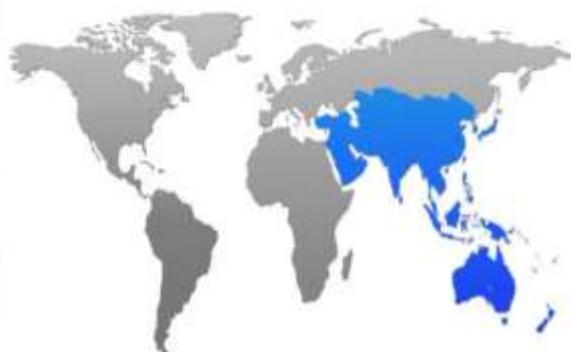




# Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific: Impact on South Asia



Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)



Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF)

# **Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific: Impact on South Asia**

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The Conference Coordinator and Editor are grateful to the authors whose papers have been included in this book for their time and commitment. We are also thankful to Dr Dietrich Reetz, Mr Takaaki Asano, Dr Fazal-ur-Rahman, Dr Swaran Singh and Mr Javed Jabbar for sharing their views at the Conference in the form of presentations/extempore speeches. Their thoughts are included in the Preface.

The Institute is also thankful to the chief guests, chairpersons of the different sessions, scholars, students and professionals, who participated. The successful completion of the Conference owes much to the efforts and logistical support provided by the IPRI and HSF staff. The Institute is especially thankful to Mr Kristof W Duwaerts, Resident Representative, HSF, Islamabad, for his cooperation and sharing the financial expenses of the Conference.■

## **Acronyms**

<b>ADMM</b>	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
<b>AIIB</b>	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
<b>APEC</b>	Asia-Pacific Economic Forum
<b>ARF</b>	ASEAN Regional Forum
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>BMD</b>	Ballistic Missile Defence
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
<b>CASA-1000</b>	Central Asia - South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CPEC</b>	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
<b>EAS</b>	East Asia Summit
<b>FATA</b>	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IONS</b>	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
<b>IOZP</b>	Indian Ocean Zone of Peace
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>JEZs</b>	Joint Economic Zones
<b>LoC</b>	Line of Control
<b>MSR</b>	Maritime Silk Road
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>OBOR</b>	One Belt One Road
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PLAN</b>	People's Liberation Army Navy
<b>RAW</b>	Research and Analysis Wing

<b>RCEP</b>	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
<b>RDF</b>	Rapid Deployment Force
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>SAFTA</b>	South Asian Free Trade Agreement
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
<b>SHADE</b>	Shared Awareness and Deconfliction
<b>SLOCs</b>	Sea Lines of Communication
<b>SREB</b>	Silk Road Economic Belt
<b>TAPI</b>	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
<b>TPP</b>	Trans-Pacific Partnership
<b>TPPA</b>	Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>VMF</b>	Voenno-Morskoi Flot

## Preface

**Ambassador (retd.) Sohail Amin,  
Muhammad Munir and Muhammad Nawaz Khan**

This book is based on the papers, presentations and speeches made at the two-day International Conference on *Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific and its Impact on South Asia* organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) from 17-18 November 2015 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The Conference comprised of four working sessions, in addition to the inaugural and concluding session. 15 papers were presented during the Conference. The presentations made by the eminent scholars from Pakistan and abroad covered various themes ranging from ‘Overview of Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific’ to ‘Rising China and U.S. Re-engagement in Asia Pacific’ and from ‘Regional Connectivity and Trade in Asia Pacific’ to ‘Power Politics in the Asia Pacific: Implications for South Asia’. With the aim to suggest a way forward for building a co-operative regional security order, the Conference helped in initiating a timely and comprehensive debate on the subject and forwarded recommendations.

The Asia Pacific/Indo Pacific region is at the world’s focus for its growing political importance, its fast economic development, and its strategic position on the sea lines of communication (SLOCs). It has 60 per cent of the world population, a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than \$40 trillion and hubs of economic power that now compete with the West. It has four sub-regions spanning the Asian continent bordering the Indian and Pacific oceans: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania and South Asia. Its seas command the vital and busy pathways of maritime activity. Three of the most important straits — Malacca, Sunda and Lombok — situated here permit shipping of trade and energy vital to the East and West. China’s rise as a major power has added a new dimension to the region’s geostrategic importance.

A regional security order which is a complex combination of actors and policies is no longer associated exclusively with political and economic interdependence. The Asia Pacific region has undergone fundamental changes in its regional organisation, security order, and power structure in the post-Cold War era. The region has become a powerhouse of global economic and geopolitical transformation as part of Asian ascendance in comparison to the West which in general perception is no longer the world’s centre of gravity. The accretion of military power that has

inevitably followed the region's economic growth is altering the balance of power within the region and between Asia and the West.

According to the Western analysts, the key strategic issue today in East Asia is the rise of Chinese power. For nearly three decades, the Chinese economy has been growing by 7 to 10 per cent annually. China's defence expenditure has risen by an even larger percentage. Chinese leaders assert China's 'peaceful development', but Western analysts long accustomed to power politics of the West have their doubts. They think China will exert its weight towards seeking hegemony in East Asia which might lead to conflict with the United States and Japan. Another factor which has tilted the balance of power is Japan's economic slowdown and relative decline in its influence in the region. To hedge against a possible security gap, Japan, South Korea, India, Vietnam, Australia and others are boosting intra-regional and bilateral trade, defence and diplomatic ties, selling military equipment to each other, and conducting joint military exercises, sponsored by the U.S. which views China's rapid growth with apprehension.

This does not mean that the U.S. is playing a backseat role in this strategy. Its decision to rebalance its forces so as to deploy 60 per cent of its combat ships in the Asia Pacific region by 2020 did not come as a surprise. It has built a web of strong alliances around China's periphery by developing cooperation with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and India. This proactive involvement of the U.S. in the region, and its unabashed propping up of its declared strategic partners in South Asia as a kind of 'counter weight' to China, only translates into what is generally and not so wrongly understood as its China containment policy. This has raised concerns in South Asia.

On its part, China is now attracting regional states with its economic power and is offering a competing vision of shared destinies in economic progress as a soft power to the U.S.-centric 'hub and spoke' system of alliances that was established in the post-World War II period. China's alternative has been constructed around trade relationships and diplomatic initiatives manifest at the East Asia Summit, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)+3 forums, various Chinese bilateral free trade initiatives, and China's 'charm' offensive.

As a result, a new web of power relations is emerging in Asia today inspired by China's rise and the perceived relative decline of the U.S. The countries of the region are bolstering mutual ties eclipsing the U.S.-led model of alliances by a broader, more complicated and more diffused, web of relationships in which Asian countries are the primary drivers. This developing web has provided an impetus to the new U.S. grand strategy in the region by leveraging relationships among like-minded countries to share

its burden of managing China's rise and preserving a balance of power. Yet the current dynamics of the U.S.-China-Japan triangle will continue to haunt the region and may even confront the present cozy ASEAN-driven model of security with new challenges.

Closer to more real fault lines than the spectre of rising China is the South China Sea issue that will remain a bone of contention between China and the other claimants – Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, on the one hand, and between the U.S. and China on the other. Lately, Vietnam and the Philippines have also asserted their claims. ASEAN states are divided over the role of extra-regional powers in the South China Sea. Some regional countries are leaning on the U.S. to get more deeply involved, but China is averse to any outside interference and wants to resolve the issue bilaterally.

The Asia Pacific region's diversity requires a security order of its own. China's 'new concept of security' encourages economic interdependence and stresses finding solutions of non-traditional security challenges like terrorism, environmental degradation, disaster management, water management, drug trafficking and health related issues. Rising China, due to its capacity and stakes in the region will continue to be the key player in such an order. This might strain the existing structure of regional relationships. The important question is how the region would address the competing interests of China and the U.S.

With the current emphasis on economics as the driving force in international relations, regional flashpoints such as territorial disputes in the South and East China Sea, Kashmir, Tibet and the North Korean nuclear issue tend to get overshadowed. But that does not lessen the danger they pose to regional security as they continue to cause tension and mar growth of bilateral relations.

For South Asia, the strategic shift from Eurasia to Asia Pacific has become an urgent concern in the wake of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Geostrategically, Pakistan is important for trade and commerce between South and Central Asia, East and West Asia. In its efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been contributing significantly to establishing a new security model in the region. Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan constitute a relevant regional powerbase in this respect. Pakistan can give practical shape to its proposal of providing 'connectivity' to ASEAN via western China and Central Asian Republics by both land and sea through the Gwadar Port and the prospective China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which is introducing a new and positive dimension to the emerging Asia Pacific scenario.

This book is organised into two parts. The first part includes the welcome address and the vote of thanks by President IPRI, Ambassador

(retd.) Sohail Amin; opening remarks by Mr Kristof W. Duwaerts, Resident Representative, HSF, Islamabad; inaugural address by the Chief Guest, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman Senate Committee on Defence and Defence Production and Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); and the concluding address by the Chief Guest Mr Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The second part is thematic and consists of papers, essays and thought pieces presented at the Conference.

In his commentary on '**Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture in Asia Pacific**', Ambassador (retd.) Shamshad Ahmad stated that the emerging security architecture in Asia Pacific was an extension of the global security paradigm as the world is being challenged by the strategic power game, nuclear security order, power politics, economic adventurism, military occupations, invasions in the name of self-defence, and religion-based extremism. Further, the end of the Cold War not only provided an opportunity to revert to the concept of collective security under United Nations auspices as a reflection of the new world order, but also engendered hope that peace would no longer remain hostage to two heavily militarised blocs. Contrary to expectations, the emerging reality was totally different as the concept of 'pivot' replaced the Cold War containment policy in the name of peace and security in Asia Pacific. He highlighted that the concept of the Cold War global security has been replaced by security arrangement for regional as well as sub-regional levels and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with its new role to build coalitions to change the regime and wage war in the name of peace and security has been adjusting to new realities. He opined that nuclear arsenals have also contributed to shaping the global security architecture and nuclear states have been focusing on non-proliferation just to enhance their own political objectives. The world has witnessed the erosion of arms control and disarmament measures, development and deployment of nuclear weapons and destabilising effects of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems. The power asymmetries as well as economic and social disparities and injustices have given rise to new conflicts. He explained that while the Cold War is over, the Cold War psyche has dominated the policy formulation process. A power-led, oil and gas-driven Great Game has serious repercussions for global peace and stability in general and for Asia Pacific in particular. He highlighted that the rise of China has been a major factor to preserve the global balance of power and termed it as the only ray of hope for stabilising Asia Pacific. China has not responded to the 'Asia Pivot' strategy militarily, but put forward the concept of revival of traditional silk route in the form of 'One Belt One Road (OBOR)' initiative involving not only the connectivity of land masses, trade and investments, but connectivity of minds as well.

This is the new approach which has never been practiced in the past and it is aimed at linking Asia with other regions such as Europe and Africa and can bring true peace and stability.

Dr Dietrich Reetz in his extempore speech on '**Regional Compulsions, and Opportunities after U.S./NATO Withdrawal from Afghanistan**', said that the U.S. and its allies were reordering the security paradigm and their commitment to South Asia. The reorientation in the commitment and the changing policies of the U.S. and its allies would impact the regional security environment. Afghanistan and Pakistan being the primary regional actors would face the maximum ramifications. The dawn of a new Cold War between the U.S. and its contenders – Russia and China could make the region a battleground for geopolitical and geostrategic interests. New regional alliances and regional identities would emerge. According to Dr Reetz, the November 2015 interaction between the U.S. and Pakistan military leadership (Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif's visit to the U.S.) was indicative of the fact that the U.S. wanted to engage Pakistan in the emerging security order of the region. Moreover, the U.S. was also trying to balance its ties with both India and Pakistan.

On the Afghan situation and regional peace, he underscored that the contending India-Pakistan relations were an impediment in Afghan peace. He hoped that Pakistan and India's Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) membership could open new grounds of cooperation between the two neighbours. He further argued that the U.S. and China could be instrumental in normalising ties. He concluded that the South Asian region was passing through a phase of pluralisation and shared interests, which would shape the regional security order in the near future. Pakistan could play a positive role in supporting the mega developmental projects in the region. Besides, Iran's new approach towards the post-nuclear deal offered new opportunities as well as prospects of regional cooperation.

Mr Bunn Nagara discussed '**The South China Sea in ASEAN-U.S.-China Relations**', and said that the South China Sea was now generally regarded as the main potential flashpoint for conflict in Southeast Asia. The China-ASEAN tensions over the Spratly and Paracel Islands had intensified. The other potential regional flashpoints like the Malacca Strait, the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula had become manageable over the years. To mollify the regional states' opposition over the South China Sea, China was employing economic diplomacy. The One Belt One Road (OBOR) was a step in this direction. He referred to the U.S. military presence in the region and was of the opinion that its defence cooperation with the Philippines and Vietnam could complicate the situation in South China Sea.

Dr Takaaki Asano gave an overview of Japan, Russia and China's cooperative regional role in a presentation titled '**U.S.-Japan-China-Russia Relations: Conflict and Cooperation in Asia Pacific**', discussed their instrumental role in the Six-Party Talks. It was pointed out that these countries were successful in pacifying a nuclear North Korea. It was further shared that all three are active members of economic and defence groupings, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM). The U.S. 'pivot to Asia'/'re-balancing' strategy was viewed optimistically. The 'pivot' was described as the U.S. global posture to sustain its leadership. It was opined that the regional states, in particular the U.S. allies were desirous of enhancing defence cooperation with the latter.

In his essay '**Rising China and Regional Stability: South Asian Perspective**', Mr Ameen Izzadeen highlighted that China's rise is too big to be ignored. Even the big powers realise that kowtowing to China is in their national interest as it has emerged as a key source of foreign investment. But they are also preoccupied with the thought, 'How do we solve a problem like China?' since its rise also poses a security threat. China's economic ingress in world regions has made it an influential international player. The Republic has also started investing in troubled regions of the world, and its investment in Afghanistan is a testament to this. Moreover, China's political assertiveness in world affairs has also intensified. Since 2004, the use of Chinese veto power in UN Security Council has also substantially increased. Chinese foreign policies are like a mindboggling calculus conundrum. Take for instance, the huge show of force it staged in September 2015 to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Asia. The Beijing ceremony, while seemingly promoting pacifism, showcased China's latest weapons.

As regards, China's bilateral ties with Sri Lanka, he reiterated that China is the largest donor of Sri Lanka. But unlike the Western countries, China does not link economic aid with the issue of human rights. China has also inked an agreement with Sri Lanka over the improvement of maritime security in the Indian Ocean. To counter Chinese moves, India is trying to influence the foreign relations of its smaller neighbours (e.g. through implementation of the 'Indira-Doctrine'). He suggested that the South Asian countries should not become part of the power game of the West.

In his paper '**Advancing Defence Cooperation in Asia Pacific and the U.S. Re-balancing Strategy: The Reality of an American-Indian "Strategic Partnership"**', Dr David R. Jones (who passed away in August 2016) analysed at length why the U.S.-India relationship which is 'more a business transaction than an emotional union based on mutual love', is

being given the symbolic status of a ‘strategic partnership.’ He underscored that regional developments, in particular, the rise of China has raised India’s importance in the U.S. calculus. Washington’s tilt towards New Delhi has enhanced the latter’s stature diplomatically. India has become a recipient of U.S. weaponry as well as economic investment. However, how strong is this strategic partnership or to what extent, the strategic partners would side with each other was yet to be seen.

He further stated that seen from India’s angle, the U.S. is not the sole supplier of India’s defence, rather, other countries like the UK (as apparent from Prime Minister Modi’s visit to London) are willing to compete in the lucrative Indian market. Secondly, India is not a submissive ally, and the possibility that India would go to any extent to please the U.S. hardly existed. Therefore, the perception that India would deploy naval boats in the Indian Ocean to deter Chinese vessels could turn out to be a miscalculation. Another factor, which New Delhi cannot ignore is Beijing’s veto power. India would require the U.S. as well as China’s support to attain the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) membership. Any drastic policy shift against China could be provocative, and further embolden Beijing over India’s UNSC membership. Therefore, India would have to follow a balanced, pragmatic path, while dealing with both. Similarly, because of the U.S. support to India, over the latter’s disputed ties with Pakistan, the perception that Pakistan would be abandoned on Delhi’s behest carries little weight.

In his presentation ‘**Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo Pacific: Indian Perspective**’, Dr Swaran Singh pointed out that the rise of new powers in the now called Asia Pacific has led to its nomenclature changing several times. For example, during the rise of the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s, this area was called the Far East; the rise of Japan in the 1970s-1980s changed it to East Asia, while the region was renamed Asia Pacific with the emergence of China as the rising power in the 1990s-2000s. He stressed that the U.S. was desirous to use the Indo-Pacific to sustain its leadership and had endorsed India’s role in the region as a net security provider. He said that India saw two parallel networks emerging in Asia Pacific: a security network led by the U.S.; and an economic network led by China. He identified that both networks had been trying to build economic as well as security partnerships and India did not want to choose between the U.S. and China, rather it sought to balance its engagement with both.

In his paper ‘**Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: Pakistani Perspective**’, Dr Rizwan Nasser outlined that the Indo-Pacific has become a central locus of power in the Twenty-First Century. However, the power struggle, interstate tensions and the unresolved disputes make the region volatile. The decline of the U.S. and the rise of China has become a

prevalent trend. According to him, the U.S. tilt towards India, in particular support of the latter's 'Look East/Act East Policy' is an endeavour to abet Indian regional presence, primarily to counterbalance China. Meanwhile, to engage China on the regional front is also a challenge for the U.S.

South Asia remains a conflict-prone region dominated by the legacy of India-Pakistan rivalry. The Indian government headed by the Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi has further strained bilateral ties. The region's economic vehicle South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is also a victim of hostile India-Pakistan relations. The Indian arms buildup is a source of concern for other regional actors, while Pakistan's defence buildup is to balance the power with India. In this regard, the foreign powers, in particular, the U.S. could play a pivotal role in normalising relations. Pakistan's regional standing was also highlighted by him. It was reiterated that Pakistan's geostrategic location coupled with the country's ties with the P-5 states as well as Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey make it a 'pivot state in Indo-Pacific.' A stable Pakistan guarantees a stable South Asia and a stable South Asia means the rise of new powers in the Indo-Pacific.

In his presentation on '**ASEAN and Geopolitics of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA)**', Dr Fazal-ur-Rahman said that the economies in the TPPA contribute 40 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The economic body had adopted 'Second Generation' trade rules and regulations (much more advanced and sophisticated than adopted at the time of World Trade Organization negotiations). As regards, TPPA and regional politics, he opined that America's central role in the economic grouping reinforced the speculation that it is aimed at countering China's economic influence. In this backdrop, TPPA could be called as the economic backbone of the pivot to Asia. Over China's inclusion into the TPPA, it was pointed out that the trade provisions enunciated in TPPA are in sharp contrast to Chinese labour policies. He also highlighted the importance of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for various regional economic groupings such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the TPPA.

In his paper '**China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: An Opportunity for Regional Prosperity**', Dr Liu Zongyi explained that in the backdrop of U.S. rebalancing, there has been an increased militarisation in the region. The U.S. allies, in particular Japan and India, are also empowering their defence forces. Japan's military buildup and involvement in South China Sea dispute along with India's 'Act East Policy' are destabilising regional harmony. The growing U.S. ingress in the geopolitical and geo-economic affairs of Asia Pacific might be devastating for the region. The security structure of Asia Pacific as envisioned by the U.S. is not an inclusive

structure since China and other smaller states are excluded from it. He referred to China's endeavour for a harmonious and just politico-economic order. He discussed Chinese proposal of an 'Asian Community of Shared Destiny' which has three pillars: 'a community of common interests, a community of common security and a community of culture and people'. The OBOR Initiative is the materialisation of this and needed the cooperation of regional as well as extra-regional countries, including Japan and the U.S. According to him, CPEC as part of OBOR, would enhance Pakistan's regional position, empower the country's economy and most importantly, strengthen its resolve against militancy.

In his presentation on '**Revitalizing SAARC for Economic Prosperity**', Mr Javed Jabbar discussed the peculiar characteristics of South Asia, the problems being faced by the region, regional discord and the way forward. According to him, South Asia is a diversified region, where countries are connected by geography and history, but divided by nationality. He discussed the role of SAARC in regional cooperation in South Asia and argued that the unresolved political and territorial disputes, in particular, the India-Pakistan rivalry is responsible for SAARC's slow progress. He recommended that in order to revitalise SAARC, regular/frequent dialogue among the SAARC states, operationalisation of SAFTA, conducting joint ventures and establishing Joint Economic Zones (JEZs) was the need of the hour.

In his paper '**India as a Linchpin of U.S. Strategy in Asia Pacific and Policy Options for Pakistan**', Mr Majid Ali Noonari said that the U.S. had identified India as a 'balancer' in Asia Pacific back in 2002 even though it was initially reluctant to accept the role of a linchpin. In 2011, the U.S. announced its pivot to Asia policy to reinforce its ingress in the region and counter the Chinese influence. Later, the policy was renamed 'Re-balancing Asia'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi supported this idea and during the ASEAN Summit (2014), unveiled its 'Act East Look West' policy. During the Summit, Indian leadership criticised China's belligerent stance over the South China Sea. India supports the ASEAN claimants, in particular, the Philippines and Vietnam over the South China Sea dispute, he stressed.

In his paper '**Geostrategic Competition in Asia Pacific and Security Implications for South Asia**', Dr Sinderpal Singh explained that the notion of Asia Pacific was introduced after the Second World War. The Cold War witnessed the emergence of Asian tigers in East Asia; and the U.S. tried to counter Soviet influence in the region. He said that while India during this period was not an active player here, in the post-Cold War era, it has re-oriented its policies towards this region. The map of Asia is being re-imagined. The idea of the Asia Pacific, which made sense as a framework

for regional order in the late Twentieth Century, was giving way to another construct: the Indo Pacific. This changing use of geographic terms has real-world consequences for how states and leaders perceive the regional strategic order, the challenges it faces, and the ways to address them. The desire for Chinese containment after the demise of the former Soviet Union and economic liberalisation policies were the reasons behind India's policy shift towards the region. He said that India is keen to facilitate the extra-regional powers in the Indo Pacific in the post-Cold War era. The idea of renaming the region as Indo-Pacific is advantageous for India since it increases Indian presence and role. China does not welcome this development and perceives India as a member of the rival coalition. This perception has developed mistrust between the two countries.

There are two competing narratives over the regional definition, i.e., whether China is a part of South Asian region or not? But in recent years, China has become an active player by offering economic benefits and opportunities of regional integration which have made it a member of the South Asian community. He highlighted that there are two main challenges to Indo Pacific security, i.e. maritime security and competition of China and the U.S. and its allies over dominating role in the region. Indo Pacific and Chinese maritime Silk Road are contesting and competing narratives. He concluded that politics of the region are rapidly changing, therefore, it is too early to decide who would be the dominating power.

In his speech '**China's Constructive Role in Asia Pacific**', Mr Muhammad Zhao Lijian highlighted that to move forward in the era of globalisation, connectivity and regional integration are required. The Belt and the Road initiative is an endeavour towards peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. The One Belt One Road (OBOR) would physically connect markets of Asia, Europe and beyond, and would create strategic channels, trade and industrial hubs. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also a part of OBOR, which would connect the Northwestern Chinese province of Xinjiang with the Pakistani port of Gwadar through a forward-looking network of roads. According to him, China has also established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) which has a pivotal role in supplying funds for promoting connectivity and integration.

About China's present day role in international politics, he referred to China's foreign policy principles of 'Amity, Sincerity, Mutual Benefit and Inclusiveness'. He illuminated that China believes in territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference (in each other's internal affairs) and peaceful co-existence. China is wrongly portrayed as hegemon. He stressed that China is not seeking a dominant role, rather, China's economic prowess is a stabilising factor, and an

opportunity for the developing world to integrate with the Chinese economy (China's major trading partners include Japan, Hong Kong, EU, the U.S. and ASEAN). He reiterated that China supports peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue or negotiations. The Republic has recently cut down the number of its troops by 300,000. Besides, China has not built military alliances with regional states nor is it trying to draw any country out of the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, China is an active member of regional defence and security forums (like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN Regional Forum). Through these security platforms, terrorism (and other related threats) can be addressed. He shared that China supports peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, and is ready to be a facilitator in the peace process.

In her special remarks '**Building a Co-operative Security Order for Asia Pacific: A Way Forward**', Ms Margaret Adamson highlighted the relationship between China and the U.S., which would be the defining factor in shaping the security architecture of the Asia Pacific. She shared that Australia's engagement in the region is based on compliance with international law and the Australian Prime Minister has discussed this approach with President Obama. She said that Australia firmly believes that maritime security and economic growth complements each other and without maritime security, the possibilities for economic development and regional cooperation cannot be materialised. She identified that regional peace and security could be enhanced by adopting transparent defence policies. Every region has its own peculiar issues that need viable regional arrangements. The maritime security architecture in Indo Pacific is based on coalition task forces dealing with non-traditional security threats. She concluded that a co-operative security order for the Asia Pacific region must be based on consultative mechanism. ■



## Welcome Address

### Ambassador (retd.) Sohail Amin

Honourable Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Committee on Defence & Defence Production and Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,  
Mr Kristof W. Duwaerts, Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Scholars,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**I**welcome Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who has kindly accepted our invitation to be the Chief Guest at this two-day International Conference on *Emerging Regional Security Order in Asia Pacific and its Impact on South Asia*.

I also thankfully acknowledge the presence of former Foreign Minister Mr Inam ul Haq who will be chairing the first session of the conference. You may have noticed Dr Stephen Cohen's name in the programme. He had accepted our invitation and was all set to come but unfortunately, he became suddenly indisposed due to illness two days before his departure from the United States. He has regretted his inability to come.

I also very warmly welcome distinguished scholars from China, Japan, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. The Ambassadors of Australia and China will also be speaking at the second day of the Conference. I also extend a very warm welcome to scholars who are representing prestigious think tanks and distinguished academic and media institutions of Pakistan.

It has been our endeavour at IPRI to organise national and international conferences on emerging and new topics having direct bearing on Pakistan in particular and on the region in general. During 2015, we organised a national conference on *Building Knowledge Based Economy in Pakistan: Learning from Best Practices*. Before that, an International Conference on *Policy Approaches of South Asian Countries and their Impact on the Region* was held. In early 2015, another International Conference on *Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan* was organised.

Like our previous conferences, today's Conference is equally important with respect to its theme and timing. The Asia Pacific region is in focus for its growing political importance, its fast economic development,

and its strategic position on the sea lines of communication (SLOCs). This region has 60 per cent of the world's population. Three of the most important straits are situated here through which goods vital to the East and the West travel.

The Asia Pacific region has undergone fundamental changes in its regional organisation, security order, and power structure in the post-Cold War era. The region has become a powerhouse of global economic transformation as part of Asian ascendance in comparison to the West which in general perception is no longer the world's centre of gravity. In popular opinion, the focus has shifted from the Atlantic to the Asia Pacific.

Many important geo-economic developments are taking place in this region. Recently, the United States along with some Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries concluded the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) based on open accession which enables participation of any of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement partner like China, Korea, Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand. The agreement is also open to other external economic partners, such as Central Asian states and the South Asian countries.

So far, the U.S. 'pivot' policy has shown little specific impact on the broad pattern of U.S.-China relations. Since the firing of a missile by an American naval ship close to a 'Chinese construction site' in the South China Sea, the two sides have agreed to work out a protocol to avoid misunderstanding and incidents that could trigger escalation.

In the midst of sustained, strong economic growth in the Asia Pacific, there have also been unfortunate trends of rising tensions in the area. Intensified competition among major powers, emerging security challenges and rising confrontation in maritime areas, amongst other developments, are contributing to declining geo-political trends in the region.

The Asia Pacific region's diversity requires a security order of its own. China's 'new concept of security' encourages economic interdependence and stresses finding solutions of non-traditional security challenges like terrorism, environmental degradation, disaster management, water management, drug trafficking and health-related issues.

For South Asia, the strategic shift from Eurasia to Asia Pacific has become an urgent concern in the wake of withdrawal of U.S.-led forces from Afghanistan. Geostrategically, Pakistan is important for trade and commerce between South and Central Asia, East and West Asia. Pakistan can give a practical shape to China's proposal of providing connectivity to ASEAN countries via western China and Central Asian Republics by both land and sea through the Gwadar Port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This Corridor is introducing a positive dimension to the emerging Asia Pacific scenario.

The main objective of the Conference is to discuss emerging trends in the security architecture in Asia Pacific with reference to issues relating to current policies of regional actors, future security developments, emerging alliances and suggest options for Pakistan to play its due role in the dynamics of Asia Pacific politics. Issues such as conflict in South China Sea, rising China, U.S. rebalancing strategy would also be covered. Further, the focus of the Conference is on issues of regional connectivity including the impact of political disputes on trade and economic cooperation and suggesting a way forward for building a co-operative regional security order.

In the end, I thank the distinguished audience for finding time to be here to share their views with the speakers during the Q & A sessions. Before I conclude, I thank the Hanns Seidel Foundation for their collaboration with IPRI in making this event possible.■

## **Opening Remarks**

**Kristof W. Duwaerts**

Resident Representative,

Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Islamabad

**L**ooking at the title from a purely geographical point of view, this Conference will deal with roughly two thirds of the world's population and surface. After all, Asia stretches from Russia to Timor, the Pacific borders and vast parts of the Americas. Even though it does not include Europe or Africa, the implication of anything which is happening within the Asia Pacific possibly carries huge ramifications for even geographically non-contingent countries.

Applying a more political definition of the Asia Pacific – for instance by looking at multilateral institutions such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and its currently 21 member states – again, we would be looking at powerhouses of both political and economic growth in the region and in the world. Each of those countries has aspirations. Roughly speaking, one could divide the bigger nations in the Asia Pacific into former, current and future world powers, with all of them pursuing policies to regain, maintain or foster their political position. Yet, such power generates a huge responsibility. It is here that the notion of an 'Emerging Security Order' comes in.

Yet again, one needs to keep in mind that there has been a security order well before. It has been there for the past decades, even centuries, and is impacting hugely on how the currently emerging security order would be developing further. In that regard, the Twenty First Century, and particularly the globalisation of virtually every sector of modern life is adding to the challenges every actor faces. There is huge redistribution of responsibilities at hand, and it is the responsibility of every nation involved to shape this redistribution sustainably and to a mutual benefit, i.e. to a positive end.

Defining the Conference title more deeply, one also needs to keep in mind the meaning of 'security'. While during the Cold War, security meant the absence of a physical threat by perceived (at times actual) enemies and armies and weapons, be it nuclear or conventional, this century and its technological advances and interdependencies have complicated matters to a large extent. Today, security can no longer be looked at in a purely military way, i.e. the traditional way. Newly emerging challenges have, thus, been summarised as 'non-traditional security' factors. Major future wars would likely be erupting over climate, water and food, basic necessities for everyday life.

Still, traditional challenges have by no means ceased to exist. Add to that the soaring challenge of terrorism, which can only be resolved through a balanced civil-military approach, plus the high number of internal and transnational challenges such as migration, the stability of political systems, and maybe most importantly, the economic stability of all states involved, it becomes very clear, that security cannot be the topic of one single conference, not even of a complete conference series.

Yet, the first step to finding solutions is – apart from cooperation – a discussion among as many experts as possible. Such discussions in a second step usually initiate cooperation based on common understanding. The important first step of bringing together experts to explore issues has been taken by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute. This Conference, and the book, may not offer definitive, all encompassing solutions. They will rather show aspects and angles to tackle the problem. Based on some of the premises, one then needs to jointly start – nationally, regionally and internationally, as well as academically and politically – to work on solutions in a segmented way, tackling one issue after the other. Setting the field is one of the core tasks of universities and think-tanks and their affiliated political scientists. It is their task to see a problem, define it, develop scenarios taking into account as many factors as possible, and on the basis of learned analysis and in cooperation with policy-makers, draft policies, which are sustainable, inclusive and comprehensive, and oriented towards the future rather than the past.

My thanks go to IPRI for ably having provided such a platform, and for having brought together a galaxy of learned experts. I sincerely hope that the proceedings would be widely read and provide a meaningful basis for both academicians and practitioners in the near future. On behalf of the Hanns Seidel Foundation, I am looking forward to many more such fruitful dialogues in the future.■

## Inaugural Address

### Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed

Chairman, Senate Committee on Defence and Defence Production and  
Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

**T**here was a shift in the balance of power from West to East and after 9/11 this shift became more apparent due to military failures in Iraq and Afghanistan and also failures of regime change that shattered the *status quo* in most of the Muslim world. We have been facing the consequences of these policies based on military might alone. Twenty-First Century was termed as the Asian century; the focus has shifted from the Atlantic to the Asia Pacific.

In the present era, there is talk of greater South Asia driven by energy and economic cooperation which includes China, Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan and linkage of rail and road networks, energy pipelines such as Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), Iran-Pakistan (IP) and Myanmar-China pipeline that present huge economic opportunities. There are two basic trends in the region: first, new regionalism of which Pakistan is a part due to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); and the second, the concept of the New Great Game that depicts a mindset of the Cold War, primarily for the containment of China. These trends have been reflected in the speeches of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (20 July 2011) and President Obama (17 November 2011). The concept of ‘New Silk Road’, the introduction of the term ‘Pivot to Asia’ and the shift in the U.S. foreign policy towards Asia Pacific were highlighted in these speeches.

Chinese leadership’s response to the U.S. policies is the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) that converge in one country, Pakistan. CPEC is a 15-year project starting from 2015-2030, roughly of about \$50 billion, which would be a ‘game changer’ not only for Pakistan, but for the whole region.

India has been given a major role in the region on the pretext of the Great Game and its role under Prime Minister Modi has been disturbing for Pakistan as well as for other regional states. Apart from Indian policies and the violations of ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC), the inconclusive talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have also been destabilising the region.

I would like to highlight three mistakes that had destabilising global as well as regional impact. First the U.S. went to Iraq without stabilising Afghanistan. Afghan *Jihad* gave rise to Al-Qaeda, while the war in Iraq has given rise to the Islamic State. Second, the Indo-U.S. civil-nuclear deal has violated the norms of the non-proliferation regime and Washington has

shown double standards since Pakistan, Iran and India are being treated differently giving birth to a new arms race in South Asia. Third, the regime in Syria is being tackled on a priority basis rather than first dealing with the Islamic State.■

## Concluding Address

**Sartaj Aziz**

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs,  
Government of Pakistan

Ambassador Sohail Amin,  
Mr Kristof W. Duwaerts,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel honoured to address this august gathering of eminent scholars and researchers on a very interesting theme - the *Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific and its Impact on South Asia*. Ambassador Sohail Amin and the Islamabad Policy Research Institute deserve credit to have brought together experts and scholars from the region. Indeed, I hope that the deliberations and discussions of this important forum will be shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Geopolitical and geostrategic developments in the Asia Pacific have been moving rapidly in the recent past. The United States brought greater focus on the region by launching the ‘Asia Pivot’ in 2011. The Pivot, renamed as ‘rebalance’ strengthens alliances with Japan, South Korea, India, ASEAN countries as well as Australia and the New Zealand. Greater interaction by the United States with fora like Asia Pacific Economic Forum (APEC), East Asia Summit (EAS) and more recently Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has underlined the growing importance of these regional arrangements.

Likewise, China has unveiled plans to revive the ancient Silk Road by undertaking massive infrastructure projects and adding value to ports around the Silk Road. You are well aware of China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. It has two components- the overland Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR). OBOR’s ambitious project coupled with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) highlights the changing global power dynamics, in the context of the much talked about ‘Asian Century’. China, with its 20 per cent share of the world’s population and having surpassed the United States in terms of purchasing power in 2014 is engaged in several diplomatic initiatives to boost the economic growth of the region and create a win-win situation for all the participants.

This geopolitical realignment has two dimensions which enhance its significance. One is the growing cooperation between Russia and China to

develop trade and energy connectivity in Eurasia; and second, the creation of several important new institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund.

Pakistan is located at the crossroads of South, Central and West Asia, and is uniquely located to gain from stability and peace in Asia as a whole. These expectations are based around CPEC. It is a mutually symbiotic project serving energy and transport requirements across South and Central Asia linking to shipping routes of the Arabian Sea. The strategic port of Gwadar is the hub around which CPEC rotates. Thus, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a whole can be connected to the markets of Central and West Asia, adding another dimension to market competition and economic diversity in the region.

The CPEC is the only corridor which is connected to another corridor and helps provide landlocked countries with access to the sea. Massive investments in infrastructure envisaged under CPEC seek, *inter alia*, to tackle the menace of terrorism. The size of the investment over the next 15 years when materialised, will equal the cumulative gross Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows in Pakistan since its creation.

Cooperation between Pakistan and China are focused on economic development through connectivity and is not against any other country. Pakistan seeks to establish and sustain long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with the global and regional players in Asia. Pakistan has the distinction of forging and maintaining strategic dialogue with both the U.S. and China. We have vibrant and robust relations with another power in the region, i.e. Russia. From Pakistan's perspective, China together with the United States and Russia, are important pillars in the newly emerging economic and security order of the region.

We believe that a resilient U.S.-Pakistan partnership is vital to regional and global peace and will bolster the mutual commitment of the two countries to democracy. Pakistan and United States are further expanding bilateral ties, with increased focus on trade and investment, education, science and technology, clean energy, climate change, and regional integration. The two countries intend to focus upon accelerated macroeconomic cooperation through the Economic and Finance Working Group as a key element of the larger Strategic Dialogue Framework. The U.S. has also reaffirmed its support for the Afghanistan - Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), Electricity Transmission and Trade Project for Central Asia and South Asia (CASA-1000), Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project, along with other measures to enhance regional economic connectivity and growth.

It is unfortunate that some other countries in the region are trying to divert attention away from the importance of CPEC. India's loud objections and attempts to gain support of elements hostile to Pakistan in the region are ill-advised. Pakistan has had to overcome many challenges in its bilateral ties with India in the past. However, the recent deviation of India from all invitations to dialogue and peace belie its commitment to peace and harmony in the region. While Pakistan favours normalisation of its ties with India, we also expect reciprocity with respect and dignity.

While the theme of this Conference emphasises the evolving dynamics in regional and super-power context, the most viable option for peace and stability in the Asia Pacific, is a form of shared regional leadership that is inclusive not only of the major powers, but also of other key players in the region. This mode of regional leadership is the best manifestation of international governance. It has the support of the largest number of stakeholders.

The key multilateral dialogue forums in the Asia Pacific region are mechanisms of shared and inclusive regional leadership vis-à-vis the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the extended East Asia Summit (EAS), and the newly established ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+). These forums have demonstrated a remarkable ability to nimbly adapt to the changing balance of power in the region. There is a place under inclusive leadership for various leadership roles played by great powers and small states alike.

While the merits of this approach cannot be overlooked, territorial and border disputes in the region continue to have strong bearing and if left unresolved, politics of 'rebalancing' and the beginning of a 'new cold war', will continue to haunt us. Given that major powers have so many interlocking interests and convergences on transborder issues like cyber-terrorism, climate change and the environment, UN peacekeeping, connectivity and open lanes of trade, one feels optimistic about the future of the Asia Pacific region provided a rational and mature approach is adopted by all the stakeholders.

Thank you.■

## **Vote of Thanks**

**Ambassador (retd.) Sohail Amin**

Honourable Excellency Mr Sartaj Aziz, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Mr Kristof W. Duwaerts, Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Pakistan Office,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Scholars,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**A**s we now conclude the Conference, I wish to state that the proceedings of the past two days were extremely productive in highlighting the potentials of the Asia Pacific region which far outweigh the challenges confronting it. The South Asian countries, in particular can learn from Asia Pacific best practices in regional cooperation. There is a need to take advantage of the opportunities the emerging order in the Asia Pacific would be offering to our region.

The Conference has been a very successful endeavour. In total 15 papers and presentations were made by five eminent Pakistani scholars, nine foreign scholars, one each from China, India, Japan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and the United States, including two special key notes by Mr Zhao Lijian, the Chargé D'affaires, Embassy of People's Republic of China in Islamabad, Pakistan; and H.E the High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan Ms Margaret Adamson.

I wish to thank all the participants who attended the Conference for their valuable contribution and gracious presence. I thank the Hanns Seidel Foundation for making the Conference possible. The chief guests at the inaugural and the concluding sessions, the chairpersons of various sessions and the scholars who presented their papers were the real contributors to all that has been achieved. As a result of their contributions, we have been able to understand the emerging security order in the Asia Pacific and its possible implications for South Asia, and formulate concrete recommendations.

I thank you all.■

## **Conference Recommendations**

**I**n the light of the views expressed by the eminent Conference participants, the following recommendations were put forth.

### **Overview**

Three strategic mistakes were made after the turn of the century based on myopic understanding of security: 1) The United States (U.S.) coalition went to Iraq in a war which had nothing to do with the War against Terrorism; 2) efforts to integrate India into the largest non-proliferation regime by violating NPT's rules; 3) the currently unfolding conflicting policies of the U.S. led coalition's military strikes against the Islamic State (IS), Iran and Russia's air strikes and fight against the IS, while simultaneously supporting moderate Syrian opposition groups in their war against the Bashar al-Assad regime, and Iran and Russia's support to his regime against the moderate opposition groups, and Russia not recognising the moderate opposition fighting against al-Assad.

Discriminatory and shortsighted policies of the U.S. and other countries for their perceived economic and strategic gains are undermining peace, not only in the South Asian region, but the world at large. In this scenario, while Pakistan needs to continue its pragmatic policy of neutrality, it should become part of any reconciliatory process to help resolve contentious regional issues through dialogue, whenever such a process starts.

In the past three decades, the Asia Pacific has emerged as the second, if not, the largest engine of global economic growth. It is home to three of the four largest economies in the world. Its increasing trade figures are indicative of the extent of interdependence between the economies of China and other Asia Pacific countries which is the foundation of the phenomenal prosperity the region has achieved.

### **China's Role in Asia Pacific and South Asia**

The emergence of China is creating new hope in the Asia Pacific region. Its policies will stabilise rather than destabilise the world order. China's answer to the Asia 'pivot' of the U.S. is the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative, which involves connectivity of land and sea routes, trade and, most significantly, of minds. It is a bridge of unprecedented nature and magnitude. The Indo Pacific region and South Asia require stability through balance which China is now in a position to provide and is offering.

Initiatives like the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) have the potential to make Pakistan the centre of the emerging economic hub of the world. CPEC is a 15-year project and is a destiny changer for the region. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that, however laudable, regional projects such as the MSR and the OBOR, will require region-wide cooperation, confidence and trust. Disputes will militate against these projects.

Pakistan needs to focus on the completion of CPEC and meet project deadlines. Both Pakistan and China should enhance interaction with other regional countries to win their support for CPEC.

The China-Pakistan friendship is built on a solid foundation and needs to be consolidated through the younger generation. Influenced by Western media, many young Pakistanis and Chinese have little understanding about each other's country. Therefore, both sides in the future should pay attention to enhancing the people-to-people exchange among the younger generation.

### **India's Role in Asia Pacific and South Asia**

For a long time, the Asia Pacific and South Asia had remained largely insulated in terms of security dynamics. After the end of the Cold War, India's entry into the Asia Pacific region and its institutions broke down this insulation. Due to the rise of the Indo Pacific idea and China's unease, India is attempting to prevent China's presence in the Indian Ocean. However, the main battle will be between two major regional projects such as the Maritime Silk Road and U.S. 'Pivot' to Asia. The result of this contest will have important ramifications for South Asian countries. Hence, there is a need for cooperation between project management groups, ministerial meetings and exchange of regular delegations between South Asian neighbours. In this evolving scenario where India's influence on the world stage is growing, Pakistan should focus on increasing its regional influence by developing good relations with all major powers and regional Muslim and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

### **Pakistan's Role in Asia Pacific and South Asia**

Pakistan's geographic location gives it a central position in the regional geopolitics of South and Central Asia. A stable and strong Pakistan can lead to a stable South Asia which means rise of new powers in the Indo Pacific region which in turn can create a favourable balance of power and establish durable peace and prosperity. Therefore, to become more relevant in Asia

Pacific politics, Pakistan should focus on its economic development, widen its strategic outreach and expand its relative naval power.

Given the assertive Indian policies under Modi, Pakistan is banking on the U.S. to help reignite bilateral talks so that Pakistan and India can resolve their disputes and work together to achieve South Asian integration which can provide an opportunity for socioeconomic development in accordance with the themes of CPEC, IP, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor. The permanent membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) seems for Pakistan to be one of the few available post-Afghan war opportunities of regional cooperation and stability, as an alternative to the stalled process of South Asian integration.

However, Pakistan's strategic focus on other issues should not result in discontinuance of its official policies on Kashmir. To achieve sustainable peace and stability in South Asia and maintaining credible strategic deterrence, efforts should be made to resolve the Kashmir dispute through a sustained dialogue in the light of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan's struggle to balance the power against Indian nukes remains a crucial factor in ensuring peace and stability in the region. A post-nuclear era has proven that nuclear parity with India has been a crucially stabilising factor in the region. Therefore, the U.S. needs to balance its relationship with India and Pakistan by offering a nuclear deal to Pakistan on the same terms and conditions as signed with India.

The Asia Pacific region can provide new markets for Pakistani goods and can balance the dependency of Pakistan's economy on Western markets. The government should encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from the Asia Pacific states by reviving its traditional relations with Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Given its experience in counterterrorism, Pakistan should support the ASEAN states in combating terrorism and providing necessary information, and play an active role in the solution of disputes in South China Sea.

Policy-makers in Pakistan should avoid applying zero-sum game analyses to the Indo-American-Pakistani triangular relationship; and refrain from undertaking any abrupt initiatives aimed at redressing apparent, but usually short-lived, imbalances of power. While the gains from such initiatives may seem beneficial in the short run, but from a longer perspective, they may also 'poison the well' with regard to Islamabad's relations with the United States and other powers.

## **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and its Role in Asia Pacific**

Given its increasing growth rates, an expanding middle class and rising power of civil society and media, South Asia is rapidly becoming integral to the larger Asia Pacific region. SAARC member states need to deliberate and evolve shared understanding and strategies to resolve their political differences and disputes to enable them to become politically and economically more integrated so that they can contribute to the future security architecture of Asia Pacific. In this context, Pakistan should play a leading role in strengthening SAARC. Pakistan should also convince SAARC countries to support China's permanent membership of the organization.

## **New Security Dynamics**

One of the essential features for collective peace and security in Asia Pacific is that all countries of the region should be open about their defence policies, and transparent in their long-term strategic intentions. This approach will build trust, minimise any chance for miscalculation, and help in resolving regional disputes peacefully.

In considering a co-operative security order for the future, regional countries should also take into account non-traditional security threats like food security, availability of water, climate change, energy security, international health epidemics and natural disasters.

As agreed at the Sydney Regional Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in June 2015, in which Pakistan was represented, regional countries should take practical steps to build resilience at national levels by working together in countering violence and extremism.

The specific interests and issues affecting different regions of the world have shown that global multilateral institutions need to be strengthened through regional arrangements. More intensive efforts are needed if neighbouring countries are to reap the mutual advantage of regional economic integration. They should help each other in times of natural disaster and to combat transnational crime. They should also collectively combat terrorism and commit to global good governance.

The future prosperity and the safety of the region will depend on maritime security and marine resource protection. There is a need to establish a Maritime Architecture of Regional Countries where they can work together and build links for better understanding and creating trust.

A co-operative security order for the Asia Pacific region must be founded on the basis of consultation and cooperation. To build a strategic

culture, regional countries need to overcome contemporary and future challenges. While, at times, consultation might not resolve problems, it does make the search for solutions easier and diminishes the risk of miscommunication and miscalculation.■

## **PART II**

### **Overview of Emerging Security Order in Asia Pacific**

- Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture of Asia Pacific
- The South China Sea in ASEAN-U.S.-China Relations



# **Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture of Asia Pacific**

## *A Commentary*

**Ambassador (retd.) Shamshad Ahmad\***

### **Introduction**

**R**egional security environment in Asia Pacific is only an extension of the global security paradigm with all its ramifications for the world at large. And the world at large today is marked by challenges of the strategic power game involving the nuclear security order, oil politics and economic adventurism, military occupations, invasions in the name of self-defence, human tragedies, and a culture of religion-based extremism and violence.

### **A Divided World Disorder**

Beginning in late 1989, states, peoples and nations were suddenly freed from the constraining influence of the two ‘blocs’ headed by the United States and the Soviet Union. This was an extraordinary situation which not only provided the world an opportunity to revert to the concept of collective security and acceptance of the United Nations as an instrument of the new international order, but also engendered hopes that peace would no longer remain hostage to antagonistic heavily militarised blocs. The emergent reality, however, was totally different.

If ‘containment’ was the key word to describe international diplomacy during the Twentieth Century, ‘Asian Pivot’ in the name of ‘peace and security’ is its substitute during the present one. The weird unipolarity, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, has been unleashing its own security challenges for the entire world community, including South Asia. The concept of global security has changed from its Cold War context only to be replaced by security arrangements at regional and sub-regional levels (e.g. North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], Euro-defence, Balkans, Mediterranean security, ASEAN Regional Forum [ARF] etc.).

Interestingly, NATO, in its new role today, not only stands out as a veritable remnant of the Cold War, but also serves as a convenient military bandwagon to build coalitions that are being used unabashedly to change regimes and to wage wars in the name of peace and security ( Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, for example). In Iraq too, some NATO members were part

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\* The author is a former Ambassador and Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

of the Mission Enduring Freedom. To further complicate the situation, nuclear arsenals now largely shape the global security architecture. Nuclear weapons have been proliferating vertically as well as laterally to give the erstwhile imperial powers a sense of ‘destiny’ and ‘invincibility’.

Old practitioners of power politics seem to dominate the global political scene, stamping out the ‘idealism’ of the United Nations, which today is no more than an instrument for these strategic players to be used for their own self-serving ends. To them, the nuclear question has traditionally been uni-dimensional, focusing on non-proliferation only as a concept which they have ingeniously adapted to their own intents and purposes. Symptom, not the disease, is their problem.

No wonder, the world today witnesses an erosion of arms control and disarmament measures, reversal of non-proliferation policies of the key powers, violation of treaty obligations and weakening of UN disarmament institutions. Lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament and advocacy by these few powerful states of doctrines such as pre-emption, development and deployment of new war-fighting nuclear weapons and destabilising systems like the Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) or Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) are now perpetrating tensions at the regional and global levels.

Also, continuation of long-outstanding regional disputes, emergence of new forms of conflicts, which emanate from power asymmetries, as well as economic and social disparities and injustices, continue to obstruct the objective of equal security for all. The events of the last decade or so representing a critical threshold in the world’s new strategic matrix have immeasurably shaken the international system which is no longer governed by the rule of law or universally acknowledged norms. Countries today find that they have to fend for themselves in a local or regional and quite often hostile environment.

In this dreary backdrop, the emerging security scenario in Asia Pacific looks like re-enactment of the Cold War with the concept of collective security and acceptance of moral and legal imperatives enshrined in the UN Charter no longer remaining the basis of the global security order. Already, there has been unprecedented erosion in the role, authority and credibility of the UN which is no longer the sole meaningful arbiter on issues of global peace and security. What aggravates this bleak scenario is the growing inability of the international community to respond to these challenges with unity of purpose.

There is no global consensus on major peace and security issues or on how to address them. Historical grievances and outstanding disputes remain unaddressed. Palestine is tired and has given up. Kashmir is disillusioned and feels betrayed. Iraq is still burning. Afghanistan has yet to breathe

peace. Libya remains mired in chaos and lawlessness. Iran is on parole, and Syria is in the line of fire.

### **Asia Pacific and South Asia Security: Is There or Isn't There?**

Yes, the Cold War is long over, but Cold Warriors are still out there in the drivers' seat. A power-led and oil & gas-driven Great Game is already on with serious ramifications for global peace and security and concomitant tensions and instability in what we call the Asia Pacific regions. While countries and nations in the West have been able to move away from the bitter antagonisms of the past to embrace peace, Asia's major regions continue to be a global hotspot.

Major sources of tensions and conflicts in these regions include the prospect of potential turmoil in post-2014 Afghanistan, ongoing power-play in Central Asia, the Indo-U.S. military and nuclear nexus with its destabilising effect on the prospects of peace in South Asia, unabated tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the volatile situation across the Strait of Taiwan and challenges of triangular relations among Japan, the U.S. and China, or even in an expanded regional context, pentagonal relations among these three powers, plus Russia and India.

Discriminatory and short-sighted policies for narrow gains giving country-specific preferential access to nuclear technology are further undermining the prospects of peace and security. If the region's turbulent political history had any lessons, the world's engagement in this nuclearised area should have been aimed at promoting strategic balance rather than disturbing it. Policy-makers in world's major capitals should have been eschewing discriminatory policies in dealing with the India-Pakistan nuclear equation, the only one in the world that grew up in history totally unrelated to the Cold War. But this never happened.

Instead, in 2005, the U.S. signed a long-term multi-billion dollar military pact with India and then in 2008, it entered into a country-specific discriminatory nuclear deal introducing an ominous dimension to the already unstable security environment of this vast region. What this territory needs is not the induction of new destructive weapons and lethal technologies, but the promotion of peace, stability and economic development. Any measures that contribute to lowering of nuclear threshold and fueling of an unnecessary arms race between the two nuclear-armed neighbours are no service to the people here.

South Asia needs stability through balance not asymmetry of power. Unless the U.S. revisits its iniquitous nuclear deal with India and matches it with a similar arrangement with Pakistan, the current Indo-U.S. nuclear nexus will continue to undermine the cause of peace and stability.

Obviously, in the face of India's fast developing capabilities, including its dangerous weapon-inductions, aggressive doctrines and devious nuclear cooperation arrangements, equally dangerous options in response become inevitable.

Pakistan remains opposed to a nuclear and conventional arms race in South Asia and continues to pursue the establishment of a strategic restraint regime with India involving three interlocking elements: conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint, and conventional balance. India, however, remains averse to these proposals and continues to cite extra-regional concerns while its force potential remains overwhelmingly Pakistan-specific.

### **Where Does China Stand?**

Meanwhile, the security order in this part of the globe, though still dominated by the U.S., is gradually being balanced by the rapid rise of China which is using its phenomenal economic, political and military influence as a major factor of regional and global stability. Whatever the global balance of power now entails, China it seems is emerging as the only ray of hope for the Asia Pacific regions. It is already pursuing a policy of peaceful co-existence with all including the U.S., Russia and India which shows its interest in stabilising rather than destabilising the world order.

China has also been seeking to build security dialogue and co-operative mechanisms in the Asia Pacific region. It is pursuing an engagement policy in multilateral frameworks which it claims will remove the apprehensions of other powers as well as its neighbouring countries and regions. But China also has its own regional and global concerns in terms of the challenges resulting from the U.S.-led new unipolarity or its Asian-Pivot-led counterforce arrangements around its borders. No wonder, in recent years, there has been a conspicuous development of closeness between China and Russia in reaction to what they jointly perceive as growing U.S. strategic outreach in their backyard.

They, especially, share a common interest in curbing Washington's influence in strategically important and resource-rich Central Asia. Interestingly, China's answer to America's Asian Pivot is not in military terms. It is in terms of the revival of its traditional ancient Silk Route that it now calls One Belt One Road, a concept involving 'connectivity' as a means of socioeconomic growth in Asia, in its own version of America's post-World War II Marshall Plan. But it is more than the Marshall Plan. It does not involve any 'post-war reconstruction or rehabilitation'.

China's Belt and Road connectivity with multidimensional benefits will run through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, connecting the

vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and developed European economic circle at the other, and encompassing countries with huge potential for economic development. If anything, this is China's answer, not in military terms but in socioeconomic terms, to America's 'Pivot'. At an estimated cost of \$140 billion, this project will in fact link, deepen the multidimensional connectivity between East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, Europe and Africa, putting them all on the cusp of an economic transformation.

## **Conclusion**

The U.S. should consider joining China in changing the destiny of the world in fulfillment of the vision of its own Eighteenth Century visionary philosopher Thomas Paine who in his common sense had visualised the United States as a power big enough 'to begin the world all over again,' and said:

We must not mortgage our children's future to pay for the mistakes of today.■

# The South China Sea in ASEAN-U.S.-China Relations

Bunn Nagara\*

## Introduction

Relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the United States (U.S.) and China draw upon, and pertain to, the South China Sea and beyond, as do their implications and consequences. However, while much in popular imagination tends to be influenced by topical news reports of the day, the realities are more multifaceted. Any meaningful analysis of the issues demands a comprehensive and sophisticated approach to the multitude of related themes. ASEAN, the U.S. and China represent a major composite or set of issues. Their mutual and reciprocal relations, at several levels simultaneously, are even more complex and decisive for each of them and for others. That is true for other countries and regions besides these three. To make sense of the issues, it would help to look at the following ten themes:

1. Regional history
2. Present situation
3. Popular perceptions
4. Decoding misperceptions
5. Abiding realities
6. Future promise
7. Possible pitfalls
8. Current exigencies
9. Likely developments
10. Preferred options.

## Regional History

The South China Sea, South-East Asia as a region, and East Asia as a whole have had trade as their main focus for centuries. That is likely to continue without interruption or serious diversion by occasional tiffs and spats between neighbours over disputed claims to territory. Such friction has routinely involved, and will continue to involve, typically littoral nation states in a largely archipelagic region. However, while skirmishes at sea have occurred, they are rare and have yet to develop into full-scale war that all parties want to avoid.

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For centuries also, the undisputed dominant power in the region had been Imperial China. As Selden (2009) and others suggest, this period saw less conflict across the region than later with the coming of the European colonial powers. It may well be that there was less competition for territories and ‘overseas possessions’ then, with what competition there was between lesser powers with more modest capabilities, other than China.

Throughout the period of the China-centric tributary system, regional conflict between neighbouring states was contained or deterred. Such conflict was often cross-border infractions or settling of scores up to and including spasms of imperialistic ambition. Burmese designs on Siam, and Siamese designs on the Malay states to the south, had been curtailed or obstructed by the tributary system. It follows that in the absence of such a system today, similar issues can be more fraught and less manageable.

Current disputed claims to maritime territory by several littoral or archipelagic states in the region are a relatively recent development, notwithstanding assertions by China in particular that its claims are historical in nature. Recent claims said to be based on historical assertions or assumptions, such as maps, do not in themselves make the claims historical. Other relatively recent (largely post-1945) developments include U.S. military predominance and its security treaties or alliances with a few countries in South East Asia.

Among nation states in the region, another relatively recent development particularly in the second half of the Twentieth Century is regional organisations comprising individual sovereign states. These include the Association of South East Asia (ASA); South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO); Malaya-Philippines-Indonesia (MAPHILINDO); and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Each essentially succeeded the previous one until ASEAN remains to this day.

In the larger East Asia – North-East Asia and South-East Asia combined – there were almost a dozen proposals for a regional organisation comprising nation states of East Asia. These include the East Asia Economic Grouping (EAEG) proposed by Malaysia; the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) proposed by ASEAN at Singapore’s suggestion as an alternative to the EAEG; and ASEAN Plus Three (APT) whose prime mover was South Korea. All three comprised the ten countries of ASEAN and China, Japan and South Korea. These were in addition to other regional organisations that were proposed or established by countries in East Asia.

## **Present Situation**

What is often called ‘the rise of China’ today is only its re-emergence as a regional power tending towards global status. As before this is centred on economic relations, with investment added to trade. The stakes for all regional players are now higher than ever before, and are still rising. Notwithstanding occasional dips in economic growth performance, East Asia overall remains the most economically vibrant region in the world.

Despite official denials, the U.S. response to China’s rise has been its ‘pivot’ to the Asia Pacific that includes South East Asia. The move has been rebranded a ‘rebalancing’, to effect a more positive spin as a due corrective to a presumed imbalance. Despite further denials, the rebalancing is largely military in nature. However, the move is not without a significant non-military component, of which the most prominent feature is the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) designed as a counterpoint to a seemingly inexorably rising China.

Meanwhile, disputes over the Spratly Island group for example have made news headlines again, most pointedly the dispute between the Philippines and China. The one between Vietnam and China is somewhat less pronounced, and those between Brunei and China, and Malaysia and China, still less so. At the same time, China is soliciting for regional support from, and participation by, countries in South East Asia for its ambitious Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and One Belt One Road (OBOR) (PRC 2015) plans. These are grand schemes that require the participation, confidence and trust of countries in the region to succeed.

ASEAN itself is on the road to its own reinvigoration through consolidation in establishing a cohesive ASEAN Community. This is to be achieved internally through a ‘people-centred ASEAN’, (ASEAN Secretariat 2011) building on a ‘people-oriented ASEAN’ and externally through ‘ASEAN centrality’ or heightened regional engagements. ASEAN has grown from being just an organisation exclusively comprising member nations to a regional driver of groupings beyond its immediate membership, such as the 13-member APT, the 18-member East Asia Summit (EAS) and the 27-member ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

## **Popular Perceptions**

It is nearly always presumed that China is seriously contending with the United States to be the pre-eminent power in South East Asia and the wider East Asia. This presumption rests on the assumption that China is able, willing and anxious to do so. This appears to overlook two key realities: one, that China is already a major power in East Asia, while the United

States only has interests *in* the region without being a country *of* the region; two, that South East Asia and ASEAN are both averse to the dominance of any power from within or outside the region as a substitute for the *status quo*.

Some observers like Mearsheimer (2014) even argue that China's rise cannot be peaceful, and that conflict with the U.S. is inevitable. Such pessimism is said to derive from hardcore realism of the neo-realist school, with apparently little basis beyond that theoretical foundation and a general pessimism. With few if any underpinnings in fact, much of the argument would seem to range between speculation and rhetoric laced with hunches and preconceptions. They may, however, encourage self-fulfilling prophecies.

Some would argue that China's challenge to U.S. military supremacy in and around the South China Sea has begun. Such arguments continue to be rejected by China as well as by analysts who combine academic with policy experience like Joseph Nye (Callahan 2015). The region is rife with signs and semblances of just about anything anyone wishes to interpret them to be. Given the rich nuances so integral to the region, the prospect of interpreting anything and misinterpreting everything approaches the infinite.

Nonetheless, the momentum created by these arguments has lately cast the South China Sea area as the region's most dangerous flashpoint. The most evident consequences have been a greater apparent U.S. resolve to 'rebalance' the region, higher expectations of China to top that, more sensationalist press coverage, more colourful academic banter, and higher insurance premiums for shipping. Each of these may serve some special interest or other, but serious analysis must look beyond them to something more palpable and substantive.

## **Decoding Misperceptions**

The fact remains that China is unable to challenge the United States militarily, now or in the foreseeable future, even if it wanted to. Despite occasional bouts of assertiveness in the South China Sea, China has shown no sign of wanting to mount such a challenge in the Pacific theatre. Its military forces remain relatively underdeveloped technologically and continue to undergo demobilisation to focus on technological capacity. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is still heavily biased as a land-based army as China's forces have been for millennia, although the PLA Navy (PLAN) continues to modernise for a region where strategic considerations are largely naval in nature.

In any international accounting of military assets, the PLA remains over-manned and under-equipped given a country of China's size and global significance. Both the PLA and the PLAN can then be expected to grow further. What concerns other countries in the region is not the size or prowess of the PLA and PLAN but their posture. Doctrine and policy determine posture and intent, which can be quite independent of capacity or prowess. China's assertiveness in the region's waters has sent mixed signals to other countries, hampering further cooperation in Beijing's plans for pan-regional development.

The general cynicism of the neo-realist school can be quite unrealistic. China today depends more than any other country on maintaining the peaceful and free passage of shipping in the region. Owing to sheer volume, its stake is highest in ensuring consistently uninterrupted supplies of vital commodities like oil and the export of manufactured goods. Without demonstrable assurance that such vital trade links will be safe, remain and even grow, China's rise itself may not be sustainable. More than any other country, China depends on a safe and peaceful region if only to safeguard its cargo.

If current U.S. military predominance is a guarantor of regional security, China is its biggest beneficiary. Although it may not look like that when media reports focus on tiffs and spats over rival territorial claims, that situation remains a basic reality. Thus more than anything else, China may be accused of being the biggest free rider in the regional order. However, the current language of regional strategic considerations is weighted more to rivalry between the two big countries rather than aspects of complementarity or cooperation. Depending on circumstances, the tone of the language may change.

Up to about a decade ago, besides the Korean Peninsula, the three major potential flashpoints in East Asia were the Taiwan Straits, the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. Joint action by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand checked piracy in the Straits of Malacca. After two terms of the Kuomintang's President Ma Ying-jeou in Taiwan, tension across the Taiwan Straits as a measure of tension between Beijing and Taipei subsided. Although China's assertiveness in the South China Sea has raised tensions, no party to the territorial disputes expects any conflict there to erupt by design.

Occasionally, prickly rhetoric and provocative actions at sea between Beijing and Manila do add to a sense of impending crisis. But paradoxically, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) trade figures show that among all the ten

ASEAN countries<sup>1</sup>, the Philippines has been the biggest beneficiary of China's rise. The data suggests that complementary interests achieved through cooperation can be at least as important as sterile and bitter rhetoric. If there are to be self-fulfilling prophecies, it should serve the interests of all parties to make them positive rather than negative. Nonetheless, international law should be observed by all equally, with no party resorting to any provocative act.

### **Abiding Realities**

Regardless of preference, ideology or spin, however real or perceived, there are abiding realities pertaining to the South China Sea that deserve to be acknowledged. Among the first is that neither China nor the United States wants war with the other over some patches of disputed maritime territory. Another reality is that all the countries in East Asia do not seek any kind of physical conflict in the region, whatever the cause. All are fully aware that any level of conflict would disadvantage every party without benefitting any. Plans for growth and development are predicated on peaceful and productive relations.

As sovereign nations that had gained independence from their colonial masters, countries in East Asia are intent on development. National development implies economic, social and other aspects of national well-being such that it is conceivable only with peaceable relations among states. Decades of a bruising Pacific War occasioned by the ambitions of Imperial Japan, followed by the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the U.S. bombardment of Indochina and then civil war in Cambodia, have effectively ‘inoculated’ countries in the region against any wanton lurch towards war. The same applies to any extra-territorial conflict that can escalate into full-scale war.

Yet another set of realities pertains to economics, or more specifically, economic relations among states. China-U.S. relations or ‘G2’, now the most important bilateral relationship in the world, is largely economic in nature. It is not only that their economies are deeply intertwined and are increasingly so, but they are also increasingly *interdependent*. To cite just one example, China owns some \$1.157 trillion of U.S. debt (Amadeo 2016). Never before in history have two major countries’ economies been so inextricably linked.

The fact that China has become the largest foreign owner of U.S. debt has caused much speculation about the strategic leverage that Beijing is thought

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Note: As of 9 May 2016, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam; with Papua New Guinea as Observer.

to hold over Washington. However, any leverage at all is limited in the global and their complex national financial systems. China has also been selling off parts of its U.S. debt, following a peak in November 2013. Both countries are fully aware that their mutual economic interdependence is advantageous to the growth of their economies. Although close economic ties do not fully guarantee peaceful relations, the bottom line is still that the United States and China are more likely to want to work together than choose otherwise.

The objectives of both China and the United States are also strikingly similar in East Asia, and specifically in the South China Sea. Strategically, both want freedom of navigation for shipping and overflights, with the requisite peace and security to ensure the continued supply of goods and the services it entails. China's rise today is nothing if not about economic growth, and that growth requires uninterrupted imports of energy and raw materials with continued exports of manufactured goods. The United States no less requires the continuance of trade in the markets of East Asia, which is still the most economically vibrant region in the world.

To help seal these constructive ends, ASEAN is dedicated to maintaining peace, prosperity and stability in the wider East Asia. As an organisation of South East Asia, ASEAN has long transcended its confines to impact positively on East Asia and the Asia Pacific. It helms the ARF which spans these meta-regions, even as it focuses on developing ASEAN centrality. In consisting of smaller nations in a region impacted by major world powers, ASEAN is virtually defined by the imperative of keeping the regional peace for individual and collective interests. Major powers like China and the United States have worked well with ASEAN and there is every indication that they will continue to do so.

## **Future Promise**

Although China's economic growth has dipped, it remains a global growth leader. Recent and current growth figures have dropped relative to the very high levels in the preceding decades, not to the growth levels in other countries. The Chinese economy remains a paragon for much of the world, in particular the developing world. Its appetite for major infrastructure projects abroad is undiminished. With half of China's provinces still enjoying improved growth, the picture is mixed at the local level (Bloomberg News 2016): while Liaoning is in recession, Chongqing, Tibet and Guizhou still have double-digit growth.

With its optimism in the future undeterred, China's ambitious international projects include the Silk Road Economic Belt linking Xi'an through Central Asia and Europe to Rotterdam, the Maritime Silk Road

linking Fuzhou through South East Asia, South Asia, Africa and Europe to Venice, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) linking Kashgar to Gwadar in Pakistan (Stratfor 2016). These strategic trade routes can operate separately, but together they work to connect China to Europe and continents in between. While the CPEC serves only China and Pakistan, it does so critically for both countries in promoting development for Pakistan and China's access to the Arabian Sea – and more broadly, the Indian Ocean.

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) megaproject that incorporates these new or revived trade routes and their accompanying infrastructure programmes constitutes the most ambitious transcontinental scheme in a very long time. It may have some strategic implications, but unlike military-led defence mechanisms it is not seen in zero-sum terms. As an inclusive 'plus' proposal it requires the participation of various countries. The relevant countries should then become actively involved in helping shape and define these routes. A shared, collective venture such as OBOR should respect the common interests involved to ensure that legitimate economic, strategic, environmental and other interests are well served.

The newly minted Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is expected to help finance OBOR, with both being led by China. That is only to be expected since the proposed routes impact most on China, whose economy is also best endowed to make OBOR a reality. However, full cooperation and participation of other countries in the regions spanned by the routes are essential. All interested parties need to ensure that the physical success of OBOR does not produce such problems as environmental degradation. Although different countries may benefit to different degrees, none should have to compromise by bearing any unacceptable cost.

After Britain joined the AIIB as an early co-founding member, other countries in Europe as well as Australia followed. Since Britain is the closest strategic ally of the United States, its decision seemed to make a difference. However, U.S. pressure on other countries to reject the AIIB resulted only in Canada and Japan as the only other significant economies holding out. Any petty apprehension that the AIIB would become an unwelcome competitor to the World Bank, International Monetary Fund or Asian Development Bank was overdone if not misplaced. Any new source of funding for enlarged transcontinental infrastructure that can kick-start the global economy needs to be welcomed.

Clearly, the G2 remains the most important bilateral relationship for now and the foreseeable future. A healthy G2 would impact positively on all countries, and an unhealthy G2 would impact negatively on all parties in the global system. A common objective should be to cultivate a healthy G2,

or at least avoid an unhealthy state of affairs. However, efforts were made in Washington to dissuade international participation in the AIIB (Koo 2016). This created dissension in the ranks, such as Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation that felt left out following Japan's snub of the AIIB. The countries that acceded to the bank understood that the best way to ensure it performed creditably was to be on its board as a co-founding member.

### **Possible Pitfalls**

Despite some bright spots, there are also dark clouds that may be gathering pace. China having become a major player on the global economic stage means that it can also be a cause of transnational economic contagion. There are essentially five primary issues that need to be faced:

- China's slowdown is real and significant: the loss of demand and productivity has lately been compounded by rising unemployment; its economic doldrums are still manageable but are nonetheless a cause for concern.
- The contagion has begun and may grow more serious; already, China's suppliers abroad (other than in the energy sector) have been impacted and are bracing for worse times.
- There is uncertainty over how long this slowdown will last: there is anxiety that this will drag on indefinitely, even (or at least) until China's ageing population kicks in considerably, possibly rendering recovery inadequate.
- The lack of confidence in knowing what the answer is appears very palpable; the solution seems unidentified, elusive, distant or unavailable, as none seems to be in evidence so far.
- Although some parts of China may already be in recession technically (with two or more consecutive quarters of negative growth), other parts may still be growing well enough for the Central Government to cushion the contraction. However, the negative impact from specific markets in the areas adversely affected may be enough to exert untoward effects abroad.

Besides economics, the regional strategic picture also contains issues of concern. Posturing by the United States and China in the South China Sea, with the Philippines coming in between, does not encourage confidence in regional security and stability. There is no clarity that conflict will break out over the disputed maritime territories, nor any certainty that it will not, such that the prevailing uncertainties are perhaps the greatest cause for concern. Too many variables are at play to allow the familiar confidence

that had served as the basis for the peace and prosperity of past decades to remain.

China has long been expected to prioritise economic growth over muddying the waters, but in recent years its assertiveness in the South China Sea has given reason for pause. Other claimant states in the disputed areas such as Vietnam and the Philippines have also been regarded as being sensible enough not to provoke China, but they have lately come to consider themselves as having been provoked by China. The United States has also been regarded as too serious a major player to want to rock the boat, but its recent actions suggest otherwise. Much depends on the extent to which China and the United States are prepared to nudge each other in the South China Sea before conflict or an accident with misunderstanding erupts.

The strategic picture and the economic circumstances are not unrelated. In more positive times, economic bounties or opportunities can encourage closer cooperation and better relations – as they often do. Conversely, in tougher times annoyances and ill will between rivals can contribute to more pessimistic perceptions and less generous engagements – or worse. The current situation, particularly in relation to the South China Sea, tends towards the latter. It makes for a higher risk of disputes where differences exist, and a greater prospect of conflict where disputes persist.

## **Current Exigencies**

Among the determining factors is the U.S. security treaty with the Philippines and the implications arising from it. A secondary factor is improving ties between the United States and Vietnam. Nationalists in the Philippines presume that the security treaty covers threats or perceived threats to Philippines claims to disputed territories in the South China Sea, but the record of U.S. concern so far is vague. Would the U.S. jeopardise its economic interests in China by championing Philippines claims? How far does the treaty require the United States to come to the aid of the Philippines in the event of conflict or potential conflict, even if Manila had been the provocative party? Does it matter, and if so how much, which country is the protagonist and which the antagonist?

An indicator of the complexity of the issues is the fact that in the Spratly Islands set of disputes for example, multiple claimant states are involved: Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Taiwan and the Philippines are treaty allies of the United States, Brunei and Malaysia are friendly countries, Vietnam is improving ties with Washington, and China is in the vital G2 relationship. Which ‘side’ should

U.S. action choose to come down on? Officially, the U.S. position is not to take sides, although some disputing countries may disagree.

The primary U.S. interest is freedom of navigation of vessels in the region, particularly for its own. This includes both civilian or commercial vessels as well as its navy ships. However, the main concern of the disputing countries is sovereignty in the disputed areas, so that issues such as freedom of navigation for them would follow from the primary concern of sovereignty. Individual countries may or may not (most of them will) allow freedom of navigation for innocent passage of non-hostile foreign vessels, but this along with general security provisions are corollaries of sovereignty. Thus, any particular claimant state's case for sovereignty does not impinge on the primary U.S. concern if freedom of navigation is assured.

A potentially significant nuance is the distinction between sovereignty and ownership of the disputed territories. To the extent that they are different, sovereignty would seem to pertain to national jurisdiction, whereas ownership relates to legal possession. However, any distinction between them may be relative, limited or contrived, such as when loopholes in the law are exploited or when the issue is subjected to the machinations of the state. An example came with the Japanese government's purchase of three of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands from a private Japanese citizen in 2012. That incident set off the most serious post-war dispute between China and Japan, one that still rankles today.

Japan's action, together with the U.S. announcement of its military-led 'pivot' to the Asia Pacific, triggered an unhealthy series of reciprocal reactions in South East Asia. China stepped up its island-building and land reclamation projects followed by responses by the other claimant states, including the Philippines case against China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at the Hague. China's moves are unprecedented in scale but not in type; at least some of the other claimant states have done the same things, but none has done any of them to the same degree. Ultimately, the reciprocal nature of the actions and reactions added only to regional tensions and suspicions.

In such an inhospitable climate, China's call for joint exploration and development of the disputed areas has not been answered. Although such a call may sound reasonable and diplomatic, in practice it only papers over the problems without addressing any of the contentious issues. ASEAN claimant states contend that for any country to agree to joint exploration or development with another country already – in legal terms – concedes that the other country has at least as much of a right to stake its claim. In practical terms exploration and development also cost money, and how

exactly the costs are to be divided between the parties concerned has not even been addressed, let alone resolved.

Ironically, despite the fanfare around the announcement of the U.S. pivot/rebalancing and its function as a trigger for a chain of regional reactions including China's assertiveness and Philippines and Vietnamese responses, the policy itself may not amount to much (Defence News 2014; Navarro 2015). A sizeable component of U.S. military assets had long been deployed in the Asia Pacific, budgetary constraints may hamper any ambitious new allocations, and U.S. strategic concerns in Europe and the Arab Gulf region may also limit any difference it could have made. The policy has challenges of its own and has been criticised for being premature (Etzioni 2012), and unwarranted (Ross 2012). Not unlike the Obama administration's other pet project in the TPPA, there are doubts if the pivot would survive the current (or future) administrations.

## **Likely Developments**

Much as the Philippines has emerged as the most active claimant country in challenging China's claims in the South China Sea, that prosecutorial approach has been a hallmark of the Benigno Aquino III administration. Its successor government in the Rodrigo Duterte presidency has a markedly different approach. Although Duterte is known for a populist style that caters to nationalist sentiments, including sounding challenges to China, he is also pragmatic enough to want to seek a trade-off with China. This has marked his more recent statements: for example, he has said he would be willing to exchange disputed islands for an efficient Chinese-built train system.

Whatever the prospect or the details of such soundings, they nonetheless indicate a Filipino willingness to negotiate with China. In turn, China is open to negotiations with them. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently appealed to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to endorse such negotiations. As the Duterte government settles in, Manila and Beijing may together be warming towards talks to resolve their differences. A diplomatic reset between them, as a precursor to new and improved bilateral relations, is therefore likely before too long.

While any diplomatic development that can thaw frosty relations or ease tensions is only to be welcomed, that between the Philippines and China has its limits. Negotiations between them over disputed territories in the South China Sea can work only where their own claims are in dispute, in the absence of other countries' claims. In the Scarborough Shoal, the claimants are China, Taiwan and the Philippines. Since China considers Taiwan part of its territory, Beijing would see it as only a bilateral dispute

with the Philippines. Manila then need only negotiate with Beijing, unless Taipei regards itself as separate and independent enough to challenge both for its own claim. It is still not clear how an independence-inclined DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) government in Taiwan would respond.

In such situations, a common expectation is for ASEAN to help resolve the issues. However, this is one area that ASEAN is neither equipped nor willing to help resolve. First, conflicting claims in the South China Sea involve only a minority of ASEAN countries, not most of them and certainly not all. ASEAN's record in producing statements declaring a position on such disputes is poor. Second, ASEAN was neither intended nor designed to resolve disputes involving a few of its members with other countries. Third, ASEAN has been consistent in shying away from issues that are not within its scope of competence. Moreover, ASEAN already has enough work in building a three-pillared ASEAN community.

Much of the future of South East Asia also depends on the priorities and policies of the United States. Whether or not there is a 'pivot' or 'rebalancing', U.S. economic and diplomatic presence as well as its military dominance remain key factors in the region. Thus, U.S. actions and reactions in the South China Sea and adjacent areas are matters to contend with or adjust to. Now that the United States is heading for a presidential election in which no clear favourite is tipped to win, yet with considerable differences in foreign policy and military doctrine between the candidates, the U.S. factor in this region is very much an open question.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, how other countries respond to U.S. moves is also still in doubt.

The most likely outcome in South East Asia would be countries of the region and those with significant interests in it muddling through an indefinite period of managed tensions. Despite risks and challenges, serious conflict or war would be unlikely. The Philippines and China would move towards *rapprochement*, setting the tone for more congenial relations generally among rival claimant states. Existing tensions can be expected to diminish without disappearing completely. ASEAN would still take time to consolidate its community status, with major powers taking a keener interest in the region.

## **Preferred Options**

Although present circumstances in the South China Sea could be worse, they could also certainly be better. The situation had in fact been better until a few years ago, when mutual suspicions and tensions began to rise. The

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<sup>2</sup> Editor's Note: In the November 2016 elections, Republican candidate Donald Trump defeated Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton to become the 45th President of the United States.

same disputed claims to maritime territory had been there, but without the kind of uncertainties and recriminations that have since become evident. Even so, there is reason to hope for several improvements that are still not impossible. These would include:

1. Greater rule of international law on the high seas. This must take the form of consistent observance of the spirit and rule of law by all parties (countries) concerned.
2. Rule of law has to be codified formally with accession to, and ratification of, all the relevant international conventions and other instruments. This includes a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea, which China has yet to sign, and UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), which the United States has yet to ratify.
3. International democracy in relations between states. This concerns equal rights, entitlements, privileges and responsibilities for all countries regardless of size, wealth, power, age or economic or political system.
4. A full and immediate moratorium on land reclamation, island building, military fortifications and other provocative and disputed acts in and around territories subjected to rival claims.
5. Regular and frank diplomatic exchanges jointly between ASEAN, the United States and China to identify common objectives, challenges and means to ensure better regional security with mutual confidence building.
6. A more active, neutral/non-aligned role by ASEAN in regional security: while ASEAN may be limited in certain particular aspects, such as in producing a common document or stand on disputed territories, it can still be more active in such instruments as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

## **Conclusion**

The current situation is far from ideal. If the problems are allowed to fester and grow, this situation can only deteriorate. Redress becomes increasingly difficult, and there may come a point where any improvement becomes virtually impossible. There is no better time than now to start addressing the outstanding issues more seriously. All parties (countries) to the various disputes, as well as all others which happen to be in the regional neighbourhood, must know that it is in their own best interests to act concertedly in the collective regional interests that are also their ultimate national interests.

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## **Rising China and U.S. Re-engagement in Asia Pacific**

- Rising China and Regional Stability: South Asian Perspective
- Advancing Defence Cooperation in Asia Pacific and the U.S. Rebalancing Strategy: The Reality of an American-Indian ‘Strategic Partnership’
- Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo Pacific: Pakistani Perspective
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: An Opportunity for Regional Prosperity

# Rising China and Regional Stability: South Asian Perspective

## *An Essay*

Ameen Izzadeen\*

### **Introduction**

**W**hen we talk of the rise of China, one cannot help but mention Napolean Bonaparte's famous saying, 'There lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep! For when he wakes, he will move the world.' Whether Napoleon is a political prophet or another Nostradamus is not the focus of this paper. We are here to discuss the waking up of the sleeping giant and the tremors its strides are causing in world politics, especially in South Asia. This paper is in two parts – the first part explains the rise of China, and the second its impact on South Asia.

The world is an island. No region is free from events happening in another. We are economically interconnected. China's rise is too big to be ignored. Even the big powers realise that kowtowing to China is in their national interest as it has emerged as a key source of foreign investment. But they are also preoccupied with the thought, 'How do we solve a problem like China?' since its rise also poses a security threat.

In contrast, in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, China is more a solution to their economic woes than problem-laden geopolitical consequences. In short, the Republic is both a problem and a solution. To what extent is it a problem and a solution to the countries in South Asia? This is the focus of this paper – with examples from Sri Lanka, in particular and from other South Asian countries, in general.

### **Part I**

#### **Time to Wake Up**

The world order is going through yet another period of transition. The balance of power equilibrium is in the zone of uncertainty. Alliance formation is a major gamble as the American-dominated world order is being undermined by China's rise. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States emerged as the sole superpower and did what it wanted with consummate ease, especially during 1991-2003. This was evident in U.S. interventions in the former Yugoslavia, in the wars in

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Afghanistan and Iraq and its threats to bomb Pakistan back to the Stone Age.

This was also evident in Washington's use of its veto power at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The U.S., from January 1990 to December 2003, used its veto on 11 occasions, while China and Russia used theirs twice each during the same period. But since 2004, the U.S. has used its veto power on only five occasions, while China has used its veto power six times and Russia 11 times, largely against resolutions supported by the U.S (United Nations 2016). The trend since 2004 has been indicative of a challenge from Russia and China to U.S. global dominance. It can even be an early warning that the sleeping giant has awakened. Indeed, this trend demonstrated China's political will to pursue its strategic objectives, prompting the United States and its allies to work overtime to devise a 'Pivot to Asia' policy to contain China.

It is relevant to mention here the famous power formula of Ray Cline, an author on American intelligence and chief analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency. In trying to measure power, Cline devised an equation to underline that a country's political will to pursue its strategic objectives forms one of the key factors of power. Cline's equation read: Perceived Power ( $P_p$ ) =  $(C+E+M)(S+W)$ . C in this equation denotes the critical mass consisting of the size of the population and the territory, E economic capability, M military capability, S strategic purpose and W the will to pursue National Interest. With China, the most populous country in the world, making remarkable headway in the economic, scientific and military fields, no country in today's context can match it in terms of Cline's equation.

### ***Calculus of Power Politics***

However, the issue of China's rise is more complicated than Cline's equation – perhaps, like a mindboggling calculus conundrum. Take for instance, the huge show of force China staged in September 2015 to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Asia. The Beijing ceremony, while seemingly promoting pacifism, showcased China's latest weapons. Though China described the display as a sign of transparency, it sent a subtle but stern message to the United States and its allies in the Asia Pacific region: We can now meet fire with fire.

In another conundrum, China vigorously pursues trade and economic partnerships with the very nations that regard China as a military threat, challenge China's claim to ownership of the disputed islands in the seas around China and are on board U.S.A.'s pivot policy. China has, of late, not only increased the tempo of its rhetoric, but also resorted to calculated

brinkmanship. The new policy is in sharp contrast to Deng Xiaoping's Peaceful Rise policy of the 1980s and 1990s – a policy which emphasised regional economic integration and multilateral confidence-building in an effort to assuage the fears of China's neighbours during its ascendance to great-power status. With its military might mounting, the Peaceful Rise policy has gradually given way to abrasive diplomacy. Thomas J. Christensen, a professor of World Politics of Peace and War at Princeton University captures this change in policy comprehensively in an article he wrote:

Beijing's new, more truculent posture is rooted in an exaggerated sense of China's rise in global power and serious domestic political insecurity. As a result, Chinese policy-makers are hypersensitive to nationalist criticism at home and more rigid -- at times even arrogant -- in response to perceived challenges abroad (Christensen 2011).

### ***Cockiness***

China's brash self-confidence is also evident in its latest defence white paper issued in May 2015, days after U.S. surveillance aircrafts were spotted in the skies over the Spratly – a series of South China Sea islands, which China controls, in spite of five other claimants, namely, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam. Demonstrating China's growing confidence in its military prowess, the policy paper warned, 'We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked' (Xiaokun 2015).

Unlike past defence white papers, this time the message was as perspicuous as it was stern — and, simply put, it says the new military strategy, which it describes as China's 'maritime security struggle' was designed to confront new security challenges, including the United States' defence buildup in the region, Japan's decision to overhaul its defence policy and 'provocative actions' by neighbouring countries in the South China Sea (Hong 2015). Claims and counterclaims over the disputed islands in the South China Sea and the East China Sea have increased tensions in the region, as seen in October 2015 when a U.S. warship sailed close to an artificial island built by China.

Given these territorial disputes in the region, countering China's military rise has become a major defence headache for countries in the region. On November 7, U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said the U.S. was not seeking a new Cold War, but is determined to oppose the rising global powers – Russia and China – to protect the U.S.-dominated

‘international order’ (RT 2015). In recent years, the United States has enhanced its military presence in the region in such a way that China feels it is being encircled by hostile forces. At the same time, China also frowns upon defence arrangements such as the now defunct Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between Australia, Japan, India and the United States and Japan’s nationalist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s legislative drive to enable the deployment of Japanese soldiers for overseas military activities (BBC 2015).

It is amid such saber rattling and the confusion of war and peace that a question looms large: Will China start a war that will spell doom to the whole world when it relies heavily on world peace to sustain its economic growth?

## **Part II**

### **China in South Asia - Impacts**

It is said that when elephants clash, ants on the ground get crushed. A case in point is the recent Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) the United States and 17 Pacific states signed with the exclusion of China. The agreement is seen as an economic counterforce to check China’s clout (Hsu 2015). But countries like Sri Lanka have to pay a big price. If the TPP comes into force, Sri Lanka’s garment exporters will not be able to compete with TPP countries which will receive duty concessions.

China’s growth has significantly changed the geopolitical balance of power. Big powers are on a scramble for allies through economic and defence cooperation - sometimes through coercion. In a reaction to China’s growing influence, the United States considered its domain, the then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2012 said the U.S. was committed to ‘a model of sustainable partnership that adds value, rather than extracts it’ from Africa. Unlike other countries, ‘America will stand up for democracy and universal human rights even when it might be easier to look the other way and keep the resources flowing’ (Smith 2012). Her remarks, probably, indicated that the hare (the U.S.) in Aesop’s Fable was losing the race to the tortoise (China).

### ***The Case of Sri Lanka***

International relations, according to political realists, are a constant struggle for power. New power games emerge when countries try to enhance their soft and hard power through alliances and economic and cultural cooperation. With China trying to increase its power, Africa, South Asia,

Central Asia and other world regions have become virtual theatres of a new and subtle cold war.

However, the presence of China in these regions has its positive effects, too. South Asia derives immense economic benefits from China's rise. But China's so-called largesse does not arise from altruistic concerns alone. China furthers its national interest through economic aid. Thus, China's presence in South Asia has created diplomatic dilemmas for some states, requiring a realignment of their relations with other powers.

In South Asia, smaller countries cannot throw in their lot with China without earning the displeasure of regional power India and world power United States. Nothing explains this dilemma more vividly than the case of Sri Lanka.

With Sri Lanka's separatist war entering a decisive phase in 2006, China extended unconditional support, selling aircrafts and weapons at concessionary terms. India desisted from providing direct military aid due to domestic political compulsion arising from its own 70 million Tamil population in Tamil Nadu. This prompted Sri Lanka to turn to China, Pakistan and Israel. While the country's resources were being eaten up by a costly war, the economy was salvaged from doom largely due to China's aid. By 2008, while the war was still raging, China overtook Japan as Sri Lanka's main donor, increasing its economic aid to Sri Lanka five-fold in 2007, the year in which President Mahinda Rajapaksa undertook a state visit to China to mark 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. It is worthwhile to cite here a relevant news report: Sri Lanka's Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona said that Sri Lanka's 'traditional donors,' namely, the United States, Canada and the European Union, had 'receded into a very distant corner,' to be replaced by countries in the east. He gave three reasons for this: the new donors are neighbours, they are rich and they conduct themselves differently. 'Asians don't go around teaching each other how to behave,' he said (Zee News 2008).

Sri Lanka's 30-year separatist war ended in May 2009 with the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. But the end of the war marked the beginning of another crisis. Accused of committing war crimes, Sri Lanka was pushed into a situation where the U.S.-led Western world threatened to take the country before an international war crimes tribunal. Again, it was China – also Pakistan and Russia – which came to the rescue of Sri Lanka at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). India, once again, yielding to domestic pressure from its Tamil Nadu state, supported the UNHRC resolution sponsored by the U.S., or, at best, abstained. But India's stand had a geopolitical objective. It was probably India's way of punishing Sri Lanka for getting close to China. That India was agitated over China's entry into Sri Lanka in a big way was

evident when New Delhi demanded that it be allowed to set up a consulate in Hambantota where China was developing a deep water port for Sri Lanka. Indian defence analysts espouse a theory that ports being developed in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka) and Chittagong (Bangladesh) are part of a plan to encircle India.

It was obvious to any observer that the move to set up a consulate office in a backward district, where India hardly had any interest, was to keep close tabs on China. Commenting on India's Foreign Minister's impending visit to Sri Lanka in November 2010, a Times of India report put it succinctly: Foreign minister S M Krishna will be in Sri Lanka over the weekend to do a couple of things — open consulates not just in Hambantota but in Jaffna as well — and send a message that with India's expanding presence in the island nation, it's not playing second fiddle to the Chinese (Baghchi 2010).

Sri Lankan leaders know that antagonising India could be an invitation to more troubles. India was at one time arming, training and financing the LTTE. It is still capable of rekindling ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka. This is perhaps why President Mahinda Rajapaksa (2005-15) personally took charge of matters relating to India. But he found it difficult to maintain the required balance vis-à-vis Sri Lanka's relations between India and China as he had to depend more and more on China's aid to keep the economy going. China unofficially became the most favoured nation. So much so that the mega projects Sri Lanka has undertaken are 'unsolicited projects' from China. This includes the \$ 1.5 billion Colombo Port City project. This project has raised eyebrows in India, for it offers Chinese ownership of the freehold of 20 hectares of land next to the Colombo Port, where Chinese submarines in recent years have made secret visits. The site is also a stone's throw away from the Indian High Commission and the U.S. embassy. The project has been put on hold until such time the issues raised by environmentalists are sorted out and fears raised by India are allayed.

Despite worries about Chinese projects in Sri Lanka, China's presence here is more acceptable to Sri Lankans than India's presence. This is because of fears that stem from India's past words and deeds. They include K.M. Panikkar's doctrine of linking India and Sri Lanka in a security tie up; and the Indira doctrine, India's assistance to the separatists and interference in Sri Lanka's internal affairs. India's assistance – such as building houses for tsunami victims, restoring rail roads and offering regular credit lines – is rarely recalled with a sense of gratitude. India's recent proposal to build a road bridge connecting the two countries – in keeping with Modi's vision of connectivity – drew much opposition in Sri Lanka with newspaper articles warning of consequences such as the spread

of disease and an influx of Indians from Tamil Nadu to create trouble in Sri Lanka.

As Sri Lanka-China ties grew stronger, Japan, the United States and India resorted to coercion and cooperation to prevent Sri Lanka from becoming another North Korea, China's maverick ally in its backyard.

Neglecting the balancing act with which almost all previous Sri Lankan governments have conducted their foreign relations, the Rajapaksa regime behaved like a desperate casino player. It placed all its chips on one suit — the red heart symbolising China, which placed no human rights conditions on aid and readily invested billions of dollars in Sri Lanka's infrastructure projects.

In the end, this policy became a case of a casino owner lending the gambler more and more to play again, lose again and borrow again. The gamble virtually made Sri Lanka a satellite state of Beijing. Raising serious alarms in the United States, Japan and India, Sri Lanka signed defence and maritime security agreement with China in September 2014 during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Colombo. It is alleged that the U.S. and India played a behind-the-scenes role in the 8 January defeat of Rajapaksa.

The new government that came to power in January 2015 renewed its relations with the West and refreshed Indo-Lanka relations. Resetting ties with the West and winning back the confidence of Sri Lanka's giant neighbour, India, have helped Sri Lanka to work out a formula to extricate itself from the war crimes tangle and win promises of close economic cooperation. As a reward for this shift in foreign policy, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, his deputy Nisha Biswal and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sri Lanka. But the shift has stoked fears that Sri Lanka is moving towards a U.S.-India-Japan axis from the China-centric foreign policy of the previous regime.

### ***The Maritime Silk Route (MSR)***

Energy-dependent China's bid to set up a maritime silk route connecting the South China Sea with the Indian Ocean countries, all the way to Africa has the potential to increase trade between the connecting states. Sri Lanka, whose ties with China go back to nearly 2,000 years, has backed the 40 billion dollar Chinese-funded MSR. So has the Maldives. India's response to China's invitation to join the MSR has so far been lukewarm, because, India feels it will undermine its 'big brother' status in the region.

Geethanjali Nataraj, a senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi sees it differently. She sees greater benefit for India if it joins the MSR:

India is located at such a prime position that it can't miss out on the opportunity to be part of MSR. Both the maritime and continental Silk Roads are going to traverse India's periphery. India could gain a lot from being an active partner to the initiative. India has expressed its desire to attract Chinese investments and being part of the MSR will certainly help with that. It would also help India to develop its northeast and further its Act East Policy of prioritizing relations with East Asia. And it could prove to be a perfect platform to enhance India's regional and bilateral cooperation. Indian investment in neighboring littoral countries could help in reducing China's sphere of influence and dominance in South Asia to some extent (Nataraj 2015).

India's 'Chinaphobia' seems to influence policy. But Sri Lanka cannot ignore China completely. The amount of money Sri Lanka needs to develop the country can come only from China. The new government understands this. That is why it has not shut down the Port City project. That is why it won't let the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, visit Sri Lanka. China has been sending high-level envoys to Sri Lanka since the new government came to office to win assurances that the billions it has invested are safe.

Sri Lanka needs China, which has stood by it in times of crisis and has all the money in the world to assist a country trying to survive after a devastating 30-year war, although Beijing, like all donor nations, has an agenda behind the aid it dishes out. But the new government in Sri Lanka finds itself in a situation where closer China ties can come only at the expense of earning the displeasure of the U.S., Japan and India. The fear is that the U.S. and its allies could again haul Sri Lanka before an international war crimes tribunal and that even economic sanctions could be slapped on the country. This is the dilemma of a small country like Sri Lanka.

India as a regional power despite political differences and territorial disputes seeks to improve economic ties with China in a mega way. India and China are partners in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and in the China-led new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Trade between India and China was a mammoth \$ 75 billion in 2014, whereas Sri Lanka-China trade was around \$ 3,227 million. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government plans to develop India's infrastructure with Chinese aid. When asked whether India was concerned about China's presence in Sri Lanka, BJP government minister and Shiv Sena Advisor Suresh Prabhu, said:

We have no problem with that. We want Sri Lanka to progress and the help can come from China, India or anywhere. But we feel China should not use its economic investment in Sri Lanka to create some geopolitical tension in the region. They must make economic development – absolutely no problem.

The underlying message is that India is at unease when Sri Lanka gets closer to China. This is because India is still guided by the Indira doctrine – a doctrine that prompted India to punish Sri Lanka – by supporting the separatists' cause – during the height of the Cold War in the 1980s when the then government sought closer ties with the U.S. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, India wasted no time in wooing the United States, promoting itself as a bulwark to check China:

It is under such strategic compulsions that the U.S.A. threw bait to India to become a bulwark against China in return for huge material benefits. The latter readily took the bait because of its own burning ambitions of becoming a regional and a world power. It is happily playing the game since the very thought of being tipped as a bulwark against a potential super power gives myth-loving and megalomaniac Brahmins an inner pleasure and boosts their mythical beliefs (Raja 2011).

This explains why there exist closer India-U.S. defence ties, why they both signed a 2008 landmark nuclear agreement, why the two countries play a strategic partnership role in Afghanistan and why the Kashmir dispute hardly gets mentioned in U.S. policy statements.

In the power game India plays, together with the United States in some cases, almost all South Asian nations are in a dilemma and have suffered.

### ***The Case of Nepal***

Take the case of Nepal, which has become another theatre of a cold war tussle between China and India. Like Sri Lanka, Nepal is trying to stand on its feet after years of civil war but unable to follow a 'free' China policy and derive maximum benefit from China's economic resurgence because of fears that it may hurt India's sentiments and pave the way for economic blockades or even lead to an Indian-sponsored regime change.

Memories of the economic blockade India imposed on landlocked Nepal in 1989-90 were revived when the latter recently faced a similar crisis on its border. For India's high-handedness, many in Nepal resented the 1950 agreement, which governs people and goods movements between

the two nations and establishes cooperation on defence and foreign policy matters.

Over the years, Nepalese governments have tried to maintain a balance between India and China, promoting the country as a land bridge between two Asian giants. Nepal, like Sri Lanka, has endorsed a one-China policy and has advocated the move to grant Beijing observer status within South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Nepal has also increased defence cooperation with China in a calculated show of defiance despite India's overwhelming influence in the Himalayan kingdom.

China believes strong ties with Nepal are a *sine qua non*, given the separatist tendencies in Tibet. In recent years, high-level visits by Chinese and Nepalese leaders to each other's capitals have further cemented their ties. China's aid and investment flow to Nepal doubled between 2007 and 2011. Some Indian analysts saw this as Chinese expansionism. Perhaps to counter this, Indian Premier Narendra Modi during his visit to Katmandu in 2014, pledged to finance a hydropower project following Beijing's decision to invest in a \$ 1.6 billion in a hydropower project in Nepal. According to Dr Harsh V. Pant, a strategic analyst on security policy issues:

China's reach in Nepal is indeed growing and is now quite substantial; something that Indian policy planners had not expected just a few years back. China has made Nepal a priority primarily because it allows Beijing to control Tibet better.... For India, this is a major challenge as China's control over Nepal makes India very vulnerable to Chinese pressures. But, most of it is New Delhi's own fault. By not taking Nepal seriously, by not developing its own border infrastructure and by not making Nepal a part of India's economic dynamism, India has provided China the strategic space which it has quite happily filled (Seghal 2014).

Yet India is still a big player in Nepal. It is still Nepal's biggest donor. It was only in June 2015 that India pledged \$ 1 billion in aid in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake. The offer comes in addition to India's \$ 1 billion development aid over the next five years. China's earthquake relief aid was around \$ 740 million. The disparity apart, China is fast narrowing the gap.

The current crisis on the Nepal-India border over the Madhesi people's protests over underrepresentation in Nepal's new constitution has also overtones of a Sino-India tussle. Many Nepalese see the refusal by Indian oil companies to send fuel to Nepal citing security reasons as state-sponsored. The crisis has created severe shortages of fuel and other

essentials in Nepal, prompting the government to turn to Beijing for emergency fuel aid.

The dilemma Nepal faces is yet another example of smaller South Asian nations suffering due to power rivalry between India and China. The mutual mistrust between the two powers has hindered Nepal's bid to benefit from both neighbours and prosper.

### ***The Case of Maldives***

The case of the Maldives is not so different. Since independence from the British in 1965, Maldives virtually grew under British protection until India emerged in the 1970s as the guardian of the Indian Ocean archipelago in keeping with its Indira doctrine. When Sri Lanka's mercenaries laid siege to the capital Male in 1988, it was India which took control of the operation to hunt down the mercenaries and helped President Mamoon Abdul Gayoom to stay in power. But today, it is a different story. The Maldives has come under the security microscope of not only India, but also of the U.S. and China. Political developments in recent years and months in the Maldives have given rise to intrigues and theories about foreign power involvement.

India was seen as wielding greater influence when President Mohammed Nasheed was in power, with an Indian company winning a long-term contract in 2010 to manage Male's Ibrahim Nasir International Airport. The controversial deal was cancelled by the interim government of President Mohammed Waheed after Nasheed was overthrown in 2012. This was followed by reports that Waheed was to sign a deal with the U.S. allowing the superpower to set up military facilities in two atolls. Exposing the deal, the Maldivian news website *Dhivehi Sitee* carried a detailed article by Azra Naseem which tried to make a link between the deal and the big power rivalry in Asia:

Clearly, a military base in the Maldives would be quite a prize for both China and the U.S. Both countries would, no doubt, go to great lengths to acquire one. Towards the end of last year, the Maldives government, led by Defence Minister Nazim, was seen actively wooing China, while simultaneously manufacturing tensions with India, the region's other Big Power.

What the new Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen told the media in Colombo in January 2014, during a visit to Sri Lanka sheds more light on the dilemma facing South Asian states. Admitting there had been some movement towards offering a facility to the U.S. military, Yameen said his government would not go ahead with the proposal as it would upset

regional power India. However, Yameen is seen as getting more close to China and a new law that his government has passed has evoked fresh fears in India that it was aimed at allowing China to have a foothold in the Indian Ocean Island chain. The development prompted India to send its Foreign Secretary to the Maldives a month before China's President Xi Jinping made a historic visit there. Yameen in a missive to India said his country would remain a 'demilitarised zone' and would not allow China or any other country to set up bases. The new law allows foreigners to own land in the country if they invest \$ 1 billion and reclaim 70 percent of the land from the sea. This kind of money can come only from China. Besides, China has agreed to construct a bridge connecting the capital Male with the island that hosts the airport. According to Darshana Baruah, an analyst at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi:

We already have tensions along our land border with China in north and opening up possibility for China to have a permanent position within our maritime border is making India nervous.... Tomorrow, if China has so much of economic interest and investments in the Indian Ocean, they will have all rights to protect their economic interests.

Adding more concern to India are the Yameen government's willingness to be part of China's Maritime Silk Route and his new found courage to tell off Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj - in the wake of political unrest following the arrest of former President Nasheed - that his government would not tolerate foreign interference in domestic issues. The Indian Express interpreted the statement as a shot at India (Roy 2015). China, on the other hand, said it would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Maldives.

### ***The Case of Afghanistan and Pakistan***

It sent real shockwaves across the world when the visiting Chinese President Xi Jingpin announced in April 2015, a mammoth \$ 46 billion infrastructure development aid package to Pakistan, with the key project being the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) linking Pakistan's Indian Ocean Port at Gwadar with China's Xinjiang province, via a network of highways, railways and pipelines to transport goods and fuel. The aid package and the envisaged development activities carry the potential to make Pakistan the next Asian Tiger, probably the next Fergana Valley of the old Silk Route fame.

Developing nations desperate for cheap development funds see China's rise as a godsend. Xi's 'fate-and-game-changing' visit, which he describes as a visit to his brother's house, was greeted in Pakistan with

slogans such as ‘Pakistan-China friendship is higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel.’ This mindboggling aid offer is expected to put Pakistan on a rapid course to development, creating job opportunities and boosting its economy, which in turn will increase its military power. The project can indeed be a game changer if Islamabad could bring in major socioeconomic reforms aimed at making the country a modern Islamic republic with warped interpretations of Islam being dumped in the dustbin of history.

As mentioned above, India also can get economic benefits if it gains access to China’s Silk Road Economic Belt, which can stimulate world trade as never before. Making peace with Pakistan and abandoning the policy of treating China as a rival could make India prosper. The Indira doctrine is an economic liability.

Over the years, China has been Pakistan’s all-weather friend and a much more trustworthy partner than the United States, whose relations have seen their ups and downs, soured by sanctions, U.S. administrations’ closer ties with India and the reluctance to sell F-16s and other advanced weaponry to Pakistan.

China, on the other hand, has been more reliable, providing, in addition to economic assistance, military supplies. The two are seen as natural allies against the backdrop of the mistrust between India and China over a territorial dispute that had taken the two countries to war in 1962.

Yet, Pakistan cannot afford to abandon the U.S. Pakistan has much more to gain from maintaining close relations with the United States. Peace in Pakistan’s troubled regions depends on U.S. cooperation. Peace is important for development and growth. Peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan can come only if all stakeholders sit at the negotiating table and work out a deal. The U.S. has recognised China’s peacemaking potential because the latter worked with both the Taliban government and the post-U.S. invasion governments in Afghanistan. China is also in a position to coax Pakistan to put to good use its channels with the Taliban. Besides, President Xi Jinping sees a link between China’s political and economic stability and regional peace, especially in view of Uighur militants – from China’s troubled Xinjiang province – links with the Taliban. China’s involvement in recent months in Afghan peace efforts has gained pace with the high-level meetings being held in London, Beijing and Murree (Pakistan) against the backdrop of a planned drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The power struggle within the Taliban after the death of its leader Mullah Omar and the presence of the Islamic State in Afghanistan may have slowed down China’s peace efforts, but there is little indication that China has withdrawn from the peace initiative.

Also any peace move to succeed in the Af-Pak region, Pakistan's security worries, especially India's unusually larger presence in Afghanistan and its alleged links with Baloch separatists, need to be addressed. India's multi-billion dollar investments in Afghanistan and other South Asian nations (despite bulk of its population still overwhelmingly poor), points to the strategic dimension of its involvement in South Asian countries.

But China is also seeking to take India on board its One-Belt-One-Road or Silk Road project, despite India's closer defence ties with the U.S. and Japan. China probably operates on the premise that greater economic cooperation will produce greater peace dividends that could avert military confrontations arising from territorial disputes or other crises. Its mammoth development programmes in Central Asia and the Af-Pak region can certainly be catalysts for peace.

Yet the U.S. has no immediate intention of letting Afghanistan slip out of its control. With the Central Asian region regarded as Russia-China sphere of influence, a U.S. foothold in Afghanistan is a strategic necessity for Washington. Washington and Kabul have inked security pacts, in terms of which the U.S. will have a military presence in Afghanistan till 2024 and beyond.

## **Conclusion**

States pursue economic and military objectives with a view to increasing their power and security. Big powers thrive in the security deficiency of small states. They react aggressively when a state or a rival is seen to be increasing its security value or power. They try to undermine measures a rival state or even a friendly state takes to increase its power. This is the bottom line in the new cold war between the United States and China, despite China being the United States biggest trading partner and the biggest investor in U.S. bonds. This is also the reason why India tries to throw the spanner in the works when South Asian countries court the friendship of China in search of development aid.

Despite tensions that threaten to trigger a major war in the South China Sea, the very thought of its devastating consequences prevents the big powers from going to war. With all indicators pointing to an emergence of a China-centric world order, South Asian countries should act with prudence. They must evaluate each situation and take decisions. South Asian nations should redefine non-alignment or look at how countries like Britain, a powerful North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally of the United States, have been courting China's friendship, even going to the

extent of abandoning their long-held principled policies. This is the way forward.

No country can devise a long-term strategy when dealing with another country. No country can promise to another country to be true to it in good times and in bad, in difficulty and in prosperity till kingdom come. This is because international relations are always in a state of flux. Alliances could change and foes could become friends over the years or all of a sudden. Countries only have short-term strategies to achieve their national interest goals. The long-term interest of a country consists of a series of short-term strategies to suit the global order at a given time. South Asian nations, therefore, must take the necessary short-term decisions to benefit from China's economic rise and be wary of its military rise to avoid being caught in a quasi Cold War.

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# **Advancing Defence Cooperation in the Asia Pacific and the U.S. Rebalancing Strategy: The Reality of an American-Indian ‘Strategic Partnership’**

*A Thought Piece*

**Dr David Robert Jones (1941- 2016)\***

## **Introduction**

In January 2015, President Barack Obama made a highly publicised state visit to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. As usual, the resulting ceremonies abounded with speeches celebrating the warm friendship between the United States and the ‘world’s largest democracy.’ Amidst this celebratory hoopla, a number of deals were negotiated that foresaw India gaining greater access to American technology, and which cleared the way for American investment in India’s defence sector. And given this euphoric atmosphere, it is small wonder that the U.S. President’s rather ironic farewell remarks on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)’s somewhat blemished record on human rights received scant attention.

Since this visit, and the subsequent renewal by Washington and New Delhi for another ten years of the Defence Framework Agreement of 2005, much has been written about some alleged new, or perhaps renewed, American-Indian ‘strategic partnership.’ ‘Alleged’ since despite the exaggerated rhetorical hype and publicity, the real nature and practical value of that relationship is being highly exaggerated. Indeed, Modi’s triumphal arrival in London and equally much-touted talks with David Cameron might also result in some ‘Anglo-Indian strategic partnership.’ Indeed, in the near future a similar ‘partnership’ might be formed with France and, if not in name, with Putin’s Russian Federation as well. For the simple fact is that India has become a major market for military-naval equipment and technology, and all these weapons’ suppliers want their piece of the action. So as one lady cynically remarked about traditional Pakistani marriages, this ‘strategic partnership’ is obviously ‘more a business transaction than an emotional union based on mutual love.’

This obvious consideration aside, we are still left with explaining just why what is largely an American-Indian commercial relationship is being

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given the symbolic status of a ‘strategic partnership.’ Before attempting to shed light on this issue, however, as a ‘veteran of the Cold War,’ and a one-time dabbler in the mystical and arcane Black Art known as ‘Kreminology,’ this scribe is a skeptic in such matters. Yet one can fully understand why such talk alarms Pakistani security planners, and finds resonance among analysts, especially those addicted to ‘worst case scenarios.’ Even so, if it distorts the reality of the U.S.-India relationship, as it indeed does, this thought piece suggests that there are at least two obvious reasons why this is so.

### **The Play and Players**

Firstly, in Pakistan as elsewhere, there are ‘interest groups’ committed to gaining as many of the available resources for their own service or ‘pet projects,’ and for them any perceived increase in the ‘threat’ is a God-send. In Pakistan’s case, its Army’s claim on the defence budget is obviously justified by the ongoing campaigns against militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). But for proponents of the ‘Chinese card’ – the much-heralded China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – or of ‘Full-Spectrum Deterrence,’ the argument for defence funds may be somewhat less immediately obvious. And meanwhile, the resources allotted to the Navy, the Cinderella of Pakistan’s Armed Forces, are now just a paltry 10 per cent of current spending in this area. Consequently, the fleet’s representatives are left to argue that they, too, combat terrorists along the Makran coast, and so they also are deserving. Nonetheless, I suggest that Pakistan’s planners and analysts might be wise to bear in mind that Gwadar is a port, and that in any future crisis it will be the Navy that will be primarily responsible for keeping its access lanes open and, if necessary, for defending it. Nonetheless, apart from some supposed threat of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) machinations against the CPEC (to prevent China from escaping the so-called Malacca Dilemma), in all these cases it is difficult to see just how an American-Indian ‘partnership’ is endangering Pakistan.

There is, meanwhile, a second and equally potent cause for the exaggerated misconceptions of the Indo-American relationship that may influence the advice given Pakistan’s policy-makers by the professional foreign policy and IR analysts of such matters. Not surprisingly, as good social scientists, these experts’ explanations of events are shaped (wittingly and perhaps sometimes unwittingly) by the paradigms and theories they employ. After all, as one ‘world politics’ text explains, ‘Theories help us to: Describe things; Explain things; Make predictions; [and] Make policy recommendations.’ While not all of my colleagues would go this far

(especially regarding ‘predictions’), few will admit that their theoretical lens can also *shape* the reality being described, and so affect the advice proffered to the policy-makers concerned. Or put differently, an analyst’s theory can shape his conclusions and advice so that, if a political leader then acts on that advice, *theorie* has, in fact, become *praxis*.

The dangers implicit in this practice are magnified by the fact that many analysts of recent generations are academics who lack practical experience (be it political or military) in the ‘real world.’ In accordance with the theories they have studied in graduate school, they, therefore, tend to simplify the reality they study. This is because the theory they employ can narrow their perspectives, distort their vision, and often have unintended and disastrous consequences when the policies they recommend are adopted by their statesmen-patrons. This danger is especially true with regard to the so-called ‘Realists.’ Given their addiction to measurements of power, the practice of *Realpolitik*, ‘zero-sum-games’ and ‘worse case scenarios,’ they often attribute unlikely goals to possible opponents. One example is the recurring contention that Imperial Russia wanted a ‘warm-water port’ on the Gulf or Arabian Sea. This same charge was made with regards to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and one wonders how long it will be before some analysts perceive that this is a strategic goal of Mr Putin as well.

This brings us to another and equally misleading analytical fallacy - the frequent tendency of ‘mirror-imaging’. This occurs when one judges a possible opponent’s aims and motives on the assumption that they are very similar, if not identical, to one’s own. Thus, Western alarmists considered the growing presence in the Indian Ocean of the USSR’s *Voenno-Morskoi Flot* (VMF) during the 1970s-early 1980s, coupled with Soviet initiatives in the Middle East, support for East African ‘liberation movements’ and growing friendship with India, to be proof that the VMF would challenge the U.S. Navy for dominance in the IOR. This view was challenged by ‘Mike’ MccGwire, a retired British naval-intelligence officer. He argued that given the lead time required for any naval building programme, Moscow’s decision had been made *before* Great Britain’s decision to withdraw from East of Eden. MccGwire, therefore, suggested that the arrival of the new Russian fleet units was meant to counter the deployment of American Polaris SLBM nuclear submarines in the IOR, and was not evidence of some future grander programme aimed at challenging the U.S. Navy’s overall dominance. Ex-Soviet naval men later told a former U.S. Secretary of the Navy that the Kremlin rejected any such programme as being prohibitively costly.

Still more recent events suggest that so-called ‘Realism’ can be especially dangerous when mixed with a dash of optimistic ‘Idealism.’ Such

was the case with the band of Straussian Realist ‘Neo-cons’ who were gathered around Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney in the early administration of President George W. Bush. Impressed with the potency of American military interventions to change the course of events during the 1990s, they convinced Bush to launch the Second Gulf War to bring ‘freedom’ to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 2003. The story was told around Washington that when the plans were fully crafted, Vice President Cheney called together America’s leading academic Iraqi specialists (usually said to number 9!) and asked for comments. When they unanimously agreed that the venture would end in disaster, Cheney supposedly thanked them and sent them back to the obscurity of their ivory halls. Then, once the resistance of Colin Powell and the State Department had been overcome, the neo-cons struck. Inspired by theory, they confidently expected that long-suffering Iraq would emerge as a beacon of democratic liberalism in the otherwise benighted Middle East – all of which suggests that a little theory can indeed be very dangerous.

Bearing these warnings in mind, let us now return to the ‘real’ reality behind supposed Indo-American ‘strategic partnership.’ Whatever we choose to call this later, in assessing its significance for today’s often chaotic Asia-Pacific ‘insecurity’ architecture, Realist analysts (and especially those in Pakistan), may reach equally misleading, if not necessarily as immediately disastrous, conclusions. In insisting that international relations are inevitably competitive, these ‘Realists’ may focus on the algebra of hard military-naval and economic power. True, there is a growing consensus that soft power may also be important, but the Realist assumptions of the ‘security dilemma’ and a ‘zero-sum game’ retain their significance. Because of these neatly defined theoretical categories, it is easy to ignore the often bewildering, and sometime contradictory, reality of interrelationships affecting today’s Asia-Pacific. For example, the tense confrontation between the U.S. naval and People’s Liberation Army Navy’s (PLAN) fleet units off China’s man-made islands in the South China Sea are paralleled by the generally ignored, but extremely cordial welcome given to crews of the latter’s vessels by their American naval counterparts during a recent goodwill port visit in Florida. When the Chinese sailors then toured Disneyland, the world saw an excellent example of soft power in action.

In any case, any serious assessment of the rather ambiguous significance of the Indo-American ‘partnership’ for today’s often chaotic Asia-Pacific ‘insecurity’ architecture necessitates placing it in the context of the traditional ambiguity that has marked these nations’ past relationship. While their serious defence cooperation dates only from the early 1990s, this came only after at least two decades of suspicion during which relations

between New Delhi and Washington were anything but cordial. Earlier Indian doubts about America's role in the post-1945 world found a focus when Great Britain withdrew from East of Suez in the late 1960s. At this point, the U.S. Navy (USN) was replacing the Royal Navy as the guardian of the peace in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). For this purpose, Washington had leased the isolated island of Diego Garcia. There, to India's annoyance, the Americans created a powerful naval and air base which initially served deployments to counter the Soviet VMF. Subsequently, the site became a forward operating base that permitted the Pentagon to surge its sea and air forces during two Gulf Wars, and which today serves as a base for nuclear cruise-missile submarines. Meanwhile, Indian resentment had been ratcheted still higher by Henry Kissinger's deployment of the USS *Enterprise* carrier force into the Bay of Bengal during the Indian-Pakistan War of 1971.

New Delhi rightly interpreted this as a hostile move and, when a VMF detachment followed in the wake of the *Enterprise*, the result was what we might call the Indo-Soviet strategic 'partnership' that lasted for almost two decades, during which the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became India's major source of arms. These ties with the USSR aside, Washington remained suspicious of India thanks to its past support of the non-aligned movement, and support for a proposed Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZP) that would have closed its waters to non-regional fleets. Such sentiments were reciprocated in full by many in New Delhi's leadership elite. They nursed a continuing resentment that was fuelled by the base at Diego Garcia, the so-called 'Enterprise syndrome' and the continuing policing by USN units of the Indian Ocean's vital trade routes. Indeed, in the early 1980s, leading Indian political figures were still expressing suspicions about Washington's role in the IOR and although muted by today's shows of camaraderie during the joint Malabar and similar exercises, some undoubtedly still do. For this and the other reasons outlined below, Indian attitudes about a *de facto*, let lone *de jure*, alliance with Washington have always been ambivalent at best.

But if mutual suspicions, and at times outright hostility, had prevented cooperation in the defence field before 1990, by that date four major developments were changing matters. To begin with, in 1979-1980, the United States had to deal with a major geopolitical shift that upset its earlier assumptions. Despite alarms over the VMF's irritating presence in the IOR, the Americans' regional dominance had remained unchallenged. But in 1979, two events suddenly threatened this stability. Firstly, the United States lost its most reliable regional ally when the Iranian Revolution ousted the Shah; and secondly, Moscow's intervention in Afghanistan in that December apparently signalled a drastic change in the

Cold War's geopolitical balance. Amid heightened concern over Communist expansion into the region, Washington first set up a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). The new Reagan Administration then undertook a major expansion of the base at Diego Garcia, and in 1983 it established a new regional Central Command (CENTCOM) with its headquarters at Bahrain (to which the U.S. Fifth Fleet was added in 1995).

Meanwhile, the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s had required that the USN keep open the oil routes through the Strait of Hormuz, an activity that at times threatened to involve full-scale combat operations against Tehran's Revolutionary Guards. Not unnaturally, the American leaders had already begun searching for a new partner to help police the IOR. At first Saddam Hussein seemed a reasonable successor to the deposed Shah, but these hopes were dashed by his occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. Thereafter, in the wake of the First Gulf War, Washington renewed its search for a new, regional 'junior partner' and India now looked to be an increasingly attractive candidate for the role. Furthermore, by this time the other two other events were forcing New Delhi to reconsider its position as well. Firstly, its strategists there had become increasingly agitated after 1985 when PLAN fleet units, following in the footsteps of the great Ming Dynasty's admiral Zheng-He of the 1400s, began deploying West of Malacca. Secondly, by 1990 the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe was no more, and the USSR was stumbling towards its own collapse. India, thus, was losing its traditional ally and, equally importantly, its main source of modern weapons. As a consequence, Indian strategists had reappraised the possible benefits to be gained from some form of limited partnership with the United States.

With both sides ready for a new relationship, it was left to Lieutenant General Claude Kicklighter to take the initiative. As a representative of the American Pacific Command's headquarters in Hawaii, he arrived in New Delhi in 1991 to successfully negotiate a range of technical transfers and regular joint military-naval exchanges and exercises (including the near annual Malabar naval exercises). This can be said to mark the beginning of today's 'partnership' although the road from Kicklighter's exploratory mission to Obama's celebrated visit of January 2015 was a tortuous one. Indeed, given lingering resentments and suspicions on both sides, New Delhi's independent ways and Washington's continuing (if often troubled) ties with Pakistan, it is hardly surprising that there have been major ups and downs. Even so, India's continuing and growing desire for access to advanced American technologies and support in the face of China's growing power, and America's perceived need of a regional ally, meant that both sides persevered. The result has been what we might call an ongoing courtship in which a coy India has demanded an ever increasing 'bride

price' and the United States has appeared in the role of an ever ardent suitor.

The courtship's first major crisis was provoked by the BJP government's nuclear tests in May 1998. These occasioned the automatic imposition of sanctions by the Clinton Administration. Moves to repair the resulting damage followed quickly, however, although by 2001 the parties involved still had diverging priorities. Whereas, the Americans were increasingly concerned by Al-Qaeda's strikes on their facilities and ships in Africa and the Gulf, they had less interest than the Indians in combatting the rising threat of piracy in the Strait of Malacca, and after 9/11 were fully engaged in waging President Bush's ill-starred War on Terror. New Delhi condemned the terrorist strike and in the American invasion of Afghanistan saw an opportunity for further improving relations. To this end, they supported that effort with an offer of base facilities, and in 2002 aided the USN by escorting American merchantmen through the Malacca Strait. Nonetheless, when Bush launched his Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, New Delhi withheld participation in both that campaign and in the subsequent anti-terrorist and anti-proliferation combined task force (CTF) patrols that were mounted by the U.S. dominated 'Coalition of the Willing' off Iraq, and subsequently off the Somalian coasts. In part, of course, this refusal was due to Washington's reliance on Pakistan.

In fact, if one can take Indian strategic writings at face value, New Delhi was still much more concerned about a possible Chinese naval buildup in the IOR than about Saddam Hussein. In the mid-decade attention focussed on China's alleged intention to create the celebrated 'String of Pearls.' This term was coined by an American think tank to describe a series of commercial ports that, alarmists warned, could possibly serve the PLAN as bases in some future effort to obtain hegemony within the IOR. Overall, however, American naval strategists remained unconvinced. As they pointed out, the costs of converting 'Pearls' such as Pakistan's Gwadar into active defensible naval bases, quite aside from providing them with secure logistical support, would be truly horrendous, and the effort still would leave them vulnerable to capture in case of any future hostilities. For while the USN can maintain its base at Diego Garcia, the PLAN is decades distant from acquiring this capability (assuming it wants it), and for the foreseeable future will most likely concentrate on asserting its authority in the waters of the East and South China Seas.

Meanwhile, having had its fingers burned by American sanctions after 1998, New Delhi diversified both its arms purchases and naval exercises, the range of which now extended from France's Atlantic Coast in the West to the Sea of Japan in the east. Drawn out negotiations with Washington continued, of course, by means of regular Strategic Dialogues

and the high-level talks that brought the ten-year Defence Framework Agreement of 2005 and the Indian-specific ‘123 Agreement’ (or U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement) of October 2008. Although the threat of new sanctions on nuclear issues was now largely removed, India was clearly unwilling to enter too closely into Washington’s embrace. As noted, this continued coyness undoubtedly in part reflected irritation over the role assigned to Pakistan in the War on Terror, as well as its participation in naval patrols of Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150).

Apart from Washington’s insistence on maintaining its relations with Islamabad, this hesitation also was motivated by India’s dislike of the American ‘dual-track’ policy towards Beijing. For neither the Bush nor the early Obama Administrations fully accepted the warnings of Indian strategists or their alarmist American counterparts. Washington did seem willing to contain, or perhaps more correctly ‘constrain’ China’s alleged ambitions. Yet despite the PLAN’s increasingly aggressive stance in the South China Sea, Washington continued to adopt what has been termed a ‘proactive hedging policy’ while its critics damned the Administration for causing unease among America’s active and proposed partners in Southeast Asia, India included. Signs of a change came only in July 2009 when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton candidly admitted in New Delhi that Washington’s policy in East Asia needed a ‘makeover’. In that November, President Obama himself suggested to a Tokyo audience that a change in focus was indeed coming when he announced that he was his country’s ‘first Pacific president’. Over the next thirteen months, the outlines emerged of his proposed ‘rebalance’; and in January 2012, they received final official form in his ‘Strategic Guidance’ issued jointly by the White House and Pentagon. Nonetheless, the various declarations of official policy have consistently reaffirmed that the Administration’s goal is to find a mutually acceptable set of ‘rules of the road’ for everyone navigating the maritime commons of the Asia Pacific, the South China Sea included. This, Obama insists, is essential for the future prosperity of all regional and extra-regional stakeholders.

That India is less than fully satisfied with this position seems likely. Meanwhile, in the longer run, there exists another and perhaps more fundamental obstacle to the practical and sincere realisation of any American-Indian ‘strategic relationship’ in the IOR. This is the issue of naval doctrine. Writing in the late 1800s, Alfred T. Mahan insisted on the American need to obtain ‘command of the sea.’ Although this precept is modified when necessary by the British theorist Julian Corbett’s concept of ‘sea control’, the USN is committed to maintaining dominance in any waters in which it is deployed. The trouble is that thanks to the great historian K.K. Panikkar, so is the Indian Navy, at least as far as the IOR is

concerned. Acknowledged by his country's naval strategists as the founder of their naval doctrine, Panikkar's were equally shaped by the teachings of Mahan and Corbett as passed on by the Britain's Royal Navy (RN). Writing in 1945, he foresaw the Indian Navy as cooperating (at least initially) with the RN to jointly police and dominate the IOR 'commons'. Such hopes were crushed when Britain withdrew from East of Suez, but Panikkar's doctrinal teachings lived on intact. Needless to say, his dream of commanding the Indian Ocean were postponed as long as Indian defence policies focussed mainly on the northern land frontiers with Pakistan and China, which meant that soldiers controlled the Ministry of Defence, and that defence budgets were allocated accordingly.

Despite (or perhaps because of) their government's hesitation to actively engage in the American-led operations in the western IOR, by 2004 India's naval officers – both active and retired – set out to raise their public's consciousness for the need to build a stronger fleet. In that year, they presented the appropriate doctrinal justifications and, partly by citing China's ongoing naval expansion, obtained budgetary funds for construction of their own 'blue-water' fleet. Additional doctrinal adjustments followed in 2007-09, but by 2008 they had remained frustrated by New Delhi's unwillingness even to commit the Navy to the anti-piracy struggle off Somalia in the Arabian Sea. Matters changed in that autumn when a series UN Security Council resolutions opened the way for a range of international naval actors (NATO, the European Union, China, Russia, Iran, and so on) who joined the existing Combined Task Forces (CTF-150, CTF-151) in the effort to stem the Somalian pirate tide. As a result, by October 2008 Indian naval men felt that the northwest corner of *their* ocean was becoming definitely crowded. And with Somalian pirates seizing merchantmen with Indian crewmen, the navy's argument that such seamen deserved protection finally helped them overcome opposition from the soldiers and diplomats, and the Ministry of Defence agreed to dispatch two warships for this purpose.

Although their initial successes in the anti-piracy role seemingly justified the navy's decision, a few weeks later another event at home was far more important for raising domestic awareness of the fleet's importance. This was the Mumbai carnage of 26 November (11/26). In its wake, the navy was charged with creating a strengthened system of coastal security. Although this meant diverting funds from the planned blue-water building programme, the naval leadership gained enhanced clout within the defence establishment and willingly made the necessary adjustments. Thereafter, they also followed the USN practice of linking the issue of piracy with terrorism in order to justify more aggressive naval diplomacy in efforts to forge bilateral ties with other navies around the IOR, and for taking a more

active role in a range of regional fora. Significantly, however, while the Indian Navy cooperated with its American ‘partners’, it was careful to retain its operational independence. Unlike the PLAN, the Indians, therefore, resolutely refused to join the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction System (SHADE), the anti-piracy coalition organised and managed by CENTCOM and the U.S. Fifth Fleet. If they had done so, their fleet units would have had to accept a degree of interoperability (in the form of the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System [CENTRIXS] communications network). Significantly, this despite the fact that New Delhi had accepted this procedure as part of the Defence Framework Agreement of 2005.

In the interim, the Americans had been revising their own naval doctrine. The new version was made public in November 2007 entitled ‘A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower’. In true Mahanian style, its authors foresaw the USN as continuing to police the world’s oceans, and they estimated that for this purpose, a ‘1000-ship navy’ was necessary. Yet, they also understood that the United States alone could not afford to build or maintain such a fleet. They, therefore, drew on the Fifth Fleet’s recent successes in organising coalitions in the form of the CTFs and SHADE to suggest that this 1000-ship fleet be achieved by means of a ‘Global Maritime Partnership’ that would promote Obama’s ‘rebalance’ by permitting a greater deployment of U.S. forces stationed in the Asia Pacific east of Malacca. And since both a reduced U.S. Fifth Fleet and the Diego Garcia forward base would remain active, the Pentagon believed that the overall policing of the vast IOR commons could be safely shared other regional fleet units. Within this context, gaining the full cooperation of the Indian Navy, the strongest of the regional naval forces and already a recognised ‘net security provider’ assumed a still higher priority for Washington. Needless to say, as heirs to the Mahanian legacy, the Pentagon naval planners assumed that the U.S. Navy would remain the senior partner and so the region’s maritime hegemon.

Unfortunately for the U.S. naval planners, their Indian counterparts do not share this assumption. As suggested above, the Indian Navy’s leaders have never abandoned their hopes of eventually achieving regional maritime dominance. Furthermore, having gained the political support needed for launching the naval construction programmes that they believe will eventually allow them to achieve this goal, they have no interest in accepting the role of junior partner. Moreover, during the last decade, they have increasingly defined the region of their navy’s competence within their ‘Indo-Pacific’ (not Asia Pacific) as comprising all the waters extending from the Cape of Good Hope in the west to the coasts of Japan in the east – and beyond. From this perspective, the USN is seen as being at

least as much of an interloper as the PLAN, and perhaps more so. This attitude is nicely summed up in the Indian Navy's tale of one of its captains who, when called upon by a NATO vessel to explain his own ship's presence in the Arabian Gulf, reportedly replied: 'I'm an *Indian* warship sailing in the *Indian* Ocean. But what are *you* doing here?'

## **Conclusion**

In sum then, given the twists and turns of the complicated history behind the now celebrated 'strategic partnership', one may well question the reality behind the diplomatic rhetoric. For New Delhi, it certainly has symbolic diplomatic value, but even this can be easily overstated. Thus, Washington has as yet to abandon its diplomatic efforts to reach a detente with China, and also is far from abandoning Pakistan or taking India's side in the Kashmir dispute. As for the American promise to support India's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council, this is a completely hollow pledge in the light of China's likely veto. Otherwise, we cannot ignore the value to both India's military and the American business community of the weapons and technology transfers, as well as of joint ventures in building India's own military-industrial complex. Nonetheless, the United States is far from India's sole arms and technology supplier and, as Prime Minister Modi's 2015 visit to London illustrated, others are willing to compete for the lucrative Indian market. Otherwise as the extremely meagre results accruing to date from the '123' nuclear deal of 2008 (which so exercises Islamabad) illustrates, one should be cautious about assuming that such agreements have the results envisaged.

Nonetheless, as long as Washington believes India can become its new regional ally, the courtship will continue and the Americans will continue to ply their coy dance partner with offers of technology and investment. Yet, given the course of the affair thus far, it is perhaps time we asked what the suitor has gained since the resumption of relations some fifteen years past. As is obvious, India has retained its freedom of action and has no intention of becoming a submissive partner within the IOR. The same is likely true east of Malacca, and this despite Modi's reiteration of the earlier 'Look East' initiative, or of New Delhi's commitments to Japan, Vietnam or other South Asian nations. There is also evidence that India's naval leadership is wary about being dragged into any American-Chinese confrontation occasioned by the 'earthern wall' of man-made islands Beijing is constructing in the South China Sea. And finally, as long as the interoperability provisions of the Defence Framework Agreement of 2005, which were renewed on paper by that agreement's renewal earlier in 2015, one can hardly consider the Indo-American 'partnership' properly

consummated.

Finally, there is another factor that in the long run may indirectly, but adversely affect the Indo-American relationship. This is the diminishing impact of India's soft power, and the corresponding changes of that nation's image in the court of American public opinion. Thanks to the images of Gandhi and Nehru, along with Bollywood, sitar music, yoga, and other schools of 'spiritual' meditation, Hindu India has long been generally regarded in much of the West as a benign and generally peaceful player on the world stage, even after its acquisition of nuclear capability. Widely touted as the 'world's largest democracy', the land of the *gurus* has long stood in stark contrast to Muslim Pakistan, with its fanatical *mullahs*, religious fanaticism, ethnic violence, and bearded terrorists. In recent years, however, this image has been slipping as stories of brutal Indian gang-rapes have eclipsed those of Pakistani honour killings in the pages of the Western press, and gradually growing awareness regarding the often brutal repression of the Muslim inhabitants of Kashmir, and of the bloody Gujarat pogrom of 2002. Indeed, the fact that this last event occurred on the watch of the present Prime Minister Modi is far from forgotten. Rather, it adds weight to concerns aroused by latter's recent attempts to play the 'communal' card in the recent Bihar elections, to the lynching by Hindu nationalists of a man accused of allegedly killing a cow, and to the threats posed to other ethnic and religious minorities, Christians included. The impact of such events on an outraged American feminist constituency or the largely Republican, fundamentalist Christian community, quite apart from beef-raising states such as Texas, may well find its expression on the American political scene. And if so, as Obama's parting remarks to Modi suggest, the impact of this changing image will be reflected in Washington's future policies. Consequently, if handled with care and sensitivity, this situation may well be turned to Pakistan's advantage and increase the influence of that country's own incipient soft power.

Bearing all these considerations in mind, it seems that there are still areas of major future tension, as well those of likely convergence, that make talk of any real 'partnership' between New Delhi and Washington premature at best. Furthermore, whatever theoretical model is applied, the friction arising from their differing, not to say incompatible long-term goals, will in fact doom any such partnership. Consequently, Pakistan's leaders will do well to avoid applying zero-sum game analyses to the Indo-American-Pakistani triangular relationship, and should refrain from any precipitous initiatives aimed at redressing apparent, but usually short-lived, imbalances of power. While gains from such initiatives may seem beneficial in the short run, from a longer perspective they may also 'poison the well' with regard to Islamabad's relations with the United States and

other powers. Rather, they should sit tight, ‘cultivate their own garden’, observe developments with clear eyes and, to quote the advice given to soldiers holding muskets, ‘keep their powder dry.’ ■

# **Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo Pacific: Pakistani Perspective**

**Dr Rizwan Naseer\***

## **Abstract**

The ‘Indo-Pacific’, as coined by Robert D. Kaplan, is a region in its broader expanse from the east coast of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Bay of Bengal, Strait of Malacca to Japan; and is a central locus of power in the Twenty-First Century because of the presence of majority of the rising powers and the strongest militaries and navies in this region. Close proximity of four nuclear powers (India, Pakistan, China and North Korea) complicates the regional balance of power politics here. Considering the resources, trade routes, energy corridors and strategic interests of great powers, the future global struggle for democracy, energy, religion and security will be waged in this region. This paper will highlight how the United States, in collaboration with India and Japan, seeks to build an ‘Indo-Pacific order’. It will also pinpoint three sets of bilateral ties (China-U.S., China-India and China-Pakistan) and their impact on regional affairs.

## **Introduction**

**T**he United States long-term strategic partnership with India includes supporting it as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region. The future challenge for U.S. leadership is to balance two opposing priorities i.e. building a partnership with China in areas such as trade and investment, terrorism and climate change; and to compete for power in Asia, for which it is using India. This paper unfolds America’s three-pillar approach to deal with China’s rise: Engaging; 2. Binding; and 3. Balancing.

In case of South Asia, risk of India-Pakistan conflict is burgeoning because of the Modi regime. Cooperation paralysis between these nuclear-armed rivals may certainly inflict stagnation risk (e.g. stagnation of GDP growth rate). Recent nationalism among Indian masses creates a mutually bellicose environment. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an institution had great potential, but geopolitical contestation, power of nationalism, and different ideologies are impediments towards

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reaching cooperation. Pakistan's struggle to balance power against India's nuclear programme remains a crucial factor in ensuring peace and stability in the region. The post-nuclear era has proven that nuclear parity with India has been a crucially stabilising factor in the region. In the light of Indo-Pacific order, the paper highlights the risks of conflict and potential for opportunities.

The New Great Game is gearing up with three predominant strategies i.e. China's Maritime Silk Road, India's Act East Policy, and America's 'Rebalancing' Asia. Since these three strategies are conflicting, therefore, it is unlikely that all three will work together. The United States may face trouble to its interests in the Asia Pacific (Mullen and Poplin 2016). Pakistan-India's outstanding issues, regional arms race, involvement of external powers, surge of terrorist networks in South Asia, and instability of Afghanistan make this region volatile.

### **Geographical Expanse of Indo Pacific**

In his book *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, Robert D. Kaplan writes that the Greater Indian Ocean is a region that is hugely vast as it stretches eastward from Somalia (the Horn of Africa) past the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian plateau and the Indian subcontinent and leads to the Indonesian archipelago and even beyond. He adeptly tattles about the main sources of Islamist extremism along the shores of the Arabian which includes monarchies of the Persian Gulf, Iran and Pakistan (Friedberg 2010).

Kaplan argues that in the Indian Ocean the interests and influence of India, China and the United States are overlapping. Monsoon Asia which includes China, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Oman, Tanzania and Indonesia has become crucially important for American power. He proposes to U.S. strategic thinkers that this is the area where the fight for democracy, energy independence, and religious freedom will be waged and U.S. cannot ignore this important area of the world to protect its interests.

Based on these overlapping and intersecting interests, the global power dynamics of Twenty-First Century will be revealed here. Because of 9/11, United States shifted its focus towards the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. The Indo Pacific region is quickly shaping global events and preferences (Medcalf 2012).

The region is geographically vast and economically powerful. Great powers have vested interests here. According to Indian strategic thinker C. Raja Mohan, there is huge interconnectedness of many nations' economic and strategic interests as the Indian Ocean is ranked as the world's busiest trade corridor with two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, third of bulk

cargo destined towards or from East Asia (*Ibid.*). While some neoliberals claim that international cooperation has increased over the years, Mead (2016) pinpoints that the year 2014 was a tumultuous one as geopolitical rivalries have stormed back to centre-stage; old-fashioned power plays are back in international relations.

China is undoubtedly a great power in the region. But, despite having economic and military valour, China still has unresolved territorial disputes with neighbouring states (India, Japan, Philippines). China's unprecedented economic growth demands sufficient energy coupled with new markets for goods and raw material. Its oil shipments pass through the narrow Strait of Malacca from Gulf States and other oil exporting countries. In case of any conflict, China fears closure of this Strait. Pakistan has become a strategic partner of China in the Indian Ocean through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This corridor has huge potential to benefit both the nations economically and strategically. In the post-9/11 scenario, Pakistan faced multiple challenges. Its image was badly distorted with Indian allegations of sponsoring terrorism, and internal instability (economic and political). Gradual stability in democratic institutions, economic revivalism and success against terrorist groups have helped Pakistan rebuild its image regionally and internationally.

### **Geopolitics versus Geo-economics in Indo Pacific**

As the world is getting more red in tooth and claw, international cooperation is diminishing. With the remarkable achievements of international organisations, liberals were pretty hopeful that geopolitics was not going to return. But recent developments are revealing that old strategic rivalries between rising powers and declining hegemons are heating up. For example, the geopolitical clash during the Ukraine crisis (Patrick and Bennett 2015). Annexation of Crimea was a litmus test for Russia to see whether the U.S. could take any punitive action. Future rough and tumble between the U.S. and Russia is likely to get intense in case of the Syrian crisis. China-U.S. strategic competition and India-Pakistan conflict are also challenges that need to be managed rationally by regional as well as global players.

China is making headway by leaps and bounds in the economic realm. United States is the global hegemon because of its allies in Europe and Gulf states. European economies are promoting U.S. interests globally as they are partners in defence and economic institutions like NATO, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Gulf States continue uninterrupted energy supplies to the U.S. and its allies. As China is flexing economic muscle, it surely undermines U.S. economic interests globally.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are dominated by the U.S. As substitutes to these financial institutions, China has proposed the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This bank is viewed as a rival institution of IMF and World Bank by economists. The success of China's economic strategy is that Britain has joined this economic institution. Major economies that have not joined are U.S., Canada and Japan. Britain's decision to join the AIIB is a revealing example of one of the key realities of the new international order (Beeson 2015). In a rapid changing world and under new world order, the old multilateral institutions which were founded under American auspices are no longer effective in addressing problems globally and already fed up from U.S. dominated institutions, states are eagerly looking for an alternate to solve collective action problems (*Ibid.*). Chinese-sponsored institutions are likely to expand because of their support from third world countries. China's image in Islamic world is far better than United States. It is perceived as a multilateral power with a non-interfering approach. China would be connected to the Middle East through Pakistan which would have immense impact on Pakistan's economic stability. China's creation of new 'Silk Road' would link Beijing to its immediate neighbours and will enhance regional connectivity in trade making it a hub of regional economic activity.

Some countries in the Asia-Pacific are disconcerted by China's rise as they face confusion in deciding whether its rise is boon or bane for its neighbours. America's 'pivot' towards Asia is aimed at strengthening alliances against China's military threat (*Ibid.*). The annually published Blue Book 2014 revealed China's aspiration to become a maritime power and emerge as a powerful nation. It also suggested that China must proactively ensure complementary backup sea-lanes in case of threats from competitors (*Ibid.*).

China has given consistent diplomatic, military and economic support to Pakistan. But its image in India is not seen as positive as a survey conducted by Lowy Institute in 2013 showed that majority of the Indian populace (83 per cent) considered China a security risk for India. Public opinion was divided about balancing against China or cooperating with it. According to the same survey when asked if China's purpose was to dominate Asia, 70 per cent of the respondents agreed. These anti-China sentiments in public opinion can be attributed to Indian nationalism (Jakobson and Medcalf 2015).

Pakistan's image is almost the same in the eyes of Indians. Washington-based Pew Research Centre released a survey of Pakistan's unpopularity amongst Indians. According to that, Pakistan is the least favoured nation in India, with only 18 per cent seeking better ties, while 64

per cent wanting to stay away from Pakistan. This means three-quarters perceive Pakistan as a very serious threat to India (Dawn 2015).

### **Regional Powers in Indo Pacific**

South Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia are the geographically, strategically and economically important regions in the Indo Pacific rim. South Asia has two nuclear armed powers (India and Pakistan), while East Asia and Southeast Asia has emerging superpower China, and economic power Japan and some U.S. allies. The Indo Pacific order is under constant shift for the last few decades because of China's emergence as a great power, Japan's struggle for revival, India's aspirations to become a regional hegemon in South Asia and Pakistan's struggle for securing its homeland from internal and external threats.

European states view India as an emerging power in the world arena. Being a biggest democracy in the world, based on so-called 'shared democratic ideals', India enjoys close cooperation with the United States and its allies. In recent times to expand Indian influence beyond South Asia, India has adopted the 'Look East' policy announced two decades ago but because of mistrust between India and its neighbours, Myanmar's isolation and poor infrastructure impeded connectivity between South and Southeast Asia. With improved relations between India-Bangladesh and Myanmar, connectivity between South and Southeast Asia has drastically increased. United States wants these ties to grow further (Inderfurth and Osius 2013). If U.S. allies become stronger and influential in the region, in other words, United States gets stronger. Indian close cooperation with other U.S. allies in Southeast Asia (Japan) envisages neutralising China's influence in the region. Not far very far back, Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe during his speech to the Indian Parliament in 2007 said:

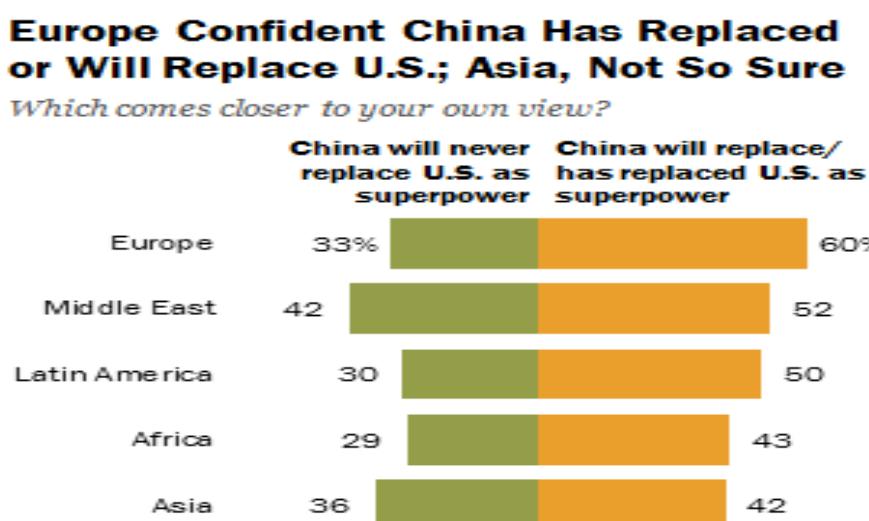
We are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being...The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are bringing about dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A 'broader Asia' that (breaks down) geographical boundaries is beginning to take on a distinct form (*Ibid.*).

United States wants to contain China's rise to the status of superpower. Japan and India can be the best options for Washington to empower and continue unrelenting support in areas of defence. Under the prevailing power politics, Pakistan has assumed a more crucial role in China's eyes. A more stronger, stable and influential Pakistan would neutralise Indian hegemonic designs. Nuclear symmetry has kept India and Pakistan away from war. Once this balance gets upset, chances of escalation

are more likely. The U.S.-India nuclear deal can tilt the balance of power in India's favor. According to C. Raja Mohan, there is no doubt that India was not qualified for the deal being non-signatory of NPT and CTBT, but Washington exclusively revised the law, and now India is emerging as a swing state in the global balance of power. In the coming years, it will have an opportunity to shape outcomes on the most critical issues of the Twenty-First Century (Mohan 2006).

Joseph S. Nye highlights Indo-U.S. common interests that both countries want better relations with China, but also want to make sure that China does not challenge their interests aggressively. Friendly relations between India and U.S. in the areas of defence (air, land, and sea) and other related interests in cyber security and the governance of the Internet are the common goals that can provide India strength against China. China's fast growing economy, military prowess, technological power and rising influence in the developing world has worried the U.S. A heated debate is underway whether China will replace the U.S. or not. Even Europe has started acknowledging China's power. Figure 1 is based on a Pew survey about how the world sees China:

**Figure 1: European Perceptions about China**



Note: Median percentages by region.

Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey, Q34.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

*Source: Pew Research Center 2014.*

Almost all the regions in the world view China as a would-be superpower which will be replacing the United States in the future. Europe's acknowledgement of China is pretty important because of the concentration of U.S. allies in the European Union. In this regard, the following recommendations have been provided:

- ‘The U.S. should aggrandise U.S. ballistic-missile defence posture in the Pacific and there should be a substantial increment of naval and air power and South and East China Sea.
- U.S. should maintain the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement.
- U.S. wants to create a technology-control regime to constrict China’s access to various types of technology of dual use: its allies should adopt a coordinated approach.
- Washington should impose costs on China that are in excess of the benefits it receives from its violations in cyberspace. United States should continue improving its cyber defence under its Cyber Information Security Protection Act.
- The U.S. needs to strengthen its allies in the Indo Pacific region (China’s periphery) who could effectively defend U.S. interests in Asia.
- To mitigate tensions with China, the U.S. should practice high-level diplomacy to avoid any confrontation (Blackwill and Tellis 2015).

## **Maritime Interests in the Indian Ocean**

Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. The ocean is the key to seven seas. In the Twenty First Century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its water.

- A.T. Mahan

The sea due to its resources, transport route, power and influence make it significant for nation states. Over the years, the Indian Ocean has gained interest from great powers to regional powers because it interlinks five major regions, generating particular strategic and political dynamics. These regions include South Asia, East Africa, Red Sea / Horn, South East Asia/ Oceania, Middle East and Gulf. The Indian Ocean is very significant for its 30 littoral states and 11 land-locked states with 1,284 islands because unlike Open Oceans (Pacific or Atlantic), the Indian Ocean can only be accessed through different choke points. To secure energy and trade routes, the security of these choke points is of prime concern for all great and small powers because Indian Ocean maritime security dynamics include India,

U.S. and China's interests.

Pakistan being a littoral state to this ocean has serious maritime security concerns because stability of the Indian Ocean region is in the interest of all. Indian Ocean region is not only strategically significant due to the great power game between U.S.-India-China, it is an important global trading sea route as well. Pakistan directly gets affected by any events in the Indian Ocean as 95 per cent of the Pakistan's trade depends on this sea route (Goldrick 1997). We must maintain reliable maritime security as a strong navy is important to conduct commerce. It is also an important key line of communication in the world. Oil transport from the Middle East to East Asia and South East Asia elevates its economic importance. Only one-fifth of the total trade is conducted among the littorals of the Indian Ocean themselves, and 80 per cent of the trade is extra-regional which explains the global interest (Ibid.).

### **Pakistan's Maritime Interests in Indian Ocean**

- Maintaining stability and security in the Indian Ocean region, especially in its immediate area of interest, the North Arabian Sea.
- Preserving freedom of the seas.
- Safeguarding the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs).
- Naval empowerment.
- Countering India's supposed 'blue water' navy ambitions.
- Development sea-based capabilities for economic growth and the national security of Pakistan.
- Safety and security of energy highways.
- Secure trade and access routes like different choke points.
- Exploration of sea-based resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- Development of Gwadar, along with the ongoing efforts for exploration of resources in Indus Delta region signify the expansion of Pakistan's maritime interests.

### **Maritime Security Challenges and their Implications for Pakistan**

Pakistan is facing threats in the maritime domain like drug trafficking, piracy, human smuggling and terrorism. Stability of Indian Ocean region and security of this energy and trade route is not only in the interest of Pakistan but for other stakeholders like China, U.S. and India as well. Despite knowing that cooperation has higher dividends for the regional actors, it's hard to reach common goals because of their mutual mistrust.

Indian hegemonic approach in the Indian Ocean is also posing threats to Pakistan, due to a history of enmity, number of armed conflicts and frozen issues like Kashmir conflict, external military threats and security perceptions primarily from New Delhi.

South Asia is probably the only region where possibility of an armed conflict is still present even under the nuclear weapon shadow. It is alarming for Pakistan that India is striving to achieve sea-based second strike capability. With U.S. cooperation, India is trying to develop this nuclear technology, so Pakistan is left with no option but to acquire a sea-based second-strike capability of its own in order to maintain credible nuclear deterrence. For maintaining stability and balance of power in the Indian Ocean region, full spectrum deterrence remains the scarlet thread of Pakistan's national security strategy of which Navy is an essential component.

Indian naval buildup and conventional superiority is another challenge for Pakistan's maritime security. India has the fifth largest navy in the world, which is equipped with modern missile-armed warships, an aircraft carrier, advanced submarines, and minesweepers.

Lack of maritime awareness and institutional barriers also pose challenges to Pakistan's maritime security. Pakistan is generally not a sea faring nation; its knowledge regarding the sea is limited compared to other sea powers. Vice Admiral H. M. S. Choudhry in 1991 established Pakistan Institute of Maritime Affairs (PIMA) to create a greater awareness among the decision makers about the importance of maritime sector in assisting economic growth and ensuring national security (Hasan 2015). Technological and economic constraints also hinders our maritime security. Maintaining navies and arranging resources is a costly business. Limited size of Pakistani economy and less share of defence budget among the three services restricts naval development and incorporation of new technology. Submarines, warships and naval weapon systems are becoming sophisticated and expensive day-by-day. Therefore, Pakistan has to rely upon foreign assistance.

The Indian Ocean region is turning into a 'great game zone' for major powers like the U.S.A., China and India which makes Pakistan concerned for its maritime security. Establishment of naval bases by these states increases the risk of potential conflict which may pose a serious threat to the stability of this region. It has become a chessboard for extra regional powers. China has high stakes here because 80 per cent of China's fuel comes from the Middle East and North Africa. This oil travels through various choke points like Strait of Hormuz, west coast of India, strait of Palk and later Strait of Malacca which are the reason's behind China's naval strategy to secure energy routes (string of pearls).

India having hegemonic aspiration in the Indian Ocean wants to deter China by developing its own blue water navy. The U.S.A also wants to counter Chinese rise and ensure the security of maritime navigation from Africa and the Middle East to East Asia (Kaplan 2011). America is guarding the Indian Ocean due to its growing share of global economic output and the security of littoral countries.

China-Pakistan strategic partnership goes further by jointly benefitting from Gwadar port. Gwadar has become a strategic periphery in the international arena. This seaport is close to the Strait of Hormuz from where every day about 16 million barrels of oil passes. It is located among three key regions, South Asia, oil and gas-resourced Central Asia and the oil-rich Persian Gulf, which has further increased its strategic importance. What Pakistan lacks is the number of ports for maritime security and shipping. Development of Gwadar has shifted the Great Game of Central Asia to Pakistan because it would be the main junction to connect landlocked Central Asia with the rest of the world. Chinese are developing Gwadar because it provides them an alternate to Strait of Malacca but India and U.S. perceive Chinese presence at Gwadar to have obvious strategic implications for events in Iran and the Persian Gulf.

Pakistan alone cannot maintain stability in the Indian Ocean region; therefore, it requires collective efforts and collaboration response from friendly states. To tackle multiple threats like illegal trade, piracy, drug and human trafficking collaborative maritime security efforts need to be made. Pakistan's participation in the Counter-Piracy Combined Task Force 151 and two multi-national Combined Task Forces 150 will help it to monitor and control arms and drug smuggling in North Arabian Sea. Forums like Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) must be established to promote information sharing and cooperation among Indian Ocean region states. Other strategies may include:

- Self-reliance through indigenisation of weaponry and related technology. Today Pakistan is able to manufacture missile craft, fleet tanker and even submarines with the help of foreign assistance.
- Promote marine research and education, formulate national maritime policy framework and seek early operationalisation of Gwadar Port.
- Engage in a wide range of collaborative activities, naval exercises and visits jointly with advanced navies like China.

Pakistan has acquired sufficient technology and capability in land and air power, but Pakistan's maritime interests can only be safeguarded by a strong and well-equipped naval force. Challenges for Pakistan's navy are

growing with the changing international dynamics and Indian Navy being a sole potential external threat. The imbalance between the two naval forces, inclines Pakistan towards Chinese assistance.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Stabiliser**

After fighting a prolonged, indecisive and futile war initiated by the United States in 2002, Pakistan's economy, society and infrastructure paid heavy costs. In these circumstances, Pakistan needed economic assistance in terms of investment and infrastructure. China stepped up to drive Pakistan out of economic plight. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the name given to multiple mega projects meant to develop transportation and energy infrastructure in Pakistan and improve road and rail links between China and Pakistan. The project is also likely to serve as a gateway to Middle East for China, hence contains economic and strategic benefits for both the countries.

The project signifies the strength of friendly relations spanned over more than five decades amongst both the countries. Pakistan was the first Muslim country to accord recognition as a sovereign state to the Peoples Republic of China in 1950 and established diplomatic relations in 1951. Pakistan is believed to have played a pivotal role in Sino-U.S. rapprochement. China, also, always stood by Pakistan as a closest friend and pragmatic ally. China has also sponsored hosts of development projects and has extended concessional loans to Pakistan in the past. Both the countries signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2007 to boost trade ties. China is Pakistan's largest trade partner. China and Pakistan are engaged in a strong relationship vis-à-vis defence cooperation.

The inflow of such a massive investment per se amounts to an effective antidote for an ailing economy such as Pakistan. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is an important tool of progress and development for developing countries. It accompanies large scale socioeconomic improvements. The CPEC will generate enormous economic activity thereby creating thousands of jobs for the unemployed youth. This major economic activity also provides impetus to small/cottage industries and businesses. It can, therefore, go a long way in alleviating poverty in the country. The improved infrastructure will facilitate business activity by providing improved means of transportation of goods. The Development of Gwadar Port is the linchpin of the entire package. The city of Gwadar is to be linked to China through road and rail network. The CPEC also includes a number of energy projects, an area where Pakistan desperately needs investment and assistance to address energy shortages that have crippled the

industry. Pakistan's economy has suffered irreparable loss due to energy crises.

However, there are some challenges that pose a considerable risk to CPEC. India has expressed reservations. It is all but natural that India would be displeased on any initiative or measure that brings progress and prosperity for Pakistan. Pakistan's security agencies have foiled involvement of external elements who do not want CPEC to go further. Indian media is also criticising the Corridor and declared it as against Indian regional interests. This Corridor is harbinger of progress and prosperity for Pakistan. It is the first ever assistance package in the history of Pakistan which caters for the diverse needs of the country on multiple fronts. It is, therefore, imperative that the project be owned as a national asset by all the stakeholders by putting aside individual political interests.

### **Balance of Power: Key to Regional Peace and Stability**

Being nuclear armed nation, ally of China, contender of Indian hegemony, defender of Islam, Pakistan has geo-economic and geopolitical interests in South Asia and beyond (Indo Pacific). There is no doubt that Pakistan has been through hard times since 9/11 and U.S. led War against Terrorism. But the country's strong defence and national will helped to revive it in political and economic realms. Pakistan's primary interest is defence against any possible internal and external threats. Despite fighting several wars with India, the Kashmir conflict is still unresolved. Post-nuclearisation era between India-Pakistan relations has been relatively peaceful and less threatening. Washington-based think tanks and strategists still fear nuclear war but the Lahore Declaration 1999, Agra Summit and further developments in establishing confidence-building measures (CBMs) show that there are no chances of war. There have been some hiccups but those hiccups could not turn into armed conflict. Pakistan's foreign policy revolves around maintaining balance of power with India as it guarantees regional stability.

### **Conclusion**

The world has shrunk to a virtual drawing room where every event occurring anywhere in the world has global implications whether it is the outbreak of Ebola in Africa or rise of the Islamic State in Syria. International peace and stability is the common challenge for great players as well as small and medium range powers. Pakistan being a strong South Asian state has high stakes in regional peace and prosperity. China-Pakistan defence cooperation makes Pakistan a prominent player in the

Indo Pacific region. If regional powers like China, Japan, India, Pakistan and global players like the EU and United States engage diplomatically to avoid confrontations, this region would become example of prosperity. But inter-state conflict between India-China, India-Pakistan, China-Japan, U.S.-China etc. are great impediments. Pakistan, under this scenario is trying to protect its economic and strategic interests. Recent developments which include Pakistan's internal stability, peace in Afghanistan, India-Pakistan rapprochement, China's adherence to peaceful rise, are the crucial factors for a peaceful and prosperous region.

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# **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: An Opportunity for Regional Prosperity**

**Dr Liu Zongyi\***

## **Abstract**

The geopolitical and geo-economic situation in the Asia Pacific is changing dramatically. These changes are not only caused by China's rise, but the strategic anxiety of the United States and some other countries is also playing a dominant role. New changes in the region are showing that the regional security and economic structures designed by the United States would be featured by geopolitical competition, and are not democratic and inclusive. These are against the tide of history. In order to avoid geopolitical conflict, China put forward its concept of the Asian Community of Shared Destiny with three pillars in theory: a community of common interests, a community of common security and a community of culture and people. Its goal is to build a fair and reasonable international order and an inclusive global and regional security and economic cooperation structure. Through this, China wants to dispel Asian countries' anxiety towards its rise, as they share its development results. The Belt and Road Initiative will promote this concept of community greatly. It is an open and inclusive initiative, ready to integrate with other regional or domestic development plans or strategies. As the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project will prove to be a game-changer. It will change not only the economic and security situation in Pakistan and the region, it also will have a demonstrable effect on the other 'Belt and Road' projects, and validate the feasibility of the Asian Community of Common Destiny. Nonetheless, there are challenges ahead, which ask China and Pakistan to work harder together.

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## **Introduction**

The geopolitical and geo-economic situation in the Asia Pacific is changing dramatically. Many people, especially those from Western countries think that the main factor that is driving geopolitical changes here is the rise of China, and believe that this rise is the root of all evil. But people who are familiar with history understand that the rise and fall of big powers is actually a natural phenomenon, so the rise of China is natural. According to the late famous economist Angus Maddison, China's economy has been one of the largest in the world over the past 2000 years. Chinese leaders have declared clearly that China is pursuing peaceful development or peaceful rising, which means it will not pose a threat to other countries nor overthrow the current international system, although incremental reform of the current international system is necessary, not only for China but also for other emerging economies and all the developing countries.

But from some other countries' perspective, China is a big challenge, especially for those who believe China's military budget has expanded continuously with economic growth. A fact many American politicians, Japanese Prime Minister Abe and Filipino President Aquino mention frequently. From the Chinese perspective, it is normal to increase the military budget, because for a long time China's military buildup remained low in favour of economic development and now China must defend her development achievements of the past 30 years as well its overseas interests. It should be noted that the growth of China's defence budget never surpassed its GDP with the inflation factors deducted. In fact, the Chinese military budget ratio decreased from 6.5 per cent in 2009 to 5.3 per cent in 2012 (Zheng and Yang 2014). China's military development level is far behind that of the United States. But for the United States, China's fast economic growth and military budget expansion has become an excuse to conduct the 'Rebalance to Asia Pacific' policy, with the Western mass media deliberately interpreting Chinese self-defence actions in East China Sea and South China Sea as aggressive. They control and shape such discourse power.

Everything in the world is shifting, including the international order, but the United States does not want to recognise and adapt to this reality. In the interaction between the United States and China, the U.S. enjoys a positive position and has a lot of priorities for it is the dominant power in the current international system. So we cannot say that the situation in Asia Pacific is only caused by China's rise. The strategic anxiety of the United States and some other countries plays a dominant role due to which

geopolitical competition and geo-economic cooperation co-exist in the region. Sadly, China's rising power and the *status quo* power have not found a way to accommodate each other. The visit of President Xi to the United States in September 2015 was a success, both sides agreed on non-confrontation and non-conflict, which is the bottomline of China-U.S. relations. But it's far from the new type of major country relationship initiated by China.

## **New Changes in Geopolitical and Geo-economic Situation in Asia Pacific**

As a dominant power in Asia Pacific, the United States wants to continue to enhance its priorities in the region by conducting 'Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific Strategy'. This strategy has three pillars: political and diplomatic, military, and economic. Among them, the military pillar is the strongest one by far. The U.S. is positioning the bulk of its Air Force and Navy in this region despite budget constraints. 60 per cent of its forces will be in the Asia Pacific region, with its air force having the most advanced weapons, including the Zumwalt-class destroyer, long-range attack missiles and air defence missiles (Diola 2014). Now F-35 Joint Strike Fighters and Littoral Combat Ships have been deployed and started to patrol. Besides the involvement of U.S. Navy and Air Force, the U.S. Army will have more than 100,000 soldiers in the region. On the basis of strengthening its Hub-Spoke Military Alliance System formed in the Cold War, especially with Japan, Korea and the Philippines, the United States has tried to build its new multilateral military alliances, such as the U.S.-Japan-Philippines, the U.S.-Japan-Australia, and the U.S.-Japan-India, etc. The United States has also enhanced its military relations with Vietnam, a country where thousands of American soldiers died in the Vietnam War. Japan, India and other small countries in the region cooperate or coordinate with the United States closely, which often lead to turbulence in the East China Sea and South China Sea and impact regional security and economic cooperation seriously. The U.S. Navy now conducting maritime patrols within the 12-mile territorial zone around Chinese man-made islands in South China Sea, maritime tensions in the Pacific are at an all-time high (Singh 2015).

Against this background, two countries' strategic tendency should be attached great attention, one is Japan, and another is India. The United States wants to use Japan as a counterbalance power to check and balance or even contain China, and Japan wants to take the rising of China as an excuse to get rid of the military control of the U.S. and become a normal country. Under the Abe government, the Japanese have realised a lot of objectives that his grandfather could only dream of. Japan has adopted new

security bill and dropped a long-standing ban on ‘collective self-defence’, which allows much easier deployment of Japanese troops abroad. Now Japan has become a country that can become positively or negatively involved in more and more disputes and conflicts in the region and beyond the region, such as the Diaoyu Islands, Taiwan and South China Sea, which will cause great danger to the security of the Asia Pacific region. In order to check and balance China, the U.S. has abandoned morality and justice. Shinzo Abe’s government is eager to renounce the pacifist constitution foisted on Japan by the United States. The so-called Chinese threat is still the perfect excuse for him to get support not only from America, but also from the Japanese people. But the latter are not so easy to cheat this time, so it’s possible for the government to provoke some conflict with China on Diaoyu islands or South China Sea to make the ‘Chinese threat’ look likely.

As for India, after Prime Minister Modi took power, Indian foreign policy has become much more aggressive. Many people had thought that PM Modi’s focus would be on Indian economy and domestic reform, but actually Modi’s biggest achievement in the past year has been diplomacy. PM Modi feels good at India’s position, thinking that it can play the role of a strategic lever in Asia and the world at large. Of course, on many occasions India’s success is based on its potential role of ‘Checks and Balance’ with China that Indian government highlights intentionally or unintentionally. On China-India bilateral relations, New Delhi welcomes Beijing’s finances and the two sides have collaborated well in the BRICS Development Bank (New Development Bank -NDB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the high-speed railway project between Delhi to Chennai. Nonetheless, the Modi administration takes a rather different attitude towards China in strategy and security-related affairs. A border standoff broke just two days before Chinese President Xi’s visit to India. Meanwhile, the Indian government has adopted the ‘Act East’ policy to replace the old ‘Look East’ strategy. It not only engages in more proactive military cooperation with the U.S., Japan and Vietnam, but also interferes in the South China Sea dispute in a high-profile way. In addition, New Delhi has also strengthened its relations with countries across South Asia and along the Indian Ocean. It has become more vigilant against China’s military actions in the Indian Ocean. It has used this as an excuse to energetically develop its navy. India holds an ambiguous attitude to Beijing’s initiatives such as the One Belt and One Road initiative and only expressed interest in studying the India-China-Bangladesh-Myanmar Economic Corridor. However, it welcomes Washington’s Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor project in exchange of U.S. and Japan support for its Mekong-Ganga Cooperation project. India’s different attitudes towards China in strategy and economy show its mentality about and towards

bilateral relations: it views China as its competitor in Indo-Pacific geopolitics though it longs for economic integration in Asia to boost its economy. However, it is reluctant to see China acting as the single leader in the region, but expects to share the role.

In order to strengthen the ‘Rebalance to Asia-Pacific’ strategy, the U.S. adopted the phrase ‘Indo-Pacific’, a term initiated by Australia. The aim of U.S. ‘Indo-Pacific’ geostrategy is to balance and even contain China’s increasing influence in the Asia Pacific region and the Indian Ocean, with the help of other countries. From the U.S. and Japan perspective, India is the ‘linchpin’ in the ‘Indo-Pacific’ geostrategic system. Many Indian officials and scholars appreciate this idea. In January 2015, during Obama’s visit to India, the U.S. and India released the ‘U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region’. The adoption of the strategic vision reflects India’s much needed enthusiasm to play a greater leadership role in the region and India’s willingness to step aside from its strict ‘non-alignment’ principle to further this vision. India and the U.S. agreed to enhance trilateral and multilateral security cooperation. Earlier, India was cautious of entering into trilateral and multilateral security arrangements, and New Delhi is leading the way for such initiatives (Baruah 2015). In October 2015, India and the U.S. held naval exercise ‘Malabar 2015’, and Japan was invited to join as a permanent participant which marks a turning point in the relationship between the navies of India, U.S. and Japan in the region (Raghuvanshi 2015). If Australia had been invited to participate like it was eight years ago, a ‘security quartet’ in the Asia Pacific that was advocated by Shinzo Abe in 2007 would gain further momentum. But such regional multilateral security arrangements are not inclusive - a legacy of the Cold War, -they are based on ideology, members are not equal, and the largest country in the region is excluded.

Besides these new geopolitical changes in Asia Pacific, another important new change is a geo-economic one. The U.S. has always emphasised that the economic pillar is the most important part of the ‘Rebalance to Asia-Pacific’ strategy, but in the past several years, this strategy has been militarised. On 5 October 2015, the U.S., Japan and other ten Pacific Rim countries finalised the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, which caused a stir in the mass media. The TPP is a victory for U.S. President Barack Obama, since it will be a part of his diplomatic legacy. This deal is of great symbolic importance since, just as Obama reiterated after the TPP agreement was passed, the U.S. ‘cannot let countries like China write the rules of the global economy.’ After TPPA was signed, news headlines such as ‘China has suffered a setback in competing for predominance in formulating new rules for global trades’ and ‘China has

been thoroughly isolated' have been common. But from the text of the Agreement (MFTA), we can find that the TPP, dominated by the U.S., is not only based on economic, but also geopolitical considerations. TPPA is an exclusive regional trade design, China, India and other emerging economies are not included. The U.S. declared publicly that:

If we don't pass this agreement and write those rules, competitors will set weak rules of the road, threatening American jobs and workers while undermining U.S. leadership in Asia (USTR n.d.).

Should the TPPA be ratified by legislative authorities in all its member states as the U.S. expects, and should the U.S. and Europe finalise the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a new global trade and investment system will take shape to replace the World Trade Organization (WTO). The global framework the TPP and the TTIP are designed to centre around the G7. The conclusion of the TPP will lay the foundation for a capitalist empire transcending sovereignty. It will keep the world economic order intact, and expand advantages for Western transnational companies. And in the TTP, member countries will form a new centre-peripheral structure. It will be difficult for developing members to upgrade to a new level along the value chain.

To summarise briefly, the regional order in the Asia Pacific is undergoing restructuring, and new changes in the region show that there the emerging regional structure is focused on geopolitical competition which seems to have led to a rapid and serious arms race. Now Japan is in the process of re-militarisation and the U.S. is showing its muscles in the South China Sea. Furthermore, this emerging regional structure is not a democratic or inclusive one, it is centred on the U.S. strengthening its hegemony, and other members in this structure are in a subordinate position. China is excluded, as is India, and a lot of other developing countries. India is regarded as the linchpin in this American geostrategic design, but it is not a member of TPPA. It is impossible for India to become a member of TPPA in the future, unless it decides to give up its economic sovereignty. This new regional security and economic structure designed by the United States is also against the tide of history.

### **Asian Community of Common Destiny and the Belt and Road Initiative**

Geopolitical competition could lead to an arms race, conflicts and even wars, which will destroy peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region. For

China and most Asian developing countries, it is peaceful and stable circumstances which are needed to promote social and economic development. In the past, the United States even provided public goods for the security and stability of the region, but today American behaviour in Asia proves that it has become a troublemaker. Afghanistan, Iraq, and South China Sea are examples. The United States cannot build an inclusive, equal, democratic, and peaceful regional and global security and economic order anymore. But how can Asian countries deal with the challenges they are facing? It's against this background that the Chinese government put forward the Asian Community of Common Destiny and the Belt and Road Initiative. Both ask countries to take account of each other's legitimate interests and reasonable concerns while defending and seeking national interests, and to promote common development and security when driving one's own development and security. They want win-win cooperation while tolerating other country's development and promoting mutual strategic trust through peace dialogue. they ask to build a fair and reasonable international order and an inclusive global and regional security and economic cooperation structure.

China initiated the Asian Community of Common Destiny because it realised the close interdependent relationship between the economies of the Asian countries, and the latter's aspiration to improve social and economic development. Because of economic globalisation, Asian countries with different political systems, different advantages and different development levels have formed an inseparable symbiotic relationship, and composited a vertical supply chain centred with China. This supply chain is expanding continuously, absorbing more and more countries for participation and creating more and more development opportunities. Most Asian countries want to grasp the opportunity of the world's political and economic loci shifting to Asia.

Secondly, Asian countries hope to deal with traditional and non-traditional threats, but don't want to geopolitical competition. Of course, there are a few Asian countries which want to use geopolitical competition to realise their own goals. But most want to abandon the Cold War mindset, bring forth new ideas to security, and build an equal, democratic, inclusive, co-operative and a mutual restraint Asian security framework through a jointly-built, shared and win-win way.

Lastly, China and most Asian countries have common aspirations. China is willing to shoulder international responsibilities and provide international public goods by playing a coordinative and leading role in building the Asian Community of Shared Destiny. China's development will promote Asian peace and prosperity, and vice versa. China's peaceful development strategy ensures the peace of China's development from

within, and without.

The general goal of the Asian Community of Common Destiny is to establish a new type of harmonious symbiotic international political order and a new type of win-win co-operative economic order. This will be a step-by-step process. There is not a simple way nor a single institution that can lead this. It will be based on current international institutions and new institutions that bear political, economic and security functions, such as SCO, CICA, ASEAN+, APEC, RCEP, AIIB, SAARC, and GCC etc., and TPP also is not excluded. Cooperation and integration of different sub-regional institutions with different functions is the way forward. For example, China advocates Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), which is more inclusive than TPP. The future FTAAP might be based on TTP and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Through the Belt and Road Initiative China will also open up towards the developing countries in Central Asia, Middle East and Africa. It is a shift from ‘bringing in’ to ‘going out’. So the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative is not only a demand of broadening and deepening China’s opening-up, but also a demand of enhancing mutual benefits and cooperation with Asian, European, African and other countries in the world. One of the reasons that East Asia developed fast in the past decades is that these countries composed a perfect production, supply and value chain, and a resilient financial network centred with China. Now, the Belt and Road Initiative will expand these chains, and the financial networks to Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa, ultimately forming a common economic space.

The Initiative is just an initiative by far, it’s not a plan or a strategy. It needs cooperation and support from not only all the countries along the belt and road, but also from powers beyond the region, such as the United States and Japan. The initiative is ready to integrate with other regional or domestic development plans or strategies, such as the New Silk Road project put forward by U.S.A. in 2011, Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor raised in 2015, and India’s Mekong-Ganga Cooperative Initiative, etc. It has connected with Russia’s Euro-Asian Economic Union and Kazakhstan’s Bright Route strategy. It will not only improve the formation of a community of shared interests, but also a community of shared security and a community of culture and people.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Game Changer**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was co-initiated by Premier Li Keqiang and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2013. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Pakistan in April 2015 promoted CPEC

greatly. It is a comprehensive development programme between Pakistan and China with a planned portfolio of projects totaling around \$45 billion, the largest overseas investment of China. The programme has two main components. It plans to develop a new trade and transport route from Kashgar in China to the Gwadar Port. The other component envisages developing special economic zones along the route, including power projects. Major physical infrastructure to be built includes a 2,700-kilometre highway stretching from Kashgar to Gwadar through Khunjerab Pass, railway links for freight trains between Gwadar and Khunjerab linking to China and having possible regional connectivity with Afghanistan, Iran and India, and the Karachi-Lahore motorway. The project will also undertake the revival and extension of the Karakorum Highway that links Xinjiang with Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. The first phase projects will receive \$45.69 billion in concessionary and commercial loans, for which financial facilitation is being arranged by the Silk Road Fund. These include \$33.79 billion for energy projects, \$5.9 billion for roads, \$3.69 billion for railway networks, \$1.6 billion for the Lahore Mass Transit, \$66 million for the Gwadar Port and a fibre optic project worth \$4 million (Zain 2015).

By integrating China with Central Asia and South Asia and reaching the Middle East through the Gwadar Port, the corridor mainly acts as a trade bridge between China, the Middle East Africa, and Europe through Pakistan. But it is not only an economic initiative but also a strategic one. It is of great significance for China's energy security and Pakistan's strategic security. It is genuine win-win cooperation and also symbolises that strategic and economic cooperation can have an equal footing in bilateral relations.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and a lot of Pakistani officials and scholars have said that the CPEC will prove to be a game changer for the entire region (Pakistan News 2015). From a Chinese perspective too, CPEC will indeed become a game changer if it is actualised.

Firstly, a large portion of CPEC is reserved for power projects to reduce the demand-supply gap in energy-starved Pakistan, while the expansion of road networks across the country is a major key point for both infrastructural and industrial development. The jobs created by CPEC would address the employment concerns of the youth of Pakistan. The economic activity generated in the northern parts of the country could be a harbinger of peace for the terrorism-hit areas (Khaled 2015).

The highways that shall stretch from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea have interlinked transportation and trade encouraging small towns and cities to develop along the routes (Khan 2015). It will change Pakistan's economic geography. And more importantly, it has sent signals of stability

and investment friendly messages globally for Pakistan's economy.

At a time when no country was ready to invest in Pakistan due to security concerns, China has come forward to make an enormous investment that has a potential to transform Pakistan forever.

But if anything is to come out of the present deal, Pakistanis will need to work harder to fulfill their part of the institutional, legal, financial and logistical commitments (Khan 2015) which may change not only the destiny of Pakistan, but also its governance capability. Secondly, CPEC will change the regional economic and security situation (Sial 2014). It will have a positive effect on SAARC integration. Because of conflicts between India and Pakistan, SAARC has split into two segments. CPEC may enhance China and SAARC economic cooperation and SAARC regional integration.

China's economic inroads into Pakistan and its recent involvement in Afghanistan will benefit the U.S., which has historically maintained a strong influence over Pakistan. The Silk Road Economic Belt and the CPEC are ready to connect with the New Silk Road Project raised by Hillary Clinton in 2011. That is the reason why the United States is not against CPEC. With the U.S. desperate to end its presence in Afghanistan, China is beginning to play a central role through its economic corridors in stabilising the region for U.S. withdrawal, a win-win for both China and the U.S. (Nadim 2015).

And lastly, this flagship project and its smooth and down-to-earth advance will have a demonstration effect on other Belt and Road projects such as BCIM. India is against the CPEC firmly. It is hoped that the trade and energy benefits India could obtain from joining CPEC could change its stance. India is already part of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project that will move natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India. It is also among the four countries that invested in the recently commissioned Myanmar-China natural gas pipeline that allows China access to cheap fuel (Chowdhury 2013). Most importantly, CPEC is not only an economic project, but also a political, social, security, cultural project. Its success will make China and Pakistan a community of common destiny, which demonstrates the feasibility of an Asian Community of Common Destiny.

## **Challenges Ahead**

Nonetheless, there are challenges ahead. The United States and India are important stakeholders in CPEC. Although in the short-term, the U.S. is not

against it, but in the long-run, it may try to prevent China's influence to expand. For India, CPEC means that China shall have the upper hand in the Arabian Sea as it will have complete control over the Straits of Hormuz through Gwadar's seaport. So it is important to integrate the U.S. and India's interest into CPEC which will require both Chinese and Pakistani efforts.

Terrorism and the insurgency in Balochistan are posing threats to the construction of the economic corridor. Beijing hopes that Islamabad could adopt effective measures to stabilise the domestic situation. It also hopes that the bilateral cooperation could help create favourable conditions for Pakistan to eradicate terrorism and internal rebels. PM Nawaz promises no compromise on the security of the Chinese workforce.

Meanwhile, China wants to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan to jointly safeguard the stability of Afghanistan, which is important for the smooth implementation of the Belt and Road project and the stability of Xinjiang. Beijing hopes to coordinate with Pakistan to put forward a peace negotiation and reconciliation with the Taliban.

With enormous funds and a large number of projects flooding Pakistan, all Pakistani provinces have been competing for Chinese projects. The Baloch nationalists fear turning into a minority. Chinese companies should assure the local population that their investment is legitimate and transparent and make the locals real beneficiaries of the projects. They should actively communicate with the local people, political parties, tribes and media. But for the Pakistani people, dealing with Chinese investment is also a challenge. It is a 'cake issue: dividing it or baking a bigger one?

The China-Pakistan friendship is built on a solid foundation and needs to be consolidated through the younger generations. Influenced by Western media, some young Pakistanis have little understanding about China. Therefore, both sides in the future should pay attention to enhancing people-to-people exchange amongst the youth.

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# **Power Politics in the Asia Pacific: Implications for South Asia**

- India as a Linchpin of U.S. Strategy in Asia Pacific and Policy Options for Pakistan
- Geostrategic Competition in Asia Pacific and Security Implications for South Asia
- U.S. Pivot/Rebalance Policy and Role for India
- China's Constructive Role in Asia Pacific
- Building a Co-operative Security Order for Asia Pacific: A Way Forward



# **India as a Linchpin of U.S. Strategy in Asia Pacific and Policy Options for Pakistan**

**Majid Ali Noonari\***

## **Abstract**

The dawn of the Twenty-First Century has witnessed a change as the centre of power began to shift from the West to the East. The new millennium has changed the United States' interests as its policies took a turn by shifting attention from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific. Chinese growth and its rise of influence in the region has been the main factor behind the U.S. Asia Pivot policy, and India becoming the centre of U.S. policies to contain China in the region. U.S. President Obama introduced the policy of Asia Pivot in 2011 which changed the whole dynamics of its relations with the regions' states. The developments between Indo-U.S. relations have been the hallmark of the strategy as the U.S. supported India in multiple international forums such as India's aspiration for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and Nuclear Suppliers Group. The United States identified India as the most potential challenger to the Chinese hegemony due to its complex relations with China as well as its growth and aspiration for the 'great power' status. In 2012, Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta described India as a linchpin in the U.S. policy of 'rebalancing' Asia, and India's own Act East policy.

## **Introduction**

**I**ndian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Look East Link West' policy is designed to involve actively in the Asia Pacific region and forge its alliances and secure the east of Malacca. In this regard, relations were strengthened with the key states Japan, Australia, and South Korea who fear Chinese aggression.

In the above scenario, Pakistan has looked towards China who has helped in times of crisis and their close friendship has now been cemented into a critical strategic partnership of South Asia, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the civil nuclear deal. Pakistan's

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'Vision East Asia' provides a comprehensive guide to balance Pakistani relations in the East Asia, as a result Pakistan has initiated efforts to forge close ties with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and even Oceania states to strengthen economic relations and create a balance with India in the region. Pakistan, on the other hand, cannot leave the U.S. as it is a close ally in the War on Terror and in multiple economic and security projects; hence, Pakistan will continue to develop good relations with U.S. and the West as long as their interests are aligned with ours.

The Asia Pacific is vast consisting of the regions of South Asia<sup>1</sup>, North East Asia, East Asia<sup>2</sup>, Oceania<sup>3</sup>, and South East Asia (SEA).<sup>4</sup> The maritime trade from Gwadar to Malacca makes the region one of the busiest in the world. It has become a strategic theatre of this millennium due to the natural resources and the sea lanes as more than 40 per cent of the seaborne crude oil and 50 per cent of merchant trade passes through here. China, like the United States and others has important stakes in this region. But there are suspicions about the growth of the Chinese economy as well as influence, and its claims over the South China Sea territories. The U.S. been further pressurised by the U.S. One-China Policy especially over their claim on Taiwan, and their friendly and cooperative relations with ASEAN since this makes it the largest trading partner of the association. The declining power of Japan further strengthens Chinese influence in the region.

Chinese economic reforms were initiated in the late 1970s with the principles of mutual co-existence and since then the world is amazed how China has been able to foster its economic development by following this principle. This is the question which has haunted the U.S. policy-makers for more than a decade. The Chinese government White Paper *China's Peaceful Development Road* which was published in December 2005 states that China cannot achieve its peaceful development without the rest of the world likewise, the world needs China if it is to attain prosperity (China.org 2005).

The growth of China, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India has transformed the region economically as well as politically as competition has grown between multiple forces for influence over the region, and to capture markets for the growth of their economies. The U.S. has backed the 12 member Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) to

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<sup>1</sup> India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives.

<sup>2</sup> People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia, and eastern regions of the Russian Federation.

<sup>3</sup> Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, and Palau.

<sup>4</sup> Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

promote the economic growth of the member states as well as strengthen their cooperation in the different fields.

Such competition may create political instability due to the formation of U.S.-led alliances in the region. India may play a central role in these alliances and become the linchpin of U.S. Asia Pivot policy, supported by Australia and Japan. There are few states that are happy with the Chinese role as a benefactor to their economies and may not want any conflicts, but while China is pursuing its peaceful existence policy, if U.S. encirclement continues, it may not remain aside in the region.

The rivalry over the sea routes is growing as China is modernising its navy to secure the sea routes as 80 per cent of its trade passes through this region, and the U.S. has pledged that more than 60 per cent of its naval ships will be stationed in the region until 2020.

The other important states of the region are Japan and South Korea which are concerned about the Chinese rise due to the Japan-China conflict and South Korea's concern over the Chinese role in North Korea's nuclear issue and its support of the North Korean regime. According to them, the Chinese supremacy in the region will not only jeopardise their political and security interests, but also economic interests, as more than 90 per cent Japanese and South Korean trade passes through here.

The South China Sea is a hotbed of conflicts, where China is a major claimant alongwith Japan and others. The issues of Taiwan as well as North Korean nuclear crises make the region a flashpoint for future conflicts.

### **United States Asia Pivot Strategy**

During the first years of his presidency, the Bush administration developed a strategy that US should pay special attention to the Asia Pacific region which mainly focused on strengthening the periphery states around China to contain its growing influence in the region. The main focus was on the states of India, Japan, Australia, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam, but the situation changed dramatically as 9/11, 2001 happened and the U.S. diverted all its attention towards the War on Terror by launching a war in Afghanistan in 2001 and their invasion of Iraq under the pretext of Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2003.

In 2002, Condoleezza Rice in an article identified India as a potential state to become a key state of the region and to achieve the status of a global power. In 2003, then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee reportedly confessed that a strategic partnership with the United States was essential to his twenty-year programme of attaining the 'great-power status'; otherwise India's ability to project power and influence abroad anywhere would be greatly compromised (Monthly Reviews 2006). In March 2005, then U.S.

Secretary of State Rice announced Washington's decision to 'make India a global power' (*Ibid.*). Given this, George W. Bush dealt with Pakistan and India separately. While the U.S. has needed Pakistan in its WoT, its reliance on Pakistan will be reduced after the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan is completed. Since 2001, the U.S. has supported the normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan and have maintained a neutral stance over the Kashmir issue. There are suspicions in the minds of Indian policy-makers that once U.S. forces withdrawal will be completed, South Asia will once again be forgotten and India will have to face the consequences which is a concern for them.

The U.S. is not clear about its vision towards the Asia Pacific as President Obama has different policy on the region. In 2009, his strategy was to accommodate rising China in global affairs, but with the growth of China, Obama changed his policy in 2012 when he declared his formal decision to 'rebalance' Asia,<sup>5</sup> with the Pentagon Chief Leon Panetta vowing to expand defence ties between India and the United States, saying New Delhi was a 'linchpin' in a new U.S. military strategy focused on Asia (Dawn 2012).

The January 2012 Pentagon document on Strategic Guidance has 'inaugurated' a new cold war in the Asia Pacific region between the United States and China. The document affirms that the United States will of necessity *rebalance*, or 'pivot' towards the Asia Pacific region...The document gives a prominent place to India in the U.S. strategy, which came as a surprise to many observers. While India is singled out with specific reference to strategic partnership, long-standing allies such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea are clubbed together under 'existing alliances' (Koshy 2012).

America's main interest during the Twentieth Century was towards the Middle East due to its oil resources, but with depleting resources as well as the growth of new players in international politics has realigned its policies towards Asia Pacific. The emergence of China, the decline of Japan and the growing conflicts in South China Sea have compelled it to forge alliances with Australia, Japan, India, South Korea and Philippines to counter the rising influence of China. The formation of these alliances raises concerns in China as it has disputes with these states and China wants control over maritime security to control its interests in the Asia Pacific region. A hostile and overbearing U.S. response would confirm Chinese

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<sup>5</sup> The main architects of the Asia Pivot policy were Hillary Clinton and Kurt Campbell who floated the idea of Asia Pacific in their speeches and statements.

suspicions that the United States seeks to contain its rise, which could cement the emergence of a U.S.-China Cold War (Glaser n.d.). It has taken following initiatives to encourage allies in the region:

- In 2010, the U.S. offered full support to South Korea after the North Korea nuclear tests and its naval activities in South China Sea.
- In 2011, Obama signed an agreement which allows for rotational deployment of 2500 marines in Darwin, Australia, and U.S. Navy plans to have four Littoral Combat Ships operating out of Singapore by 2018.
- In 2011, U.S. offered Japan assistance under the U.S.-Japan Security Agreement.
- U.S.-Philippines signed a ten-year defence treaty in 2014.
- In April 2015, the U.S. held joint drills in SCS with Australia and Philippines.

### **India's Role in the Asia Pacific**

India's Look East Policy (LEP) 2.0 was initiated by President Narismha Rao in 1992 to reintegrate with South East Asian states in all fields. Its policy of Look East 3.0 is focused on strengthening relations with Asia Pacific states. First LEP refers to the Indian influence over South East Asia (SEA) from Sixth to Fifteenth Century B.C. The new policy of LEP 3.0 is designed due to the rising influence of China in South and South East Asia not only in trade but also in political and security influence.

India considers South Asia and South East Asia as its sphere of influence as 55 per cent of its trade with Asia Pacific region passes through the South China Sea (SCS) which makes this region vital for India. India's geographical position gives it an advantage over China in the Indian Ocean. India LEP has been successful in dealing with ASEAN as it became a Full Dialogue Partner (FDP) of ASEAN in 1995 and a member of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996. India also became the founding member of East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005. India has become successful due to its role as a balancer against China.

Indian Prime Minister Modi during the ASEAN Summit in 2014 introduced the upgraded version of India's Look East Policy known as 'Act East Link West'. He emphasised to the parties involved in the South China Sea dispute that they should follow the international laws and regulations to resolve issues. Modi is a critic of the Chinese policy in the South China Sea. The term 'Act East' was first coined by Hillary Clinton in her visit to India

in 2011 when she discussed and encouraged India to not only ‘Look East’ but also engage as well as ‘Act East’.

The U.S. and India signed a Defence Framework in 2015 which states that both will increase each other’s capabilities to secure the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean. The states of Vietnam, India, and Australia will look to protect their interests in the region and coordinate so that they can execute their policies smoothly.

Japan and Australia also see India as a balancer in the region and Japanese Prime Minister in his visit to New Delhi in 2014 stressed forming a Japan-India led ‘broader Asia’. During Modi’s visit to Japan, he signed multiple agreements, including defence to enhance military ties between both the states. Modi also forged close ties with Australia and as a result Australia signed a Civil –Nuclear deal with India during the Australian Prime Minister’s visit of New Delhi after Modi’s inauguration. In November 2014, Modi called Australia the centre of India’s vision for the region.

India’s Act East policy may be affected due to the Chinese role in its periphery states, particularly west as China has forged close ties with Pakistan and Afghanistan by hosting/ facilitating the Afghan government talks with the Taliban. India’s policy towards its west is failing as Iran-Pakistan-China gas pipeline will continue and India’s influence in the Afghanistan is also fading even though it has spent millions of dollars in the country.

## **Policy Options for Pakistan**

Pakistan is situated at an important geostrategic location as it connects Central Asia, Middle East and provides access to China to the Indian Ocean via Gwadar Port. Since 9/11, Pakistan remained a close ally of the United States in the region and was called the major non-NATO ally in 2004. With the growing U.S.-India partnership, policy-makers in Islamabad have looked for other states to balance the power equation. China has remained the cornerstone of the Pakistan’s Look East policy particularly in this changing scenario where Indo-U.S. nexus may frustrate Pakistan’s efforts.

With its volatile and hostile relations with India due to Kashmir, Siachen, nuclearisation and terrorism, Pakistan is concerned by the U.S. tilt towards India. The discriminatory behavior of U.S. on the civil-nuclear deal with Pakistan, declaring India as a linchpin in Asia Pacific and its support for India to gain UNSC permanent membership are the hallmarks of the new priorities of U.S. in South Asia.

The growing Indo-U.S. cooperation will bring Pakistan and China closer to each other due to their common goals i.e., to balance the region

and deal with the threats posed to their interests. Pakistan sees China as a most trustworthy friend and ally and signed 2005 Treaty of Friendship and 2014 CPEC to enhance their ties.

The volatile nature of Afghanistan and the Middle Eastern region makes Pakistan an important state in new great game to obtain resources of mineral rich states of Central Asia as well as those of the Middle Eastern states via the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean through the Gwadar Port. Pakistan should maintain friendly relations with Middle Eastern Muslim states and strengthen links with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Central Asian Republics. The relations with Russia should be promoted to diversify its defence portfolio.

Pakistan has sacrificed hundreds in the War on Terror, but the U.S. and its allies including India still accuse it of terrorist activities around the world to pressurise the country. Pakistan's Armed Forces Zarb-e-Azab has been a major military operation against terrorists and reduced the terrorist threats to a great extent, but the cold shoulder U.S. policies should now make the government reconsider its policies regarding the United States. As the visit of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 2015 witnessed that Pakistan's demands for U.S. support for the membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group, Civil Nuclear deal as well as the solution of contentious issues with India were rejected by the U.S. President Obama due to objections raised by New Delhi.

### **Pakistan's Look East Policy**

Pakistan's 'Vision East Asia' is aimed to foster the economic development of the state by forging close ties with the East Asian economies. The main purpose was to balance trade relations between west and east so that Pakistan can lessen the dependency on the western states for its economic development. It was formally adopted in 2003. Pakistan should actively become involved in organisations like Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, ASEAN, ARF and others to promote its interests as many states are still not a party to any side but are vying for the role of 'balancer' in the region, such as Indonesia. Policy-makers should visit the states of the Asia Pacific region frequently and people-to-people contact should be encouraged to further the understanding between Pakistan and the states of Asia pacific region. Pakistan should continue to support the Six Party Talks for the solution of the nuclear issue of North Korea which will reduce the concerns raised by the U.S. and its allies Japan and South Korea.

## **Conclusion**

The Asia Pacific region is a hotbed of competition between great powers for control. India and China are vying for the influence to gain new markets as well as to create a sphere of influence. India has been seeking the role of global power dominancy, and has the concerns over growing Sino-Pakistan relations, since their *entente* will impact India's interests in western Asia as well as divert Indian attention from the region. Indian defence analysts have raised concerns that China is encircling India by forging alliances with its periphery states.

The role of the U.S. has been important since it has opted to take India under its wing for forging alliances in the Asia Pacific. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one to contain the influence of China. In this great game, India will play a critical role due to its expanding economy and population as well as its ever increasing military muscle. Pakistan may find it has limited options but with China on its side and its Vision East Asia policy, Islamabad should continue to focus on economic and security cooperation with China along with renewing friendly ties with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea. The government should encourage the Asia Pacific states to invest in the country, and realise that the former can provide new markets for Pakistani goods and can lessen the dependency of its economy on Western markets.

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# **Geostrategic Competition in Asia Pacific and Security Implications for South Asia<sup>1</sup>**

**Dr Sinderpal Singh<sup>\*</sup>**

## **Introduction**

**A** large part of the geopolitics literature on the Asia Pacific looks at the strategic rivalry between the three main protagonists – India, China and the United States – and draws various conclusions based on this approach. However, a growing body of literature has begun to look at how geopolitical competition can be traced even further by examining the contests over defining regional spaces and the attempts to include /exclude states from various regions. This paper will attempt to add to this literature by looking at how specific definitions of the ‘Asia Pacific’ and ‘Indo Pacific’ have had and will continue to have important ramifications for the region we term ‘South Asia’.

## **Constructing the Asia-Pacific: Cold War Imperatives**

Arif Dirlik, a renowned historian, has argued that although the term ‘Asia Pacific’, along with related terms like ‘Pacific Rim’ and ‘Pacific Basin’ have become relatively commonplace, the meaning of these terms still remains fuzzy. The immediate reference is obviously geophysical – a reference to societies/states on the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean and those within it. However, the actual usage itself sometimes left out some of these societies/states while including societies/states outside the physical boundaries of the Pacific Ocean. He concludes that ‘the terms represent ideational constructs that, although they refer to a physical location on the globe, are themselves informed by conceptualisations that owe little to geography understood physically or positivistically; in other words, that they define the physical space they pretend to describe’ (Dirlik 1992; 1998).

In representations of both ‘Asia’ and the ‘Pacific’, Japan’s position as a region-builder has been core, both physically as well as in intellectually conceptualising the parameters of these regional spaces, as far back as the late Nineteenth Century (Korhonen 1998; Duara 2001). In the post-war period, however, until the 1960s, Japan’s attempts to play any kind of role

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<sup>1</sup> Part of this paper has been published by the author under ‘From “Asia” to “Asia Pacific”: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces’, ISAS working paper no. 113, September 2010.

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in the Asian region, much less re-articulate any vision of a regional space, were crippled by latent suspicions towards Japan on the part of several newly independent Asian states. By the late 1960s though, as Japan became the third largest national economy in the world after the U.S. and the Soviet Union (by 1967), it began to represent itself as a member of two identifiable regional groups. Japan, according to this representation, belonged firstly to the advanced industrialised countries, specifically the Pacific advanced countries. Secondly, Japan was also part of Asia. Put together, a conception of an ‘Asia Pacific’ region, a distinctive regional entity that suitably captured Japan’s dual ‘position’ was put forth. More importantly, the ‘Asian’ part of this early ‘Asia Pacific’ idea did not necessarily include the whole of ‘Asia’, as usually understood. Therefore ‘the concept of Asia relevant to Japan is in a process of being defined through the term ‘Pacific’, so that it means what is today known as East and Southeast Asia’ (Korhonen 1992).

Regions, though constructed by statesmen, are hardly arbitrary or random. They are represented on the basis of certain ideological foundations as evidenced from the previous discussion on earlier attempts to forge an Asian region. One of the central ideological foundations of such early Japanese constructions of the ‘Asia Pacific’ was ‘economism’. Similar to earlier rhetoric about the ‘Pacific Age’, an important part of the ‘Asia Pacific’ ‘idea’ was centred around the vision of economies growing and developing rapidly, in a context where it became taboo to even mention military affairs within discussions of the ‘Pacific’ or the ‘Asia Pacific’ (Korhonen 1996). By the 1980s, the term ‘Asia Pacific’ was no longer an unfamiliar term in both the policy and academic discourses on international regionalism. The ‘economism’ that underlay earlier representations continued into this period, especially with the advent of NICs (Newly Industrialised Countries) or the ‘Asian Tigers’, comprising of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. In fact, these examples of export-led capitalist development were lauded as models for other countries in the ‘Asian’ region which had chosen (mistakenly according to this discourse) economic policies of ‘self reliance’ or ‘socialist development’ (Burma and North Korea) (Cummings 1998; Teik 1999).

Despite being originally left out of this Asia Pacific region in the 1970s, on the basis of its ‘socialist’ character, China post 1978 (with Deng Xiaoping’s economic ‘reforms’) began to slowly be accepted as part of this economically ‘dynamic’ regional space. By the late 1980s, the region, in line with this dominant representation, included most of East Asia (with the notable exclusion of North Korea, Myanmar and Indochina, mainly Vietnam), Japan, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand.

A second basis of this specific representation of the ‘Asia Pacific’ was military-strategic. In this particular representation, U.S. conceptions of regional ‘order’ were crucial. Up till the mid-1960s, the U.S. perceived its strategic interests in Asia as that of facing the greatest of threats from the Chinese-Soviet alliance and its military-ideological support for ‘Communist’ movements within this regional space. Beginning in 1950, the Korean War and its aftermath were enduring reminders for the U.S. of the contested nature of the ‘Asian’ space. The U.S. sought to make a legitimate role in this part of the world by fashioning this space as not just ‘Asia’ but as ‘Asia Pacific’, in effect placing itself ‘within’ this seemingly geographically defined space. The Vietnam War, the domino theory and conceptions of a monolithic Sino-Soviet threat to the U.S. interests and allies in Asia and the Pacific were the salient features of this ‘struggle’ over the ‘Asia Pacific’ space. In important respects, these military-strategic elements were, of course, intimately linked to the market-capitalist aspects of Asia Pacific region-building.

A discernible shift occurred with the Sino-Soviet ‘split’ by the mid-to late-1960s and the signing of the Shanghai communiqué between the People’s Republic of China and the U.S. in 1972, signalling a normalisation of ties between the two countries (Levine 1975-76). From this period till about the end of the 1980s, both viewed each other as uneasy partners, seeking to retard the military-strategic aims of the Soviet Union within the Asia Pacific region, while remaining wary of each other’s intentions within this regional space. Reflecting this tension, one of the central principles underlying the Shanghai communiqué was that ‘neither should seek hegemony in the Asia Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony’, with no geographical definition given for the ‘Asia Pacific’ either in the communiqué or anywhere else (Glaubitz 1976).

Despite the lack of any openly stated definition, it was clear that one important site of such a Soviet challenge by the late 1970s was the close relationship between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. This relationship was deepened gradually by the provision of naval and airbases to the Soviet Union at Vietnam’s Danang and Cam Rahn Bay (Funnel 1993). Such developments were seen in military-strategic terms as providing the Soviet Union with military reach into the Pacific Ocean and as part of ‘the Soviets’ quest for ‘Asian Pacific’ status by extending their ocean fleet capacity from the Sea of Okhotsk to the South China Sea (Kimura 1985).

An important domain of the Cold War military-strategic contest was, thus, clearly the ‘Asia Pacific’. In effect, the ‘Asia Pacific’ became a regional microcosm, stretching from military bases in the Pacific, through Southeast and Northeast Asia and extending to Australia and New Zealand,

of the global politics of the Cold War. The ‘Asia Pacific’, in these representations, was a site of struggle and contestation between U.S., China and their allies in the ‘region’ on one hand, and the Soviet Union and its ‘client states’ like Vietnam on the other.

### **India and the Asia-Pacific – From Outside to Inside the ‘Region’**

Another important aspect of representations of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ during this period was the near total absence of a major ‘Asian’ state - India. Seemingly content at being represented as part of the regional space of ‘South Asia’, Indian political elites did not express much interest in staking a place or role in the ‘Asia Pacific’ throughout the 1960s until the late 1980s. Similarly, countries belonging to the ‘Asia-Pacific’ at this point in time did not view India as part of this regional space.

This was hardly remarkable. India’s closed economy, built and sustained by Indian political elites on notions of economic self-reliance and anti-imperialism, did not fit into the economic basis of ‘Asia Pacific’ region-building. It lacked the export-driven capitalist ethos that countries in the ‘Asia Pacific’ had embraced as part of their respective foreign economic policies. These political elites had also built a fairly strong consensus in their respective domestic spheres on the importance of embracing this particular market-oriented economic model. Indian political elites, in this sense, had not built a similar domestic consensus. In the words of ‘Pacific Rim-speak’, India lacked the economic ‘dynamism’ that would have qualified it as part of this ‘Asia Pacific’ region.

In the military-strategic sphere, there was a somewhat similar narrative accounting for India’s exclusion from this regional space. From the end of the Nehru era in 1962, right up till the late 1980s, Indian political elites saw their foreign policy interests largely anchored within the South Asian region. More specifically, Indian political elites sought to keep ‘extra-regional’ powers out of South Asia, while at the same time attempting to keep well clear of the bloc politics of the Cold War outside South Asia. In fact, Indira Gandhi, India’s Prime Minister for three consecutive terms from 1966 till 1977 and then from 1980 till 1984, saw the demonstration of Indian predominance in the South Asia region as a central goal of Indian foreign policy during this period (Ayoob 1989-90).

Even more significantly, Indian political elites, over this period, did not see India as a global power with global interests. The inverse was also true. The major powers of this time, the U.S., the Soviet Union and China (after 1972), viewed India as a mere regional power, with little to offer in terms of the global politics of the Cold War. The other states in the Asia Pacific, defined as much due to their participation in the bloc politics of the

Cold War, also perceived no tangible role for India in this region. India, most definitely, was in Asia but not the ‘Asia Pacific’ at the end of the 1980s. The new decade would usher in significant change to such representations.

The story of India’s economic reforms in 1991 is frequently narrated with reference to the Indian government’s ‘unsustainable levels of foreign and domestic borrowing’, with ‘reserves down to two weeks of imports’ in 1991. In effect, although it is a narrative imbued with notions of reluctance on the part of Indian political elites in liberalising India’s economy, it is largely agreed that in this instance, ‘in a democracy there must be a sufficient body of influential opinion already convinced, or ready to be convinced, of the need for radical change’ (Joshi and Little 1991-2001). Despite this, the then Indian Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, largely credited with devising and pushing through these reforms, had to strongly defend them against wider domestic criticism that India’s ‘new’ reliance upon the Bretton Woods institutions’ would ‘lead to a form of dependent development that would exclude or even impoverish the mass of India’s labouring poor’ (Corbridge and Harriss 2006).

In effect, beginning in the 1990s, Indian political elites began to dramatically renegotiate a central pillar of Indian state identity since independence – that of national sovereignty based on notions of economic self-reliance. Reinterpreting somewhat radically this notion of ‘self-reliance’, from 1991, political elites within the Congress Party, led by Prime Minister Narashima Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, began to reframe this pivotal notion of Indian state identity without ‘surrendering some intact and mythical notion of sovereignty that had been handed down from Gandhi or Nehru’ (*Ibid.*). Between 1991 and 2004, despite India changing government six times, alternating between Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition governments at the central government level, there has been a consensus, at least amongst political elites in the Congress and BJP parties, that the economic liberalisation cannot be reversed and there is no going back to the pre-1991 days. The idea of India’s development being based on outward-looking economic policies which entangles it in increasingly deeper ways with the global economy is increasingly the ‘new’ idea of India in this respect.

The result of such dramatic changes within India led to significant transformations in the manner in which the world began to view it. The radical negotiation of a central pillar of Indian state identity did not go unnoticed by those observing India. It led to numerous works predicting the coming ‘rise’ of India as a global economic power, prompting Fareed Zakaria to proclaim India as the ‘star’ attraction the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2006. Peripheral for long periods, India’s economic

reorientation now especially caught the attention of states within the Asia Pacific region. As part of India's 'Look East' policy announced in 1992, India's political leadership, motivated, initially at least, primarily by economic considerations, sought to build closer links with member states of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) (Yahya 2003). As a result, in 1992, India became ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner, leading to full dialogue partner status in 1995 (Sen, Asher and Rajan 2004). This led eventually to a range of various bilateral Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various ASEAN member states, as well as a range of economic agreements with other Asia Pacific countries like South Korea and Japan.

From the perspective of Indian political elites, engaging in and being part of this economic space was and is essential in sustaining and pushing further their domestic re-articulation of Indian state identity. On a fundamental level, Indian political elites represented India's need for economic liberalisation on the premise of emulating specific economic policies of the various East Asian 'dynamic' economies within the 'Asia Pacific' countries which had earlier seemingly left India 'behind' and which India had to 'catch up' with. In important policy documents, the Indian government rehearsed this theme of learning lessons in economic openness from like-sized countries within East Asia like China and Indonesia. As such, economically engaging with these countries in the Asia Pacific, and thus becoming an important part of this space was crucially tied to the domestic reconstruction of 'Indian-ness' and the 'new' role of the Indian state (Abraham 1998).

The 'Look East' policy, initially driven by economic imperatives, also came to embody a clear shift in the strategic outlook of Indian political elites. More significantly, following on from its economic liberalisation measures domestically, Indian political elites began to increasingly articulate a specific discourse about India's role within global politics in the 1990s. The Indian nuclear test of 1998 was, in a sense, the strategic-military equivalent of India's domestic economic reforms of 1991. The BJP-led government's decision to conduct nuclear tests enjoyed wide domestic support, exhibiting a rare cross-party consensus within Indian politics. These series of tests were represented by Indian political elites as evidence of a 'new' India, an India that had tired from playing the part of a self-restrained 'moral' actor within international politics and to one that saw nuclear weapons and the great-power status they conferred as India's due. As Jaswant Singh, then Indian External Affairs Minister, argued in an article in *Foreign Affairs* just a few months after the nuclear tests:

Nuclear weapons remain a key indicator of state power. Since this currency is operational in large parts of the globe, India was left with no choice but to update and validate the capability that had been demonstrated 24 years ago in the nuclear tests of 1974 (Singh 2008).

The Indian state, as this discourse asserted, had arrived as a ‘great power’ within global politics. As much as such discourse was meant for foreign consumption, such re-articulation of the identity of the Indian state vis-à-vis the outside world was still contested within India, even though such voices of dissent appeared to be on the periphery.

An important and associated facet of this discourse of India’s ‘arrival’ as a global or great power also hinged on forging a closer relationship with what Indian political elites saw as the sole superpower after the end of the Cold War – the U.S. In this, there was clear continuity between both BJP and Congress political elites. As compared to the Nehru era, where Indian self-representations were dependent, in important respects, with keeping the U.S. at a safe distance, from the 1990s onwards, Indian political elites from both the major parties began to view a closer relationship as a central part of defining a ‘new’ India (Chadda 1986).<sup>2</sup> An important illustration of this sentiment appears in the aftermath of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998. Despite the huge (initial) criticism from the U.S. as a result of the Indian nuclear tests, in 1998, then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared that ‘India and the U.S. are natural allies in the quest for a better future for the world in the 21st century.’<sup>3</sup>

Such declarations of close ties with the U.S. persisted even with the replacement of the BJP-led government by a Congress-led coalition after the 2004 general elections. In fact, these affirmations of close ties with the U.S., as an integral part of representing India as a great power, came to the forefront as a result of the debate surrounding the proposal for a U.S.-India civilian nuclear deal, first mooted in 2005 in a joint statement by George W. Bush and Manmohan Singh. By mid-2008, as the Congress-led government sought to ‘operationalise’ the civil nuclear agreement, it faced tremendous political opposition from its main alliance partner, the Left Front, the latter eventually withdrawing support for the Congress-led government at the Centre.

Crucially, an important element of this fierce debate pivoted on the notion of the identity of the Indian state. Indian critics of the civilian nuclear deal with the U.S. saw the signing of the deal as a development that

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<sup>2</sup> Some date the start of improving ties between India and the U.S. to the Rajiv Gandhi period, with his official visit there in June 1986.

<sup>3</sup> The remarks were made at the Asia Society, New York, in September 1998.

‘will only lead to India’s surrender to America’s dictates and will have implications and bearing beyond the nuclear deal.’<sup>4</sup> The familiar link between closer relations with the U.S. and India surrendering its autonomy, and thus its very identity, was a central part of this particular strand of criticism. Countering such criticism, the Congress Party, and especially Prime Minister Singh, in a robust defence of the agreement in Parliament, linked the 1991 economic reforms and the civilian nuclear agreement as historical milestones, both of which would enable India to finally emerge as a great power. As Prime Minister Singh saw it:

In 1991, while presenting the Budget for 1991-92, as Finance Minister, I had stated: No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I had then suggested to this august House that the emergence of India as a major global power was an idea whose time had come... Both the Left and the BJP had then opposed the reform. Both had said we had mortgaged the economy to America and that we would bring back the East India Company. Subsequently, both these parties have had a hand at running the Government. None of these parties have reversed the direction of economic policy laid down by the Congress Party in 1991... The cooperation that the international community is now willing to extend to us for trade in nuclear materials, technologies and equipment for civilian use will be available to us without signing the NPT or the CTBT. This I believe is a measure of the respect that the world at large has for India, its people and their capabilities and our prospects to emerge as a major engine of growth for the world economy... Our critics falsely accuse us, that in signing these agreements, we have surrendered the independence of foreign policy and made it subservient to US interests. In this context, I wish to point out that the cooperation in civil nuclear matters that we seek is not confined to the U.S.A. Change in the NSG guidelines would be a passport to trade with 45 members of the Nuclear Supplier Group which includes Russia, France, and many other countries. We appreciate the fact that the U.S. has taken the lead in promoting cooperation with India for nuclear energy for civilian use. Without U.S. initiative, India’s case

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<sup>4</sup> Statement made to the press by Communist Party of India –Marxist (CPI-M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury (28 September 2008).

for approval by the IAEA or the Nuclear Suppliers Group would not have moved forward.<sup>5</sup>

Singh was recasting an important aspect of Indian state identity. More specifically, Singh sought to demonstrate the crucial link between growing international recognition of India's place within international politics and the role of the U.S.-driven civil nuclear agreement. In this re-casting of the Indian state's foreign policy 'interests', India's close relationship with the U.S. did not result in any type of 'surrendering' of Indian autonomy; however, 'without U.S. initiative', India's claim to great power status would at best be delayed if not perpetually retarded.

Conversely, in the Asia Pacific, things had begun to change since the early 1990s as well. Strategically, countries that were part of the Asia Pacific had also begun to re-order the role that this regional space played within global politics in the post-Cold War world. Led by the ASEAN states, and supported by countries like Japan and the U.S., the Asia Pacific became a realm within which China's growing military and strategic presence could be 'managed' peacefully. The exact manner of 'managing' this rise is, however, contested. For example, the ASEAN member states view 'socialising' China as getting the latter to habitually engage in the process of 'develop(ing) norms' within regional multilateral institutions as an important way of managing China's rise.

Another strand views balancing strategies as central in 'managing' China's rise – this usually translates into policy positions that prescribe continued military-strategic predominance of the U.S. within the Asia Pacific regional space (Schwarz 2010; Broomfield 2003). In the post-Cold War era, the Asia Pacific has, therefore, become a venue for managing China's rise as a great power. Notwithstanding differences on how exactly to cope with China's rise, for the majority of countries in the Asia Pacific, an important part of negotiating this phenomenon of China's rise involves promoting the necessity of continued U.S. military presence in this regional space.

This need to 'negotiate' the rise of China has, of course, been a fundamental aspect of Indian self-representations since the 1962 border war with China. More recently, at the time of its 1998 nuclear tests, the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee cited China as one of the major reasons for India's decision to declare itself a nuclear-weapons state. In the post-Cold war period, this Indian anxiety, however, was also coupled with the recognition that relations with China needed to be upgraded, with the result that by

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<sup>5</sup> 'PM's reply to the debate on the Motion of Confidence in the Lok Sabha', Prime Minister's Office, New Delhi, July 2008.

2005, India and China announced a ‘strategic partnership’. This posture of anxiety and engagement over China’s rise similarly characterised the range of attitudes across the various countries of the Asia Pacific. As such, India began to gradually emerge, given such a commonality of outlook, as a useful addition to the Asia Pacific strategic space. Thus, from the 1990s onwards, the countries of the Asia Pacific began to gradually include India within Asia Pacific regional institutions. India became part of the ARF in 1996 and then participated in the East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2005.

In recognising India’s shared apprehensions about China’s rise both militarily and politically, as well as grasping India’s position on the need for a continued U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific, several Asia Pacific member states began to represent India’s participation within the region as central to its future trajectory. An example of this is the 2005 *Update to its Defence White Paper* where the Australian government saw India as one of the region’s ‘major powers’, who together with China, Japan, Russia and the U.S., ‘have the power – actual or potential – to influence events throughout the Asia-Pacific region.’ More specifically, in relation to the particular point being made here, the 2005 Update saw ‘the nature of the relationships’ between India and these states as ‘the most critical issue for the security of the entire region.’ In this re-articulated representation of the ‘Asia Pacific’ as a space in which China’s rise needs to be ‘negotiated’, India is seen increasingly as an integral part of this region.

## **From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific**

The Asia Pacific, an amalgam of ‘Asia’ and the ‘Pacific’, gained currency within international politics because of the after effects of the Second World War, the most major one being the Cold War. India’s inclusion in this region occurred as a result of the effects of both the end of the Cold War and changes to India’s domestic sphere. More recently, there is a new regional construct gaining currency within international politics: the Indo-Pacific. The changing use of geographic terms has real-world consequences. Such consequences flow from the contest over how to define Asia conceptually, including choice of terminology. This will have strategic implications, not least on managing the growth of China’s power and interests (Medcalf 2015).

The history of the use of the term, ‘Indo-Pacific’ as a regional category, brings us outside the domain of international politics and strategic studies. It is apparent that the term Indo-Pacific has been in use for some time by marine geographers to reference the varieties of biological species spanning the Indian Ocean, the Western and Central Pacific Oceans, as well

as the maritime space between them, with Indonesia at the centre of this bio-geographical space. The term Indo-Pacific first came to be applied to strategic-military considerations in a 2006 Massachusetts Institute of Technology report entitled *The Future of Naval Aviation*. This report looked at how the United States needed to effectively project power in the Indo-Pacific region in order to demonstrate ‘the capability to assure the protection of its commercial shipping’ as well as the need for the U.S. to be prepared for a scenario where China and India became embroiled in a struggle for energy security that also involved the medium powers in the Indo-Pacific region’ (MIT 2006: 17). However, it is Gurpreet Khurana’s 2007 article, ‘Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation’, that is commonly considered to have been the first academic usage of the term Indo-Pacific. In official discourse, it was Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who first used the Indo-Pacific term in August 2007 when he delivered a speech to the Indian Parliament entitled, ‘Confluence of the Two Seas’. In that speech, he outlined which he foresaw the future of a ‘broader’ Asia taking ‘shape at the confluence of the two seas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans’ (MoFA 2007). The next significant use of the Indo-Pacific term was in an official document, namely the 2013 Australian Defence White Paper (GoA 2013). Overall, an explicit Indo-Pacific framework has entered the policy discourse of at least five countries. Besides Japan and Australia, officials in the United States, India, and Indonesia have also begun using the term. This points to a growing acceptance of the concept. The then Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, began using the term in late 2012 and into 2013 as part of an enhanced ‘Look East Policy’. In a conference in Washington on 16 May 2013, Indonesia’s then Foreign Minister, M. Natalegawa proposed an ‘Indo-Pacific treaty’ (Liow 2014). The U.S., under then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, first used the term officially in 2010. The shift from using Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific within official U.S. discourse was part of the its declared ‘pivot’ to Asia policy. During his historic visit to India in January 2015, Obama went on to implicitly endorse the Indo-Pacific concept in U.S. foreign policy. In his joint statement with Modi, which recognised ‘the important role that both countries play in promoting peace, prosperity, stability and security in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Region’ (Medcalf 2015).

### **China and the Indo-Pacific**

Given the manner in which the Indo-Pacific term has evolved, especially as represented by countries like the U.S., Japan and India, initial Chinese attitudes towards this term was one of caution. This caution was primarily

based within the context of the term being used in conjunction with the U.S. pivot to Asia and increased Chinese trepidations about a U.S.-led containment strategy against China. On the other hand, there is acknowledgement within China that the Indo-Pacific concept does not exclude China. However, besides the spectre of a (re)-entrenchment of the U.S. military and strategic influence in the Indian Ocean, the Indo-Pacific concept also legitimises India's role in the security of the South China Sea and the waters which connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Medcalf 2013). Therefore, China's more recent approach has been to signal the need to manage Chinese sensitivities on geostrategic and military complexion of the Indo-Pacific. The fact that Japan, India, Australia, and the United States participated in a quadrilateral dialogue way back in 2007 further raised Chinese suspicions about the anti-China quality of the Indo-Pacific concept and those who vigorously champion it.

There are some observers, however, who argue that China could potentially benefit from the Indo-Pacific idea (Zhao 2013). One key potential benefit is the acknowledgement, however implicit, of China's growing strategic reach within the Indian Ocean region. China's growing naval capabilities is a clear marker of its strategic priorities in the Indian Ocean region. In mid-2015, the Chinese Defence White Paper clearly pointed at its ambition to become a maritime power beyond just East Asia. China's deployments and port investment stretching from the Gulf of Aden to Sri Lanka demonstrate its desire to play a significant strategic role within the Indian Ocean region. More potently, in late 2013 and early 2014, the long-range patrols of a Chinese nuclear-powered submarine across the Indian Ocean in 2013-14 and the 2014 conduct of combat-simulation exercises in the Indian Ocean by a Chinese surface action group, including two destroyers and a large amphibious ship, further illustrated China's approach to the Indian Ocean region (Medcalf 2015).

Chinese submarines docked twice in Sri Lanka in late 2014 and this, once again, demonstrated that China was keen to build a strategic presence in the Indian Ocean region. These visits created a significant amount of unease within India and further fostered concerns about the growing economic and strategic ties between Sri Lanka and China during the tenure of the Rajapaksa government (Aneez and Sirilal 2014). The defeat of Rajapaksa in January 2015 in Sri Lanka's presidential elections was seen as a major blow to Chinese interests. Rajapaksa's claim that India's intelligence agency, RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), was responsible for his defeat further cemented the view that Rajapaksa's defeat was India's gain at the expense of China (India Today 2013). However, the current Sri Lankan Prime Minister, in a statement in Singapore in October 2015, outlined that Sri Lanka welcomed future Chinese submarine visits

'provided they are not too frequent' (Velloor 2015). The strategic competition between India and China vis-à-vis an Indian Ocean nation like Sri Lanka, at least for the time being, is far from over.

Beyond the specific case of Sri Lanka, Chinese diplomatic activity in recent times has been pro-active within the Indian Ocean region. Li Keqiang's first foreign visit as premier was to India in May 2013. While Xi Jinping combined his first presidential visit to India with visits to Sri Lanka and the Maldives. These trips to the Indian Ocean island nations concentrated heavily on geo-economics, with Chinese investments in these countries marking a crucial new strategy in the Indian Ocean region. In comparison to the U.S.'s stress on military deployments in the Indian Ocean maritime space as part of 'pivot' to Asia, China is deploying economic incentives in this region as part of its wider Maritime Silk Road (MSR) project. It is thus reasonable to assume that this strategy posits the MSR as an alternative concept to the perceived U.S.-Japan-India-Australia driven Indo-Pacific idea. However, some observers have claimed that this need not necessarily be the case. The MSR concept, they argue, could complement efforts at building an Indo-Pacific economic and strategic region (Zongyi 2014).

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# **U.S. Pivot/Rebalance Policy and Role for India<sup>1</sup>**

## *An Essay*

**Riaz Mohammad Khan\***

### **Introduction**

**S**ince the normalisation of its relations with the United States, China has had a mixed view of U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific. While the extra-regional military presence of a superpower is a source of concern for Beijing, the U.S. military presence, in particular the U.S.-Japan security pact, also serves as check against potential pursuit of militarism by Japan or South Korea. For China, the Asia Pacific region, historically and for a variety of obvious reasons, represents the primary focus of its global interests. For Washington, its military presence and alliances with many Asia Pacific countries, which have a history of more than a century, are vital to protecting its sprawling interests that extend over the entire Pacific Ocean. China's phenomenal economic rise, significant development of its military capacities and a corresponding assertion of its territorial claims in East China Sea and South China Sea have caused anxieties among regional countries which dispute the claims as well in Washington. Against this backdrop, President Obama announced his policy of Pivot/Rebalance in October 2011, indicating plans for a deeper engagement in the Asia Pacific. While the Pivot policy remains loosely defined, the purpose of this discussion is to examine whether the U.S. will depend on extra-regional powers such as India to advance any declared or covert objectives of the Pivot or Rebalance policy.

### **U.S. Military Presence, the Disputes and the Pivot/Rebalance Policy**

Over four decades ago, at the time of Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to Beijing, political analysts and diplomats debated whether China would raise the question of the U.S.-Japan security treaty which was the central pillar of the U.S. alliance system in the region. China did not, signaling that it acquiesced in the U.S. military presence as a factor of balance and stability and as a counter to any justification for Japan opting to develop its own military. China's rise with the advent of the new century is, however,

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<sup>1</sup> The author was unable to present the paper at the Conference. However, given its relevance and importance, it is being included in the book.

\* Ambassador (retd.) Khan is a former Foreign Secretary, Government of Pakistan.

changing the picture even though in subtle ways. The immediate bone of contention has been the disputed island, outcroppings, sandbars and shoals in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. These territories were first delineated by the Chinese Republican government in 1930, enclosing almost 90 per cent of the South China Sea, based on historical claims of the reach of Chinese fishermen. Later, the delineated boundary represented by ‘Nine Dashes’ was incorporated in official maps issued by the People’s Republic of China. Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines maintain their counter claims on account of their respective coastlines with the South China Sea. In the East China Sea, desolate rock outcroppings became significant for the exclusive economic zone around them for the claimant states, namely, China and Japan. Meanwhile, the United States appeared more preoccupied with freedom of navigation in the area which disputants allowed under the Law of the Sea.

Tensions began to grow with speculation that the South China Sea area had rich deposits of oil and gas and minerals as well as with China’s effort to raise its profile in the area by consolidating natural features through reclamation and construction of permanent structures and enhanced naval presence. Regional powers used Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) forums to raise the issue, pressing China not to alter ground features and calling for negotiations. China refused to negotiate with ASEAN as a group and instead offered bilateral discussions. This was the early period of President Obama’s first term when he wanted to make good on his election promise to wind up America’s long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. An increasingly assertive and powerful China appeared to provide the right opportunity for launching the Pivot strategy to shift to a more robust engagement in Asia Pacific to stand by the side of its allies.

The Obama Administration described the policy in terms of intensified engagement, strengthening bilateral security alliances, expanding military presence as well as trade and investments and deepening relations with all countries of the region.<sup>1</sup> The initiative was variously explained in benign terms but it concealed a sharp military edge. Five years down the road, the policy still lacks definitive shape as the United States remains mired in the Middle East and Afghanistan with no clear options for exit. China’s economic influence and engagement continues to expand. The U.S. has not been able to blunt the Chinese initiative for the establishment

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<sup>1</sup> Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in an article ‘America’s Pacific Century’ appearing in *Foreign Policy Magazine* on 11 October 2011, wrote ‘our work will proceed along six key lines of action: strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights.’

of an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). China has embarked on a more ambitious initiative of ‘One Road One Belt’ policy for development of trans-Euro-Asia commerce and communications. Washington has its own co-operative initiative in the shape of Trans-Pacific-Partnership (TPP) which faces domestic opposition, especially from labour unions and from the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. One of the U.S. Administration’s selling point is to present TPP as part of the Pivot/Rebalance policy.

The Obama Administration has often stated that Pivot is not targeted against China. The policy has shown little specific impact on the broad pattern of U.S.-China relations which is evident in high level visits and understanding on cooperation in such new but vital areas as climate change and cyber security. Yet there are spikes in tension such as witnessed on account of the firing of a missile by an American naval ship close to a ‘Chinese construction site’ on an atoll in South China Sea. While flexing muscles, both sides avoided escalation. The U.S. claimed that the naval ship did not violate international law and its presence was consistent with freedom of navigation. The Chinese sent their naval ships in the area, but did not engage the U.S. naval ship. The two sides also agreed to work out a protocol to avoid misunderstanding and incidents that could trigger escalation.

Regional countries oppose China’s reclamation activity and view it as altering the natural features of South China Sea sandbars and shoals to consolidate its claims. The U.S. views this activity as an attempt to artificially change submerged features of the sea to establish exclusive economic zones and block freedom of navigation. In 2012, following an incident involving Chinese and Philippines naval boats over fishing in Scarborough Shoal which adjoins the Philippines coast, the Philippines took the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). While China challenges the Court’s jurisdiction, ICJ will be adjudicating the issue of fishing rights in the Shoal area. Thus, the potential for escalation and conflict is real. However, military escalation would have far reaching implications. Clearly, the United States cannot push for military escalation unilaterally without the consent of and coordination with its regional allies. On the other hand, these allies cannot overlook what is at stake if events take such a turn. Costs would be high for all parties, including China.

### **What is at Stake and a Case for Restraint**

In the past three decades, the Asia Pacific has emerged as the second if not the largest engine of global economic growth. It is home to three of the four largest economies in the world. The transformation has also integrated the

economies of the countries of the region especially with that of China covering the entire spectrum of trade, joint production, investment and fiscal management. Just take the trade figures for 2013 and 2014. According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, in 2013, China's exports to the U.S. were \$ 440 billion and imports \$ 122 billion. U.S. FDI in China generated by the private sector exceeded \$ 51 billion. In 2014, Japan's imports from China stood at \$ 188 billion and exports to China at \$144 billion. In comparison, according to *Global Edge*, Japan exported to the U.S. goods worth \$ 142 billion and imported worth \$ 78 billion. In 2013, ASEAN's volume of trade with China was over \$ 366 billion, of which China's exports counted for over \$ 216 billion, whereas the figure for Japan was \$229 billion and with the U.S. was \$ 212 billion. In comparison, ASEAN's total trade with India for the same year was \$ 67 billion. These trade figures are indicative of the extent of interdependence between the economies of China and other Asia Pacific countries which is the foundation of the phenomenal prosperity of the region achieved during the past three decades. This prosperity has enabled China to pull more than 400 million of its citizens above the poverty line. All this would be put at risk by a military misadventure to push territorial claims for the sake of asserting sovereignty and exclusive control of undiscovered/unproven mineral or hydrocarbon resources in the area.

Looking at China's approach to issues involving sovereignty, Beijing has so far shown remarkable prudence in dealing with Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and disputed borders with the newly independent Central Asian states, as well as Russia. China did not insist on straight jacket sovereignty and instead showed preference for economic interests, stability and pragmatism. For instance, China dropped its territorial claims and offered to conclude agreements on the basis of existing boundaries with the newly independent neighbouring Central Asian States. Today, China is Central Asia's largest trading partner and Central Asians are enthusiastic participants in China's New Silk Route initiative. An economic-interaction based approach towards Taiwan has led to Taiwanese investments worth billions of dollars in Mainland China which have virtually suppressed Taiwanese urge for independence. China's 'one country two systems' doctrine for Hong Kong is essentially driven by economic considerations and pragmatism. The question arises whether Beijing will pursue a similar approach on the disputed islands. A related question is whether the regional countries in dispute with China, namely Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines in South China Sea and Japan in East China Sea will push the envelope with or without U.S. prodding to create a conflict situation in which the United States will inevitably get involved.

The dispute involves large stretches of sea surfaces and islands, atolls

and sandbars. None of the claimants is expected to give up its historical claims. While China invokes historical control and traditional outreach of fishermen from southern China to back its claim, the boundary marked by the ‘nine dashes’ runs close to the coastline of Vietnam, Malaysia’s Borneo and most of Western Philippines. Spratly (Nansha) Islands located in southern part of South China Sea are particularly contentious. They also lie close to one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, just outside the Straits of Malacca. These competing territorial claims cannot be settled on the basis of a neat division of sovereign control; and will have to be soft-peddled to avoid conflict. Possibilities lie in building understandings over sharing of resources of the area, respect for freedom of navigation and restraints to avoid provocative activities. If China is averse to negotiations with the ASEAN as a group, those members of the organisation which are not a direct party to the dispute can play a role.<sup>2</sup> Nothing is so precious above or below the disputed waters as to put at risk the prosperity and tranquility of the entire Asia Pacific which has ensured not only impressive living standards for one-third of humanity inhabiting the region but also a new paradigm of economic and trade relations for a better world.

Responsibility for managing the disputes in South China Sea and East China mainly rests with the regional countries, namely China, Japan and the ASEAN. The challenge will test whether or not geo-economics prevail over geo-politics in the region. Because of permanent U.S. interests in the region, the U.S. Pivot/Rebalance policy will endure regardless of the pace of implementation of some of the publicised measures such as increased naval deployment. The U.S. will remain assertive on its declared and long-standing objective of freedom of navigation in the area. The Pivot is more of a reaffirmation of the established U.S. interests and presence rather than a new policy in the region. However, this policy will remain largely focused on the stated benign aspects unless there is military escalation with the active abatement of regional allies.

We have examined the Pivot policy in the light of regional tensions and territorial claims. We should also look into the argument that it is part of a U.S. policy to encircle China. The context is relevant as it would provide a basis for the role of extra-regional players such as India. While the rise of China is viewed with anxiety and concern especially among conservative circles in the West, including the United States, there is no evidence of a China policy parallel to the erstwhile policy of containment of the Soviet Union. First, the global political and economic landscape has radically transformed since the end of the Cold War. The world is no longer

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<sup>2</sup> The author made these suggestions at the Third Singapore Global Dialogue organised by Raja Ratnam School of International Studies in September 2012.

divided into adversarial blocs. China is not an expansionist power in any conventional sense. It has historical territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea but no irredentist designs against its neighbours. Its economic influence is on the rise and expanding, but that cannot be contained by proverbial walls and curtains. There are disputes but no walls between China and the other Asia Pacific countries. Integrated economies and trade figures alone render the idea of containment untenable. Then consider China's initiatives of AIIB and OBOR which are predicated on co-operative and participatory endeavours encompassing various regions of Euro-Asian landmass, including the countries of the Asia Pacific. Besides activating communication linkages, China has built or is in the process of constructing energy corridors from Central Asia, Russia and Myanmar.

### **Examining Possible Indian Role in Pivot Policy**

Against this backdrop, we may examine whether or not there is a role for India which American leadership has often described as a natural ally and strategic partner. If a containment policy were to be feasible, the U.S. would have looked to India. But today, barring the United Arab Emirates from which India imports bulk of its oil, China, not the United States, is India's largest trading partner with bilateral trade touching \$ 70 billion. Turning to the Asia Pacific and the U.S. Pivot policy, it is a stretch to conceive a role for India. Clearly, India is in no position to off-set China's influence in the region in the economic and trade fields. Washington cannot augment India's economic presence in the region where China is well established and has the additional advantage of demographics and cultural affinities. Like that of China, India's influence in the economic arena will grow depending on its capacities, economic dynamics in the region and a conducive environment. In any event, India's role in the Pivot policy frame often refers to what it could do militarily to advance the objectives of the policy at the behest of the United States. The proposition is theoretical and has a questionable premise.

India is essentially an Indian Ocean power where it has ambitious plans to build a blue water navy. Thus far, this objective remains a distant horizon. The U.S. is the dominant naval power in the area with its Fifth Fleet positioned in the Arabian Sea and Diego Garcia as a strong operational military base under CENTCOM. The U.S. has not delegated any responsibilities exclusive to India for the protection of its interests in the area or for any other specific purpose. Even for controlling pirate activity, especially along the Horn of Africa coast line Washington assembled a coalition of Task Force-151 comprising naval ships of a number of littoral states. For the U.S. to depend on the Indian navy in the

South China Sea makes little operational sense. Nominally, India and eastern Indian Ocean (East of Diego Garcia) fall under the U.S. Pacific Command, but this does not mean that the U.S. would enlist India's help for operations in South China Sea or East China Sea.

For India to reach into the disputed waters at the behest of the U.S. is equally untenable. First, India has no capacity to do so. It may participate in joint exercises with regional countries and the U.S., which is generally accepted as a normal practice, but that is a far cry from an expeditionary mission. Furthermore, if the U.S. plans to engineer an incident in the South China Sea or East China Sea area to raise military pressures, it would rather collude with a regional ally than bring in an extra-regional player.

An argument can be constructed around possible Indian pique against China on account of a perceived Chinese strategy to encircle it with a string of strategically located port facilities sometimes described as 'string of pearls'. China's help in the development of Gwadar as well as its closer relations with Sri Lanka during the rule of President Mahinda Rajapaksa figured prominently in this fictional theory. Rajapaksa is no longer in control of Sri Lanka and has been replaced by a pro-India government in Colombo. As for Gwadar, the fact is that the port was developed by the Chinese at Pakistan's request to handle commerce and serve as an energy port outside the Gulf. The port remains underutilised and now its fate depends on the development of CPEC. The fanciful theory is part of familiar propaganda efforts, but it is not a serious basis for prompting India to take counter measures by seeking to participate in the U.S. Pivot.

There are other issues as well. A proactive Indian interest in U.S. Pivot would draw opposition from within India and from the countries of the Asia Pacific. Many within India would not want to see India acting as cat's paw for a superpower. Then, countries like Indonesia from the region will view with suspicion, if not outrightly reject, Indian intrusion in the disputed area. These regional countries are used to the American security presence and may desire its intensification if the situation aggravates; but they are unlikely to welcome a new comer India to police their region. Many in the region would even want to see the United States act with restraint and avoid steps that could put at risk stability and prosperity of the Asia Pacific. ■

# **China's Constructive Role in Asia Pacific**

## *Speech*

**Muhammad Zhao Lijian\***

**C**hina is an Asia Pacific country. As a member of the Asia Pacific community, China is committed to the peace, security and common development of this region.

### **Maintainer of Peace and Security, rather than a Challenger**

China's development lies in the increasing power of peace and positive energy in the world. The Republic is committed to the path of peaceful development, a commitment that is of immediate relevance for the Asia Pacific. We do not seek dominance or sphere of influence in the region, nor do we intend to form military alliances or drive any country out of the Asia Pacific. Instead, we're committed to solidarity and cooperation with other countries in pursuit of a new path of security for the region, which is built by all, shared by all, win-win for all and maintained by all. China seeks to resolve disputes with its neighbours over territory and maritime rights and interests peacefully through dialogue and negotiation and on the basis of respecting historical facts and international law.

We are determined to break the so-called 'great power leading to hegemony' and unswervingly stick to the new way of peaceful development by being committed to building a new type of international relations of win-win cooperation. This relationship will help promote dignity, development interests and peace and security of all countries and peoples. Just as Chinese President Xi Jinping said on 3 September 2015:

In the interest of peace, China will remain committed to peaceful development. No matter how much stronger it may become, China will never seek hegemony or expansion. It will never inflict its past suffering on any other nation. The Chinese people are resolved to pursue friendly relations with all other countries, and make greater contribution to mankind.<sup>1</sup>

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\* The author is Chargé D'affaires, Embassy of People's Republic of China in Islamabad, Pakistan.

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Address at the Commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War.

President Xi also announced that China will cut the number of its troops by 300,000. This fully reflects China's determination to safeguard and promote the cause of peace.

### **Facilitator rather than a Troublemaker**

As an old Chinese saying goes, a close neighbour is better than a distant relative. China always attaches great importance to an amicable neighbourhood. Over the decades, it has gradually put together a full-fledged, mature and multidimensional foreign policy towards its neighboring countries. This neighborhood policy is guided by important principles such as amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. It is geared towards building amicable ties and partnerships and advancing good-neighbourliness, security and prosperity in the region. It is underpinned by the concept of common, comprehensive, co-operative and sustainable security. It is inspired by a long-term vision of building an Asia Pacific where countries live together in peace, pursue win-win cooperation and work together to forge a partnership and eventually create a Community of Common Destiny.

China has worked actively to strengthen regional security dialogue and cooperation. It has conducted joint military exercises and established defence and security dialogue mechanisms with many Asia Pacific countries. China is deeply involved in multilateral defence exchanges through regional frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ASEAN Regional Forum, and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) summit. China has also played constructive roles in facilitating the peaceful settlement of regional hotspot issues, such as restarting the six-party talks on the Korean peninsula nuclear issue, promoting peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan and national reconciliation process in Myanmar.

### **Contributor rather than a Free rider**

The sustainable and steady development of the Chinese economy is our biggest contribution to the common development of this region. As one of the main engines of world economic growth, Chinese economy contributed 30 per cent of global economic growth. Transformation and upgradation of Chinese economy will make more contribution to the prosperity and development of Asia Pacific. In the coming five years, China will import more than \$10 trillion goods, its investment abroad will exceed \$500 billion, and more than 500 million outbound visits will be made by Chinese tourists.

We will continue to expand the good momentum of economic development in the Asia Pacific. The implementation of the initiative of Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, or the Belt and Road Initiative has provided fresh opportunity for comprehensively deepening mutually beneficial cooperation among Asia Pacific countries in business, investment, industrial, infrastructure and other fields. Strengthening international cooperation in production capacity and making good use of financial institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund will be a big part of this process.

Currently, the Chinese government is advancing the Belt and Road Initiative. This Initiative was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 and won extensive applause from the international community. Its aim is to promote common development and shared prosperity along the routes, with a view to building a Community of Common Destiny. Its implementation will follow a win-win approach featuring wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Countries in the Asia Pacific are both natural partners in these initiatives and their direct beneficiaries.

As the major and pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has achieved consensus from the leaders of both countries. It has also won extensive support from our two peoples. In the past two years, the CPEC has gradually entered into comprehensive implementation from early designs and is now under smooth implementation in general. It is a comprehensive and extensive cooperation framework and it takes Gwadar Port, energy, transportation infrastructure and industrial parks as the four major fields. It will be gradually expanded into other areas such as finance, science and technology, agriculture, tourism, education, poverty alleviation, etc. It will cover the whole of Pakistan and will bring benefits to the peoples of China and Pakistan as well as South Asia.

### **A New Vision of and for ‘Security’**

As a Chinese saying goes, ‘A wise man changes as time and circumstances change.’ We need to keep pace with the changing circumstances and evolving times. One cannot live in the Twenty-First Century with the outdated thinking from the Cold War age and zero-sum game. We believe that it is necessary to advocate common, comprehensive, co-operative and sustainable security in the Asia Pacific region. We need to innovate our security concept, establish a new regional security cooperation architecture, and jointly build a road for security that is shared by and win-win to all.

Common security means respecting and ensuring the security of each and every country. With our interests and security so closely intertwined, we will swim or sink together and we are increasingly becoming a Community of Common Destiny.

Security must be universal. We cannot just have the security of one or some countries, while leaving the rest insecure, still less should one seek the so-called absolute security of itself at the expense of the security of others.

Security must be equal. Every country has the equal right to participate in the security affairs of the region as well as the responsibility of upholding regional security. No country should attempt to dominate regional security affairs or infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of other countries.

Security must be inclusive. We should abide by the basic norms governing international relations such as respecting sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs, respect the social systems and development paths chosen by countries on their own, and fully respect and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of all parties. To beef up and entrench a military alliance targeted at a third party is not conducive to maintaining common security.

Comprehensive security means upholding security in both traditional and non-traditional fields. Security challenges in this region are extremely complicated, which include both hotspot and sensitive issues and ethnic and religious problems. The challenges brought by terrorism, transnational crimes, environmental security, cyber security, energy and resource security and major natural disasters are clearly on the rise. Traditional and non-traditional security threats are interwoven. Security is a growing issue in both scope and implication.

Co-operative security means promoting the security of both individual countries and the region as a whole through dialogue and cooperation. We should engage in sincere and in-depth dialogue and communication to increase strategic mutual trust, reduce mutual misgivings, seek common ground while resolving differences and live in harmony with each other. We should bear in mind the common security interests of all countries, and start with low-sensitivity areas to build the awareness of meeting security challenges through cooperation. We should stay committed to resolving disputes through peaceful means, stand against the arbitrary use or threat of force, oppose the provocation and escalation of tensions for selfish interests, and reject the practice of shifting trouble to neighbours and seeking selfish gains at the expense of others.

Sustainable security means that we need to focus on both development and security so that security would be durable. Development is the foundation of security, and security the precondition for development. The tree of peace does not grow on barren land, while the fruit of development

is not produced amidst flames of war. For most Asia Pacific countries, development means the greatest security and is the master key to regional security issues.

## **Conclusion**

As China will continue to play a constructive role for peace and development of this region, we hope our neighbours will also make the effort to learn more about us, and understand and support us. China's peaceful development is a process of modernisation among 1.3 billion people. Seldom can we see such an inspiring and splendid endeavour in the history of human progress. China is now unswervingly going down a new path of sharing peace and development with other countries. We look forward to joining hands with others to embark on a new journey that will lead us to the successful attainment of this vision.■

# **Building a Co-operative Security Order for Asia Pacific: A Way Forward**

## *Speech*

**Margaret Adamson\***

**A**s we have been hearing during this Conference, the Asia Pacific region is experiencing major developments of a strategic and economic nature. We are collectively living through a historic shift of strategic and economic gravity towards the Asia Pacific, together with South Asia, creating a new strategic arc where the prosperity and stability of one will be indivisible from the other.

I, therefore, welcome the opportunity to reflect on the way forward for building a co-operative security order for this vital region – a region that includes some of the world's fastest growing economies and huge reserves of natural resources.

55 per cent of the world's economic output and half of the world's population come from the Indo-Pacific region. Half the world's container ships, a third of bulk cargo traffic and two thirds of oil ships pass through the Indian Ocean. This traffic is only likely to expand as India, China, Indonesia, Vietnam and other countries in the region continue to grow.

History has demonstrated that greater interdependence between states helps reduce the likelihood of destabilising actions or conflict. But we cannot remove these risks altogether. We need to ensure that all states are focused on maintaining stability in the region. In this immediate neighbourhood, we continue to encourage Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, to grasp every opportunity and work resolutely to this end.

The roles of China and the United States, as well as the relationship between them, will continue to be particularly important factors in shaping the region. The United States and China have been showing leadership in their partnership to tackle climate change.

The key challenge for the region isn't the rise of any one power – it is the way in which we collectively manage a region which is home to many powers. We all need to work together to promote peace, prosperity and stability.

Australia's approach to our engagement with the region is to:

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\* The author is the Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan.

- support regional economic integration;
- safeguard security;
- contribute to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction;
- promote shared values;
- strengthen regional architecture;
- bolster ties between regional powers; and
- build strong regional people-to-people links.

Our engagement is premised on compliance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and our belief that maritime security and economic growth are two sides of the same coin. Without maritime security, the possibilities for economic development and closer regional cooperation will remain unrealised. Moreover, as Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull remarked following a discussion with President Obama during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Manila (17 November 2015), a commitment to the rule of law, and to ensuring that big changes occur in a peaceful manner and in accordance with international law is absolutely vital to security throughout the Asia Pacific region.

A further essential feature for our collective peace and security is for all countries of the region to be open about their defence policies, and transparent in their long-term strategic intentions. This approach will build trust and minimise any potential for miscalculation. It will help to resolve regional disputes peacefully.

In considering a co-operative security order for the future, we should also take into account non-traditional security threats that are emerging – from food security to availability of water and land and climate change, to energy security, international health epidemics, to natural disasters. As Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop noted at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, 'climate change is a challenge for all nations, and decisive action is required.' We are all looking to the coming COP21 meeting in Paris in this regard.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 21 or CMP 11 was held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 12 December 2015. The Conference negotiated the *Paris Agreement*, a global agreement to combat climate change, the text of which represented a consensus of the 196 representatives attending. On 5 October 2016, the threshold for entry into force of the Paris Agreement was achieved. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016. Subsequently, the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA1) took place in Marrakech (7-18 November 2016) in conjunction with COP 22 and CMP 12.

And to these challenges must, of course, be added terrorism, as Pakistan knows so well, and as all the world has been so dramatically reminded with the heinous attacks just perpetrated in Beirut and Paris.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of Daesh is a new chapter. Australia is participating in coalition military action to combat Daesh in Iraq and Syria. We are doing so within the framework of the UN Charter, and in a manner consistent with international law. But defeating Daesh also requires political action. As agreed at the Sydney Regional Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in June 2015, at which Pakistan was represented, our region has committed to working together to counter this narrative and to take practical steps to build the resilience of our nations, including by working with civil society.

The specific interests and issues affecting different regions of the world have shown that global multilateral institutions need to be buttressed by regional arrangements. That more intensive efforts are needed if neighbouring countries are to reap the mutual advantage from regional economic integration, to help each other in times of natural disaster, to combat transnational crime, to strike down terrorism, and to commit to good global governance - for the sake of our planet and our collective security - has never before been so manifest or the collective advantages so clear. This is particularly so for our region, as a key driver of the world's future prosperity.

In the Asia Pacific, the building blocks of regional architecture are already well established, from APEC, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), East Asia Summit (EAS) to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and others, and to these has now been added the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). And closer to us here, we will shortly have Heart of Asia meetings in Islamabad, and there are a number of other dialogues, of which many are 1.5 and second track processes, including a new 1.5/second track dialogue process between Pakistan and Afghanistan launched in early November 2015. I would also note that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is likely to become a building block for regional economic integration.

Because the future prosperity and the safety of our region will depend on maritime security and marine resource protection, the more we work and exercise together and build links through maritime architecture, the better we can respond, and the more we will come to know, and trust each other. Examples of maritime architecture that are working well in the Indo-Pacific are the coalition maritime taskforces, dealing with issues of piracy and

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<sup>2</sup> Editor's Note: On 12 and 13 November 2015, Beirut (Lebanon) and Paris (France) respectively, suffered a series of terror attacks. The attacks in both capital cities were the deadliest in decades. In Beirut, 43 people were killed and more than 200 wounded. In Paris, 130 people lost their lives, with nearly 368 injured.

transnational international crime, and protecting the sustainability of fisheries. This latter effort is of particular importance in the Pacific. The Pakistan Navy often commands one of the coalition maritime taskforces in partnership with Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, a co-operative security order for the Asia Pacific region must be founded on habits of consultation and cooperation, to build the strategic culture we all need - to overcome the contemporary and future challenges we face, and to reap the prosperity we know will come from regional economic integration. While consultation might not resolve problems, it makes the search for solutions easier and diminishes the risk of miscommunication and miscalculation.

I commend the Islamabad Policy Research Institute and the Hanns Seidel Foundation for convening this conversation on these vital issues, and for inviting me to be a part of it.

Thank you. ■

## **ANNEXURES**



## Annexure 1:

### Conference Speakers' Biographies

**Mr Ameen Izzadeen** is Editor, International Desk, Wijeya Newspapers Ltd, Sri Lanka and Deputy Editor, The Sunday Times, Sri Lanka. He has been a print media journalist for the past 22 years. Mr Izzadeen is a Harry Brittain Fellow of the London-based Commonwealth Press Union and Fellow at United Kingdom Association of Professionals. He has also been serving as visiting lecturer of journalism, Middle Eastern politics and international relations at various universities and colleges such as Colombo University, Sri Lanka College of Journalism etc. His papers and research articles submitted at various international seminars and to universities in the UK and Australia have come out as book chapters.

**Mr Bunn Nagara** is a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) in Malaysia, a commentator on strategic issues and Consultant Editor of *Moderation Monitor* journal. For covering the 1986 People Power Revolution, he received a National Union of Journalists (Malaysia) citation and a Medal of Honour nominated independently by the Philippines media and church leaders. He co-authored *Agents of Peace: Public Communication and Conflict Resolution in an Asian Setting* (Jakarta, 2004); *Regional Order in East Asia: ASEAN and Japan Perspectives* (Tokyo, 2007); and *The Rise of China: Perspectives from Asia and Europe* (New Delhi, 2008). His research interests cover South-East Asia, ASEAN Community, South China Sea, national/regional security and defence issues, East Asian integration, China, Gulf region, global power blocs and major power relations.

**Late Dr David Robert Jones** was part of the Visiting Faculty, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. He had a PhD in Russian History from Dalhousie University, Canada. He taught courses on Russian, East European and Asian history, as well as military-naval affairs at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Acadia University, Dalhousie University and Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia. His publications include 11 volumes (ed.) of *The Soviet/Eurasian Armed Forces Review Annual*, 8 volumes (ed.) of the *Military-Naval Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union*, a monograph on *Russian Tactics of Mobile Warfare*, and (co-author) of a biography. In addition, he wrote four successful stage, radio and television plays, served

on the editorial board of a range of scholarly journals, and authored some hundred articles and book chapters. He passed away in August 2016.

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# **IPRI PUBLICATIONS**



## **IPRI Publications**

### **IPRI Journal**

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### **Journal of Current Affairs (JoCA)**

The Institute started its second biannual refereed Journal in November 2016 entitled the *Journal of Current Affairs* aimed to encourage the research of young scholars and academics. Articles consist of contemporary subject matters providing policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders' critical understanding of world politics, foreign affairs and international security vis-à-vis Pakistan.

### **IPRI Books**

The Institute organises annual national and international conferences/seminars/workshops on critical thematic topics. The papers presented and the proceedings of these events are published in IPRI Books:

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- *Policy Approaches of South Asian Countries: Impact on the Region* (2016)
- *Building Knowledge-Based Economy in Pakistan: Learning from Best Practices* (2016)
- *Solutions for Energy Crisis in Pakistan Volume II* (2015)
- *Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan* (2015)
- *Roadmap for Economic Growth of Pakistan* (2015)
- *Pakistan's Strategic Environment Post-2014* (2014)
- *Future of Economic Cooperation in SAARC Countries* (2014)
- *SCO's Role in Regional Stability and Prospects of its Expansion* (2013)
- *Potential and Prospects of Pakistani Diaspora* (2013)
- *Rights of Religious Minorities in South Asia: Learning from Mutual Experiences* (2013)
- *Transition in Afghanistan: Post-Exit Scenarios* (2013)
- *Solutions for Energy Crisis in Pakistan* (2013)

- *Eighteenth Amendment Revisited* (2012)
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- *The Kashmir Imbroglio: Looking Towards the Future* (2005)
- *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Responses* (2005)
- *RAW: Global and Regional Ambitions* (2005)
- *Arms Race and Nuclear Developments in South Asia* (2004)
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- *The State of Migration and Multiculturalism in Pakistan, Report of National Seminar* (2003)

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- *Challenge of Identity and Governance Quaid's Vision: The Way Forward* (2013)
- *Bharat Mein Mazhabi Zafrani Rukh* (2012)
- *Genesis and Growth of Naxalite Movement in India* (2011)
- *Naxal Tehreek: Ibtida aur Farogh* (2011)
- *China's Peaceful Rise and South Asia* (2008)
- *The Ummah and Global Challenges: Re-organizing the OIC* (2006)
- *Pakistan's Vision East Asia: Pursuing Economic Diplomacy in the Age of Globalization in East Asia and Beyond* (2006)
- *Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan* (2005)
- *India-Pakistan Nuclear Rivalry: Perceptions, Misperceptions, and Mutual Deterrence* (2005)

- *An Evaluation of Pre-emption in Iraq* (2004)
- *Rise of Extremism in South Asia* (2004)
- *Ballistic Missile Defence, China and South Asia* (2003)
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