



The US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to increased

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37° / 20°



Herat
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45° / 27°



Balkh
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Qureshi Slams Afghan NSA Urges Him to 'Reform His Conduct'

Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Saturday said Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib should be ashamed of bad-mouthing Pakistan and advised him against using harsh language against Islamabad, Geo News reported.

"Listen to me closely," he said, calling out the Afghan official, "Pakistan has played an important role in helping achieve stability in Afghanistan," he told reporters.

Mohib early last month accused Pakistan, particularly its military, of supporting the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and... **P2**



Majrooh Calls on Private Hospitals to Save Oxygen

Dr Vahid Majrooh, the Acting Minister of Public Health, in a meeting with representatives of the private sector on Sunday, instructed them to regulate oxygen consumption in private hospitals.

The acting Minister of Public Health called the lack of oxygen supply at COVID-19 hospitals one of the major challenges in treating patients and said that as per oxygen-producing companies in Kabul, private hospitals use the most oxygen.

This comes at a time when the Ministry of Public Health on Sunday reported 50 COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours, the highest daily number yet. The death toll now stands at 3,195 in the country. The health ministry also reported 1,379 new positive... **P3**

Khalilzad Heads to Kabul and Doha in Push for Peace



U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and a U.S. inter-agency delegation, including the National Security Council, Department of Defense, and USAID will meet with Afghan government officials and other political leaders this week to discuss the peace process.

In a statement issued by the U.S.

State Department officials said Khalilzad and his accompanying delegation left the U.S. on Friday and will visit Kabul, Doha and other countries in the region.

"In Kabul, the delegation will meet with the Afghanistan government, other political leaders, and civil society representatives, including women's groups, to hear their views

on the peace process.

"The delegation will underscore enduring U.S. support for Afghanistan's development and a political settlement that will end the war," the statement read.

"In Doha, Ambassador Khalilzad will continue to encourage both sides to make tangible progress towards a political settlement that

protects the gains of the last two decades.

"Ambassador Khalilzad will also meet with leaders from regional countries to discuss the Afghanistan peace process and the potential for increased regional trade, commerce, and development that peace might bring," the statement read.

This trip comes on the heels of Washington's announcement last week that as part of its commitment to the people of Afghanistan, the United States is providing more than \$266 million in new humanitarian assistance, bringing total U.S. humanitarian aid for Afghanistan to nearly \$3.9 billion since 2002.

"This assistance from the American people will help our international humanitarian partners provide support to some of the estimated 18 million people in need in Afghanistan, including more than 4.8 million Afghans internally displaced," the statement read. "This funding will allow our partners to provide lifesaving protection, shelter, livelihoods opportunities, essential health care, emergency food aid, water,... **P3**

Explosion, Clashes Reported Near Balkh District Police HQ

A car full of explosives detonated in front of the Balkh district police headquarters on Sunday, said Adel Shah Adel, spokesperson for the Balkh police.

He added that according to initial information, the attackers entered the police headquarters after the explosion and clashes broke out between the attackers and the police.

Casualties among the military and civilians have been reported, but the exact number has not been disclosed yet. According to Adel, reinforcements have been sent to the scene.

He emphasized that all roads leading to the Balkh district police... **P3**



War Major Barrier to People's Access to Human Rights: AIHRC

Emphasizing that the main challenge to consolidating a democracy and human rights in the country is war, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on Sunday celebrated its 19th year of establishment.

As per the AIHRC statement with the start of the peace process, the commission hoped that opportunities would be provided for an end to the war and for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. However, the negotiation process has not yet been able to satisfy the people and the commission.

"Violence has not abated, the necessary trust has not been built between the parties to the conflict, the prospects for peace remain unclear, and the position of human



rights in the negotiations has not been commensurate with the commission's expectations," the commission said.

The AIHRC is committed to upholding the constitution, values and democratic achievements of the Afghan people, especially women, and providing justice for the victims of war in order to

achieve inclusive peace. According to the commission, women's participation in peace talks is low and should be increased from 9% to at least 30%.

The AIHRC has also made proposals to the government, the Taliban and the international community in a document entitled "Examining Women's Political and Social... **P3**

Qureshi...

compared Pakistan to a "brothel".

"My blood has been boiling ever since you compared Pakistan to a brothel house. You should be ashamed of yourself and must reform your conduct," Qureshi said of Mohib on Saturday.

"Afghanistan's national security advisor should review his statement [against Pakistan]; he is creating obstacles in the road towards peace," Qureshi said.

Last month reports emerged that Pakistan had stopped official contact with Afghanistan's National Security Adviser (NSA) Hamdullah Mohib following his comments.

However, Mohib denied these reports at the time and said he had not received any official communique from Pakistan in this respect.

"There has been some talk about me from an anonymous and unnamed address, which is not the official position of Pakistan. If Pakistan says anything officially, the Afghan government will announce its position," said Mohib.

Mohib had been responding to a VOA report that Pakistan had officially stopped all contact with Mohib after what Pakistan called his "abusive outburst" against Islamabad.

According to the VOA report, Pakistan conveyed to the leadership in Afghanistan it will no longer conduct official business with Mohib because of his recent "abusive outburst" against Islamabad.

By: CGTN Insight

Is China Really Against the Tide?

Editor's note: "Roots of China's Growth" is a 10-episode series marking the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has presided over the country's meteoric rise as a global power. The series focuses on 10 fundamental elements of the strategy that has led to China's transformation from an impoverished nation over the past 100 years. "China's ideology" is the fifth in the series.

In 2015, the Little Red Book made the headlines in the UK. The then Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell sparked a storm after using the Quotations of Chairman Mao – or the Little Red Book – to criticize then Chancellor George Osborne's attempt to sell off state assets to China.

The daily ritual of making "morning requests, evening reports" has long gone in China. But why is there still a fuss over the Little Red Book?

It is a sad fact: Decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, the West still views the Communist Party – thus Communist Party-led China – as an alien. Even in the 21st century, Western countries, despite their close economic ties, insist on aversion and hostility against countries ruled by communist parties. Reading out the Little Red Book in parliament seemed an easy but effective way to embarrass Osborne, though much of the criticism was ultimately directed at McDonnell.

China's efforts within the international community cannot be denied. But Western pursuit of global dominance determines that China, as an influential non-Western civilization, is an "alien." With totally different political systems,



China, since the 19th century, has been a target of countries seeking to spread Western values across the world. The country's successful resistance against Western aggression in the era of imperialism has further angered those who arrogate to themselves the right to determine the destiny of humankind. This is the context of today's West-China ideological fight.

Western politicians and media outlets demonize China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) on all fronts, even seeking to split the CPC from the Chinese people. But this does not mean the CPC is a monster.

A few years ago, China Against the Tides was a bestselling college textbook on Chinese political history. Interestingly, the author Marc Blecher depicts China in a way that contradicts the book's title: The CPC-led socialist state has never attempted to be an alien to the rest of the world. It is not a challenger to the current model of international relations. Yes, China is led by communists. But this

does not conflict with people's interests or mean opposition to modern ideas. Since the 19th century, several ideas – market mechanisms in economics, representative systems in politics, mutual respect as sovereign states in international relations and scientific thinking – spread across the world. If these are the tides of modernization, CPC-led China is conforming to, not opposing, them.

In this context, the People's Republic of China was officially recognized by the UN in 1971, permitted access to the WTO in 2001 and became the world's second largest economy.

China is on a path to building an open economy. China opposes trade protectionism and has been adhering to democratic and rules-based principles in trade with other countries. In doing so, it has become an important participant and contributor to global economic governance.

China's endeavors in these regards flow with, not against, the tide. This explains

China's developmental miracle.

It is also China's contribution to global governance. Despite Western biases against communism and communist parties, the CPC has sought common interests among different countries. China's vision of a community with a shared future for mankind features extensive consultation, joint contributions, and shared benefits in global governance. These are what are required in our times.

Looking forward, China, under CPC leadership, will continue to coordinate its domestic policies with global rules and work to safeguard fairness and justice on international occasions.

If China is still seen as against the tide just because it is led by a communist party, then it is time to question this criterion in reaching this conclusion. Ideology cannot be grounds to convict a country as an evil state.

Xia Lu is an associate professor at the School of Marxism Studies, Renmin University of China.

US to Donate...

to secure vaccines, but Beijing denied the claims and has offered the island Chinese-made vaccines.

But the government in Taipei has repeatedly expressed concern about their safety, and, regardless, cannot accept them without changing Taiwanese law, which bans their import.

Standing by Duckworth's side, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu thanked Washington for the donation.

"While we are doing our best to import vaccines, we must overcome obstacles to ensure that these life-saving medicines are delivered free from trouble from Beijing," he said. Wu said Taiwan was fortunate to have many like-minded countries showing their support, which he said is about sustaining freedom and democracy in the face of autocracy.

Duckworth and her colleagues, Dan Sullivan and Christopher Coons, also met President Tsai Ing-wen at the Songshan Airport in downtown

Taipei. Tsai said the vaccines, along with those Japan donated last week, would be a great help in their fight against the virus.

"The vaccines are timely rain for Taiwan, and your assistance will be etched on our hearts," Tsai told the senators, in footage released by her office.

US senators and congressmen visit Taiwan routinely in normal times, but coming in the middle of an upswing in infections on the island when its borders remain largely closed to visitors is a

strong show of support.

Unusually, they also arrived on a US Air Force C-17 Globemaster III freighter, rather than a private jet as is generally the case for senior US visitors.

Taiwan's vaccine arrivals have been gathering pace.

Japan delivered to Taiwan 1.24 million doses of AstraZeneca PLC's coronavirus vaccine on Friday for free, in a gesture that more than doubled the number of shots the island has received to date.

By: ANI

US Withdrawal Sparks New Wave of Violence in Balochistan by Pakistan Taliban

The US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to increased violence in Balochistan by Pakistan Taliban.

The revival of the Pakistani Taliban is not only linked with the growing turmoil in neighbouring Afghanistan caused by the US troop withdrawal but also to growing differences between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban, including over Pakistan's growing new strategic engagement with the US, wrote Salman Rafi Sheikh in an article in Asia Times. The Afghan Taliban understand Pakistan's insistence on establishing an inclusive political government in Afghanistan is a result of its efforts to recalibrate its relations with the US post-withdrawal.

US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and Pentagon overtures to Islamabad have sparked new waves of terrorist violence in Balochistan.

The growing perception was confirmed when Pakistan said that its "war on terror" era contracts to provide US forces air and ground access to Afghanistan via its bases remain "valid and operational."

The Afghan Taliban were quick to "urge neighbouring countries not to allow anyone to do so" and that

"if such a step is taken again, it will be a great and historic mistake and disgrace."

The emergence and existence of Taliban-linked groups like the Al-Qaeda-linked Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) in Pakistan, of course, is rooted in Pakistan's participation in the US-led global "war on terror." Most Taliban groups in Pakistan are under the TTP's umbrella.

The fact that the TTP's resurgence is coinciding with Pakistan's apparent willingness to re-establish a military alliance with the US shows how anti-US sentiments could once again become the linchpin of these groups to continue their jihad vis-a-vis the Pakistan state, wrote Sheikh.

Indeed, recent Pakistan Taliban attacks signal that any move made by Islamabad to allow the US access to military bases will plunge all of Balochistan into instability and violence.

Meanwhile, Pakistani authorities have publicly said they will not allow any foreign boots on the ground.

Baloch separatist groups have likewise signalled they will leverage the Taliban's ramped-up activities to expand their attacks against Pakistani military forces, wrote Sheikh.

Baloch separatist groups, while not inspired by sectarian outfits or the Taliban, seek to establish an independent Balochistan state due mainly to the perceived systematic exclusion of their people from the political and economic structures of the state, reported Asia Times.

They see the China-backed Gwadar Port project as an extension of that exclusion. The 2019 Baloch militant attacks in Gwadar led the Pakistani army to fence off the port of Gwadar, in a bid to calm Beijing's nerves amid flagging investment commitments. The attack was a result of what local sources describe as systematic exclusion of the local population from employment at the port, as well as the selling of Baloch land to local and international companies for infrastructural development projects, Asia Times reported.

This is apart from the fact that China has already acquired operational rights for the port for the next 40 years, with almost 91 per cent of total port profits scheduled to be reaped by Beijing.

While the Baloch groups refer to China as an "imperial power", the Taliban's attacks on Chinese projects and officials are part and parcel of

their agenda to force the Pakistan state into political submission, wrote Sheikh.

Notwithstanding the various reasons driving these groups, Balochistan is undeniably on the verge of a major relapse into multi-dimensional instability, one that will result in an increased Pakistan military presence in the already heavily paramilitary- and military-patrolled province.

Indeed, reports indicate the Pakistan military is already on the hunt for land in Balochistan to build a new air force base that could conceivably allow for US access and operations, Asia Times reported.

For the Baloch people, especially hard-line separatists, more militarisation will bolster their political and economic exclusion narrative, one that already views the province as a "Pakistani colony", and fuel more anti-state violence that by association will target both Chinese and US interests. Balochistan is now in the throes of surging Taliban-linked militancy, a clear signal that America's troop withdrawal is fomenting new instability in the region, wrote Sheikh. The rising Taliban and Baloch group attacks are separate from

ongoing targeted sectarian killings of Balochistan's minority Hazara community.

Punjab-based militant groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), inspired by their sectarian ideology to "purify" Pakistan of "unbelievers" and "infidels", continue to attack the beleaguered community. In one of its latest attacks, the group brutally killed 11 coal miners in January 2021. Prime Minister Imran Khan's response to a recent Hazara community sit-in in Quetta showed once again that the Pakistani state is unwilling to curb sectarian militancy that has long-targeted religious minorities, including the Hazara people and other Shia sects, wrote Sheikh.

With Balochistan fast turning into a hub of sectarian, Islamist and nationalist militancy, the province's envisioned future as a new hub of China-financed economic activity looks bleak, reported Asia Times.

The situation owes largely to the Pakistani state's docile response to sectarian killings and its unwillingness and inability to control groups like the LeJ. (ANI)

Afghanistan Becomes a Permanent Member of PAECO

The Wolesi Jirga (House of Representatives) of Afghanistan has announced that Afghanistan has become a permanent member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO).

Currently, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are members of PAECO, and Afghanistan and three other countries have recently joined the organization.

During his visit to Pakistan, Mir Rahman Rahmani, Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga of Afghanistan, signed the membership charter for PAECO. Addressing the meeting, Rahmani stated that Afghanistan has a central

role in the geographical connection between the member countries, and as part of the new Silk Road, it offers great potential and opportunities for regional investment and trade.

Pakistan hosted the second general conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO), which kicked off on Tuesday.

The agenda items of the conference included discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, the role of parliaments in enhancing trade and connectivity, and advancing tourism for development and poverty alleviation.



War Major Barrier...

Participation, Their Concerns and Demands in the Peace Negotiation Process”.

The document calls on the Afghan government as the main executor to increase the political and meaningful presence of women in the negotiations, and that women should play a role as mediators and signatories in the negotiations. It also urged the Taliban to respect women's rights as enshrined in the Afghan constitution. Immediate cessation of killings and field trials of women, protection of girls' right to education, ban on attacks on educational facilities, including schools and educational staff, were some of their other demands.

The AIHRC further calls on the international community to go beyond mere condemnation and to put on its agenda the principle of its responsibility to protect fundamental human rights treaties.

Explosion, Clashes...

headquarters have been blocked by security forces.

No group, including the Taliban, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Meanwhile, two women, a 12-year-old child and the driver of the car in which they were travelling, were killed after the vehicle hit a roadside mine in Ibrahim Khel area of Gardiz, the capital of Paktia province on Sunday, said the governor of Paktia Halim Fadaei.

He added that the family members were going to attend a wedding when the incident occurred.

Fadaei said that the mine was planted by terrorists. No individual or group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Khalilzad Heads...

sanitation, and hygiene services to respond to the needs generated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Furthermore, this assistance helps to address protection needs for the most vulnerable Afghans. This includes women and girls facing particular risks, including gender-based violence, as a result of the pandemic and decades of conflict,” read the statement.

Iran's...

hardline candidates – senior security official Saeed Jalili; secretary of the Expediency Council, Mohsen Rezaei; and lawmakers Alireza Zakani and Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi – did not take issue with Raisi, attacking their reformist opponents and the current government instead.

This led to Hemmati accusing the other candidates of only covering for Raisi, an allegation they strongly rejected.

‘Restless position syndrome’ Mehralizadeh said he respected Raisi's seminary studies but argued he was not well-equipped to run a country of more than 82 million people as he had completed only six grades of traditional education and had zero executive economic leadership experience.

He also joked that Raisi was suffering from “acute restless position syndrome” as he transitioned from spending most of his career as a judge to becoming the head of the powerful Astan Quds Razavi religious organisation in Mashhad, running unsuccessfully for president in 2017 and then becoming judiciary chief in 2019. “What guarantee is there that you won't abandon the president's office for a higher one?” Mehralizadeh asked, alluding to widespread assumptions that Raisi will become the next supreme leader when 82-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei passes away.

In response, Raisi said criticising him would not solve the country's problems and that he had zero

ambition for position and power, adding he was only answering public calls.

Meanwhile, Hemmati, who says he wants to represent the “silent majority” of Iranians in the election and has tried to distance himself from the economic legacy of outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, came under attack by opponents who tried to portray him as part of the country's economic woes.

Holding up a rial banknote, four-time presidential candidate Rezaei said he had known, decades ago, that the embattled national currency would be significantly devalued. He called the Rouhani administration one of the worst since the 1979 revolution, adding: “The train of the revolution has turned into a scooter.”

The former commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, who was criticised by Hemmati for previously suggesting Iran could make money by taking American citizens hostage, directly threatened the former central banker with prosecution and jail for his role in the handling of the economy. This led Hemmati to ask judiciary chief Raisi to guarantee he would not go to jail.

Hemmati also criticised Rezaei and other hardliners for stalling remaining bills to complete Iran's financial transparency action plan with the Financial Action Task Force and said he was sorry that many Iranians, especially women, had no representative among the presidential candidates.

Supreme Leader Defied on Disqualifications

Majrooh...

cases of COVID-19 of 4,544 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

Majrooh stressed that due to the increase in patients at COVID-19 hospitals, the Ministry of Public Health needs more oxygen balloons and private hospitals should use oxygen according to their needs and provide the rest to the Ministry of Public Health.

He also instructed officials to set up a joint committee consisting of private sector members to review the needs of private hospitals, taking into account the number of patients, the number of oxygen balloons and the distribution of oxygen balloons by manufacturing companies in the country's markets.

In addition, the Acting Minister of Public Health called on all

The bickering among candidates came a day after Khamenei said the constitutional vetting body known as the Guardian Council – six members of which are directly appointed by him with the other six appointed by the judiciary chief – made an error in assessing candidates.

Without naming candidates, the supreme leader said a number of them were “wronged” and disqualified based on false information and “demanded” that corrections be made.

He was apparently referring to Ali Larijani, a three-time former parliament speaker and his current adviser, who could have been Raisi's top competitor had he not been disqualified.

Sadeq Amoli Larijani, the disqualified candidate's brother and a Guardian Council member, said in a statement that he had never found the body so “indefensible” in his 20 years there, and said intelligence agencies contributed to his brother's disqualification by offering up false reports.

Hours after Khamenei's speech, the council released a statement saying it would not change its votes – in essence disobeying a direct order by the supreme leader in an unprecedented move. First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri and a wide range of other reformist and pragmatist candidates were also disqualified by the council, leading to criticism that non-conservative hopefuls had been purged.

Voter turnout is expected to be low in the face of widespread public disillusionment due to economic and social woes.

private hospitals to adhere to the principles of treatment of COVID-19 patients and to perform their functions in accordance with the standards of the Ministry of Public Health. Representatives of private hospitals also presented their views and suggestions on addressing the challenge of oxygen deficiency and emphasized on their full cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health.

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Iran's Presidential Candidates Clash Amid Disqualification Row

From threatening prosecution to exchanging allegations, aspirants pull no punches in the first of three debates.

Seven candidates qualified to run in Iran's June 18 presidential election have gone head-to-head in a televised debate, as controversy over the disqualification of other hopefuls persists.

Saturday's three-hour event focused on the economy, which has taken a big hit in the past three years under US sanctions and is characterised by rampant inflation and high unemployment. Two more debates are due to be held on Tuesday and next Saturday.

The first session was held with no moderation. Instead, the state television presenter picked out numbered balls from glass containers indicating what randomly selected question was to be asked to which candidate, who then had three minutes to offer their response.

But much of the debate was spent almost

completely ignoring the questions – from tax evasion to budget deficit management to big bank debtors – as candidates attacked each other and discussed work they deemed necessary to shore up the economy.

In the second round, the candidates – seated six feet apart behind podiums – were each given four minutes to defend themselves against others. This was followed by participants laying out their economic plans in more detail during four-minute speeches. Their microphones were cut off the second their time ran out.

Judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is considered to be by far the frontrunner in the upcoming polls, seemed to be the centre of attention.

Technocrat former central bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati and reformist former Vice President Mohsen Mehralizadeh were the only ones to criticise conservative Raisi.

The remaining four conservative and... **P3**



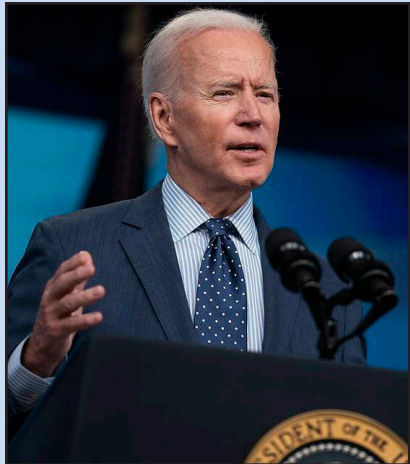
A look at the world

US Does Not Seek Conflict with Russia – Biden

“We want a stable and predictable relationship where we can work with Russia on issues like strategic stability and arms control,” Biden said.

The United States does not seek conflict with Russia, US President Joe Biden said in an op-ed for The Washington Post.

“In my phone calls with President Putin, I have been clear and direct. The United States does not seek conflict. We want a stable and predictable relationship where we can work with Russia on issues like



strategic stability and arms control,” he pointed out.

The United States will not hesitate to respond to Russia's potential harmful activities, Biden noted.

He pointed out that he had “imposed meaningful consequences for behaviors that violate US sovereignty, including interference in our democratic elections.”

“And President Putin knows that I will not hesitate to respond to future harmful activities. When we meet, I will again underscore the commitment of the United States, Europe and like-minded democracies to stand up for human rights and dignity,” the US president said.

Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia and Joe Biden of the United States will meet in Geneva on June 16. According to the Kremlin press service, the two leaders plan to discuss the prospects for Russia-US relations, strategic stability and pressing global issues, including the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and ways to resolve regional conflicts.

NATO Chief Calls Growing Russian-Chinese Cooperation a Serious Challenge



Moscow and Beijing are more often coordinating their steps in international organizations, Jens Stoltenberg said.

Russian-Chinese cooperation is becoming closer and is “a new dimension and a serious challenge” for the North Atlantic Alliance, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in an interview with German newspaper Welt Am Sonntag.

“We consider that Russia and China have developed closer political and military cooperation lately,” Stoltenberg said. According to him, Moscow and Beijing are more often coordinating their steps in international organizations, including in the United Nations.

“By the way, both countries conduct joint maneuvers, long-distance flights of warplanes and maritime operations, and also actively exchange experience in the field of using military systems and control over the Internet,” the NATO chief said.

According to Stoltenberg, at the upcoming NATO summit in Brussels a decision will be made on the program of future development NATO-2030, which is aimed at enhancing the alliance and finding an answer to “the changing balance of powers and new challenges in the field of security policy.” Among them the NATO chief called “turning China into a self-confident military power, growing Russian aggression, new brutal forms of international terrorism, mounting cyber attacks and nuclear weapons proliferation.”

In its relations with Russia, the alliance will stick to the strategy “of containment and dialogue,” Stoltenberg noted. “On the other hand, in challenging times we should maintain contact with our neighbor Russia on the issues of arms control and other military and political challenges. If we do not talk to each other, we won't be able to iron out our differences or improve mutual understanding,” he stated.

Touching on China, the NATO chief noted that the alliance's member-states would seek to boost cooperation with the countries of the Pacific region. China's rise represents “a fundamental change in the global balance of powers,” he pointed out.

US to Donate 750,000 COVID Jabs to Taiwan Amid China Row

US donation comes after Taiwan accused China of trying to block the island from accessing vaccines internationally.

The United States will give Taiwan 750,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines, as part of the country's plan to share millions of jabs globally, a delegation of US senators have announced, after Taipei complained that China was hindering its efforts to access the injections.

Senator Tammy Duckworth, who



landed in Taiwan with two of her colleagues on Sunday, said their trip underscores the bipartisan support for the democratic island that Beijing claims as its own territory.

“We are here as friends, because we know that Taiwan is experiencing a challenging time right now, which was why it was especially important for the three of us to be here in a bipartisan way,” said Duckworth.

“It was critical to the United States that Taiwan be included in the first group to receive vaccines, because we recognise your urgent need, and we value this partnership.”

She did not give details of which vaccines Taiwan would get or when. Taiwan is dealing with a spike in domestic cases but has been affected like much of the world by global vaccines shortages. Only approximately 3 percent of its 23.5 million people have been vaccinated, with most getting only the first shot of two needed. Taiwan has accused China of blocking its efforts... **P2**



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