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At the turn of the last century, a number of rapprochements have been witnessed among erstwhile adversaries. A few decades earlier, these were hardly conceivable but now have become realities due to Russia's foreign policy activism. Following the Soviet Union's demise, Russian leaders from Mikhail Gorbachev to President Vladimir Putin displayed their desires for joining NATO, but the west dismissed any possibility. Nonetheless, Russia and NATO continued the efforts.

NATO-Russia Council was created on 28 May 2002. Amid these unusual developments, the most expected one was Russo-US rapprochement and their joint front against rising China. But the surmises are bound to meet a disastrous fate. Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential elections and subsequent celebration in Russia proved short-lived and delusional with consecutive blows of the US declaration of Russia as the top threat to its national security with Trump's announcement of the expulsion of 60 Russian diplomats.

Pessimism is replacing optimism, and another iron curtain is descending between authoritarian Sino-Russo coalition and western liberal democratic world order. The dividing lines that were once attenuated in the late 90s and early 2000s, once again, are being redrawn by the new power constellation. But this time around, China is on the other side of the line with Russia.



Over the last decade, Putin's Russia has skilfully moved its paws on the geopolitical chessboard through thoughtful checkmates. It pragmatically rearranged the hierarchy of its foreign policy choices, drew the red lines for its adversaries keeping its doors open for diplomatic negotiations without giving them major concessions.

It adopted 'no enemy' policy. But wherever core interests were at risk, it never hesitated from embroiling in a full-fledged war. From the successful execution of Russo-Georgian War via Crime an annexation till the power showdown on the Syrian front, Russia has been cleverly remarkable in defending its borders, putting a full stop to NATO's eastward expansion, enhancing its own international prestige by reminding the adversaries of its military muscle.

On the diplomatic front, Russia turned around on its Cold War's undeterred enemies — Japan, China, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan — by embracing them and enhancing trade. Two among them, Pakistan and China, became its strategic partners who could act as the linchpin for Russian grand designs in the new world order.

For its soft image, Russia evolved grand plans to cater maximum acclamation. To keep its pace with modern-day great powers in the marathon of connectivity initiatives — China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), Indo-Japanese Initiative of Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) — Russia came up with its own version.

Russia's, hitherto, geographical curse of the absence of navigational ports and longest frozen coastal line in the Arctic are to turn into its geo-strategic advantage by connecting the far eastern region with Europe via proposed Northern Sea Route (NSR). Various Asia Pacific states have rushed to join the initiative. The initiative has distinguished geo-strategic feature of circumventing Indian Ocean Region (IOR) — Robert D Kaplan termed the IOR as centre stage for the 21st-century rivalries. The successful completion of NSR and could turn the geopolitical characteristics of the global power politics utterly upside down in time to come.

In the economic sector, energy, the lifeblood of the Russian economy, has been an important tool in its foreign policy toolbox. Russia holds one of the largest crude oil and gas reserves that constitute almost half of its GDP. Europe has depended on Russian energy for a long time and, in return, Russia depended on the European market.

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Approximately, one-third of European gas needs are met by Moscow. However, in the backdrop of Russia's November 2015 cut off of gas supply to Ukraine as a geopolitical card has made European states more insecure about their energy supply. This two-way energy security dilemma has pushed both Russia and European Union towards diversification of their energy markets and sources, respectively, to avoid being a victim of energy blackmailing card.

When Europe feels insecure, America comes as a security guarantor. On the other side of Atlantic, as a result of Shale discovery, the US needs reliable consuming markets. The European market, beset by energy insecurity and in the middle of an invigorated ordeal for diversification, has grabbed the attention of the US energy consortiums for exporting liquefied natural gas (LNG) as an alternative to Russia's Gazprom.

In the hunt for energy security, Poland recently moved to explore the US option on a trial basis and signed a midterm contract for LNG deliveries from the US. As a longstanding ally, America is a much reliable partner, yet holds the high cards. In contrast to territorial security in the Cold War,

in new power competition, providing energy security to European states has become the cornerstone of the US foreign policy.

However, diplomatic exchanges, trade relations, energy agreements and well wishes could not surmount the mountains of historical grudges and the principles of power politics. The alleged poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal proved precipitant for an abrupt diplomatic rift between Russia and US-backed Europe. Thus far, the ongoing investigations of the so-called Russia involvement in the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, can have two possible outcomes. Either Russian involvement could be established by investigating facts or not. In both cases, British Prime Minister Theresa May has overblown the issue before hand perhaps for greater latent national interests.

For Theresa May, a successful projection of alleged poisoning issue internationally can serve multiple purposes.

Firstly, the United Kingdom is in the middle of Brexit and facing internal divide. The rhetoric of external enemy can overshadow the internal mess.

Secondly, Europe was steadily slipping into Russia camp that had been a vital point of obsession for the UK in previous centuries.

Thirdly, Great Britain has been instrumental in drawing America in European conflicts to tip the scale in its favour. During WW-I, British intelligence agency intercepted the Zimmermann Telegram that was the central reason for the US joining WWI.

Winston Churchill's speech in Westminster College in Fulton marked the beginning of Cold War. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair had been central European supporter of the US invasion of Iraq.

Theresa May built rhetoric to capsized the ship of the anticipated a typical era of the European continent. The concerted diplomatic onslaught of West can impede, at least for short time, Russia's strategic and economic advancement in other regions as well, especially in the Middle East. It seems that Theresa May likely to get many aims at one shot.

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