

BOLTON GOES

India must not allow its ties with the U.S. to be dictated by the dynamics of the Trump regime

The departure of U.S. National Security Advisor (NSA) John Bolton from office, after he was forced to leave by President Donald Trump, won't evoke much sadness in most world capitals. Mr. Bolton's term in office was marked by his ultra-hawkish positions; he pursued hostilities with Iran, sanctions with Russia, brinkmanship on trade with China, opposed talks on Afghanistan, and with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and pushed for regime change in Venezuela. A former U.S. envoy to the United Nations, Mr. Bolton inflicted the greatest damage on multilateral institutions and agreements, as he advocated the U.S.'s exit from the Human Rights Council and UNESCO, presided over the cancellation of the multi-party nuclear deal with Iran, and informed Moscow that the U.S. was pulling out of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. His final act, one that is regarded with relief in India, was to ensure that the U.S. deal with the Pakistan-backed Taliban was scuttled. The relief, however, may be temporary, given that Mr. Trump has publicly criticised his outgoing NSA, and may reverse many of the positions the U.S. had taken with Mr. Bolton at the helm. The first such reversal is an offer to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani without any preconditions on the sidelines of the UNGA session this month made by U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo.

While New Delhi must continue to keep a keen eye on all the changes in the White House and Cabinet, it is clear that investing too much in any one adviser, or expecting consistency in American policy as a result, would be a folly. Since he assumed office in 2017, Mr. Trump has run a revolving door for recruitments and retrenchments, and is now on his fourth NSA, third Secretary of Defence and second Secretary of State. India would do well to not allow its bilateral relationship with the U.S. or other relationships to be determined by such a fluid dynamic. A case in point is ties with Iran, where New Delhi may have been better off not acceding to the tough Bolton line, and instead, like China, Russia, Iraq and Turkey, keeping its own counsel on the issue of oil sanctions. On the bilateral front, India must build its strategic and economic relationship with the U.S. with a keener eye on the transactional thinking that now prevails in Washington. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to the U.S. this month, with a plan to meet the U.S. President, it may be best to keep in mind the words of Mr. Pompeo, a contender for the NSA position; asked about the impact of Mr. Bolton's exit on U.S. foreign policy, he said the only person who determines who works for Mr. Trump, and what that means for the policy of the U.S., is Mr. Trump himself.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Dictate	Verb	Bully, domineer, dominate, tyrannize, oppress
Evoke	Verb	Summon, invoke, elicit, induce, stimulate

Ultra hawkish	Adj.	Advancing, assailing, combative, barbaric
Hostility	Noun	Antagonism, unfriendliness, malice, bitterness, malice Malevolence
Sanction	Noun	Penalty, punishment, deterrent, discipline
Brinkmanship	Noun	Precipice, brink, calculated, risk, taunt
Appose	Verb	Combat, take on, confront, be against
Inflict	Verb	Impose, force, press, thrust, foist
Preside	Verb	Chain, moderate, officiate
Cancellation	Noun	Annulment, invalidation, nullification, voidance
Scuttled	Adj.	Scampered, scurried, scrambled, hustled, trot, hurried
Transient	Adj.	Temporary, make shift, transitory, fleeting, ephemeral Casual
Reverse	Verb	Back, go back, back pedal / alter, change
At the helm		In charge, in command
On the sidelines		Without taking part
Keen	Adj.	Eager, anxious, desirous, longing
Folly	Noun	Craziness, foolishness, inane, buffoonery
Assume	Verb	Presume, suppose, conjecture, reckon, guess, accept
Revolve	Verb	Turn round, rotate, spin, whirl, pirouette
Conscription	Noun	Recruitment, enlistment
Retrenchment	Noun	Cut back, reduction, contraction, rundown
Dynamic	Adj.	Energetic, spirited, potent, lively, effectual
Counsel	Noun	Advice, guidance, direction, instruction
Accede	Verb	Agree to, consent to, accept, endorse, grant
Transanction	Noun	Auction, haggle, negotiation, closeout
Contender	Noun	Competitor, contestant, entrant, favourite

FUTILE FINES

Better enforcement and infrastructure are key to mitigating anger over higher road fines

The steep penalties for violation of road rules that came into force on September 1 under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 have produced a backlash, with several State governments opting to reduce the quantum of fines, or even to reject the new provisions. Gujarat has announced a substantial reduction in the fines, West Bengal has refused to adopt the higher penalties, Karnataka and Kerala are studying the prospects to make the provisions less stringent, and others are proceeding

with caution. Motorists have reacted with outrage at the imposition of fines by the police, obviously upset at State governments pursuing enforcement without upgrading road infrastructure and making administrative arrangements for issue of transport documents. Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has reiterated that it is left to the States to choose the quantum of fines, since it is their responsibility to bring about deterrence and protect the lives of citizens. Mr. Gadkari's argument is valid, and the intent behind amending the Motor Vehicles Act cannot be faulted. After all, India has some of the deadliest roads in the world, and 1,47,913 people died in road accidents only during 2017. The question that has arisen is whether enhanced fines can radically change this record when other determinants, beginning with administrative reform, remain untouched.

The core of reform lies in Section 198(A) of the amended law, which requires any designated authority, contractor, consultant or concessionaire responsible for design or construction or maintenance of the safety standards of the road to meet those laid down by the Central government. This provision, which prescribes a penalty for a violation leading to death or disability, can be enforced through litigation by road users in all States. Since the standards are laid down, compliance should be ensured without waiting for a road accident to prove it. Until infrastructure meets legal requirements, fines and enforcement action are naturally liable to be challenged in courts; the condition of roads, traffic signals, signage and cautionary markings which affect motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, would all fall within its ambit. State governments also cannot escape responsibility for failing to reform their Regional Transport Authorities, since these offices are generally steeped in corruption. The Transport Ministry could well have made electronic delivery of RTO services mandatory, something that a lapsed UPA-era Bill promised. It should act on this now. Ultimately, ending the culture of impunity that allows government vehicles and VIPs to ignore road rules will encourage the average citizen to follow them. Mr. Gadkari should lose no time in forming the National Road Safety Board to recommend important changes to infrastructure and to enable professional accident investigation.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Mitigate	Verb	Decrease, alleviate, relegate, abate, plummet
Backlash	Noun	Adverse, reaction, counteraction, counterblast comeback
Opt	Verb	Choose, select, pick, decide on, settle on
Announce	Verb	Embrace, over, avow, declare, herald
Adopt	Verb	Embrace, take on, acquire, affect, espouse, assume appropriate
Stringent	Adj.	Strict, harsh, exacting, draconian
Caution	Noun	Sale, vendue

Outrage	Noun	Indignation, fury, anger, rage, disapproval resentment, disgust
Obviously	Adj.	Clearly, evidently, plainly, patently, discernibly Noticeably
Reiterate	Verb	Repeat, iterate, restate, recapitulate, belabour
Deterrence	Noun	Barrier, blockade, squabble, wrangle, altercation
Amend	Verb	Revise, alter, change, modify, revamp, repaid
Enhance	Verb	Boost, surge, augment, elevate, escalate
Radical	Adj.	Progressive, reformer, reformist, rebel
Determinant	Noun	Antecedent, casuality, causation, reason, impetus stimulus
Concessionaire	Noun	Auctioneer, broker, merchandiser, vendor
Onus	Noun	Burden, responsibility, liability, obligation
Litigation	Noun	Legal proceedings, action, cause, prosecution
Compliance	Noun	Concurrence, acquiescence, agreement
Signage	Noun	Signalling, reporting, traffic, cuing
Ambit	Noun	Scope, extent, bounds, confines, breadth
Corruption	Noun	Dishonesty, unscrupulousness, deceit, delinquency
Impunity	Noun	Immunity, indemnity, exemption, licence
Encourage	Verb	Prod, exhort, persuade, stimulate
Investigation	Noun	Examination, inquiry, inspection, consideration