Vietnam and Bangladesh also share common positions on various regional and international issues, and are working closely and supporting each other at international forums and the United Nations.

Economic and trade relations

Bilateral trade turnover in 2017 saw dramatic growth, reaching US\$924 million, a 57% year-on increase. It is the highest ever trade value between the two countries so far. But the trade balance is still in favour of Vietnam. Vietnam's export to Bangladesh in 2017 was valued at US\$869 million, whereas Bangladesh's export value to Vietnam



President Tran Dai Quang (R) met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on March 5, 2018 (Photo: VNA)



Vietnam's export to Bangladesh in 2017 was valued at US\$869 million, whereas Bangladesh's export value to Vietnam was only US\$55 million. The main export product of Vietnam to Bangladesh is clinker and cement, followed by rice. Meanwhile, pharmaceuticals are the main Bangladesh's export item to Vietnam. According to the statistics of Vietnam's Ministry of Planning and Investment, as of July 2018, Bangladesh has been investing four projects in the field of logistics and transportation in Vietnam with the total registered capital of US\$615,075. Meanwhile, Vietnam has been investing one project in Bangladesh with the total registered capital of US\$120,000. However, both countries have much room to further promote trade and investment. To tap into such potentials, during the visit of Vietnam's President to Bangladesh in March 2018, a Business Forum was organised with the aim to create a platform for businesses of the two countries to meet, discuss and establish partnership. In addition, two Government-to-Government Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the field of Fisheries and Livestock, and Machinery manufacturing and several Business-to-Business MoUs on various fields were signed during the State visit. Although both countries share many similarities in the current economic development, we are not just competitors, but rather partners that can learn from each other and support mutually.

On economic, trade and investment cooperation, our two countries can work towards furthering the growth of two-way trade and investment. We should enable the trade in the commodities in which each side has an advantage, and enable the business community to strengthen engagement, information sharing and market connectivity. Air connectivity is also a possible area to promote the flow of investment, trade and tourism. Vietnam hopes to strengthen investment into Bangladesh, especially in such potential areas for cooperation as telecommunication, information technology, agriculture, food processing, textile, oil and gas, consumer goods, infrastructure development and services.

On agriculture, animal husbandry and aquaculture, the two countries should continue to strengthen complemen-

tary cooperation. The two sides should look into forming joint ventures, associations, production chains, and apply advanced technology in cultivation and husbandry, production and preservation to generate greater export value.

People-to-people and cultural exchanges

This kind of exchanges has been also continually strengthened. In June 2017, Vietnam Embassy in collaboration with Nawab Salimullah Academy organised a launching ceremony of Bengali translation of the book "How Ho Chi Minh wrote his Testament". This is indeed an expression of the affection of the people of Bangladesh towards President Ho Chi Minh - Vietnam's Father of Nation. In addition, cultural exchange activities are more and more frequent. In March 2018, Vietnam Embassy successfully hosted the three-day Vietnamese cultural festival in Dhaka that includes various activities, namely fine arts exhibition, folk music performance, traditional costume show, food festival, handicraft products display. These kinds of exchanges help increase understanding of people, especially young generation of the two countries, therefore to further strengthen our excellent traditional friendship.

Both Vietnam and Bangladesh are nations with long history and endowed with many cultural heritages. Both also have favorable geography, young populations and potential markets, and are success stories in poverty reduction, the promotion of social equality and justice and sustained economic growth. Throughout 45 years of diplomatic relations, the leaders and people of our two countries have always made great efforts to strengthen and advance our bilateral relations. On such solid foundations, our two countries' competent authorities need to tap into potentials and strengths of each country in seeking suitable measures to expand, enhance and deepen our bilateral relations, so as to live up to the aspirations and interests of our two countries' leaders and peoples.

H.E. Mr. Tran Van Khoa, *Ambassador of Vietnam to Bangladesh.*



Pakistan-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations

H.E. Shah Faisal Kakar



Pakistan and Bangladesh enjoy good brotherly relations which are rooted in common religion, history, cultural heritage and united by a joint struggle for independence. It was Dhaka from where concerted efforts were originated for the political rights of Mus-

lims of the subcontinent resulting in the establishment of All India Muslim League in December 1906, when Nawab of Dhaka moved a resolution for establishing a Muslim organization to be called the All India Muslim League. Sher e Bengal AK Fazlul Haque inspired the minds of millions of Muslims of the subcontinent with his historic demand for an independent homeland for the Muslims in 1940 in the form of the Lahore Resolution. This paved the way for the creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947 and the ultimate emergence of Bangladesh on the world map in 1971.

As sovereign independent States, relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh started in 1974 when, forgetting the bitterness of the past, Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited Pakistan on the invitation of Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to attend the second meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Lahore from 22nd to 24th February, 1974. It was on this historic occasion that Pakistan formally recognized Bangladesh as a sovereign independent State, thus, facilitating its entry into OIC. This visit of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Pakistan and the reciprocal visit of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Bangladesh in June 1974 set the stage for the future warm relations between the two brotherly Muslim States.

Today, the love of the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh for each other can be seen on the cricket field. Both Pakistani and Bangladeshi spectators celebrate the victory of each other's team against a third country as their own victory. Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Tamim Iqbal have the same number of fans in Pakistan as in Bangladesh and likewise Wasim Akram, and Shahid Afridi is as popular in Bangladesh as in Pakistan.

Not only the social bonds are strengthening mutual ties, especially between the younger generations. Likewise, economic and commercial relations have also shown positive upward trajectory in recent years in the form of bilateral trade that has gone up to the US \$ 790 million from 685 million dollars in 2016-17. Bangladesh ranks amongst top export destinations of Pakistan. Still, there are huge opportunities for improvement in bilateral trade to the mutual benefit of both. Pakistani exports - raw cotton, electronics, and electrical goods, motorbikes, CNG Rickshaws, etc. - have a huge potential in Bangladesh that could be imported at very competitive rates. Cooperation in economic and trade will not only alleviate poverty which is the common problem of both the countries but will also go a long way to rejuvenate business potentials.

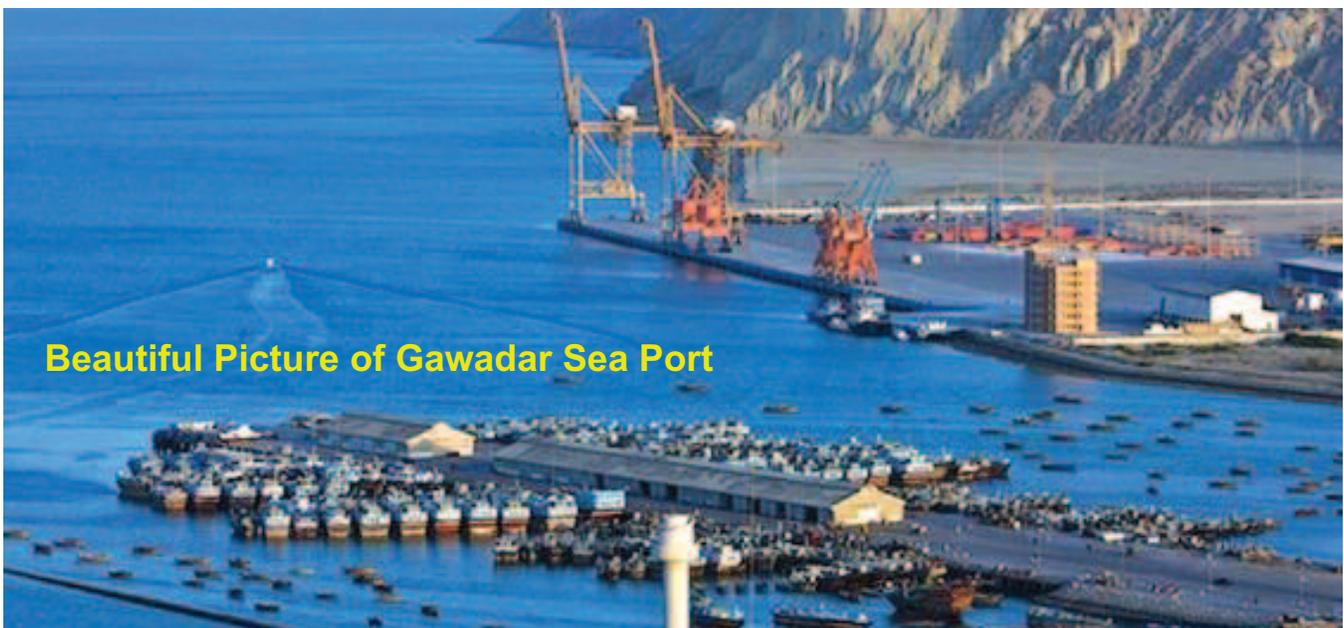
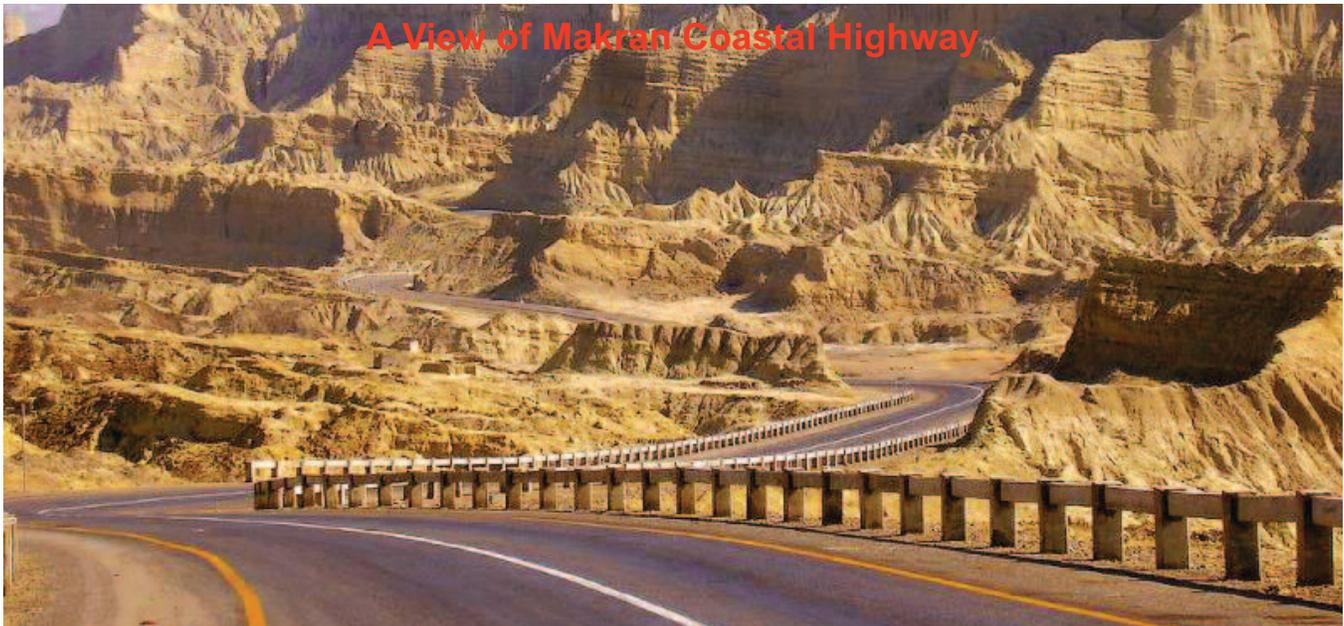
Pakistanis are jubilant at the success stories of Bangladesh, like the recent graduation of Bangladesh from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category to a developing nation. Also, Pakistan appreciates the generosity and benevolence shown by Bangladesh government to the hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas Muslims fleeing violence in Rakhine by providing them shelter. Pakistan supports Bangladesh at all international fora in its efforts for a peaceful solution to this humanitarian crisis. It is high time for the international community to pay heed to the plight of the most prosecuted community on the earth.

The newly elected political leadership of Pakistan has ex-

pressed its solemn desire to promote good friendly relations with all neighbouring countries, especially the Muslim States. This would surely give a fresh impetus to the ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh. The gravity of growth has shifted to Asia and now it is the turn of people of this region to see development and prosperity leaving behind the past and looking forward to a bright future.

Pakistan wishes to have enviable relations with Bangladesh and pray for a peaceful, prosperous, stable and strong Bangladesh because we believe that a vibrant Bangladesh is vital for a peaceful and stable South Asia.

H.E. Shah Faisal Kakar is the Acting High Commissioner of Pakistan in Bangladesh.



Russian-Made Nuclear Plant to Spur Economic Growth in Bangladesh

Bangladesh officials and locals in Rooppur have said that the nuclear power plant at Rooppur has brought modern infrastructure and various job opportunities to the region. The power plant will likely generate electricity to meet demands from crucial industries, thus providing a major push to the country's economic goals.

Bangladesh officials and locals in Rooppur have said that the nuclear power plant at Rooppur has brought modern infrastructure and various job opportunities to the region. The power plant will likely generate electricity to meet demands from crucial industries, thus providing a major push to the country's economic goals.

Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom, which is constructing Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant in Rooppur, will soon start constructing a second nuclear power plant at the same site. Bangladesh is hopeful that the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) will prove a boon for the energy-scarce nation, playing a vital role in the economic development of the country.

"The construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, inaugurated by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is currently underway. So far, the project is right on schedule and we hope that this project will also be completed in

time. Once completed, this power plant will play a vital role in the country's economy. This project will make the country's dream come true in days to come," Anwar Hossain, Secretary of the Science and Technology Ministry, Bangladesh told Sputnik.

Locals have said that there has been a radical transformation in the Ishwardi area ever since construction started. The project has created job opportunities not only for local inhabitants but also for people from other parts of Bangladesh.

"We are stunned watching the development that is happening in and around Ishwardi, especially in the residential areas. We used to see such fascinating structures only on TV. We are feeling proud of having such a modern city besides our houses. The Rooppur project has already employed a number of locals and has created employment opportunities for others as well," Md. Shajahan Ali, the

headmaster of Rooppur High School, told Sputnik.

The establishment of the first unit of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is in progress and the second unit has also got its license. The power plant will be able to generate as much as 2,400 MW of power from these two units combined. The core construction of the re-





© SPUTNIK / OLGA DYCHEVA: 2nd Nuclear Plant Site, Rooppur, Bangladesh

actor of the first unit was inaugurated by the prime minister and the project is right on schedule.

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission said that it was happy over the speed at which the project was advancing. "The Nuclear Power Plant is a long cherished dream of the people of Bangladesh. A big project like RNPP is likely to change the fortune of the countrymen. Many of the large enterprises and the companies of the country are involved in the development of this project and it has also created job opportunities for individuals and small businesses," M Ali Zulqarnain, a former chairman of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, told Sputnik.

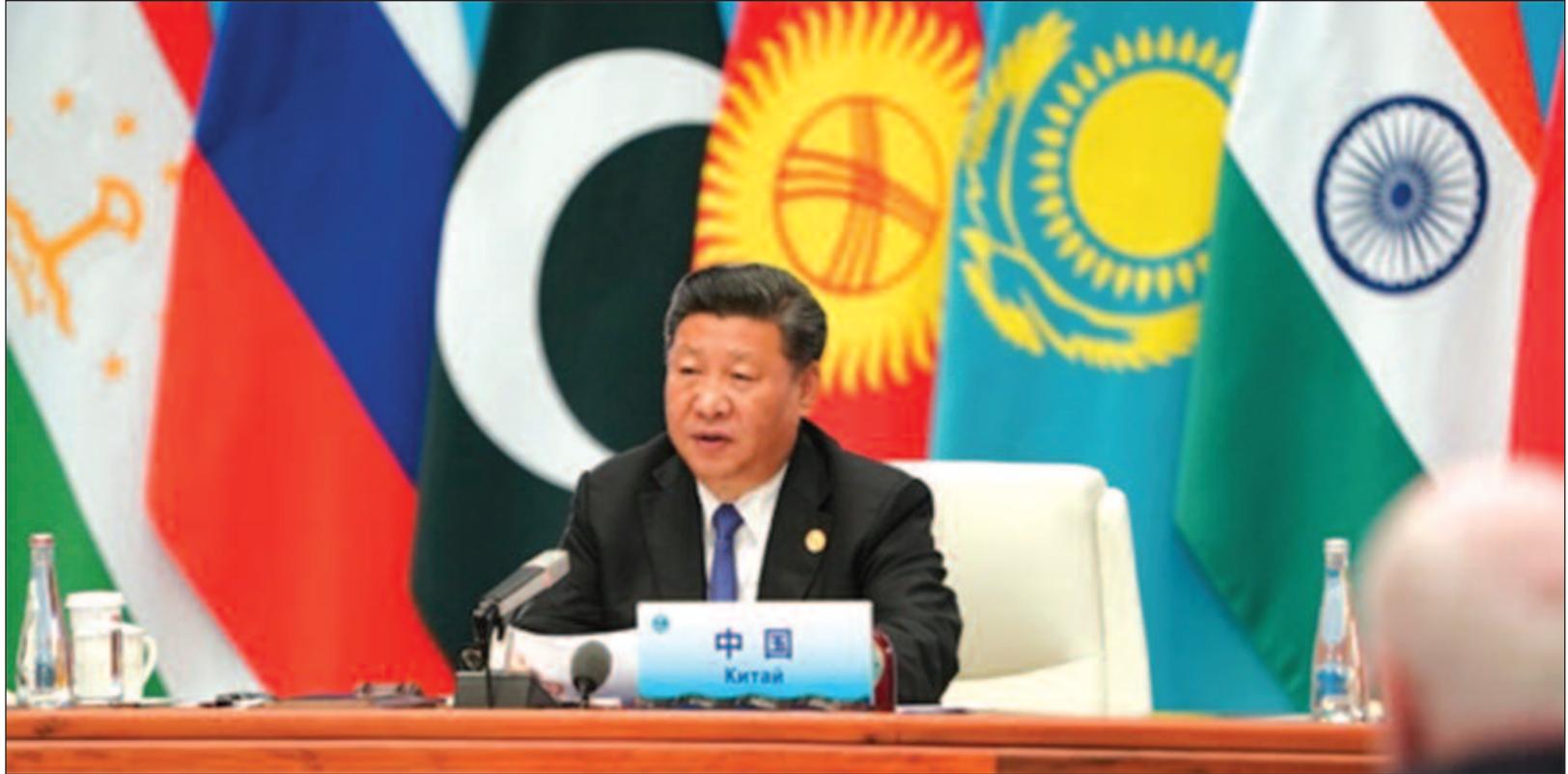
Presently, Bangladesh is in the process of establishing several export processing zones to speed up economic growth; therefore, demand for electricity is estimated to rise by an additional 3,000MW, which can be met through nuclear power generated by the RNPP.

"The nuclear power plant of Rooppur will meet a large part of the country's power demand. The project of constructing the power plant is going on in a timely manner

and we hope it will be completed within the due time as well. Without enough power, industries will not flourish and the growth rate cannot be accelerated. The garment industry of Bangladesh is already suffering due to lack of an adequate power supply and is gradually shifting to neighboring countries. So, we need to meet our power demand as soon as possible and we hope that the RNPP will help us to meet our power demand," Ishtiaque M. Sayed, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Physics Society at Dhaka University, told Sputnik.

Rosatom is supplying two 1,200 MW VVER nuclear power plants to Bangladesh and the commercial launch is expected to be in 2023. A Russia-Bangladesh intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the area of NPP construction in the territory of Bangladesh was signed on November 2, 2011. With 33 power units, Rosatom is the world's number one in terms of the number of power units supplied to foreign nuclear power plants.

Source: *Sputnik*



President Xi's Speech to the 18th SCO Summit: Laying Foundations for China's Future

The SCO Qingdao Declaration reflected consensus, confidence and commitment about various time-bound plans of action.

Swaran Singh



On June 10, 2018, at the 18th summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as Chinese President Xi Jinping handed over the chairmanship to Kyrgyzstan's President Sooronbai Jeenbekov and promised China's full support in preparing the next summit, his short but succinct opening speech had already outlined how China will continue to play a leading role in the construction of the SCO's community of shared future.

What made this speech of President Xi especially notice-

able was that, Canada on the same day was hosting the industrialized nations G7 summit which made this expanding leadership vacuum all the more glaring, creating grounds for SCO nations to accept their expanded responsibilities in formulating global discourses and initiatives. Juxtaposed with President Xi's January 2017 speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, his words at the SCO Qingdao summit appeared almost prophetic, forecasting evolving global geopolitics and the SCO's role in it.

While photographs of these two leadership huddles showed the SCO summit full of enthusiasm and bonhomie, the body language of G7 leaders betrayed their anguish and anxieties. Most G7 nations blamed it on President Trump's whimsical policies towards his allies, the most recent being his arbitrary raising of trade tariffs. Refusing to sign on their joint communique, Trump had called host Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "dis-

honest and weak." The Qingdao Declaration on the other hand reflected consensus, confidence and commitment about various time-bound plans of action. Meanwhile, China hosting dozens of year-long SCO meetings and its summit has further cemented President Xi's credibility as a global leader in ensuring equitable, free and open trade for shared prosperity.

Xi's Qingdao speech included three broad themes:

First, his message was clear that the time is up for any "self-centered, short sighted and close-door policies" which left no doubt that it was directed at President Trump's recent protectionist policies. He underlined the need to "reject Cold War mentality and confrontation between blocs and oppose the practice of seeking absolute security on oneself at the expense of others." Vibrations of this message were felt worldwide as the contrast was clear in the exclusive nature of G7 and the inclusive approach of the SCO.

Second, Xi outlined several generous offers that will keep China integral to the SCO community building. China will train 2,000 law enforcement officers of SCO nations in next three years. For forging closer people-to-people ties for building the SCO family in sectors of education, science and technology, culture, tourism, health, disaster relief and media, Xi offered to provide 3,000 training

opportunities of human resources development for SCO member countries. For supporting development projects, Xi announced setting up of a RMB 30 billion special lending facility within the framework of the SCO Interbank Consortium. Also, on the Belt and Road Initiative that he put forward, Xi underlined the new thinking of "delivering shared benefits through extensive consultations and joint contribution."

Finally, Xi here talked of the SCO's guiding Shanghai Spirit inculcating respect for cultural diversity where mutual learning will help it overcome the sinister 'clash of civilizations' theory. Xi said democracy in international relations has become an unstoppable trend of the times. This is where he called for upholding what he called "innovative, coordinated, green, open and inclusive development" as key to ensuring "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security." Xi's Qingdao speech outlined his broad vision for future and how the SCO could emerge as a model to reckon with.

Swaran Singh is a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India and senior fellow at the Charhar Institute, Beijing, China.



Boys enjoy a ride at the Everland amusement park in Yongin, South Korea. Photo: Reuters



Erdođan the Magnificent

Sinan Ülgen



With his reelection as president under a new constitution, Recep Tayyip Erdođan has become Turkey's most powerful leader since the country began to hold contested elections in the years immediately following World War II. But two practical considerations will constrain

how Erdođan uses his impressive set of new prerogatives.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdođan has now fulfilled his ultimate political objective of being the country's first ever popularly elected executive president, receiving almost 53% of the national vote in 24 June election. A year ago, Erdođan pushed through constitutional amendments

to transform Turkey's parliamentary democracy into a highly centralized presidential system. Now those amendments will come fully into force.

The constitutional changes give Erdođan new powers to appoint vice presidents, ministers, and senior officials. They also allow him to dissolve parliament, be a member of a political party, have a greater say in appointing judges to the highest courts, issue decrees with the force of law, and impose a state of emergency. Narrowly approved by voters last April, the constitutional amendments also abolished the office of the prime minister. For the next five years, Erdođan will be Turkey's head of state, head of its ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), and head of government.

Erdođan is secure in his position because an early presidential election requires a two-thirds parliamentary vote – an unlikely scenario given the AKP's near-majority. He has thus become Turkey's most powerful leader since the



country began to hold contested elections in the years immediately following World War II. Turkey's domestic and foreign policies will now be shaped, ultimately, by one man.

This is of course the opposite of liberal democracy, a core feature of which is a robust set of institutional checks and balances designed to limit executive authority. The assignment of exceptionally broad powers to the executive president under the new constitution reflects a populist vision of government according to which the elected leader, as the true representative of the nation, should not be hindered in pursuing the nation's interests. The nation can judge the president's performance only every five years.

By adopting the constitutional text in a referendum, a slim majority of Turkish voters seem to have given their blessing to this populist conception of democratic politics. But two key considerations will constrain how Erdoğan uses his impressive set of new prerogatives.

First, despite winning the presidency, the AKP lost its outright majority in Parliament. With a tally of 42%, down seven points compared to the November 2015 election, the AKP was able to secure 293 of the parliament's 600 seats. As a result, Erdoğan will be forced to seek alliances to enact legislation. Even with the parliament's diminished role under the new constitution, control of the legislature remains important for the effective functioning of the state.

Erdoğan's natural ally in parliament is the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The two parties were in a pre-electoral alliance, and Erdoğan owes his election to the 11% of the vote won by his political partner. But a deeper, long-term alliance with the MHP will have significant implications for Turkey's domestic politics and international standing. It will also constrain Erdoğan's room for policy maneuver.

At home, the MHP stands for order and security. The alliance with MHP will therefore preclude any opening – akin to the peace initiative launched by the AKP government in 2015 – toward Turkey's Kurds. By the same token, the MHP is not likely to be a natural partner for any large-scale democratic reforms aimed at strengthening fundamental freedoms.

On the foreign-policy front, the MHP's inherently Euroskeptic stance will further restrict Turkey's diplomatic space to rebuild its relations with its partners in the West. During the campaign, the MHP leadership even called for Turkey to withdraw its moribund bid for accession to the European Union.

Turkey's economic vulnerabilities pose a second and equally important constraint on Erdoğan's authority. Unlike commodity-based economies with current-account surpluses, like Russia and Brazil, Turkey is reliant on foreign savings. Turkey fuels its growth by tapping international capital markets to finance its annual external borrowing requirement of around \$250 billion. This substantial deficit is the consequence of a chronic gap between investment and saving, and past AKP governments' failure to enact structural reforms to raise total productivity and enhance Turkey's international competitiveness.

An overemphasis on growth in recent years has exacerbated these difficulties. Last year, Turkey growth rate of 7% was among the highest in the OECD. But Erdoğan's expansionary policies have compounded the country's structural imbalances, with inflation rising to double digits, nominal interest rates reaching 16%, and the current-account deficit surpassing 6% of national income.

Erdoğan's performance as Turkey's executive president will therefore depend on his ability to chart a trajectory that satisfies the MHP's main priorities and addresses the adverse consequences of economic overheating. Both constraints are likely to become stronger over time, with the MHP increasingly emboldened by its parliamentary leverage, and the economy in growing need of a potentially contractionary adjustment.

Throughout Erdoğan's coming term, the question will nonetheless remain: Can these practical – and thus ephemeral – constraints serve as even a minimal proxy for the robust guarantees of a consolidated democratic system?

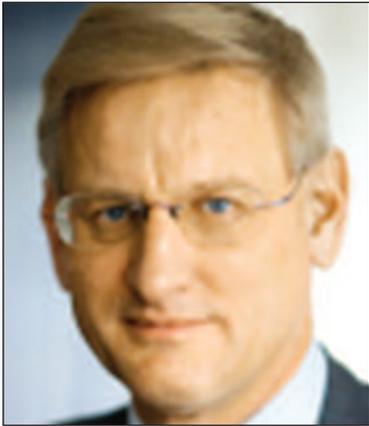
Sinan Ülgen is Chairman of the Istanbul-based Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) and a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels.



Image courtesy of the US Department of Defense.

The end of NATO?

Carl Bildt



What is left of NATO and the transatlantic order after US President Donald Trump’s tumultuous week in Brussels, the United Kingdom and Helsinki, where he defended Russian President Vladimir Putin against accusations of cyber warfare by Amer-

ica’s own intelligence agencies?

Watching events unfold through rose-tinted glasses, one might think that the West’s most important strategic alliance is more or less okay, or even growing stronger. In fact, NATO is in peril, and its fate now lies in Trump’s contemptuous hands.

Prior to and during the NATO summit, there was much hand-wringing over member states’ military spending as a share of GDP. Each member is expected to increase its spending to 2% of GDP by 2024, but Trump seems to think that this already should have been done. And at the summit in the middle of July, 2018, he suddenly called for a new target of 4% of GDP—which is more than even the United States spends.

To be sure, over the past few decades, NATO’s primary focus was on peacekeeping operations in distant places, rather than on its core function of territorial defence. For most European member states, the peace dividend from the alliance’s operations justified cuts in domestic military spending.

But this attitude changed in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and launched secretive military incursions into Eastern Ukraine. Since then, NATO member states’ de-



defence budgets have increased by around 4% per year on average, making the 2024 target eminently achievable.

More fundamentally, Trump's complaint that the US is shouldering an unfair share of the burden for NATO's collective defence is dubious. While the US military budget equals roughly 72% of combined defence spending by all NATO member states, roughly three-quarters of US military spending is directed towards regions other than Europe. Around half of the US defence budget is spent on maintaining a presence in the Pacific, and another quarter is spent on operations in the Middle East, strategic nuclear command and control, and other areas.

Moreover, although the US has increased its defence outlays in Europe substantially over the past few years, it is worth remembering that most US forces and facilities there are actually focused on the geostrategic arc from India to South Africa. With facilities such as Ramstein, Fairford, Rota, Vicenza and Sigonella, the US has long used Europe as a staging ground for deploying forces elsewhere. And the early-warning and surveillance facilities that the US maintains in the United Kingdom and Norway are there to defend the continental US, not Europe.

The fact is that total European defence spending is around twice what the US spends on European security, and also roughly twice what Russia spends on defence, according to estimates produced at the US National Defense University.

The critical importance of US command, control and intelligence forces in Europe should not be minimised, but it should at least be put into perspective. Although the US Army recently rotated heavy brigades through Europe for military exercises, its permanently stationed troops are equipped only for limited interventions.

This is why NATO must continue to improve its defence capacity in Europe. At a minimum, Europe needs more military forces, and those forces need to be equipped for rapid deployment to critical areas. The new mobility command that is being established in Germany is a promising first step.

And yet, Russia's advantages over NATO have less to do with resources than with command and control. As a single country, Russia's military forces are more integrated, and can be deployed more quickly in pursuit of strategic directives from the Kremlin. Such nimbleness was amply demonstrated in Crimea in 2014 and in Syria the following year.

For its part, NATO does have a deeply integrated command structure for the forces that are assigned to it. But that hardly matters if political decisions to deploy forces or launch operations are not taken in time. In any military confrontation, unity of will and the speed of high-level decision-making determine the outcome.

The problem is that while NATO's military capacity is actually improving, its political decision-making capacity is deteriorating. Imagine what would happen if a NATO member state sounded the alarm about Russia launching a secretive Crimea-style military operation within its borders. Then, imagine that US intelligence agencies confirmed that an act of aggression was indeed underway, despite Putin's denials.

Finally, imagine how Trump might respond. Would he call Putin to ask what's going on? And would Putin make another 'incredible offer' to help US investigators get to the bottom of things? Even more to the point: Would Trump quickly invoke the principle of collective defence under Article 5 of the NATO treaty? Or would he hesitate, question the intelligence, belittle US allies, and validate Putin's denials?

These are truly disturbing questions to have to ask of an American president. They will now hang over Europe's head indefinitely.

Carl Bildt is a former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.

Germany's 'China City': How Duisburg Became Xi Jinping's Gateway to Europe

The city is host to the world's largest inland port, with 80% of trains from China now making it their first European stop

Philip Oltermann



For much of the 20th century, the city of Duisburg in Germany's industrial west was a steel-and-coal town whose chimneys cloaked the skies in smoke. And yet there is something about this soot-stained spot in the Ruhr valley that seems to encourage a particularly clear-

sighted view of the rest of the world.

We could become China's gateway to Europe – and vice versa

In 1585, it was in Duisburg that Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator published a book of maps of European countries – the first ever “atlas” to carry that name. And it was here that Mercator first presented his new world map, the “Mercator projection”, that was so revolutionary for maritime navigators keen to steer merchant vessels across the high seas in the straightest possible line.

If in 2018 Duisburg is slowly rediscovering its cosmopolitan past, it is not just because four centuries after Mercator, traders are still trying to find the most direct route from A to B. As the threat of Donald Trump's tariffs and Brexit-related trade barriers is driving wedges between the EU and the Anglosphere, this former rust-belt town allows one to see in real time how Germany and China are intensifying their economic ties.

Every week, around 30 Chinese trains arrive at a vast terminal in Duisburg's inland port, their containers either stuffed with clothes, toys and hi-tech electronics from Chongqing, Wuhan or Yiwu, or carrying German cars,

Scottish whisky, French wine and textiles from Milan heading the other way.

In Duisburg's port, where train tracks run straight to the edge of the Rhine River, goods are loaded straight on to ships, stored for further dispatch in one of several football pitch-sized storage units, or sent on by train or truck to Greece, Spain or Britain.

Duisburg was already regarded as the world's largest inland port. But thanks to the Belt and Road infrastructure project – a revival of the Silk Road route that Mercator had read about in the travelogues of Marco Polo, this time subsidised with billions of dollars by the Chinese government – the port is fast becoming Europe's central logistics hub. Around 80% of trains from China now make it their first European stop, with most using the northern silk road route via Khorgos on the China-Kazakhstan border and the Russian capital, Moscow.

Local politicians, while still proud of the city's links to the 16th-century mapmaker, also like to compliment the perceptive eye of modern Chinese cartographers: in a map of Europe displayed at Shanghai airport, they point out,



A freight train leaves for Duisburg from Weihai port in Rongcheng, China. Photograph: VCG/Getty Images



How Duisburg connects to China's Belt (red) and Road (blue) routes.

Duisburg's name is printed larger than London, Paris or Berlin.

"We are Germany's China city," says Sören Link, Duisburg's Social Democrat mayor. For years, his city has been a symbol of the challenges of long-term structural changes facing industry in the Ruhr region: in 1987, photographs of thousands of Krupp steelworkers barricading a bridge over the Rhine protesting against imminent factory closures travelled around the world.

In 2018, Duisburg's unemployment rate of 12% is still almost four times as high as the German average, but at least the viral images are different: four years ago the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, made Duisburg one of the few stops on his state visit to Germany and was welcomed by an orchestra playing traditional mining songs. "There are signs that the city's importance will keep growing," says Link. "We could become China's gateway to Europe – and vice versa."

The trains' return journeys, however, remain Duisburg's achilles heel. For every two full containers arriving in Europe from China, only one heads back the other way, and the port only earns a fifth of the fee from empty containers that have to be sent back to China.

And while the west's appetite for gadgets made in China shows no sign of abating, one of the main European products heading east is powdered milk – a result of low trust in domestic brands following a 2008 food safety scandal. If that trust returns, even fewer containers may be heading east from Duisburg.

"The ratio used to be 4:1, so it has improved, but we still have an imbalance," admits Erich Staake, the port's CEO. A former TV channel manager, he is not shy to take credit for the entrepreneurial spirit of the port. Since taking

charge in 1998, employment at Duisport has soared from 19,000 to 50,000.

While other German port cities such as Hamburg run their harbour "like a landlord", Staake says, Duisburg has worked to court new trade, modernising its logistics infrastructure and even setting up its own railway company. He is building a new 20,000 sq metre storage unit where China Railways will be able to neatly stack 2,000 containers.

Staake's aspiration doesn't stop there. For Duisburg to permanently establish itself on the New Silk Road, he says, rail travel between China and Europe needs to outstrip other freight methods.

"Rail freight between Chongqing and Duisburg is almost twice as expensive as shipping, but takes 12 days instead of 45. Air freight is at least twice as expensive as rail freight, but takes on average five days. If we can reduce lead times even further, below 10 days on average, then that opens up a lot more potential."

But in Germany, some have been quick to sound a note of caution. If the still-recovering industries in western Germany make themselves too reliant on China, they warn, it could provide economic leverage for an authoritarian regime that wants to project its geopolitical power into western Europe. "What's good for Duisburg isn't necessarily good for the world," cautioned one recent article.

For now though, China's soft power barely registers in the region. The number of Chinese citizens living in the city has doubled in the past eight years – but from a low base of 568. The local Duisburg-Essen University houses a Confucius Institute and attracts the largest number of



Krupp steelworkers occupying a bridge over the Rhine in 1987. Photograph: Ullstein Bild/Getty Images



Chinese President Xi Jinping Visits Duisburg in 2014 and welcomes the arrival of the Yuxinou container train, linking Duisburg directly with Chongqing.
 Photograph: Pool/Getty Images

Chinese students in Germany, most of whom study engineering and economic sciences. They support a growing network of relatively authentic Asian fast food joints which now compete with the kebab houses introduced by a previous generation of migrants.

The number of Chinese businesses in the city has risen, too – up 50% since Xi visited in 2014 – but, again, there are still only 90. Unlike other cities on the New Silk Road, the port remains German-run.

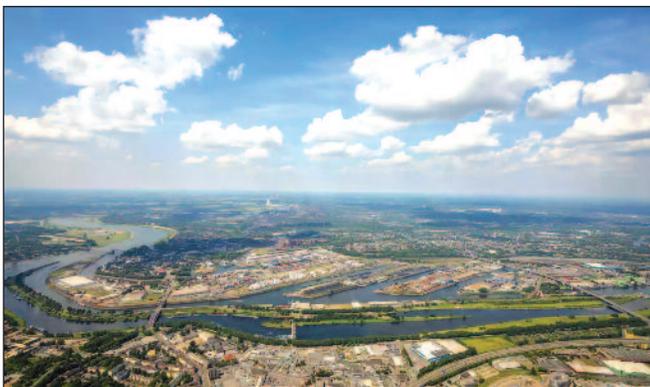
The reasons journey times from China are still far too long, as Staake sees it, lie mainly with the heavily unionised rail companies in Europe rather than their counterparts in

Asia: trains take on average six days to travel the 1,300km (800 miles) from Brest on the Polish-Belarusian border to Duisburg, while the 10,000km from Chongqing to Belarus is often completed in five-and-a-half days.

“The Chinese and the Kazakhs drive thousands of kilometres a day, they really work hard. It’s ridiculous, really. Of course we are trying to work out why this is happening. You know how many train drivers’ unions we have, and the Poles are not much better,” says Staake.

At the Duisburg city museum, visitors can still listen to the chants and jeers of the workers who went on strike over the closure of the steelworks in the 1980s and early 90s. A button hidden inside a wall made of original Ruhr valley coal triggers a recording. The modern Duisburg port with all its modern marvel, however, has yet to find its place in the city’s memory.

In the entrance hall to the museum, a wall greets visitors with the words for “welcome” in the languages of all the migrant workers who have shaped the city, from Kurdish to Greek to Polish. For now, the Mandarin or Cantonese phrases for “welcome” do not feature.



Eighty percent of trains from China make Duisburg their first European stop. Photograph: Hans Blosssey/© duisport

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The problem of political succession in Singapore

The decades of unique development have largely been enhanced by political stability in Singapore. Smooth political succession, when the Prime Minister was chosen several years prior to taking office, has nearly become the trademark of the city-state. Today, however, 4 years before Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's planned retirement the selection of the ideal successor is hindered by several factors, which might also influence the future of the country.

Klemensits Péter

After Singapore gained its independence in 1959 and seceded from Malaysia in 1965, the predictability of the political power has nearly become the trademark of the city-state. Keeping the rules of parliamentary democracy, the right centre People's Action Party (PAP) has won all the elections since 1959 and has been considered the only government party in the history of the country, obtaining 83 of the 89 mandates available at the last election held in 2015. Over the past decades the policy of the party has allowed for the handling of Singapore's economic and social issues as well as the unique development of the country. However, the stability of the political system has not only been ensured by the reign and broad authorisation of the governing party: the country has only had three prime ministers so far, and a decision on political succession was passed far earlier, which ensured the smooth

transfer of power and the reassurance of economic agents. Nevertheless, although Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong does not plan to govern the country after the elections in 2021, the Singaporean leadership has met with several difficulties finding the appropriate successor, which might significantly influence the future of the country, too.

Selecting the appropriate person

According to the official opinions, the Singaporean electoral system offers an opportunity to the talented, as members of parliament might get into the government depending upon their results; and thereafter it is also decided who is suitable to fulfil the main position. The future prime minister will not be selected by his predecessor but the next-generation leaders on the basis of consensus.





As everyone is aware of the responsibility, the party cannot be characterised with fights within the party, neither does the elite in power rival for the prime ministerial position.

It is a fact that in Singapore the People's Action Party takes the reforming of the political leadership seriously, and politicians undergo a well-established selection process, which also has negative aspects all the same. Most leaders come from the public service and the armed forces, so the chances of outsiders are limited. Since the party has no formal requirements regarding the election of the future prime minister, the decision is passed in private, behind closed doors, and one cannot exactly know who have decision rights in this issue. According to certain opinions, greater publicity would be essential in the 21st century, in view of the fact that the general public has no voice in electing the prime minister.

Electing the second and third prime ministers

Being most prestigious at global level, Lee Kuan Yew was Prime Minister of Singapore between 1959 and 1990. The eminent statesman, however, refrained from naming his successor; he only provided for the selection of 5 ministers but let the younger generation decide. Although Lee Kuan Yew did not espouse the election of the later successor Goh Chok Tong, he respected the decision made by the leadership in 1984 from beginning to end. After becoming Deputy Prime Minister in 1984, Goh gradually took over the lead of the country in the following 5 years, until Lee officially resigned in 1990.

Some people suppose that Goh Chok Tong's mandate as Prime Minister is only a temporary solution as Lee Kuan Yew is believed to have arranged that position for his son. Lee Hsien Loong, who is the eldest son of the late Prime Minister, became Member of Parliament in 1984 and was Deputy Prime Minister from 1990 until his rise to power in 2004. In 2003 Goh announced his resignation but his successor had already been found long before. As we can see, successors had several years to arrange the smooth transfer of power in both cases, so Singapore's political, economic and social stability as well as its global power was hardly affected by the new Prime Minister's taking of office.

Lee Hsien Loong's plans

The current Singaporean Leadership – headed by the Prime Minister – tried to make thorough arrangements in the question of succession as before, but his plans were foiled by chance in several cases. After the parliamentary elections held in 2015, Lee pointed out that the rejuvenation of the leadership will already be an urgent priority when setting up the next cabinet. After his announcement of resignation after the 2021 elections, the leadership tried to find his successor, too. Lee pointed out several times that he would let the next-generation leaders actually choose the person; at the same time, he presumably tries to use his influence on behalf of the candidate favoured by him.

In early 2016, 54-year-old Minister for Finance and Chairman of the Committee on the Future Economy was considered the ideal candidate among the fourth-generation politicians, but Heng got a stroke and needed immediate surgery in May 2016. Despite his fast recovery (in August he already returned to his position) his rise to power seems unlikely for health reasons.

Still, the preparation for the succession allows no delay, as the Prime Minister also suffers from various health problems. Diagnosed with lymphoma in the early 1990s he received chemotherapy, and in 2015 he was operated on for cancer of the prostate gland. However, in August 2016 he became unwell while delivering his annual speech on the state of the nation, and finally his doctors found serious dehydration. Although this case seems to have had no significant consequences, Lee confirmed that finding a prime minister candidate is a priority.

Current alternatives

According to the analysts, several persons in the Singaporean cabinet might come into question as the prospective prime minister besides Heng Swee Keat. Their common characteristic feature is, however, that they have relatively inconsiderable political experience as they got connected with politics only a few years ago. Minister for National Development Lawrence Wong, Minister in prime Minister's Office Chan Chun Sing and Minister



Fourth-generation Singaporean political leaders, all having a good chance of the prime ministerial position (source: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/6-men-to-watch>)

for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin all became known in the 2011 elections. However, in accordance with the Prime Minister's intention, the latter became Chairman of the Parliament in 2017, which is evaluated as degradation according to some opinions. Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung, who was Principal Private Secretary of Lee Hsien Loong, and Minister for Education (Schools) Ng Chee Meng entered into politics in 2015.

As is generally accepted politically, if no ideal candidate is found in the next few years and if it is the interest of the country, Lee Hsien Loong will have the opportunity to stay in his office temporarily, although the promotion of the current Deputy Prime Ministers has greater possibilities. Both Tan Chee Hean and Tharman Shanmugaratnam are experienced politicians; the latter person would be an ideal choice in all respects, only his Indian origin may create an obstacle, as according to the general political opinion most of the Chinese would not accept him as the primary leader.

Despite the numerous opportunities, it seems certain that the next prime minister will be chosen from the members of the present cabinet, which the Prime Minister himself has also confirmed in a recent interview.

Dynastic ideals

When Singapore's present Prime Minister took office, many people supposed that Lee Kuan Yew wished to pass

on the leading of the country to his own family members, and in the summer of 2017 the question of the Lee dynasty came to light again. The internal strife broken out in the Lee family, which has negatively affected the Prime Minister's prestige, too, might also influence the political future of the country. The Prime Minister's siblings Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang accused their elder brother of not fulfilling their father's last will because he refused to demolish the family home. In addition, they stated that the Prime Minister misused his power when he prepared the transfer of power for his son Li Hongyi. However, the person concerned, who works for the Governmental Technological Agency, denied having political ambitions.

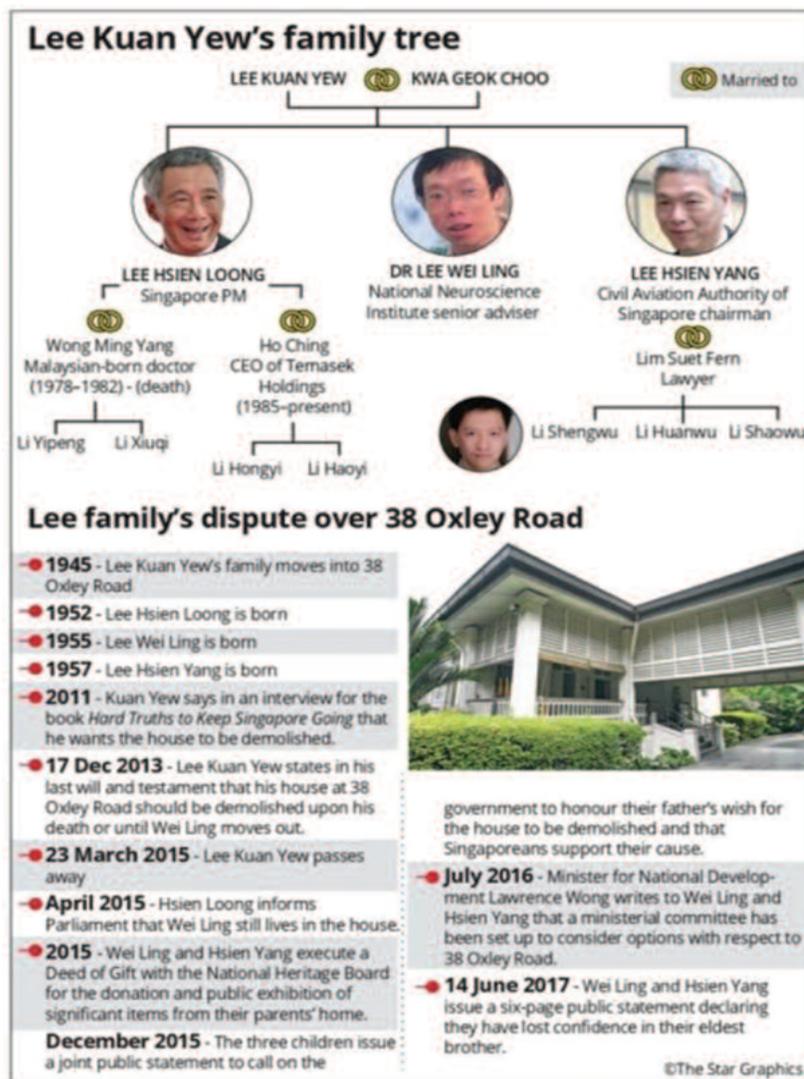
Lee Hsien Yang has even raised the intention of going abroad, saying that he is not safe in the country any longer owing to his elder brother's position. The scandal has decreased the prestige of the name Lee; what is even more, the drawbacks of the Singaporean political system have also come to the foreground. Therefore, it can be stated that it is not only the leaders of the country but also the future of the city state that can be influenced by the case negatively, especially in this stage of the political succession process.

Challenges of the Singaporean policy

Finding the ideal prime minister candidate is also difficult because the country has to face significant problems

both in domestic and foreign political terms. In the past, political stability used to grant the confidence of foreign investors, and economic development was spectacular and predictable. In today's Singapore, however, besides political succession several other uncertainty factors have arisen, too. The Singaporean economy is under more and more severe pressure from China and other ASEAN States. The slowing down of economy, the stagnation of productiveness, the ageing population, the influx of foreign migrant labour force and the development issues of transport infrastructure have confronted the government with conditions that it cannot find an ideal solution to. The political efforts, which have been applied for several decades, do not bring the desired effects any longer, so reforms are of pressing necessity. However, according to certain opinions, Singapore's future can be granted by its leading role fulfilled in the 4th industrial revolution, that is, if it manages to promote the development not only the city state but the development of the entire Southeast Asia through the digitalisation, during which social and economic issues could also be handled.

In foreign political terms, the relationship with China and the United States is decisive. As the Lee Hsien Loong Government has tried to counter the Chinese efforts the relationship of the two countries is not free from tension, while Beijing's economic dominance can be felt more and more.



Lee's family tree and chronology of family dispute (source: <https://rightwaysuccess.blogspot.hu/2017/06/lee-family-feud-explodes-into-open.html>)

After all, it is not hard to see why the selection of Singapore's next prime minister is pressing since, in addition to being expected to pass on earlier traditions, he also has to wrestle with the new challenges of the 21st century and maintain the political stability of the country.

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The BRICS in a Multipolar World

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos



On 25-27 July, 2018 South Africa was hosted the tenth annual gathering of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). When the first BRIC summit was held in 2009 (South Africa was added in 2010), the world was in the throes

of a financial crisis of the developed world's making, and the increasingly dynamic BRIC bloc represented the future. By coming together, these countries had the potential to provide a geopolitical counterweight to the West.

But Western commentators have long underestimated that potential, forcing the BRICS to demand greater rep-

resentation in global-governance institutions. In 2011 and 2012, the BRICS challenged the process of selecting leaders at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But, lacking a united front behind them, a European (Christine Lagarde) and an American (Jim Yong Kim) continued to preside over those organizations. And though the BRICS did get these institutions to reform their voting structures to give developing countries greater weight, the US and Europe still wield disproportionate power.

Against this backdrop, the BRICS took it upon themselves to pursue "outside options," by establishing the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement in 2014. These initiatives have been presented as complements to the prevailing Bretton Woods system, but it is easy to see how they could also form the foundation for an alternative global-governance framework at some point in the future.





After all, while the BRICS still emphasize the importance of multilateralism, it is clear that they are not wedded to the current international order. Yes, permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council gives China and Russia distinct advantages over most other countries. But both are nevertheless skeptical of the existing order.

China's foreign policy has increasingly come to reflect its status as a rising superpower. In accordance with President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream," China has been pushing hard for a relationship of equals vis-à-vis the US. And at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China last year, Xi made his goal of restoring China's great-power status even more explicit.

How China uses the many geopolitical instruments at its disposal will matter a great deal to the other BRICS countries, because they will have to adapt their national strategies to China's own "outside options." Since 2013, China has established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and proposed expanding the BRICS into a "BRICS Plus" – with China presumably at its head.

China announced its plans for the AIIB shortly after signing the NDB articles of agreement in 2014. In the case of the NDB, each of the BRICS owns an equal share, and each contributed \$10 billion to the initial subscribed capital. Although equitable shareholding was not China's preferred route, it did not force the matter.

By contrast, China is the AIIB's largest shareholder by a wide margin, holding a 26.6% stake, compared to India's 7.7% and Russia's 6%. Brazil and South Africa, meanwhile, have made no capital contributions to date, despite being designated as "founding members." The AIIB thus exemplifies China – not the BRICS – exercising its own "outside option." The institution is open to developing and developed countries alike, and China is at its center. Similarly, since its launch in 2013, the BRI has evolved into what Cobus van Staden of the South African Institute of International Affairs calls a decidedly "Beijing-centric global trade and investment order." The BRI is Xi's signature project. His hope is to create a "community of

shared destiny" not only across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean. As a practical matter, the BRI allows China to translate its economic might into geopolitical power.

Lastly, the proposal for a "BRICS Plus" signals a shift in China's external relations – one that will obviously affect the other BRICS. At the 2017 BRICS summit in Xiamen, China, Xi indicated that he wants the group to represent something larger than its current members, given the premium that it already places on cooperation among developing countries. Xi's initial proposal seemed to imply an expansion of the group, which some of the other BRICS have staunchly resisted. Still, South Africa is now taking the idea forward, by holding a "BRICS Plus" meeting on the third day of this year's summit.

These three developments underscore the extent to which an emboldened China now wields outsize power relative to its BRICS partners. Through the AIIB and the BRI, China is laying the foundation for a new regional and global order. The Chinese government is actively executing Xi's vision through trade, investment, and the strategic projection of power, particularly in the South China Sea. Nevertheless, the other BRICS have an important role to play in legitimating China's "other options." Each is committed to reforming the international system, and to building a more multipolar world; but they have not necessarily reached a consensus about what a new order should look like.

Under President Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa is once again asserting leadership on the African continent. This could entail a greater focus on Africa within the BRICS. But as South Africa pursues the continent's interests in addition to its own, it will have to remain open to working not just with the BRICS, but also with other developing countries and coalitions. The ultimate goal must be to support and reinforce a rules-based order. After all, that is in Africa's interests.

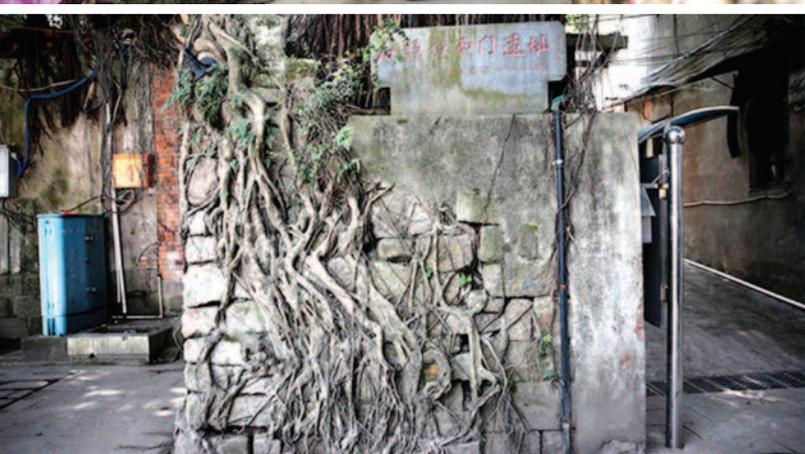
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In Pictures: Turkey Marks 2nd Anniversary of 2016 Defeated Coup.





Fujian: Memories of the Maritime Silk Road



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