

and Philippines look towards India for help and assistance to insist their legitimate rights over these seas, China wants to silence India. These small countries are not in a position to exert any pressure on China. Even Japan is looking so helpless because its strategic ally, the US has to exert extreme pressure on China to stop its tireless efforts to capture and control these seas, and the US is looking for India to come forward and play a balancing role to control China. But China is not to be stopped. On 17-8-2016, Japan lodged a fresh diplomatic protest with China accusing the country of sending its coast guard ships into waters surrounding the contested islands in the East China Sea. Tokyo has filed at least 32 protests through diplomatic channels since August 5 over what it says have been 29 intrusions.⁷ *The latest protest came in the wake of reports in the Japanese media that hundreds of Chinese vessels were sailing close to the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which have reportedly been captured on camera by Japan's coastguard.*⁸ On the other hand, China is leaving no stone unturned and is inching towards complete control over the South China Sea and for that, it has launched a new high resolution satellite. To have an ever closer surveillance, the satellite has been placed to play an important role in monitoring the marine environment, island and reefs, and ships and oil rigs, according to the official China Daily newspaper. Meanwhile, Vietnam has done fortification of its islands on the South China Sea, which has not gone down well with China. Chinese media, on 11.08.2016, termed this move as a terrible mistake and advised Hanoi to draw lessons from the war in 1979 between the two countries⁹. The Indian Express, while quoting the global times, said that "If Vietnam's latest deployment is targeting China, that would be a terrible mistake. We hope Vietnam would remember and draw some lessons from history."¹⁰ Though, Chinese position with regard to South and East China Sea has weakened recently, owing to its permanent nature of arm-twisting and then getting favours, China had recently conducted at least three reconnaissance missions in the past three months using aircrafts armed with technology, capable of broad area of imaging at high resolutions in Uttarakhand. Not only that, around 20-25 Chinese troops have entered the demilitarised area in the 80-square-kilometer Barahoti pastures of Uttarakhand's Chamoli district earlier this month, according to The New Indian

Express. This is a clear-cut violation of 1958 understanding between the two countries, which listed it as a disputed area, where neither side would send their troops. As stated earlier, India's stand is clear on these disputed seas, which is evident from the then Defence Minister A.K. Antony's address at the first ASEAN's Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus in October 2010, in Hanoi, Vietnam. India's stand on the ES/SCS dispute is supporting to resolve the disputes through peaceful solutions on the basis of international laws, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 and noting the concerned parties, serious observation of the declaration on the conduct of parties in the East Sea¹¹. India does not have direct presence either in the South China Sea or in the East China Sea. Still, it is trying to reach there for some economic and political purposes that may include energy security and a counter to the Chinese efforts to reach in the Indian waters. India is strong in the waters surrounding it, but in recent years, China has been trying to have its presence felt here and for that, it tried to have some sort of understanding and relationship with Sri Lanka and Maldives. To counter this, Indian Defence Minister of that time, Mr. A.K. Antony, visited Maldives with a high level delegation from 20-22 August, 2009, so as to obtain some assurance from Maldives that it will not provide any help and assistance to China. India has become more worried after Pakistan has allowed China to develop Gwadar Port and thereby giving presence to it in the Arabian Sea close to the straits of Hormuz. China reached Myanmar and Myanmar leased the Coco Islands in the Andaman Sea to China in 1992 ostensibly to set up monitoring devices and for military use. India upgraded its command structure in the Andaman to an effective tri-services command more than a decade after the transfer of the said island to China¹². India lost an opportunity in the build-up of maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean when Sri Lanka offered it to invest in the development of Hambantotta Port due to the bureaucratic delays whereas China grabbed it and lost no time by providing funds for this strategic port. The 'girdle of encirclement' from the North-Western Arabian Sea to the North Eastern Bay of Bengal, the 'string of pearls' strategy remains much abused term to explain China's Indian Ocean ambitions¹³. India has been providing different kinds of aid and assistance to



Maldives, be it the Tsunami assistance or the air surveillance helicopters to counter Chinese ambitions in these seas. These helicopters could be used for surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and for responding to threats and disasters. The importance of the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, though look similar for both India and China, but there are some dissimilarities too, as China looks into these waters for strategic matters, whereas India endows both, the strategic as well economic importance. The Chabahar port agreement between India and Iran has put China in some trouble and there looks to be a balancing stone has been laid. Recently China opposed India's bid to enter into the NSG group and put all hurdles. The same China now expect from India to cooperate with it to claim authority over these Seas. China appealed India not to raise these issues in the recently concluded ASEAN summit which India obliged. Now China is expecting India should not raise the issue in forthcoming G-20 Summit so that it does not become an issue of international dispute. Refusing to be bogged down by China scuttling its entry into the NSG, India on 13-8-20 took up the matter directly with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi who visited New Delhi in the last week (3rd week of August). Yi met the Prime Minister and the Foreign Affairs Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj and had a three hour long marathon meeting between the two where India raised number of issues of bilateral and international importance were discussed. Ms. Swaraj outlined the importance of a seat in NSG for India to meet the objective of clean energy goals. As per the report they agreed that the director generals of the disarmament of the two countries would meet soon to discuss the issue. China has been blocking the Indian effort to declare Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist by the United Nations and in this year itself China put the listing of Azhar on a technical hold. As it was reported, China has agreed to revisit its technical hold. India raised host of issues which have been troubling India. China was not interested to address them such as China-Pak Economic Corridor coming up in Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The Corridor aims to link China's Xinjiang province to the Gwadar deep sea port close to Pakistan's border with Iran. India has been asking China to cease such activities. India also discussed the issue of easing of visa regime and civil society relations, India's desire

to becoming the permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. China avoided discussing the South China Sea Issue which is quite obvious because the very reason for the visit of the Chinese foreign minister Mr. Yi was to keep Indian mouth shut in the forthcoming G-20 Summit in China in the month of September 2016 so that India should not raise this issue and making it an unanswerable question for China. This meeting took place on the background of a statement of China's state run media which said that door for India's admission into the NSG is not tightly closed and New Delhi should fully comprehend Beijing's concerns over the disputed South China Sea. Suddenly the tone of Chinese media has changed and it stated that India and China are partners not rivals. The Xinhua news agency said, "as Beijing and New Delhi head into a season of intensive top-level diplomatic encounters that could well define the future of their partnership, the two need to work together to keep their disagreements in check."¹⁴ It further said that India has wrongly blamed China to have blocked India's efforts to enter into the NSG group. As stated earlier, the report expect India to learn lesson from the ethics and to understand China's concerns over the South China Sea where Beijing is on the back foot after the verdict of the international tribunal striking down its expansive claims over the area. The US, Australia, Japan and Philippines which won the case asked China to implement the verdict as it is binding. Beijing boycotted the tribunal's proceedings, terming it as illegal and thus null and void. It is putting pressure on India on the ground that in a joint communique issued at the recent meeting of foreign ministers of Russia, India, and China in Moscow, India agreed that the South China Sea issue should be addressed through talks between the parties concerned. But China forgot that soon after the verdict, India stated in clear terms that the verdict of the international tribunal must be honoured. It is unbelievable to see a ring master is taking the role of an ethics teacher. It is impossible to believe China and thus a ring master should be treated in the similar fashion. India in recent days is doing the right thing by reinforcing its strength in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, sending Sukhoi war planes in Arunachal Pradesh and increasing the number of Tanks in Laddakh region to show its desire to face China head to head.



Summary and Conclusion

As per a report that India is going to skip the meeting of NAM, which would be a big surprise for many Indians but in the changed geo-political situation, it looks like a very deeply thought after strategy of projecting itself as a big power. India wants to play a big brother role in the region and in the world too and for that it is necessary to project itself a strong, matured and influencing force. China has never shown itself creditable enough to be believed. Now since it is in dire need of Indian support, it is showing some softness. But not without stick, as it does not resist from encroaching into Indian borders and indirectly indicating that in the event of India not supporting its claim on the South China Sea, China will teach a lesson to India. China may become an instrument for the reviving of insurgency in the north east but India should not be scared and take Myanmar and other neighbouring countries into confidence and be prepared to fight such misadventure by China.

India has done correct by deploying more tanks in Ladakh and landing Sukhoi fighter planes in Arunachal Pradesh. China may use Pakistan as a proxy to trouble India but the Prime Minister has done right by just mentioning the names of Baluchistan and POK. Things are changing fast by just mentioning these matters. To feel it, pain should be given to the pain givers.

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India-Myanmar Joint Statement during the visit of the President of Myanmar to India (29 August 2016)

August 29, 2016

1. At the invitation of H.E. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of the Republic of India, H.E. U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, paid a State visit to India from 27-30 August, 2016. He was accompanied by his wife Daw Su Su Lwin. Apart from his official engagements in New Delhi, President U Htin Kyaw visited places of historical and cultural importance, including Bodhgaya and Agra.
2. President U Htin Kyaw was accompanied by a high level delegation including the Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, the Union Minister for Transportation and Communications, the Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Manpower, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and other senior officials. He was accorded a ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhawan on August 29, 2016. The President of India hosted a banquet in his honour.
3. President U Htin Kyaw paid tribute and respect to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi at Raigad.
4. H.E. Smt Sudhna Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India, called on President U Htin Kyaw in New Delhi.
5. The Indian leadership congratulated the President of Myanmar on the victory of the National League for Democracy after general elections in Myanmar in November 2015. They expressed support to the new Government in all its endeavours for the well-being of the people of Myanmar, including in development of democratic institutions. They also offered to share India's own experiences in evolving parliamentary rules, procedures and practices as well as in managing Union-State/Region relations, allocation of powers and resources between the Union and States etc.
6. President U Htin Kyaw held wide-ranging discussions with H.E. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India and H.E. Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. While reviewing bilateral issues, both sides agreed that greater bilateral cooperation between India and Myanmar is required in order to promote inclusive growth and development and to contribute to peace, prosperity and stability in both countries and in the region as a whole. They expressed support for the continuation and reinvigoration of dialogue within the framework of existing bilateral institutional mechanisms, namely Joint Consultative Commission, Foreign Office Consultations, Joint Trade Committee, National Level Meeting, Sectoral Level Meeting, Regional Border Committee, Border Liaison Meetings, Heads of Survey Department Meeting etc.
7. The Indian leadership also expressed support to the national reconciliation and peace process of the Government of Myanmar under the "21st Century Panglong Conference".
8. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral security and defence cooperation, which is crucial for maintaining peace and stability along the long India-Myanmar border. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to fight the scourge of terrorism and insurgent activity in all its forms and manifestations. Both sides reiterated their commitment to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other and to continue practising the policy of not allowing any insurgent groups to use their soil for hostile activities against the other side. They emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation between security forces and border guarding agencies for securing peace, security and stability in the border areas, which is crucial for overall development.
9. The two sides alluded to the importance of sound border management as an intrinsic part of maintaining border security, peace and stability along the entire length of their common border.
10. Referring to the ongoing discussions between the two sides on maritime security, both sides agreed that Maritime Security Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal is vital for both countries.
11. The two sides reviewed ongoing development cooperation initiatives being undertaken with technical and financial assistance from the Government of India, including in the areas of connectivity and capacity building, health and education infrastructure, agriculture, information technology, industrial training, and various training programmes.
12. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the implementation of Kaladan Multi Modal Transport Project. The two sides agreed that the completed facilities at Sitwe and Palauk should be operationalised by December 2016 and the modalities of their operation and maintenance be finalised by the two sides at the earliest. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the signing of two MoUs pertaining to the implementation of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project.
13. Identifying the need for special focus on the development and prosperity of the people in bordering areas, both sides agreed to enhance their cooperation to bring about overall socio-economic development in the border areas by undertaking both infrastructure development and micro-economic projects, including the upgradation of roads and construction of schools, health centres, bridges, agriculture and related training activities in accordance with the MoU on India-Myanmar Border Area Cooperation.
14. The two leaders noted with appreciation the substantial progress made in upgrading the Yangon Children's Hospital and the Sitwe General Hospital with technical and financial assistance from India. The Myanmar side thanked India for this important partnership initiative with state-of-the-art medical equipment. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the functioning of the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT) as well as on the establishment of the Rice Bio-Park at Yangon University in Nay Pyi Taw. They reviewed progress in establishing the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) in Nay Pyi Taw. These institutes will emerge as centres of excellence that will be able to address the capacity building needs of Myanmar's IT and agricultural sector respectively. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the successful upgradation of the India-Myanmar Centre for the Enhancement of IT Skills (IMECITS) in Yangon, which has emerged as a premier IT training centre in Myanmar. Language Laboratories at Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, e-Resource Centre at Nay Pyi Taw as well as the computerisation of the Central Land Records Development Training Centre (CLRDT) at Taik Kya in Yangon region. Indian side offered assistance for undertaking small development projects in areas and sectors considered priority by Government of Myanmar. Indian side also offered assistance to Myanmar side to enhance agricultural productivity by undertaking initiatives such as programme on germplasm enhancement, development of seed models, training private seed entrepreneurs in Myanmar, training and demonstration of improvised agro-techniques and other capacity building projects. The two sides agreed to exchange information on skill development initiative that could be undertaken to provide useful employment opportunities while the needs of industry of both countries.

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Maritime Security of India and The Maritime Silk Road: Challenges and Perspective

Dr. Sanghamitra Patnaik

Introduction

Maritime security in a very narrow sense includes aspects like force-protection and defense against sabotage. Its scope of operations can be expanded to combat terrorism and illegal activities like piracy and trafficking by embracing the protection of territorial waters and sea lanes. So India by imbibing the inclusive approach defines maritime security as a collection of all the issues related to the seas having a bearing on national security. These issues include seaborne trade and infrastructure development, management of sea resources, environmental issues and employment of naval forces. India's maritime security revolves around safeguarding national maritime interests at all times.

The objectives of India's maritime security are finding its way from its stated goal.

The objectives are (NSP, 2015) to deter conflict and coercion against India, to conduct maritime military operations in a manner that enables early termination of conflict on terms favorable to India, to shape a favorable and positive maritime environment for enhancing net security in India's areas of maritime interest, to protect Indian coastal and offshore assets against attacks and threats emanating from or at sea and to develop requisite maritime force levels and maintain the capability for meeting India's maritime security requirements.

The overall objective of the maritime security is to ensure a positive maritime environment while protecting Indian coastal and offshore assets. Before analyzing the India's perception of Maritime Silk Road, it is pertinent to focus on India's primary areas of maritime interests as follows:

- India's coastal areas and maritime zones, including coastline, islands, internal sea waters, territorial waters, contiguous zone, EEZ and continental shelf.

- The Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, and their littoral regions.
- The Persian Gulf and its littoral, which is the source of majority of our oil supplies and gas imports, and is home to more than seven million expatriate Indians.
- The Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and their littoral regions.
- South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions.
- The choke points leading to, from and across the Indian Ocean, including the Six degree Channel; Eight/Nine degree Channels; Straits of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca, Singapore, Sunda and Lombok; the Mozambique Channel, and Cape of Good Hope and their littoral regions.
- Other areas encompassing our SLOCs, and vital energy and resource interests.

India's secondary areas of maritime interest include the following:

- South-East Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions in vicinity.
- South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, and their littoral regions.
- Southern Indian Ocean Region, including Antarctica.
- Mediterranean Sea, West Coast of Africa, and their littoral regions.
- Other areas of national interest based on considerations of Indian diaspora, overseas investments and political relations.

India's perception of Maritime challenges and threats are shaped and reshaped by the behavior of different countries in the above mentioned areas.

Maritime Threats and Challenges

Threats and challenges to India's maritime interests are derived from both traditional and non-traditional sources. The Indian Navy is entrusted with continues



monitoring of all developments influencing the maritime domain. The traditional sources pertain to states with organized military capability and resources. The activities of these states are considered detrimental to the Maritime interests of India. Traditional sources pose a higher level of threat to India's national security interests. If a change takes place due to sudden politico-economic and military events in any area, it would lead to changes in the regional security environment.

The prevailing geo-strategic environment is very much complex as it is characterized by simultaneous competition and cooperation, resulting in no clear-cut conventional divisions. Nations with divergent national interests can be grouped as significant trade partners to share many areas of convergence. From security point of view, there can be another group of traditional friends. There has been a noticeable rise in regional tensions and instabilities in some areas of maritime interest to India especially in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Aden in recent years. These events have already had a spill-over effect from land to sea. As a result of which there is the rise of non-traditional threats and maritime security challenges such as piracy, terrorism, and humanitarian crises. A number of leading powers made their presence felt in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through military bases and forward deployed units. There has been continued militarization of the region and proliferation of weapons on the part of non-state groups, including private security organizations. These elements have posed serious threat to regional maritime security environment. It would have adverse impact on India's maritime security and prosperity.

Keeping this in the background, India's maritime strategy is being revised to address the prevalent scenario which will help in studying the Maritime Silk Road initiative of China and Indian response and reactions to the particular issue.

Maritime Security and Strategy - Redefined

The revised strategy *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* focused on two key aspects. First, to tackle both traditional and nontraditional threats require a seamless and holistic approach towards maritime security. Second, in order

to achieve its own maritime interests India wants the seas to remain secure. Indian Navy is entrusted with various roles in an integrated manner by developing new means to address it. It insists on increased maritime cooperation and coordination with different agencies in India and with friendly nations. The strategy focuses on the Indian Navy as the mainstay of the maritime force of the nation. It also provides a broader framework for synergizing actions in the maritime domain with the other stakeholders.

The revised strategy is based on the principles and concepts of national security and maritime power, reflected in the *Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces* and the *Indian Maritime Doctrine*. It builds upon the Indian Navy's *Vision Statement* and *Guiding Principles*, formulated in 2014. The revised strategy has increased focus on the following:

- The safety and security of seaborne trade and energy routes, especially in the Indian Ocean Region, considering their effect on global economies and India's national interests.
- The importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and strengthening the international legal regime at sea, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), for all-round benefit. India's *maritime interests* can be summed up as follows:
 - Protect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity against threats in the maritime environment.
 - Promote safety and security of Indian citizens, shipping, fishing, trade, energy supply, assets and resources in the maritime domain.
 - Pursue peace, stability and security in India's maritime zones, maritime neighborhood and other areas of maritime interest.
 - Preserve and project other national interests in the maritime dimension.
- The considerable scope and value in undertaking cooperation and coordination between various navies, to counter common threats at sea.

The revised strategy of India to deal with new environment can be interpreted by focusing on Maritime Silk Road initiative of China.



Maritime Silk Road (MSR)

The Chinese concept Maritime Silk Road is an attempt by China to construct multiple lines of communication to its economic heartland in eastern China since the early 2000s. During Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to Indonesia in October 2013, the president pointed out Southeast Asia as a major maritime hub since ancient times. He proposed that China and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should jointly build a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The MSR is one component of Xi's One Belt One Region (OBOR) initiative, with the other component being the Silk Road Economic Belt connecting Europe and Asia. Since the announcement, the Chinese government has strongly embraced the principle of joint construction to meet the interests and development strategies of all states involved. In March 2015, China's State Council issued the document "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road." It provides a comprehensive presentation of the OBOR framework. It indicates that the MSR initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure, and efficient transport routes to connect major sea ports.

Two factors are emphasized while choosing countries for the MSR. The first is whether countries are located on maritime trade routes or have marine transportation centers, such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Singapore, Myanmar, and Kenya. The second factor is whether states respond positively to the initiative and have a good foundation of economic cooperation with China.

The Indian Ocean is considered as a major maritime trade and energy channel for China. It is of great strategic significance for the stable development of the Chinese economy. Energy security is in particular a key priority area. Being a net petroleum oil importer in 1993, China became the world's largest oil importer in 2015. China's import of crude oil reached 335.5 million tons, of which more than 60% was transported via the Indian Ocean. In 2015, imports represented 60.6% of total oil consumption (Li, Zhu, 2016). The Indian Ocean is the most important route for imports to East Asia and Southeast Asia and for exports from these regions to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The development of port

infrastructure in these key regions will not only benefit China's economic development but also greatly facilitate the social and economic development of other countries in East Asia, in Southeast Asia, and around the Indian Ocean rim.

The growth of infrastructure construction is a major factor in encouraging regional economic cooperation. The MSR includes joint port construction in Colombo and Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan, Kyaukpyu in Myanmar, and Chittagong in Bangladesh. Some large Chinese companies are also making investments in ports such as Piraeus in Greece, Said in Egypt and Antwerp in Belgium in accordance with their own development strategies.

It can be called as a geostrategy to develop inner Chinese provinces and shape China's regional periphery by exercising economic, political and cultural influence. When in May 2014, Xinhua unveiled China's ambitious Land and Maritime Silk Roads he envisioned an area of economic cooperation stretching from the Western Pacific to the Baltic Sea as a sort of maritime highway. The MSR starts in Quanzhou (Fujian province), touches Guangzhou, Beihai (Guangxi) and Haikou (Hainan) before heading south to the Malacca Strait. The MSR reaches Kolkata, from Kuala Lumpur and crosses the northern Indian Ocean to Nairobi, Kenya. From Nairobi, the MSR heads towards north around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, while catching Athens before meeting the land-based Silk Road in Venice. The MSR will open up 'new opportunities and a new future to China and every country along the road that is seeking to develop'.⁵ India was invited to join the MSR during the 17th round of Special Representatives (SRs) Talks in New Delhi in February 2014.

China's Silk Road initiatives have the potential to address a number of the most pressing challenges facing Beijing. There is a more pressing need to find new markets to absorb the products of China's excess industrial capacity and to improve access to energy supplies as domestic demand continues to grow. It is a serious concern that economic indicators in China's interior and western provinces have persistently lagged behind in comparison to China's more affluent eastern coastal



cities. As a part of its "Go West" strategy, China has made significant investments in many of the targeted provinces. Still they have not yet reached the national average. Beijing strives for greater economic integration with its neighbors. Beijing perceives accelerated development as the panacea for the persistent instability in Xinjiang Province to eliminate the "Three Evil Forces" -terrorism, extremism, and separatism. By posing the province as a gateway to a "Eurasian Land Bridge" through Central Asia to Europe, China hopes to address one of the greatest threats to its internal security. The March 2015 blueprint for One Belt One Road states that China intends to "make good use of Xinjiang's geographical advantages" and "make it a key transportation, trade, logistics, culture, science, and education center."

China has gone to great lengths in emphasizing its openness to a wide range of stakeholders. It clearly intends to establish itself as a central actor in regional affairs. It has been discussed within China's policy circles as an effort to counterbalance the U.S. "pivot to Asia" and American attempts to "dominate" the region. Chinese government officials and scholars publically contrast their plans with the post-World War II American Marshall Plan that lacks the latter's "hegemonic" characteristics. For Beijing it is an effort to encourage integration and economic growth in Eurasia, rather than an attempt to expand its own political influence in the region. Chinese policy makers describe OBOR as a mechanism to promote peace and stability in the region (what President Xi has referred to as the "Community of Common Destiny") by strengthening China's bilateral relations with its neighbors and developing international organizations that are not dominated by Western powers. This pattern should extend to security issues according to some Chinese scholars who, echoing President Xi, have called for "security problems in Asia [to] be solved by Asians themselves."

Regarding Beijing's interest in Afghanistan, it is directly linked to its concerns about Xinjiang. Geographically the province is crucial for China to expand its economic ties to Central Asia. The stability of Xinjiang is the foremost concern for China's Afghanistan policy as hundreds of ETIM terrorists found shelter in Afghanistan, especially under the

protection of Al-Qaeda in the 1990s. It poses a severe threat to the national security of China. Though there is absence of much economic interest in Afghanistan, still China is ready to increase its contributions to the reconstruction of Afghanistan by making Afghanistan a partner in the "Silk Road Economic Belt". Indian response regarding the MSR can be interpreted from different ideas and perspectives.

MSR- a part of Geopolitics

MSR is interpreted as China's attempt to 'reorder Asia' and 'undermine American alliances' in the region. It is attempting to create trade and economic relationships with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries through trade, port and continental land bridges to counterbalance United States (US) influence and to attract the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) littorals within its sphere of influence. The MSR proposal enables landlocked south-west China to access markets in Southeast Asia. It is also understood as a policy to challenge the US' rebalancing strategy by 'softening' ASEAN elites renewed interest in reaching out to the US, Japan and perhaps, even India. China's official discourse projects such a view: 'a certain individual country (Japan) persistently promotes its own value and political systems and "zero-sum" mentality, complicating the regional situation. To be different, the Silk Road Spirit means peace and win-win cooperation.' (Xinhua , 2014)

As India is located both in Maritime Silk Route and the Southern Silk Route¹⁶ there are opportunities and challenges for India in light of other alternative economic options like strategic partnerships with Japan and the US. India should study various alternatives available to make use of the proposed plan. For example, if there is a refusal by India and the MSR is accepted by ASEAN and a majority of South Asian states, it would leave India on the wrong side of China.¹⁷ This would negatively influence India's intention to attract massive Chinese investment capital in several industrial parks across the country. India has already conveyed its objection to CPEC as it goes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during her visit to Beijing last year, said India will not give a blanket endorsement to the MSR project but



support where the synergies of the two countries meet. (Chinese Daily, July 2016) It implies that India would look at the evolution of the MSR proposal for a synergy of Sino-Indian interests to play a constructive role in the emergence of a new geo-economic trend in Asia's political economy.

MSR- The Neorealist Perspective

The MSR can be viewed as a catalyst to structural changes (as viewed by Kenneth Waltz) in the power balance in South Asia by increasing capacity of China. It should be seen in the context of Indian national interests and implications for India's position in the IOR and South Asia. The strategic objectives of MSR raise questions about Chinese intentions. China through its policy of 'String of Pearls' is striving to expand its influence in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea by building ports in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, apart from other Indian Ocean littoral states. Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have pledged support to Xi Jinping's MSR initiative. If the MSR made Bangladesh and Sri Lanka drifting into the Chinese orbit, it would challenge India's traditional conception of the subcontinent as a privileged sphere. Since 2006, China-South Asia trade has increased by 280 per cent to US\$ 100 billion.

South Asian states have already discovered the option and ability to play the 'China card' by exploiting Sino-Indian mistrust to advance their national and developmental objectives. For India's neighbors, the MSR offers another potential opportunity to play the 'China card' in their strategic bargaining with India. One of the reasons for the regional outreach forwarded by Modi government is to address such a possibility by reinvigorating Indian credibility with its neighbors. It is interesting to note that while the Xinhua MSR map excludes Gwadar, Indian analysts offer competing interpretations. One view is that China is hedging against an unstable Gwadar corridor, which begins from Xinjiang and passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The possibility of instability in the AfPak region and Baluchistan after the drawdown of Western forces, China is shifting its priority to other maritime routes in the IOR. Gwadar's proximity to the Persian Gulf and its ability to support both naval and commercial activity in the Arabian Sea makes this Silk Road too lucrative to be dismissed. After a recent visit to China,

a Pakistani minister noted that 'Gwadar is the gateway to the economic corridor and it will be developed into a modern port city.' (The Express Tribune, 9 July 2014). Therefore, in spite of China's MSR map bypassing Pakistan, the planned Chinese investments in Pakistan are indicative of a sustained strategy. The omission in the map is presumed as a deliberate attempt to prevent adverse reactions from India's strategic community and make the MSR appear less contentious in Indian debates.

MSR- Security Strategy

Though the MSR is offered in the economic platter, the maritime analyst viewed it from the angle of national and regional security. China's long-term ambition is perceived as establishing permanent presence by being aided by the structure of 'outposts' from Myanmar to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, Sudan, Tanzania, Seychelles, Mozambique etc. When these 'outposts' have been built in the plea of developmental assistance, the MSR has a chance to support Chinese warships in terms of logistics and operational turnaround.

There is also one apprehension in India that whether the MSR is part of China's attempt to neutralize its 'Malacca Dilemma'. In 2003, Hu Jintao had publicly expressed about 'Malacca Dilemma', that described the vulnerable SLOCs -crucial to China's trade.(Lanteigne, Marc, 2008). China's long and vulnerable SLOCs extend from West Asia and East Africa to China's eastern seaboard. Eighty-five per cent of China's oil imports traded through the northern Indian Ocean in close proximity to Indian naval deployments. So far, the PLAN does not possess the quantitative strength or strategic basing rights to secure its IOR SLOCs.(Ji, You, 2007).

There are two assumptions connected with MSR project of China. In the first place, China's growing SLOCs can potentially turn the IOR into a contested space. It is the impulse of projecting power up to and beyond 1,000 nautical miles from its territorial waters that is driving China's maritime force development and possible deployment of nuclear attack submarines and carrier-based task forces in IOR by 2020. Secondly, as China is aware of the fact that the Indian Navy monitors Chinese SLOCs through the Malacca Strait. By taking a divergent



route through the Sunda or Lombok Straits will not ensure complete security for China's strategic commodity trade as Chinese SLOCs traverse near the Indian peninsula.

MSR – a Cobweb Model perspective

John Burton (1972- book- World society) proposes "Cobweb model" of transnational relationships. It gives emphasis on interrelationships among Nation states consist of different groups with different interests, business groups, labor groups etc. The cobweb model builds on cross-cutting and overlapping group memberships and less conflict. The MSR resonates as an inevitable trend of globalization and the rise of new economic centers of power in Asia.

No country in modern times would be able to achieve sustained economic growth without increasing its share in world trade and investment and connectivity is a vital means to achieve the purpose. It viewed that geo-economics is what really matters and policymakers should not downplay the element economics over security considerations. Accordingly, the MSR can be a stepping stone to a new Look East policy. It is for India to explore the opportunity of connectivity and openness towards trade and business with its neighbors stretching across ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea.

Conclusion

The rise of China in Asia's maritime security architecture is playing a determinant factor for India to define its strategic interests and review its maritime policy. For the first time Indian government document formally acknowledged the implications of the evolving and increasingly accepted concept of the "Indo-Pacific" on India's maritime security. The geographic extent of this concept with its multiple variations essentially brings the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific — theaters of geo-political competition — into one strategic arc. The concept is endorsed by Australia emphasizing on the strategic implications of this region in its 2013 Defense White paper. The United States, Japan, India, and Indonesia prefer to use the term Asia-Pacific in their official documents. Indian Chief of Naval Staff TRK Dhowan emphasized on the need to revise the 2007 maritime strategy. He wrote "The shift in worldview from a *Euro-Atlantic* to an *Indo-Pacific* focus and the

repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment in tangible ways." (Evolving-MaritimeStrategy,2016) Over the years, India's ASEAN friends expressed their concern in New Delhi's lack of naval and political presence in the South China Sea. This Maritime Strategy re-affirms India's resolve not to be directly engaged in the affairs of the U.S.-China power politics dynamic. While ASEAN nations have shown a preference for a larger Indian presence in the Western Pacific, regional navies such as Australia and the United States have encouraged India to play a larger security role and be a "net security provider" in the region.

There is a critical development in India's shifting naval strategy – the role of a net security provider. The strategy outlines: "The term net security describes the state of actual security available in an area, upon balancing against the ability to monitor, contain, and counter all of these." (ibid) In the backdrop of the region's expectation for the Indian navy to be a net security provider, the step taken to spell out what the term means is a positive approach. The 'objective' for the moment is to "shape a favorable and positive maritime environment, for enhancing net security in India's areas of maritime interest."(ibid) The shift in India's maritime strategy and policies was made clear through the navy's engagement under the Modi government. The 2015 maritime strategy not only formalizes the intent of the Indian navy, it also takes a bold tone to build a network of regional cooperation to ensure peace and stability in India's areas of interest. The document also recognizes the increasing importance of HADR(Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) operations for the Indian navy envisioning the expansion of India's maritime outlook as well as capabilities. Through the Joint Strategic Vision with the United States, Japan's inclusion into the MALABAR exercises, new bilateral exercises with Japan, Indonesia, and Australia and re-engagement with the island nations of the IOR and South Pacific, India is willing to play a larger role in the unfolding security architecture in the region. It was only a matter of time before New Delhi acknowledged the changing dynamics within its area of maritime interests. The initiatives taken under the



Modi government to re-engage with the navies of the region are much appreciated and this document is a step forward in voicing India's intentions and concerns regarding maritime security. If New Delhi can sustain the momentum that it has created in the Asian maritime domain, India will emerge as a credible leader and critical player in the evolving security architecture of the Indo-Pacific. The need of the hour is that India should scale up its own investment in its immediate neighborhood by investing in ports, logistics, and shipbuilding to guarantee overall development of the region.

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India, the Maritime Silk Road and Asian Geopolitics

Dr. Praveen Kumar

Introduction

The Maritime Silk Road initiative of the Government of China needs to be seen in the larger geopolitical context. It has implications for India's maritime interests in the India-Pacific region. The intended project is not to be seen in isolation, but as a part of the larger endeavour of China under the 'one road, one belt' strategy. The strategy entails creating maritime and overland commerce infrastructure along the Asia-Europe shipping route and in a zone stretching from Xinjiang to the Baltic Sea. Development of ports in South-East Asia, around the Indian Ocean and in the eastern Mediterranean region is planned among the maritime infrastructure. Majority of the nations in Asia and Africa, *prima facie*, are projected to get the benefit out of the commerce that may happen along the Maritime Silk Road. China among them would be the major stakeholder. China is still ahead of other countries in the projected geopolitical region in terms of its share in the global and maritime trade, presence of the largest number of container ports and as the third largest ship owning nation, among others. Amidst all these facts, a realistic assessment of the likely outcome of the project and possible role for India cannot be made unless an analysis has been made on three fronts to include economy, politics and the idea of regional hegemony.

India and other regional powers have intensely debated the likely prospects of the Maritime Silk Road, since it was first articulated publicly by the Chinese premier Xi Jinping at the 2013 summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia in October. There has been an approach of ambivalence as far as India is concerned. This ambivalence is due to the fact that China's intentions behind the proposal cannot be known. This may be true about any policy of a state in the international system. However, what complicates the matter is the history of India-China relations and their rising profile as competitors in the international system. In addition, China's political actions in Asia, which are often

considered aggressive by other nations in the region work towards erosion of already depleting trust between India and China and China and other regional powers in the region.

A strategy of enhancement of power

Kautalya while dealing with the elements of sovereignty in his book the *Arthashastra* prophesied वस्तु राजिः सुखं सीदः.¹ Meaning, for a state, strength is power and happiness is the end. He also explains that strength is of three kinds and depending on the kind of strength a state has, corresponding happiness, too, could be of three kinds.² He further states that "The possession of power and happiness in a greater degree makes a king superior to another; in a less degree, inferior; and in an equal degree, equal. Hence a king shall always endeavour to augment his own power and elevate his happiness."³

Written approximately two thousand and four hundred years ago,⁴ the theoretical implications of Kautalya's work have continued to remain relevant for successive generations. Understood properly, military, economic and ideational, including technological powers determine national power, and the more of them a nation-state has, better its status in the international system. By implication, the more powerful a state is, more secure it is in all aspects of security. Considering that the states in the current international system are inter-dependent and have to endeavour for the acquisition of strength and corresponding happiness in the international system, competition among the states is inevitable. This is primarily due to the fact that states operate within the same environment, which is "anarchic" and "(T)he structure of international politics is not transformed by changes internal to states, however widespread the changes may be".⁵

This is known that human beings cannot exploit the natural resources beyond a limit. Also, states, before helping others would take care of their



own security interests first. However, 'self-help' and survival for one state in the contemporary international environment would not have a meaning in isolation. Meaning, the states may look after their national interests first and may take up measures that is of upmost value to their survival, but for that they need to strike a balance between their national security measures and what is needed to maintain the equilibrium in the larger system. Argued differently, neither nation-states are self-sufficient, nor can they shut the boundaries to avoid interaction with the outside world. However, in the light of Kautalya's ideas, it can be understood that a state would always enhance its power and happiness, both. In contrast, the ancient Chinese thinker, Sun Tzu, who lived between 551-496 BC declared in the opening paragraph of his work, *The Art of War*:

"War is
A grave affair of State;
It is a place
Of life and death,
A road
To survival and extinction,
A matter to be pondered carefully"

We find a significant difference in approach between Indian thinking and that of the Chinese. Kautalya himself was a realist. Kautalya, too, pondered upon and emphasised on the importance of and the ways and means of conduct of war by the state, but his emphasis would be on the happiness of the state, as well.

If we look at China's maritime policy, one has to look at the internal contradictions and the emerging geopolitics in the India-Pacific region, first. According to S B Cohen, a contemporary geopolitical thinker, China's position has been strengthened in the post-Cold War period in the East Asian geostrategic realm, and within the Yellow, East and South China Seas, the country presents a serious challenge to Japan and the U.S. western pacific strategy.⁷ Meanwhile, the country has oriented itself from 'continentality' to 'maritimity' following the end of Maoism and end of Vietnam War, opening its economic system. A net impact of the imbalanced Chinese economic policies during the different regimes (of Mao's and that of Deng's) has been that the coastal regions of the South and Central China

have developed much more than the North and East of China. As has been pointed out by Cohen:

"This coastal region, sometimes called the "Golden coast of China" is home to most of China's rapidly growly middle class, as well as wealthy entrepreneurs, and has the country's highest per capita income and largest share of foreign-funded companies. The focus of these companies is foreign trade."⁸

However, during the same period the continental China, the North of the country, and the south and far southwest, which also has the concentration of the largest land mass and population continue to remain underdeveloped and backward. This way, China encompasses both of these contrasting world orientations (continentality and maritimity). This is further complicated by the fact that the country has retained the repressive top-down repressive governance apparatus, while encouraging the market-oriented economy. According to Cohen, "(H)ow to reconcile the geopolitical contradictions that grow out of these two outlooks represents China's greatest internal geopolitical challenge. Its outcome will determine whether China will remain united or it disunity is to be divided into two separate states."⁹

While the internal contradictions may present challenges to even developmental and national integrity of China, the external orientation of its economic growth has led some western strategic analysts to conclude that China may be the fastest growing economy, but it is out there to compete with the leading powers in the international system, most importantly the US and its per capita income would continue to remain smaller than that of the US.¹⁰ China may need higher economic growth to enhance its power to address its internal contradictions and at the same time this may help China to establish itself as the most prosperous and powerful country in the international political system. The "one road one belt" policy devised by the Chinese authorities purportedly is oriented towards meeting these objectives, something that would appear a very genuine function for any country in the international system. China also claims that this may be a benevolent policy, which will help the countries in the Asia, Africa and Europe to grow with it. However, any student of diplomacy



is aware that implications of any such policy not that simple and straight. To understand this one just needs to look at China's involvement in the geopolitical issues in the East and South East Asian region.

There are territorial disputes that China is involved with the countries in the neighbourhood. The dispute with Russia has eased with improved relations in the post-Cold War times, but the former USSR and China were involved in a dispute over territory of over 4500 miles. China's boundary disputes with India are considered to be the most serious one. China, following its aggression against India in 1962, has not vacated part of Indian territories that it had occupied during the war. In addition, China's support to Pakistan is considered to be part of its larger policy to encircle India. China also has land border disputes with Vietnam. China's maritime boundary disputes with Indonesia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines over the Spratlys islands in the South China Sea, and dispute over Senkaku island with Japan are but a few more to be mentioned in this respect.¹¹ In addition, China has been in controversy over the issue of Taiwan and Tibet in the region.

This is also important to look at China's military modernisation, especially its naval modernisation. This may be indicative of a policy under which a country seeks more power in the international system and assertion in the maritime domain may only be indicative of this fact. For instance, US established its influence over the Caribbean and the western hemisphere in the 19th century and Japan did the same over East Asia in the 20th century as their powers grew.¹² Although China may still be behind the US in terms of its cumulative military power, but it has significantly improved its military arsenal, particularly its naval capability. As per the SIPRI database, it the second largest spender on military and its naval capability may be only next to the US, comparable only to Russia. India, meanwhile, was the 7th largest spender on military and its naval capability also was ranked at seven.¹³

India and Maritime Diplomacy

India's maritime connections with the outside world for trade and commerce have been very old. The use of Navy for military purposes can also be traced to the ancient period. History has recorded the

evidence of use of Navy by the Tamils against Ceylon in 2nd Century BC.¹⁴ The earliest connections could be traced to the early period of the first millennia BC. Later period of the ancient Indian history has also seen contacts with western Asia and Burma and use of ports for political and commerce purposes.¹⁵ Mention can be made here of the Southern kingdoms of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. Later history has also shown that missionaries, traders and colonisers, all took the sea route to come to India.

Coming to the contemporary period, when one looks at India's maritime connections and related foreign policy issues, the first link that comes to one's mind is that of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean, stretching from the Cape of Good Hope to the Strait of Malacca is the world's link between the East and the West. It has vital sea lanes of communication, especially those along the strategic choke points in the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb.

Coasts have always been areas of opportunities and challenges, both for the nation states. Historically, nations rise to dominance has been attributed to supremacy over sea, and fall of nations too has been attributed to their declining naval strength. A T Mahan, in his influential book, "The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783" argued that the British rose to world dominance because they had control over the seas, which also coincided with a corresponding decline in the naval strength of its major European rivals. Control over sea paved the way for Great Britain's emergence as the world's dominant military, political, and economic power.

Coastal systems produce a large number of goods and services that are and would remain valuable to the society. People and investments are located in coastal zones, even to the places that are susceptible to hazards. A large part of global human population lives in coastal areas. A large portion of global GDP too is produced in coastal areas. According to an estimate, growth in GDP and population is higher in coastal areas when compared to their respective national averages.

India's 7,516.6 km long coastline in nine States—Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka,



Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal, and four Union Territories—Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and Andaman and Nicobar Islands too are areas of challenges and opportunities, both. Policy initiatives pertaining to Indian coastal areas need to factor in aspects of national security and national economy, both. This is known that today 90 per cent of global commerce travels by sea. Of this, half the world's container traffic and 70 per cent of the total traffic of petroleum products is accounted for by the Indian Ocean. The Indian coasts are strategically located on the world's shipping routes and Indian ports play a vital role in the overall economic development of the country. Approximately 80 per cent of the world's sea-borne oil trade passes through the choke points of this ocean.¹⁶ According to the statistics of the Ministry of Shipping, about 90 per cent by volume and 70 per cent by value of the country's international trade is carried on through maritime transport. Exports during April–November 2013 were valued at US \$ 203989.66 million and imports during April–November 2013 were worth US \$ 303891.89 million. Oil imports during April–November, 2013 were valued at US \$ 111058.5 million. Coastal areas are hubs of major economic activities. They are also homes to the large number of poor and vulnerable population. In addition, country's foreign policy has, since 1991, also been looking east that aims at better economic ties, among others, with the countries located at East and Southeast of India. While alternative routes of transport are being considered, the maritime route would continue to remain predominant in trade and commerce with Southeast and East Asian nations.

Security of maritime borders is always considered important in conventional terms. However, two developments during the last two decades—offloading of explosives used for the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts at Raigad coast and the terrorist incident of 26 November 2008 in Mumbai, sensitised the Indian security establishment for the requirements to reorienting the security setup to tackle the non-traditional challenges to security coming through maritime route. Subsequent initiatives, especially the two phases of the coastal security scheme of the Ministry of Home Affairs, starting 2005, are indicative that security requirements are being seen in terms of better policing and prevention of illegal acts.

Indian coastlines are highly prone to oceanogenic, hydro-meteorological, seismic as well as manmade disasters. The coastal regions have been facing atmospheric depressions resulting in cyclones, storm surges, tsunami, erosion and coastal flood, and we have seen increased incidents of such types in the recent past. Human activities like oil spills, coastal pollution and ballast water exchange too create grounds for coastal and marine vulnerability in the region. Seawater rise is also a cause of major concern as they threaten some of Indian coastal and deltaic regions from submergence. Evolution of new challenges also requires advanced means to tackle them in terms of skilled human resources and high-end technology. Any comprehensive scheme of coastal management must give due place to information technologies such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS), and Internet. These information technologies help manage spatial information, integrating various information resources and efficient communication, and provide immense data online for preventive and prospective usages/policies, both. Indian coasts matter in the national security environment beyond the conventional threats of state aggression from enemy countries to its territories through the sea routes. Opportunities too have increased manifold when it comes to use of coastal resources for developmental activities. Sustainability is another factor that is of growing importance to any policy initiative. In this sense, any definitional endeavour would be considered limited in approach, if maritime diplomacy is taken to mean coastal security, and the latter in turn is taken to mean policing of coastal waters in terms of enforcement of such measures by the state police, in conjunction with and by other law enforcement agencies, including the Navy, the Coast Guard, CISF, BSF and Indian Customs department, among others to control and prevent illegal movement of goods and people. A holistic approach that appreciates development, including business in addition to security is what would be needed. Areas of foreign policy, commerce and finance, shipping and cargo movement, environmental sustainability and IT infrastructure must converge when we take stock of security along our coasts. Thus, what would actually be required is a developmental approach to maritime security that would have preventive and protective model of countering organised crime and terrorist network as



one among the various elements. India's Maritime Doctrine 2004 declares the Arc from Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca as India's legitimate area of interest. In view of the above, this is pertinent to look at the Maritime Military Strategy of the Indian Navy. According to the Indian Navy: "(T)he main business of major navies in the 21st Century is to use warships to support foreign policy by less violent methods. During the long years of peace, we need to project power and show presence; catalyse partnerships; build trust and create interoperability through combined operations, and international maritime assistance. The range of options available extends from unilateral armed action, or coercion, at one end of the spectrum of naval diplomacy to bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation at the other end."¹⁷

India's maritime diplomacy, keeping in view these factors, are not reactionary to those of China's actions, what has been debated popularly in the strategic circles as China's 'String of Pearls' or 'encirclement' strategy. India's engagements with the littoral countries have been meaningful and India has stretched out to the countries in the Indian ocean and to the countries on her east with a positive approach. The smaller countries like the Maldives, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and Mauritius have been comfortable in dealing with India. There is no denying the fact that there have been occasional issues like those of the fishermen with countries like Sri Lanka, but overall, India has also proved a useful partner for these countries in safeguarding their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The South East Asian countries and Japan too find it convenient to deal with India. Unlike China, these countries do not have any territorial issues with India, and countries like Singapore, in fact, welcome greater role for India in the region. In addition, regional naval powers like the US too are positive about India's capability to become a net provider of security in the region. Port calls to various navies in the region, and annual naval exercises including those with the US Navy are indicative of this fact.

Conclusion: India, China and the Maritime Silk Road

Paul Kennedy, the author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* in one of his later works, entitled *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* has argued

that India and China can potentially do harm to themselves and the planet, given their rising population and limited resources. He has urged upon the developed world to "apply its capital, technology and brainpower to help them."¹⁸ While there may be limitations to this argument, first being a western perspective and then on considerations such as with regards to the extent to which the developed world intends helping India and China, and to what extent India and China are willing to accept the terms, if any, of that help, but one thing that the author has highlighted is of significance. This pertains to the likely 'conflict of interests' over common resources and market between the two countries.

Differences over maritime issues are likely. More so, if the suspicion prevails over the alleged covert objectives underlying such initiatives. The peacetime commercial facilities can be used as bases during the war time. Moreover, India would not let any country dominate the Indian Ocean. As regards maritime cooperation leading to protection of commercial interests of the international community and providing security in the Indian Ocean, India would be happy to do that and the Indian Navy and other maritime forces, given their current capability may be willing to enhance their role in that direction. However, as K N Panikkar had said, "To other countries the Indian Ocean could only be one of the important oceanic areas, but to India it is a vital sea because its lifelines are concentrated in that area, its freedom is dependent on the freedom of that coastal surface." Keeping this in mind, he had indicated that strategic thinking suggests that (it would be good) if the Indian Ocean remains truly Indian.

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India's Maritime Diplomacy and China's Silk Road

Dr. Sudhanshu Tripathi

India, while clinching on its rechristened Look East Policy, must act towards evolving a regional bonding of greater Asia as a regional bulwark against the backdrop of mounting tensions in the Indo-Pacific region due to rising Chinese expansionist assertions based on bullying tactics of its awesome military power, accompanied by economic allurements under its silk road initiative in Central Asia and string of pearls scheme in littoral regions of Indian Ocean and adjoining areas with ultimate purpose of establishing its hegemony all over the world. In this scenario, India needs to strengthen its strategic relations with all the littoral countries around its maritime zone and beyond to include all Southeast Asian nations, Persian-gulf, West Asia and African continent so as to strengthen and consolidate its maritime diplomacy and consequent naval strategy.

Introduction:

India's geographical position in the South stands out as a unique one having peninsular shape and size with hundreds of miles of maritime boundary ranging from Bay of Bengal in the East to Arab Sea in the West while going deep to Indian Ocean in the South and sharing its maritime territory with countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives, besides other adjoining littoral countries. In the North, there is mighty China across the long Himalayan range with Nepal and Bhutan lying on the foothill of Himalayas and persistent trouble creator and exporter of terrorism into India is Pakistan in the North-West with India comes between China and Pakistan at Siyachin glacier- one of the highest glacier in world capped with snow all through the year- where boundaries of these three neighbours coincide. Unfortunately, Pakistan which was an integral part of India prior to partition of the country in 1947 which took place on the basis of "Two-nation Theory" adopted by Muslim League, China was, in fact, a part of "Great Tibet Empire" with whom India has

great cultural affinity and socio-religious relations since unknown times, as Shimla Conference records of 1913-14 shows, wherfrom it cunningly ceded to assert its independent authority by capturing a large chunk of Tibetan soil by using brute military power on the deeply religious and peace loving Tibetans, to form an independent state. As the foundational psychology of both these neighbours- China and Pakistan- rest on betrayal, sabotage and finally stabbing in the back of the parent entity (sic.- nation), the onward course of India's relations with both of them was destined to be what it obtains today. Because, due to geographical complexities and some of the British manoeuvrings as manifested in partition of boundaries between India and Pakistan through Radcliffe line and with China through McMahon line began the border dispute between both the neighbours. While Pakistan claims India's 'Jammu and Kashmir' state as its integral part since partition, China, after swallowing almost entire Tibet and it attacked on India - over swept with emotive friendly slogan "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai"- in 1962, and then gradually expanded its interventionist designs into India's North Eastern States, claiming entire Arunachal Pradesh as its own and also towards entire Aksai Chin, including Siachen glacier and other adjoining areas. Both of them have now been systematically collaborating to fashion friendly relations with all the countries of South Asia and other littoral states in their bid to encircle India at any cost. With this objective in hand, China has recently invented the "string of pearls" scheme for building close trade relations with all littoral countries lying in India's maritime zone. Another tactics adopted by China in this evil design is to dig out an ancient debris of Silk Route scheme through which, once trade and commerce flourished between Asia and Europe, in general and China and Central Asia, in particular. In fact, such trade relations were commonly pursued between Asia and the European countries via Persian Gulf and Arab countries and also passing through other African states lying in vicinity.



In such a scenario, India being a non-aligned, non-violent and peace-loving country has to survive while preserving its all national interests, particularly its national security against nefarious designs of Pakistan, which has been consistently exporting cross-border terrorism since many decades because being unable to win an open war with India at least four times since independence, and also that of China who - while stabbing in India's back after defeating unprepared India in the mountainous-terrain war and then neck-filled with pomp and glory of a victor enjoying high morale - always prompts to open its fangs to swallow as much of India's territory as possible. As India has not yet been able to muster courage to confront it boldly or teach a strong lesson, either militarily as it did against Pakistan in 1971 during India-Pak War or diplomatically, because of its dithering and dilly-dallying approach against a potential enemy. Thus both of these unfriendly neighbours have been acting against India's inevitable increasing and expanding clout in the region as well as in the world in terms of rising economic, scientific and military power and the philosophical-ideological influence emerged out of rich ancient cultural heritage and eternal value based ethos.

This essay is concerned with India's evolving maritime diplomacy against worrisome scenario of increasing bullying tactics adopted by China to extend its sovereign claim over most of the India-Pacific and adjoining regions including the entire East and also attempting to establish its hold over Central Asia while overtly reviving Silk Road trade for economic progress of the region but with covert agenda of establishing its global hegemony. The second part deals with the Silk Road initiative by China and its implications. The next part discusses India's maritime strategy in the region so as to protect its national interests and also to ensure that the region remains free from all external interventions as regards protection of sovereign maritime claims of all the littoral states and also peace and security of the region. Thereafter, it brings out India's new maritime vision under PM Narendra Modi. Lastly, the paper concludes in favour of a strong regional bulwark to protect and maintain the peace and security in the region for securing safe maritime channels in the high seas.

Silk Road Initiative:

Despite Chinese leaders attempt to demonstrate itself as a benign power, the international community is yet to be convinced of China's long term objective and that China would remain peaceful during its onward course of development. Hence, almost every policy initiative of China gets subjected to deep mistrust by the international community. It is due to this very reason that China's latest policy initiative "One Belt, One Road" is viewed with grave suspicions. Delivering a speech at Nazargayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan in September 2013, President Xi unveiled a plan to review the ancient silk road for the first time. Proposing a "Silk Road Economic Belt" (now known as 'Belt') running across Central Asia towards Europe, he proposed to "to forge closer ties, deepen cooperation and expand development in the Euro-Asia region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an 'economic belt' along the Silk Road. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route" (CCTV, 2013). As early history records show that both China and Europe enjoyed the flourishing trade relations via Central Asia and that brought immense economic fortunes for them and considerably improved their socio-economic conditions. In fact, the trade in silk, spices and slaves between China and Europe had converted Central Asian states into wealthy business centres. Such feelings of the olden times were later reiterated at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), during which five points to strengthen relations between China, Central Asia and Europe were revealed (Szczudlik-Tatar, 2013). During the 16th ASEAN-China Summit held in Brunei, Premier Li Keqiang revealed Beijing's Plan to revive ancient maritime Silk Road. "Whilst both proposal had few aspects in common; commitment to promote relations with neighbours and calling for collaboration in setting up policy communication, improving road connectivity, promoting unimpeded trade, enhancing monetary circulation, and increasing people-to-people relations, the international community became suddenly alert on the parallels drawn between the ancient Silk Road and the new Belt and Road." Although the Chinese leaders expressed their clear resolve towards accomplishing the objectives of harmonious co-existence, mutual benefit and common development with countries involved through the OBOR initiative and also



achieving peaceful development in the world while ensuring development for all, yet the world community is suspicious by the Chinese move of excavating out of deep an ancient concept which reminds of the grandiose of its Middle Kingdom complex. Amidst prevailing suspicions about Chinese real intentions hidden in its uncalled largesse to Central Asia states, the *Diplomat* brings out that, "China's trade with the region rose from \$1.8bn in 2000 to a high of \$ 50bn in 2013, says the International Monetary Fund. Chinese companies own close to a quarter of Kazakhstan's oil production and account for well over half of Turkmenistan's gas exports. China's state Exim-bank is the largest single creditor to impoverished Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, respectively holding 49 and 36 per cent of their government debt. Officials have seen a rush from Chinese bureaucrats and businessmen eager to brand projects as part of the new Silk Road initiative." The foreign minister of Kazakhstan, Erlan Idrissov says that Chinese investments "will revitalise economic activity and trade in this part of the world". Yet "China is being criticized for using charm offensives to gain power and influence through introducing OBOR." According to Indian strategist C. Raja Mohan, the Silk Road, and the Maritime Silk Road in particular, is an attempt of China to project itself as a maritime power, (Mohan 2014). Another view holds that China's maritime Silk Road proposal is meant to salvage its sagging international image due to the passionate pursuance of its "string of pearls" strategy. It is said to be China's response to address the growing regional anxieties against its fast-expanding naval presence. According to Chinese journalists, the idea of reviving Silk Road is a way of "rebranding" Chinese ambitions and objectives with regard to trade and cooperation (Yi 2014). Thus, the Chinese leadership is moving forward to make China as a great and respected power (global hegemon), in the world and also a dominant regional power in the East. But due to prevailing deep economic recession in Russia, the Central Asia and the Caucasus might have to witness a two-decade steep low growth, according to the International Monetary Fund. "This set of shocks is likely to persist," says Masood Ahmed, IMF director for the Middle East and Central Asia. "The (new Silk Road) initiative can bring substantial advantages and gains." While Beijing insists its Silk Road plans are not a geo-political strategy for regional dominance, but the serious stake holders including

Russia are worried with the increasing Chinese presence in their economy, and so are America and Japan who opposed the resource funding mechanism to finance "One Belt-One Road" project including the \$40bn Silk Road Fund and the \$100bn Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The Chinese plans had to meet a cold response also from Russia and were "perceived as if 'they're trying to steal Central Asia from us", according to Alexander Gabuev at the Carnegie Moscow Centre think-tank, as Russia too was promoting its own regional integration project named 'Eurasian Economic Union.' According to a Central Asian economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Agris Preimanis "Two years ago people were saying this is an imperialistic move", but "Now, partly thanks to the way the Chinese have played it, partly because of the economic situation, it is shaping up." Amidst prevailing concerns and suspicions, as China is still being perceived as a threat to the world peace, Beijing influence is consistently rising in the region. Thus, in realizing its ambitions and objectives, China has to be very cautious. As Joshua Copper Ramo puts it, "China's greatest strategic threat today is its national image" (Wang 2008). Hence it is important for Beijing to make innovative moves to improve its aggressive image as less threatening and rather that of a sincere and benign rising power. China's Silk Road appears to be a meticulous agenda for realising its ambitions and objectives while projecting its peace-loving image in the world. In a recent outburst China's ambassador to Astana, Zhang Hanhui bitterly criticised Kazakhstan over visa difficulties faced by families of the diplomats stationed there. While local people are suspicious of China's motives and they have protested amidst fears that the government could sell off land to China, others worry that the new Silk Road is only largesse for Chinese companies and that local people will see little benefit as rampant corruption prevailed in the region with Chinese projects being no exception. Though the effects of Beijing's new "One Belt, One Road" policy remain unclear but two decades of hefty investments since the break-up of the Soviet Union have already instituted Beijing as a preeminent and dominant regional power in Central Asia. However, the on-going attempt to revive the maritime silk-road against the backdrop of Beijing's fast expanding awe-inspiring military power based naval presence has worried all littoral nations in the Asia-Pacific and



Indian Ocean Region, besides India, which had to review its maritime strategy recently in order as to address those concerns.

India's Maritime diplomacy:

In fact, India's maritime vision was captured in its first Naval Plans Paper in 1948. Though India's political and maritime decision makers have been finding it difficult to articulate a united strategic culture during post-Colonial times, but there are glimpses of it in the writings on Indian maritime policy. In the late 1980s, India had adopted a long-delayed naval acquisition program under which the Indian Navy inducted a second aircraft carrier and a nuclear attack submarine along with numerous warships, submarines and aircraft, as an expert Arun Prakash comments on Indian maritime strategy (Prakash 2013). According to David Scott, there is a significant meaningful degree of naval strategy for the Indian Ocean backed up by the government. Since 1992, there have been on-going commentaries by think tanks like the National Maritime Foundation that "there may indeed be a strategy for the Indian Ocean Region....in which a degree of consensus is noticeable over India's aspirations in the IOR". In fact, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has succeeded in injecting a fresh lease of life into the evolving concept of Indo-Pacific security by focusing on the vigorous pursuit of India's geopolitical influence by pursuing greater maritime power. He firmly holds his national security vision for enhancing India's overall stature in the comity of nations. Being acutely aware that India's development can be best secured across the sea lanes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Modi has hectically embarked upon his well-chalked out course of intensified engagement with all other regional maritime powers. Consequently, taking note of the emerging worrisome challenges to the security architecture in maritime Asia due to rising Chinese imperialist-militarist assertions in Asia-Pacific, Indian Ocean and beyond covering entire East, India found itself compelled to come with a more assertive and counterbalancing maritime strategy entitled "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy" on October 26, 2015, with a view to review its existing maritime policy and redefine its strategic interests. It carries a broad strategic view than its predecessors and endeavours to project an indigenous national naval vision for the region. The previous strategy did not

take into consideration the changing geopolitical environment and its strategic implications on India's maritime interests, which have now been suitably addressed by complementing the evolving security dynamics in the Indian Ocean region and reflecting a bold and assertion-oriented India navy with a fresh outlook on India's maritime security requirements. Though India, in past few years, has been adamantly focused on the Indian Ocean and the emerging security changes along its maritime boundaries and developments beyond this region began to shape the maritime security framework in the Indian Ocean Region, there was a mixed curiosity among ASEAN powers and regional navies like, Japan, America and Australia as to whether India is taking note of these changes or not and also whether it will re-align its policies with their naval priorities based on these developments! While ASEAN nations have shown their preference for a greater Indian presence in the Western Pacific, regional navies such as Australia, Japan and America have also motivated India to assume the role of a "net security provider" in the region. Although they are confident of India's ability to play its required role in the evolving security architecture, but there is no clarity among them as regards New Delhi's intentions to do so.

As regards evolution of maritime doctrines in recent decades, India has had the following maritime doctrines, namely, Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004), Freedom to Use the Seas: Indian Maritime Strategy for the 21st Century (2007) and Nonalignment 2.0 (2012), and "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy" in 2015, which is a revised and updated version of the 2007 doctrine, Freedom to Use the Seas. It was released after the Indian Navy (IN) had acquired hardware, systems and weaponry, as well as trained human resources reminiscent of a professional maritime force. The 2007 document was a "force planning document which set out the capabilities required for its execution", (Prakash, 2013). The foreword to the Doctrine 2007 defines maritime strategy as "the overall approach of a nation to the oceans around it, with the aim of synergizing all aspects related to maritime activities to maximize national gains." A statement of a former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Suresh Mehta in 2009, mentions that, "In military terms, both conventional and nonconventional, we neither have the capability



nor the intention to match China, force for force" (Geraghty, 2012). Although India is uncomfortable with China's rising expansionist assertions backed by its awesome military power into the Indo-Pacific region, it has no intention of jeopardizing its delicate relationship with China. Hence the two unfriendly neighbours continue to engage in subterranean manoeuvrings while seeking to manage tensions at the surface and avoid them to come up into an overt confrontation. In fact, the Indian Navy aims to achieve conventional deterrence by maintaining preponderance in conventional maritime capability, i.e. a sufficiency of warships, submarines and aircraft which will undertake the full gamut of operational missions, the idea being to never leave friends as well as potential adversaries in doubt about India's capabilities at sea. Given the dominant location of the peninsular India, astride Indian Ocean sea lanes, such a maritime force can guarantee the safety of international trade and energy lifelines and capabilities at sea port, (Prakash, 2013).

Against this scenario there are few subtle concerns that underline the shift in India's new naval strategy. To begin with, it is for the first time that India's maritime security seriously focuses on the implications of evolving and increasingly accepted concept of the "Indo-Pacific" in the Indian government document. Though the geographic expanse of this concept has different connotations but in the contemporary world, it essentially encompasses the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific into one strategic arc, as a field of intense geopolitical rivalry. The concept has been formally endorsed by Australia in its 2013 Defense White paper which outlines the strategic implications of this region. Regional countries such as the United States, Japan, Korea, India and Indonesia prefer to use the term Asia-Pacific in their official documents but different leaders of these countries have used the term Indo-Pacific in their public discourse. As well commented by an Indian Chief of Naval Staff RK Dhawan, while underpinning the need to revise the 2007 maritime strategy, "The shift in worldview from a *Euro-Atlantic* to an *Indo-Pacific* focus and the repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment

in tangible ways." Obviously, Modi's evolving doctrine in the Indo-Pacific is largely being promoted by regional institutions seeking a greater security role from India. In the east, the rhetoric so far has been that New Delhi has failed to play its role of a "net security provider" in the region. But the Modi government has brought significant changes in India's attitude and willingness to collaborate with regional players in the security domain. Apart from ASEAN, the littoral countries from the Indian Ocean Rim Association grouping, too, are "looking at India to shoulder more of the traditional and non-traditional security responsibilities of the region and take on to its leadership." To honour their feelings in this connection, India recently hosted at the port city of Cochin in the Arabian Sea, the first Indian Ocean Dialogue under the realm of IORA, to boldly express the serious concerns of the region arising particularly due to China's illegal infringement.

Secondly, there is a considerable expansion in the navy's sphere of action reflecting India's willingness to play a larger role in the region wherein both primary and secondary areas of interest appear substituting each other. The Red Sea, previously a secondary area of interest (as per the revised Maritime Doctrine of 2009), is now an area of primary interest for the Indian navy. Additionally, "the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and their littoral regions, the Southwest Indian Ocean, including IOR, island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions" etc., previously were only of secondary importance but now all are of primary interest to India's maritime security. And the Gulf of Oman and Aden did not feature specifically in either of the areas of interest in the Maritime Doctrine. The erstwhile secondary area too has expanded to include the "Southeast Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions in the vicinity, the Mediterranean Sea, the West Coast of Africa, and their littoral regions." The South China Sea continues to be an area of illegal sovereign claim by China and remains that of secondary importance, but added to this interest is the specific region of the "East China Sea, Western Pacific Ocean and their littoral regions. The actual purpose of defining different areas of interest is to highlight the navy's intention to define the geographical extension of its strategic influence and give an indication of its involvement in those areas.



Since long past, "India's ASEAN friends have voiced their disappointment in New Delhi's shrinking and thin naval and political presence in the South China Sea", against the backdrop of an aggressive China. The latest Maritime Strategy, though re-affirms India's resolve not to get directly engaged in the affairs of the Western Pacific and also not to get involved in the American policy of containing China, but be it through the Joint Strategic Vision with America, Japan's inclusion into the MALABAR exercises, new bilateral exercises with Japan, Indonesia, and Australia, or re-engaging with the island nations of the IOR and South Pacific, there is a clear message that India is willing to play a larger role in the unfolding security architecture in the region.

Thirdly, while India had to seriously consider the emerging challenges in its maritime area and renew its strategy to protect its national interests, there has been a considerable shift in India's maritime strategy and accordingly policies was made crystal clear through the navy's engagement which largely explains the Indian Navy's perception of the term "net security provider", as the document details. The strategy outlines: "The term net security describes the state of actual security available in an area, upon balancing against the ability to monitor, contain, and counter all of these." While the "navy has not indicated the geographic expanse of the region where it aspires to be a net security provider", it has however acknowledged about those steps which are required for being a net security provider. They are outlined therein as the required preconditions for accomplishing the desired 'objective' and that is to "shape a favorable and positive maritime environment, for enhancing net security in Indian areas of maritime interest."

Lastly, the 2015 maritime strategy not only formalizes the intent of the Indian navy it also takes a bold tone in narrating the same. Given the emphasis on collaborating with other navies, it is clear in its emphasis to build a network of regional cooperation to ensure peace and stability in India's maritime zone. The document also recognizes the increasing importance of the Indian navy in critical times, arisen due to calamities, while discharging Human Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) operations- all because of expanding India's maritime outlook as well as

capabilities. The initiatives taken under the Modi government to re-engage with the navies of the region are much appreciated and this document is a step forward in voicing India's intentions and concerns regarding maritime security. If India can sustain the momentum by carefully monitoring the changing dynamics within its area of maritime interests, India will succeed as a serious and credible leader and also a critical player in the evolving security architecture of the region. Again, it will be only a matter of time before New Delhi emerges as a responsible net security provider in the Indo-Pacific region.

Modi's vision for Indo-Pacific region:

Though it is a bit early to describe the key elements of an emerging "Modi Doctrine", but Indian security interests certainly prioritize strategic challenges emerging from China and Pakistan. First of all, Modi must enlarge the earlier Indian mind-set of 'South Asia' to the Indian Ocean Region and beyond; and from 'Look East' to 'Act East', so as consolidate its geopolitical interests in the resurgent Asia because global geopolitics is said to be moving towards East after two and half century from traditional Euro-Atlantic centre of power. The IOR is a strategic link from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca making it a highly volatile maritime zone as regards global peace and stability. Modi understands that India and the Indian Ocean are regarded as the appropriate half-way points between West Asia and Southeast Asia. For consolidating India's maritime strategy and strengthening security in such a vast area requires a total revision of the earlier leadership mind-set from India confining not only to the leading role in IOR but going beyond to other regions like Southeast, Central and West Asia and also Africa. For instance, India cannot struggle alone for protection of global environment by remaining stationed to one particular geographic region, i.e. South Asia, rather it will have to seek cooperation from all nations in the world by motivating them to arrive at a global consensus on the issue. The role has to be more forwardly offensive rather than defensive.

Under Modi, a resurgent India must get its due place in the global community of nations and other international institutions. Mounting tensions in the IOR due to rising Chinese hegemonies have consequently prompted India to coordinate with other countries in



the region which are equally affected by such developments. The bi-lateral and multilateral steps taken by India for improving relations with Southeast Asia besides South Asian neighbours, must be geographically-expanded under Modi's leadership, so that India may assume a dominant role in the affairs of IOR. This may urge him to reflect on India's long-neglected maritime imperative and strategic culture, as well as to think of India's strategic future in maritime terms. Hence, Modi wishes to see a thriving Indian sea power because Indians already possessed the skills to construct ocean going ships, are sturdy enough to venture into the distant reaches of the Arabian Sea and had in use a matsya yantra (magic compass) for accurate navigation, since times immemorial. The commissioning of the INS Vikramaditya in late 2013 has made India the only Asian nation other than pre-war Japan to operate more than one aircraft carrier at a time. In light of India's other carrier, the INS Viraat, being 60 years old, India is constructing an indigenous carrier despite serious financial crisis. Strategically, India seems to be focusing only on Chinese expansionism in Indo-Pacific rather than balancing with America, Australia and Japan and other regional partners. Further, Modi will concentrate on deeper economic engagement within and outside of the IOR, and safeguarding core Indian interests backed by a more assertive and credible military, particularly on the maritime front. He envisions that India must also expand its diplomatic, economic and military relations with China and Pakistan despite all odds while pursuing its onward march to become a great and respected power in the world. Indeed, "vikas-vaad" (development) and "vistar-vaad" (expansion) as well as "ahimsa" are the driving forces behind Modi's unfolding vision for India's peaceful rise. Despite serious having already emerged regarding the geographical security nomenclature about the IOR, Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific, the regional security debates have implication for India's strategic projection wherein there is a significant move from an IOR towards the Indo-Pacific security building architecture. "This means that, culturally, Australia identifies primarily with Europe; that, economically, Australia's strongest links are with Asia, and especially China; and that, militarily and politically, Australia is aligned with the U.S. (Rumley, 2012). India's Indo-Pacific role is clear enough, especially after Modi's visit to Japan in

September 2014. A stronger maritime partnership is envisaged as "both nations committed themselves to increasing their maritime interaction and reaffirmed support for the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force's continued participation in the annual Indo-US-Malabar maritime exercises" (Singh, 2014). The net effect of such military build-up exercises on stability in the IOR is a function not just of power and strategy, but that of evolving a culture of self-confidence and benign assertion on the high seas along with full capability of bold and aggressive retaliation, if required. Obviously, the IN needs to counter the Chinese and Pakistani navy in and around its maritime territory. Indeed, if the Modi Doctrine persists, then about a quarter century of "looking East" is destined to be substituted by the much required policy of "acting East", in the changed context of Eastward shifting geopolitics.

Thus India is to particularly focus on its friendly strategic relations with all the littoral states viz. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives and with their neighbours in Southeast Asia, like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Taiwan, Brunei and across the Arab Sea in the West and also with Afghanistan in the North West, besides major regional powers, like Japan, Australia and America. With Australia, the US had concluded a significant military agreement in 2011 following its "Asia Pivot" policy having a covert agenda to contain China's imperialistic and expansionary mission in the Asia-Pacific as Beijing lays claim over entire South-china sea as its maritime territory. But this claim was also rejected by a five member panel from the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands on July 12, 2016 while deciding on Philippines' complaint lodged in 2013 under violation of UN treaty governing the seas to which China is also a signatory, for arbitration on grounds of alleged Chinese infringement into Manila's Exclusive Economic Zone. But this legal defeat has made China more aggressive and irresponsible in its behaviour as it has resumed threatening India and other littoral states of Indo-Pacific, thereby worsening the already tense scenario in this region.

Conclusion

Thus, against the backdrop of mounting tensions in the Indo-Pacific region due rising Chinese



expansionist assertions based on bullying tactics of its awesome military power having ultimate purpose of establishing its hegemony all over the world, India has no option but to assert vigorously with all its might to counter the increasing Chinese naval presence in the high seas and around its maritime territory and Pakistan's rising association with Beijing towards this end. Obviously to counter these nefarious designs, consolidating and strengthening India's naval power with enlarged and diversified security cooperation with Japan, Australia, America and also with ASEAN and South Asian nations, besides deepening cooperation with islands in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean are some of the important indicators of the evolving Modi doctrine. And for that, while holding fast on its rechristened Look East Policy, India must act towards evolving a *regional bonding of greater Asia* as a regional bulwark by strengthening its strategic relations with all the littoral countries around its maritime zone and beyond to include all South and Southeast Asian nations, Persian-gulf, West Asia and African continent and also regional heavy weights like Japan, South Korea, Australia and America so as to strengthen and consolidate its maritime diplomacy and consequent naval strategy.

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Indian Maritime Diplomacy and the South China Sea

Dr. Deepak Yadav

The South China Sea is a marginal sea that is part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area from the Karimata and Malacca Straits to the Strait of Taiwan of around 3,500,000 square kilometers (1,400,000 sq. miles). The area's importance largely results from one-third of the world's shipping sailing through its waters and that it is believed to hold huge oil and gas reserves beneath its seabed. The minute South China Sea Islands, collectively an archipelago, number in the hundreds. The sea and its mostly uninhabited islands are subject to competing claims of sovereignty by several countries. These claims are also reflected in the variety of names used for the islands and the sea.

The risk of conflict in the South China Sea is significant. China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines have competing territorial and jurisdictional claims, particularly over rights to exploit the region's possibly extensive reserves of oil and gas. Freedom of navigation in the region is also a contentious issue, especially between the United States and China over the right of U.S. military vessels to operate in China's two-hundred-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). These tensions are shaping—and being shaped by—rising apprehensions about the growth of China's military power and its regional intentions. China has embarked on a substantial modernization of its maritime paramilitary forces as well as naval capabilities to enforce its sovereignty and jurisdiction claims by force if necessary. At the same time, it is developing capabilities that would put U.S. forces in the region at risk in a conflict, thus potentially denying access to the U.S. Navy in the western Pacific.¹

China has backed its expansive claims with island-building and naval patrols. The US says it does not take sides in territorial disputes, but has sent military ships and planes near disputed islands, calling them "freedom of navigation" operations to ensure access to key shipping and air routes. Both sides have accused each other of "militarizing" the South China

Sea. There are fears that the area is becoming a flashpoint, with potentially serious global consequences.

Vietnam hotly disputes China's historical account, saying China had never claimed sovereignty over the islands before the 1940s. Vietnam says it has actively ruled over both the Paracels and the Spratlys since the 17th Century – and has the documents to prove it. The other major claimant in the area is the Philippines, which invokes its geographical proximity to the Spratly Islands as the main basis of its claim for part of the grouping. Both the Philippines and China lay claim to the Scarborough Shoal (known as Huangyan Island in China) – a little more than 100 miles (160km) from the Philippines and 500 miles from China. Malaysia and Brunei also lay claim to territory in the South China Sea that they say falls within their economic exclusion zones, as defined by UNCLOS – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Brunei does not claim any of the disputed islands, but Malaysia claims a small number of islands in the Spratlys.²

The South China Sea is an extremely significant body of water in a geopolitical sense. It is the second most used sea lane in the world, while in terms of world annual merchant fleet tonnage, over 50% passes through the Strait of Malacca, the Sunda Strait, and the Lombok Strait. Over 1.6 million m³ (10 million barrels) of crude oil a day are shipped through the Strait of Malacca, where there are regular reports of piracy, but much less frequently than before the mid-20th century. The region has proven oil reserves of around 1.2 km³ (7.7 billion barrels), with an estimate of 4.5 km³ (28 billion barrels) in total. Natural gas reserves are estimated to total around 7,500 km³ (266 trillion cubic feet). A 2013 report by the U.S. Energy Information Administration raised the total estimated oil reserves to 11 billion barrels. In 2014 China began to drill for oil in waters disputed with Vietnam.³ According to studies made by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,



Philippines, this body of water holds one third of the entire world's marine biodiversity, thereby making it a very important area for the ecosystem. However the fish stocks in the area are depleted and countries are using fishing bans as a means of asserting their sovereignty claims.⁴

In September 2011, shortly after China and Vietnam had signed an agreement seeking to contain a dispute over the South China Sea, India's state-run explorer, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) said that its overseas investment arm ONGC Videsh Limited had signed a three-year deal with PetroVietnam for developing long-term cooperation in the oil sector and that it had accepted Vietnam's offer of exploration in certain specified blocks in the South China Sea. In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu issued a protest. The spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India responded by saying that "The Chinese had concerns but we are going by what the Vietnamese authorities have told us and have conveyed this to the Chinese."⁵ The Indo-Vietnamese deal was also denounced by the Chinese state-run newspaper Global Times.

The United States could be drawn into a China-Philippines conflict because of its 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines. The treaty states, "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on either of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes." American officials insist that Washington does not take sides in the territorial dispute in the South China Sea and refuse to comment on how the United States might respond to Chinese aggression in contested waters. Nevertheless, an apparent gap exists between American views of U.S. obligations and Manila's expectations. In mid-June 2011, a Filipino presidential spokesperson stated that in the event of armed conflict with China, Manila expected the United States would come to its aid. Statements by senior U.S. officials may have inadvertently led Manila to conclude that the United States would provide military assistance if China attacked Filipino forces in the disputed Spratly Islands.

The Award of Arbitration Tribunal in The Hague on South China Sea Dispute

In January 2013, the Philippines formally initiated arbitration proceedings against China's claim on the territories within the "nine-dash line" that includes Spratly Islands, which it said is unlawful under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) convention.⁶

Philippines v. China (also known as The South China Sea Arbitration) were an arbitration case brought by the Republic of the Philippines under the arbitration provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Against the People's Republic of China concerning certain issues in the South China Sea including the legality of China's "nine-dotted line" claim over the South China Sea under the UNCLOS. On 19 February 2013, China officially refused to participate in the arbitration because, according to China, its 2006 declaration under article 298 covers the disputes brought by the Philippines and that this case concerns sovereignty, thus it deems the arbitral tribunal formed for the case has no jurisdiction over the issue.⁷ On 7 December 2014, a position paper was published by China to elaborate its position. On 29 October 2015, the arbitral tribunal ruled that it has jurisdiction over the case, taking up seven of the 15 submissions made by the Philippines.

On July 12, 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration published an arbitration award by the tribunal which it states is final and binding as set out in the Convention. Conclusions expressed in the award included the following:

Regarding the "Nine-Dash Line" and China's claim in the maritime areas of the South China Sea.

The [UNCLOS] Convention defines the scope of maritime entitlements in the South China Sea, which may not extend beyond the limits imposed therein. China's claims to historic rights, or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction, with respect to the maritime areas of the South China Sea encompassed by the relevant part of the 'nine-dash line' are contrary to the Convention and without lawful effect to the extent that they exceed the geographic and substantive limits of China's maritime entitlements under the Convention. The Convention superseded



any historic rights or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction in excess of the limits imposed therein.⁹

Regarding the status of features as above/below water at high tide

High-tide features: (a) Scarborough Shoal, (b) Cuarteron Reef, (c) Fiery Cross Reef, (d) Johnson Reef, (e) McKennan Reef, and (f) Gaven Reef (North). Low-tide elevations: (a) Hughes Reef, (b) Gaven Reef (South), (c) Subi Reef, (d) Mischief Reef, (e) Second Thomas Shoal. Hughes Reef lies within 12 nautical miles of the high-tide features on McKennan Reef and Sin Cowe Island. Gaven Reef (South) lies within 12 nautical miles of the high-tide features at Gaven Reef (North) and Namyit Island, and that Subi Reef lies within 12 nautical miles of the high-tide feature of Sandy Cay on the reefs to the west of Thitu.⁹

Regarding the status of features as rocks/islands Scarborough Shoal contains, within the meaning of Article 121(1) of the Convention, naturally formed areas of land, surrounded by water, which are above water at high tide. However, under Article 121(3) of the Convention, the high-tide features at Scarborough Shoal are rocks that cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own and accordingly shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

Johnson Reef, Cuarteron Reef, and Fiery Cross Reef contain, within the meaning of Article 121(1) of the Convention, naturally formed areas of land, surrounded by water, which are above water at high tide. However, for purposes of Article 121(3) of the Convention, the high-tide features at Johnson Reef, Cuarteron Reef, and Fiery Cross Reef are rocks that cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own and accordingly shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

The high-tide features at Gaven Reef (North) and McKennan Reef are rocks that cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own and accordingly shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.¹⁰ Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal are both low-tide elevations that generate no maritime zones of their own [and] that none of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands are capable of sustaining human habitation or an

economic life of their own within the meaning of those terms in Article 121(3) of the Convention. All of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands are therefore legally rocks for purposes of Article 121(3) and do not generate entitlements to an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf. There is, accordingly, no possible entitlement by China to any maritime zone in the area of either Mischief Reef or Second Thomas Shoal and no jurisdictional obstacle to the tribunal's consideration of the Philippines'.¹¹

Both Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal are located within 200 nautical miles of the Philippines' coast on the island of Palawan and are located in an area that is not overlapped by the entitlements generated by any maritime feature claimed by China. It follows, therefore, that, as between the Philippines and China, Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal form part of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the Philippines.¹²

Regarding alleged interference with the Philippines' sovereign rights in its EEZ and continental shelf.

China has, through the operation of its marine surveillance vessels with respect to M/V Veritas Voyager on 1 to 2 March 2011 breached Article 77 of the Convention with respect to the Philippines' sovereign rights over the non-living resources of its continental shelf in the area of Reed Bank [and] that China has, by promulgating its 2012 moratorium on fishing in the South China Sea, without exception for areas of the South China Sea falling within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines and without limiting the moratorium to Chinese flagged vessels, breached Article 56 of the Convention with respect to the Philippines' sovereign rights over the living resources of its exclusive economic zone.¹³

Regarding alleged failure to prevent Chinese nationals from exploiting the Philippines' living resources

China has, through the operation of its marine surveillance vessels in tolerating and failing to exercise due diligence to prevent fishing by Chinese flagged vessels at Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal in May 2013, failed to exhibit due regard for the Philippines' sovereign rights with respect to fisheries



in its exclusive economic zone. Accordingly, China has breached its obligations under Article 58(3) of the Convention.¹⁴

Regarding China's actions in respect of traditional fishing at Scarborough

China has, through the operation of its official vessels at Scarborough Shoal from May 2012 onwards, unlawfully prevented Filipino fishermen from engaging in traditional fishing at Scarborough Shoal.

Regarding alleged failure to protect and preserve the Marine

China has, through its toleration and protection of, and failure to prevent Chinese fishing vessels engaging in harmful harvesting activities of endangered species at Scarborough Shoal, Second Thomas Shoal and other features in the Spratly Islands, breached Articles 192 and 194(5) of the Convention. China has, through its island-building activities at Cuarteron Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, Gaven Reef (North), Johnson Reef, Hughes Reef, Subi Reef and Mischief Reef, breached Articles 192, 194(1), 194(5), 197, 123, and 206 of the Convention.¹⁵

Regarding occupation and construction activities on Mischief Reef

China has, through its construction of installations and artificial islands at Mischief Reef without the authorisation of the Philippines, breached Articles 60 and 80 of the Convention with respect to the Philippines' sovereign rights in its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, as a low-tide elevation; Mischief Reef is not capable of appropriation.

Regarding operation of law enforcement vessels in a dangerous manner

China has, by virtue of the conduct of Chinese law enforcement vessels in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal, created serious risk of collision and danger to Philippine vessels and personnel. The Tribunal finds China to have violated Rules 2, 6, 7, 8, 15, and 16 of the COLREGS and, as a consequence, to be in breach of Article 94 of the Convention.

Regarding aggravation or extension of the dispute between the parties

China has in the course of these proceedings aggravated and extended the disputes between the

Parties through its dredging, artificial island-building, and construction activities [in several particulars itemized in the award].¹⁶

Regarding the future conduct of the parties

Both Parties are obliged to comply with the Convention, including its provisions regarding the resolution of disputes, and to respect the rights and freedoms of other States under the Convention. Neither Party contests this.¹⁷

India and South China Sea Dispute

The verdict by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) rejecting China's ownership claims to 80 percent of the South China Sea (an area almost the size of India) was greeted with much satisfaction and glee in New Delhi. This was the first time that the entire basis of China's "historical claims" (for example, the "nine-dash line") was ruled to be invalid under international law by an international tribunal. The ruling not only has important implications for countries with unresolved territorial disputes with China but also impinges on India's relations with Japan, the United States, ASEAN countries, and the international order. Coming as it did close on the heels of Beijing's successful blocking—citing legal procedures—of New Delhi's bids to gain entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and to have the Pakistani terrorist Masood Azhar banned by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the verdict was seen as a "damning indictment" of China's flouting of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Security Council resolutions against terrorism that Beijing had itself signed and supported. While India isn't party to the South China Sea dispute, two aspects of the recent developments might interest New Delhi. First, irrespective of the claims and counter-claims by the United States and China, it is clear that Beijing operates from a position of strength in the South China Sea, wherein it has physical control over critical islands in the region. China has shown the U.S. and its allies that what matters in a maritime territorial dispute is the actual 'possession' of the islands, and as long as the PLA exercises military control over the features, it will exploit their location to support broader territorial claims. For New Delhi, which has been concerned about the security of its trade-flows and energy interests in the South China Sea, however, Beijing's placement of missiles points



threat or use of force and exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability. As a State Party to the UNCLOS, India urges all parties to show utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which establishes the international legal order of the seas and oceans.

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Modi visit will open new page in bilateral relations: Vietnam

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NEW DELHI: Vietnam on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Hanoi, possibly in the first week of September, will open a "new page" in bilateral relations even as it welcomed India's stand on the ruling of an international tribunal on the South China Sea dispute.

Vietnamese Ambassador to India Ton Sinh Thanh said the situation in the South China Sea region was "getting worse" with militarisation.

"We expect that Prime Minister Modi's visit will be soon. It will open a new page in bilateral relationship. We hope the visit will upgrade ties to a more comprehensive level. Preparation for the visit is going on," he said during a media interaction at the Foreign Correspondents Club here.

He did not announce any date when asked whether the trip would be around Modi's visit to China to attend the G-20 meeting or Asean summit in Laos in the first week of September.

The visit will be the first by an Indian PM in the last 15 years.

The envoy reminded that the two countries were gearing up to celebrate milestones in the form of 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations and 10 years of the establishment of strategic partnership.

Thanh said Vietnam "appreciates" India's position on the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling whereby it "recognises" the international court as well as the UN Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS).

"The most important part is that India respects international law and especially freedom of aviation and navigation. Other countries should not use force or threat of force in South China Sea," Thanh said.

Stressing that Vietnam deplores "militarisation", the envoy said the court ruling, which holds the potential to reduce the area of dispute, needs to be complied with.

"The situation in South China Sea is getting worse with militarisation and so the ruling is welcome. The situation is not stable and territorial issues have not been settled yet," Thanh, the country's ambassador to India since 2014, said.

Asked whether Brahmos would be on the table during Modi's visit, Thanh said while Vietnam appreciates India's "achievements" in the defence sector, "whatever we buy is for self-defence".

Referring to the 100-million-dollar line of credit extended to Vietnam for defence procurements during President Pranab Mukherjee's visit last year, he said the contractor has been chosen and the construction of the naval patrol boats would start soon with that amount.

He said Vietnam, which will host the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit next year, would welcome India's membership in the grouping provided there was a consensus to lift the moratorium imposed on any such new joining.

Thanh added that Vietnam was trying to manage good relations with both India and China and that mutual ties between any two countries should not be seen as "against" a third country.

"On bilateral disputes we are ready to talk bilaterally while on multilateral disputes we are ready for negotiations involving two more more parties. But if needed we may explore other legal options," he said.

(Courtesy: Times of India)

China's 'Maritime Silk Road' Project: Implications for India

Dr. Netajee Abhinandan

'Regionalism' has emerged as the most important aspect of contemporary international relations. Across the world, the countries are preferring to form regional groups to achieve the goals of peace and development. Instead of being a grand global narrative, politics is increasingly becoming regionalized, resulting in significant changes in the power dynamics at both regional and global level. There are efforts to build up regional networks and infrastructure to expedite the processes of resource generation, mobilization and economic modernization. In Asia, however, the push towards regional integration runs into political tussle as the two major actors-China and India- try to counter each other and have parallel regional network projects.

While China has announced ambitious projects like '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' and 'One Belt One Road'(OBOR) to push greater connectivity and expand its economic ties with distant regions, India also has been evolving its own regional cooperation initiatives such as 'Mausam' and the 'Spice Route' in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. As both the countries pursue their respective agendas for regional cooperation through innovative policy initiatives and pronouncements, there is a view that both will soon confront each other. With the emergence of Asia as the 'power zone' in the global political system, the geo-political rivalry between India and China has only intensified with both the sides trying hard to enhance their dominance and influence in the region. China feels threatened as India is aggressively pursuing greater engagement with countries in its 'extended neighbourhood'- in South East Asia, Central Asia, West Asia- and moving closer towards the US. It is fearful of the solidifying friendship and partnership between Pakistan and China and China's strategy of developing the string of pearls around India's neck. India's 'Act East' policy and growing friendly relations with the countries of South East Asia, Japan, Vietnam etc. not only explain India's anxiety but also a desire to develop a platform

to match China in its game. China's increasing maritime assertiveness and military build-up as well as its growing presence in the Indian Ocean region have made India and Japan come closer and step up their cooperation. So far India has been silent on OBOR project and has expressed reservations on the Maritime Silk Road. It has also not responded to China's proposal for partnership in deep sea mining in the Indian Ocean. India feels that through heavy investments, China is trying to shift the centre of geo-economic power towards Eurasia, and thereby undermine the 'Asia Pivot' strategy of the United States in which India aspires to play a major role.

'21st Century Maritime Silk Road': A Politico-Economic Strategy

The ambitious project Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is part of China's attempts to establish multiple lines of communication that would link different regions of Asia to its economic heartland in eastern China. The underlying aim of such a geo-strategy is to develop inner Chinese provinces and shape China's regional periphery by exercising economic, political and cultural influence. It is a well-calibrated strategic initiative by China to not only enhance investment and foster collaboration across the historic Silk Road but also expand its sphere of influence across Asia. The project was first announced by President Xi Jinping during a speech to the Indonesian Parliament in October, 2013. Following the announcement, China declared plans to create a \$40 billion development fund to finance China's plans to develop the New Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. China maintains that MSR along with OBOR would increase connectivity among countries of Asia, Europe and Africa and would lead to trade flows and spur long-term regional economic growth and development, benefiting all those involved. The official statement titled "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" issued by Chinese Foreign Ministry on 28 March,



2015 outlined the aims and objectives of the policy. It says:

The Belt and Road Initiative is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity and a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges. The Chinese government advocates peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness. The Belt and Road 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. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe (the Baltic); linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other.¹

The official information, provided by China's state news agency 'Xinhua', suggests that Belt and Road (B&R) project comprises two physical routes, with numerous side-branches along the way. These two different routes ultimately connect China with Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia. They entail both a land route running from inner China to Southern Europe (via the Netherlands) and a sea route connecting the port of Shanghai ultimately with the end point of the land-based route in Venice, via India and Africa.² B&R is a grand and ambitious initiative that includes huge collective of infrastructure projects, accompanied by a host of bilateral and regional trade agreements. They focus on the development of a wide array of assets, including ports, roads, railways, airports, power plants, oil and gas pipelines and refineries, and Free Trade Zones, etc., as well as a

supporting IT, telecom and financial infrastructure. While some of the core elements of the B&R initiative are old and continuing well before the announcement in 2013, it merged all ongoing and planned efforts – such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor (BCIM) – under one unifying framework.³

China's 'Going Global': A Grand Strategic Narrative

Xi Jinping, after coming to power, focussed upon establishing China not only as the most dominant power of Asia but also as a 'responsible' power that can win trust of other countries. The B&R concept, fervently pushed by the Chinese government, provided a clear and coherent outward direction to China's efforts to reach out to countries of Asia, Africa and Europe. Under Jinping's leadership, Belt and Road has been elevated to a powerful slogan meant to guide and direct the efforts of both the public (e.g. provincial governments, state-owned enterprises) and the private sector in China. The initiative is expected to be a critical driver for China's long-term goals, ambitions and initiatives, and a key pillar of its 'going global' strategy. Underlying this overarching strategy is an action plan which was released in March last year.⁴

This project aims to reinforce China's pre-eminence in Asia and establish a new sphere of influence, a modern-day version of the 19th century Great Game, where Britain and Russia battled for control in central Asia.⁵ It would also serve China's foreign policy goals in the Asia-Pacific region. While encouraging its neighbouring states to cooperate in the economic field without any political strings attached, Beijing has continued to assert its claims over the South China Sea, by transforming reefs and other submarine maritime features into fully operative islands complete with 3000 m runways, air defence installations etc.⁶ The Maritime Silk Road also intends to intensify Beijing's partnership with friendly countries, such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Malaysia. This, according to William Yale, an American expert, will be accomplished primarily by way of economic incentives, such as infrastructural development and trade agreements. China's Maritime Silk Road and its infrastructure investments and projects also aim to facilitate more frequent People's



Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) deployments in the Indian Ocean and beyond. The PLAN requires reliable logistics chains across the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) throughout Southeast and South Asia.⁷ As per estimates, China will invest around \$1.25 trillion abroad by 2025. Thus, China has drawn attention and enthusiasm from a vast geographic area, stretching across Eurasia, from the Far East and Central Asia, to the Middle East and Africa, and across the Western Pacific to Latin America, where China has made infrastructure investments, provided loans, and focused on commercial ties with nations such as Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela. Apart from the proposed Economic Corridor in Pakistan, China is working to develop other economic corridors with Central Asia and Europe, as evidenced by its newly opened landmark railway that links the Iberian Peninsula to China. While several infrastructural projects are ongoing in Africa, China proposes financing new projects in other continents, such as a Eurasian-North American transcontinental railway system that connects China, Russia, Canada and America via the Bering Strait. China is also in the process of developing a mega waterway project to link the Pacific and Atlantic through a new shipping canal across Nicaragua. Although China is not an Arctic nation, Chinese news sources have reported that China's Jilin province may be involved in opening a new ocean route passing from the North Pacific Ocean island of Sakhalin, the Kamchatka Peninsula, Bering Strait, and Arctic Ocean to reach Norway, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and other European countries.⁸ Overall, these projects and proposals under the B&R initiative would help China in exercising soft-power diplomacy and economic influence that in turn strengthen its position as a dominant actor in global political system and thereby counter the growing influence of countries like India.

India's Stand

India is not totally convinced about the rationale, as put forward by China, behind such a humongous infrastructural initiative as it is constrained to believe that the MSR is basically a geo-strategic design to help China consolidate its naval / maritime strategy of access and basing in the Indian Ocean in support of PLA Navy's future operations. It is a ploy to dismiss the notion of 'string of pearls' strategy, dispel the 'China threat' in the Indian Ocean, and legitimize its

engagement in various maritime infrastructure projects along the route.⁹ The strategic experts believe that the MSR is part of a Chinese attempt to reorder Asia and undermine the US 'pivot' to Asia, which focuses on concentrating additional forces and equipment in the Asia Pacific, along with establishing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Also, the US in its 'Pivot' policy envisages a greater role for India and building an informal trilateral alliance with India and Japan, much to the consternation of China. India is concerned as China, under the B&R initiative, is developing ports in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, and is trying to enlarge its sphere of influence using its economic might in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. Thus, India has every reason to believe that under the guise of 'economic connectivity', MSR is nothing but the reiteration of the 'string of pearls' theory, which concerns the build-up of Chinese commercial and military facilities, and relationships in the India Ocean.

India was formally invited to join the MSR at the 17th round of Special Representatives Talks in New Delhi in February 2014.¹⁰ The Indian response was rather half-hearted, and certainly not one of immediate acceptance.¹¹ During her visit to China in 2015, Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj said she had conveyed to her Chinese interlocutors that India would work with China where there is synergy, adding that the MSR project "has to be synergy based... and there cannot be a blanket endorsement (from the Indian side). We want our connectivity". It clearly means that China should not take India's nod for granted. For their part, the Chinese have urged the Indians to shed their ambivalence about the project and promised to release more details in the coming months. Chinese strategic forays into the Indian Ocean region have compelled India to pay China back in the same coin and increase Indian strategic presence in South China Sea and in China's backyard like Vietnam, Philippines and Myanmar, apart from spiking up engagement with Japan.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: India's Primary Concern

Significant progress in economic relations and expansion of cultural exchanges has not helped in dispelling the security related concerns that China



and India have towards each other. In fact, 2015 witnessed both sides moving towards strategic realignments not only to secure their own interests, but also to counter each other's influence and power. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan in April 2015 and pledged to invest \$46 billion for developing China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), almost double the amount he proposed for India. As per the CPEC plan details, the Chinese government and banks will give loans to Chinese companies for investing \$15.5 billion in coal, wind, solar and hydropower projects, to come on-line by 2017, that would help Pakistan to add 10,400 MW of electricity to its national grid. Expected to ease Pakistan's energy shortages by covering both generation and transmission, the \$75 billion CPEC, which is to become operational by 2020, entails building new roads, an 1,800-km railway line, a network of oil pipelines connecting Kashgar in China's western Xinjiang region to the port of Gwadar, and an airport at the port and a string of energy projects, special economic zones, dry ports and other infrastructure.¹¹ Though there is nothing new about Chinese assistance to Pakistan, its massive investment in and around Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) makes India apprehensive of the probable encirclement of its territory by Sino-Pakistan alliance. Despite China's claims of the project being commercial in nature, its potential for intelligence gathering and forward deployment of its naval assets in the Gwadar and Karachi ports makes India uncomfortable with the proposition. India quite reasonably believes that China's presence in POK would adversely affect and further complicate the process of border negotiations.

Notwithstanding the jostle for power and pre-eminence in Asia, of late, there have been some attempts by China and India to deepen cooperation at regional level. China and India are making efforts for the early implementation of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor, which envisages a network of modern road, railway, port and communication and trade connectivity in a region stretching from Kolkata to Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, through Myanmar and Bangladesh, with Mandalay and Dhaka as the focal points.¹² In the Joint Statement issued during Modi's visit to China "the two sides welcomed the progress made in promoting cooperation under the framework

of the BCIM".¹³ Beijing has expressed its willingness to work with India to explore the synergy between its own "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" and India's "Mausam" project with a view to addressing New Delhi's strategic concerns and for their "common benefits". India, despite its reservations about China's grand infrastructure initiatives, has become an important founding member of the Beijing-promoted Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which can fund BCIM, CPEC and other projects. Significantly, the Joint Statement devoted a separate section to "shaping the regional and global agenda" where India and China, as the two major poles in the global architecture, agreed to cooperate on a host of issues ranging from WTO, terrorism to regional organisations.¹⁴

Endnotes

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21st Century Maritime Silk Road: India's Responses and Maritime Strategy

Dr. Mohor Chakraborty

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is a cause for major concern in New Delhi as it provides a basis for Beijing to increase its geo-strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean. Notwithstanding the Chinese posture of allaying India's concerns with respect to the massive outreach and implications of MSR, calling upon its neighbour to join the effort with a "friendly, open, cooperative attitude", New Delhi has, naturally been cautious and calculative in making headway on the issue. Although Beijing had invited New Delhi to join the project in 2014, the Indian response has been negative. Furthermore, India has been engaged in a strategy of balancing China's burgeoning influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by undertaking a rational, diplomatic approach by enhancing geo-strategic collaboration with its neighbours, both at the bilateral and multilateral realm, in keeping with the principles and concepts of national security and consolidating its maritime posture.

On 2nd October 2013, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, in his address to the Indonesian Parliament, unveiled the blueprint of strengthening cooperation with the member-states of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), by making "good use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up by the Chinese government" and particularly developing vigorous maritime partnership in a joint effort to build the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) of the 21st Century.¹ The 21st Century MSR – the maritime component of China's ambitiously grand One Belt and Road Initiative – is complemented by its overland counterpart, the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) envisioned to be established along the Eurasian land corridor from the Pacific coast to the Baltic Sea. The extensive domain of the "belt and road" architecture runs through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asian economic circle at one end

and developed European economic circle at the other. While the SREB focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe (the Baltic), linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean, the 21st Century MSR is designed to take off from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other. Served by a network of roads, high-speed railways, fibre-optical lines, transcontinental submarine optical cable projects and satellite information passageways, the initiative is poised to shift the centre of geo-economic power towards Eurasia, and challenge the "Asia Pivot" rebalancing strategy of the United States (US). Beijing calculates that the mega-trade volumes among the Silk Road economies would reach a tune of US\$ 2.5 trillion over the next decade.²

China's Rationale behind MSR Architecture

The MSR's principal rationale is the leveraging of Chinese economic, geo-strategic and soft-power clout and ensuring the security of sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in the Indian and Pacific Oceans – the littorals it passes through. In other words, it is a geo-strategic posture of exploring, using, protecting and managing the Oceans, involving maritime security, especially the protection of the islands claimed by China in the South and East China Seas, in addition to securing and safeguarding the vast energy and trade lanes. The Chinese leadership projects the initiative as the country's means of "opening up and economic diplomacy", and solutions for furthering "world peace and development", which in other words translates to fostering a "geo-economic cooperative design", as opposed to a "geopolitical or geostrategic one", based on the five pillars of policy coordination, connectivity facilitation, unimpeded



trade, financial integration and forging of people-to-people bonds.³ Notwithstanding its projected role in delivering the economic promises, the initiative poses a direct challenge to India's stature as a 'security provider' in the Indian Ocean, particularly with China's aim of making a "benevolent entry" through its spree of building infrastructure, ports, deep water ports and container terminals, which it hopes to connect with the mainland through a string of road and railway corridors, logistical stations, storage facilities and free-trade zones in India's "primary area of interest."⁴ Although the Chinese posture has been intent on allaying India's concerns with respect to the massive outreach and implications of MSR, calling upon its neighbour to join the effort with a "friendly, open, cooperative attitude", New Delhi has, naturally been cautious and calculative in making headway on the issue. In fact, in striking contrast to the former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh's "support" for the cause, the present National Democratic Alliance-II (NDA-II) government, wary of China's geo-strategic imperatives behind this ambitious project, has expressed reservations against specific parts of the project, for instance, considering the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The port of Gwadar in Pakistan, less than 400 kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz, will be linked by rail and road to Kashgar. Aiming initially at safeguarding the sea lanes used to ferry Middle East oil for its voracious industry and rising living standards of its people, China has come to view Pakistan as a critical element in containing India on a wider scale and MSR is the newest design on its strategic platter. Besides, China follows a similar pattern by investing millions in airports, roads, ports and other transportation infrastructure in Sri Lanka and the Maldives to develop influence throughout the Indian Ocean region. During his September 2014 tour of South Asia, Xi Jinping signed an agreement with the Maldives to upgrade its airport and build a bridge, housing project and road. Subsequently, in December 2014, Sri Lanka and the Maldives joined Pakistan to lobby the upgrading of China's status, from observer to member, in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). However, India's opposition scuttled the move.⁵ Given these considerations, in course of her visit to Beijing in February 2015, the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj set the stage for

some serious heavy-lifting along a complex geopolitical spectrum, when she conveyed that the MSR project should be "synergy based. It cannot be a blanket end (on the Indian side). We want our connectivity."⁶ Under such circumstances, the present dispensation in New Delhi is believed to have "changed" its "attitude" towards the initiative by opposing, delaying and adopting hedging measures towards it.⁷ In this backdrop, the present article attempts to highlight India's response and strategy vis-a-vis China's 21st Century MSR.

Indian Maritime Security Strategy: Pivotal Response to MSR

India's responses to this ambitious and grand Chinese MSR endeavour, also viewed as a novel strategy of "encirclement" has been principally five-fold: first, unveiling the maritime guidance document, christened *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS – 2015)* in October 2015, in order to bolster the Navy's operational sphere and influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). In keeping with the principles and concepts of national security and maritime power, enunciated in the Joint Doctrine (Indian Armed Forces) and the Indian Maritime Doctrine, it builds upon the Indian Navy's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles, formulated in 2014, which highlight the strategic 'way points' for the next decade. It reviews the key maritime strategic imperatives and influences, articulates the national maritime interests and defines the related maritime security objectives, in addition to deriving corresponding strategies for attainment of them. On the one hand, while acknowledging the hybrid nature of maritime challenges, exacerbated by the almost overlapping nature of traditional and non-traditional threats, the document harps on the imperative of envisaging a seamless and holistic approach, advocating greater coordination between and among different maritime agencies. On the other hand, it justifies the significance of the Indian Navy as the primary instrument to secure the oceanic neighbourhood for economic purposes, given India's centrality in the IOR. Towards this end, the IMSS-2015 has recommended a four-pronged approach for the Indian Navy under the present and emerging circumstances: first, it has advocated steady increase in the Indian Navy's operational footprints across its areas of maritime interest, with a growing cooperative



framework and contributions as a 'net security provider' in the neighbourhood, as maintaining "the state of actual security available in an area, upon balancing prevailing threats, inherent risks and rising challenges in the maritime environment, against the ability to monitor, contain and counter all of these, including deployments for anti-piracy, maritime security, Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations; secondly, an expansion in maritime operational engagements, with increased number and complexity of exercises with foreign navies, coordinated mechanisms for maritime security operations, and enhanced training, technical and hydrographic cooperation with friendly maritime forces; thirdly, continued development of regional cooperative approaches for enhancing maritime security in the IOR, including operational interactions such as 'MILAN', Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and emergence of maritime security cooperation as a priority area for the Indian Ocean Regional Association (IORA); and fourthly, the growth and development of the Indian Navy's force levels and maritime capabilities, with steady focus on indigenization.⁸ The relevance of this strategy became all the more evident in the context of the unprecedented docking of a People's Liberation Army – Navy (PLA-N) submarine at Colombo port in September 2014, in addition to the docking of two Chinese naval vessels at Colombo South Container Terminal (CSCT), a deep-water facility built, controlled and run by a Chinese company, the China Merchants Holdings (International). These incidents strengthened Indian concerns that the PLA-N assets were being allowed privileged access to Sri Lankan ports funded by Chinese investments, opening up possibilities of Chittagong, Colombo, Gwadar and Hambantota ports to follow suit subsequently. The issue has received greater attention since November 2014, when reports about China's blueprints for constructing eighteen "Overseas Strategic Support Bases" in the IOR stretching from the Seychelles through Pakistan to Djibouti, with facilities for fuelling and material supply bases for peacetime use; relatively fixed supply bases for warship berthing, fixed-wing reconnaissance aircraft and the naval staff ashore rest; and fully functional centres for replenishment, rest and large warship weapons maintenance made their rounds.⁹ Given this backdrop, the rationale behind the MSR's

incarnation of the "string of pearls" strategy aimed at encircling India and challenging the Indian Navy's role and stature in the region, could not be discounted.

In fact, the new Maritime strategy dilates the geographical scope of India's maritime focus, expanding the two areas of interest southwards and westwards by bringing in the South-West Indian Ocean and Red Sea within its 'primary area' and the western Coast of Africa, the Mediterranean Sea and "other areas of national interest based on considerations of Indian Diaspora, overseas investments and political reasons" within its 'secondary area' of interest. This acknowledgement clearly transcends the Indo-Pacific region, with the 2004 and 2009 editions of the Maritime Doctrine expounding the northern Indian Ocean Region as the 'primary area' of interest. IMSS - 2015 even goes beyond IMMS-2007 to include two additional chokepoints: the Mozambique Channel and Ombai-Wetar Straits, which are strategically located at the far end of the south-western and south-eastern Indian Ocean respectively, thereby formally recognizing these choke-points and reiterating the Indian Ocean's geo-strategic 'exclusivity' for India.¹⁰ Besides, the Navy's expanding footprints in recent years through the overseas deployments indicate that the maritime force is developing the capabilities to implement the intent. Strikingly enough, the fact that the IMSS-2015 focuses on India's strategy for deterrence and response against traditional/conventional military threats and corresponding capability development, has a bearing on the ambitions of the MSR, laying it threadbare that the concept of maritime security would be operational across the entire array of interests and forays by regional or extra-regional navies.

Secondly, the renewed emphasis of the Indian Navy in securing the Indian Ocean, while acknowledging the Navy's central role as a 'net security provider' may be viewed in the backdrop of the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's visit to the Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in March 2015, within the purview of which, he demonstrated the region's niche at the "top of New Delhi's policy priorities". While endorsing the "vision for Indian Ocean Region", rooted in advancing regional cooperation as well as using "our capabilities for the benefit of all in our



common maritime home". Modi highlighted the following: 1. the deepening of regional economic and security cooperation, particularly with the maritime neighbours and island states; 2. undertaking collective action and cooperation to best advance peace and security in the maritime region for ensuring better preparedness to respond to emergencies and challenges, ranging from piracy, terrorism, natural disasters, etc. Towards, this end, he acknowledged India's existing maritime security cooperation with the Maldives and Sri Lanka (Trilateral Initiative) and hoped that Mauritius, the Seychelles and other littoral nations would join the initiative; and 3. the need to promote a more integrated and cooperative future in the region that enhances the prospects for sustainable development, facilitating greater collaboration in trade, tourism and investment; infrastructure development; marine science and technology; sustainable fisheries; protection of marine environment; and overall development of the blue economy.¹¹ The urgent need of implementing this vision emerged from the burgeoning dependence on the seas for national and regional development, particularly since maritime economic activities continue to expand, and the conduct of seaborne trade, shipping and fishing calling for securing and maintaining freedom of navigation of the SLOCs and International Sea Lanes (ISL). The Indian Prime Minister's enunciation of not only securing the Indian Ocean maritime domain against traditional and non-traditional challenges, but also of enhancing means of ensuring sustainable and balanced development, establishing and maintaining a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms; sensitivity to each other's interests; and peaceful resolution of maritime issues, must be read in the context of China's enhancing footprints, for which MSR happens to be a pivot.

'Acting East': Bilateral and Multilateral Naval Collaboration

Thirdly, the 'Act East' policy highlights the imperative of building cooperative maritime security linkages with the littoral countries of Southeast and East Asia, with regard to common aspirations and challenges, manifested through expanding bilateral and multilateral interactions through joint exercises, patrolling, anti-terror operations and dialogue. Resultantly, the maritime outlook of collaboration provides a holistic stress on the development of its naval policy as well,

in a bid to form alliances and conduct joint exercises with the littoral navies not only of ASEAN member-states, but also with the countries of East Asia and beyond, particularly Japan, Australia and New Zealand. For instance, the sustenance of 'MILAN' ("coming together") - joint exercises among the navies of India and a majority of the littoral ASEAN nations, like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam is a case in point. Although the 'MILAN' had taken off as a multilateral naval forum for India, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka, it has presently been extended to embrace Australia, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles as new members. In addition to the multilateral exercises, India has also undertaken bilateral naval war games with individual ASEAN countries. The bilateral exercises conducted on a regular basis include: Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercises (SIMBEX), India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrolling (IND- INDOCOPAT), India-Thailand Coordinated Joint Patrol (CORPAT) and the like. Among the regional navies, the Indian Navy has offered to assist the littoral states in the implementation of the *Eyes in the Sky* programme for patrolling the piracy-infested Straits of Malacca. Therefore, the dimension of maritime collaboration has evoked a greater strategic significance, within the framework of which, the Indian Navy has engaged in sending warships, tankers and submarines to Japan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, Indonesia and Vietnam for joint exercises and raised the goodwill quotient, through regional confidence-building and cooperative mechanisms like regular participation in institutions of regional governance like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting+8 (ADMM+8), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) meetings and signing of agreements like the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). Furthermore, India has been profoundly engaged in providing training, personnel and professional support to their defence forces and holding defence policy dialogues. The most noteworthy instances to this end have been the assistance provided by the Indian Defence Forces to Thai pilots (for flying Sea Harriers); Vietnamese pilots and naval officers (for upgrading Mig-21 aircrafts); Malaysian pilots (for



training pilots and securing spare parts for Mig-29 aircrafts); Singaporean Air Force personnel (for joint training of F-16 combat Aircrafts) etc. This defence diplomacy has undoubtedly brought the countries of Southeast and East Asia on a common strategic pedestal, in addition to raising their consciousness about the potential of New Delhi as a balancer vis-à-vis China's rising regional stance and MSR architecture.

Trilateral Anchors: Emerging Stimuli vis-a-vis MSR

Fourthly, India's burgeoning trilateral engagement with the United States and Japan may also be viewed in the context of its moves towards attaining a more significant role in the Indo-Pacific region, with its potential of emerging as an "anchor of stability and security". The Statement issued by the three Foreign Ministers at the inaugural India-Japan-US Foreign Ministerial level (trilateral) meeting held on 29 September 2015, in New York minced no words in articulating the increasing economic and strategic convergence in the "sea lanes of communication" in the lifeline of trade and commercial externalities. It underscored "the importance of international law and peaceful settlement of disputes; freedom of navigation and over-flight; and unimpeded lawful commerce, including in the South China Sea", and demonstrated their common stride against aggressive Chinese forays in the regional littorals.¹² This initiative provides ample opportunities for buttressing the dimensions of trilateral cooperation among India, Japan and US, with India emerging as the anchor of stability and security in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. Subsequently, in keeping with the decision embarked upon in the Trilateral meeting, Japan was inducted as a permanent member of the 'Malabar Exercises' in its Nineteenth edition, held in the Bay of Bengal, on 14-19 October 2015. It may be recalled that 'Malabar', initiated as an India-US bilateral naval exercise in 1992, had been witness to Japan's participation as a non-permanent participant in 2007 and subsequent editions in 2009, 2011 and 2014, much to China's chagrin. More recently, the 20th edition of the exercise, "Ex MALABAR-16", was conducted from 10-17 June, 2016 in which, the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) was represented by the JS Hyuga helicopter carrier, with SH 60 K integral helicopters and long-range maritime

patrol aircraft, along with other assets. It demonstrated an impressive kaleidoscope of fleet strength, interoperability, coordination and development of common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security Operations among the Indian, Japanese and US Navies, through professional interactions in harbour, a diverse range of activities at sea, including complex surface, sub-surface and air operations.¹³ The exercise bore testimony to US' avowed policy of rebalance in the Asia-Pacific region, including (along with India's) sending out signals to China on issues of freedom of navigation in international waters as well as enhanced silhouette posed through the MSR architecture, made all the more pertinent by Japan's aggressive voicing of its concerns about China's enlarging footprints in the South and East China Seas. Furthermore, the conduct of the Inaugural bilateral naval exercise between India and Australia (AUSINDEX) off the coast of Visakhapatnam in September 2015, under the ambit of the India-Australia Framework for Security Cooperation and proposed to become a biennial event is another instance of India's footprint for forging a maritime relation of great potential, given the intersection in strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

India's 'Soft' Tread: Project Mausam

Fifthly, in a 'soft' power-based response to Beijing's MSR, India has launched 'Project Mausam: Maritime Routes and Cultural Landscapes Across the Indian Ocean' during the 38th World Heritage Session in Doha in June 2014. A transnational initiative meant to revive its ancient maritime routes and cultural linkages with 38 countries in the Indian Ocean region which were linked through sea trade routes in the past, the project collates archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean, extending from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka to the Southeast Asian archipelago. While at the macro level it aims to reconnect communications among these countries through enhanced understanding of cultural values, at the micro level the focus is on understanding national cultures at the regional promenade. The project also aims to tie up regional researchers and academics on a common platform to shed more light on the subcontinent's maritime history, by reviewing archaeological sites, architectural



and industrial heritage and cultural landscapes along the Indian Ocean coast. Furthermore, the project promises to promote research on themes related to the study of Maritime Routes through international scientific seminars and meetings and by adopting a multidisciplinary approach as well as encourage the production of specialized works and publications with an attempt at promoting a broader understanding of the concept of a common heritage and multiple identities.¹⁴ Although the project focuses on re-inventing ancient maritime interactions between countries and communities connected by the Indian Ocean, the strategic dimension of the same cannot be overlooked, as it offers an alternative to counter-balance Beijing's MSR endeavour.

Conclusion

It follows summarily from the above analysis that the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is a cause for major concern in New Delhi as it provides a basis for Beijing to increase its geo-strategic footprint in the Indian Ocean. Although Beijing has been sensitive to India's outlook on the MSR, even seeking to dispel doubts by acknowledging that the initiative is aimed at benefiting both countries, implemented through a friendly, open, cooperative attitude, under the present circumstances, it would be contingent on New Delhi to push for a practical, detailed and hands-on strategic dialogue with China, to ensure that the kernel of sea-based commerce is preserved and expanded, without the militarisation of the Indian Ocean waters, with countries such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Maldives willingly serving as the nodes. Therefore, whether India would honour China's initiation to embark on the MSR endeavour still hangs in a balance, as it remains in two minds over the twin conflicting alternatives of either collaborating as a partner in the project or restraining Beijing's expanding silhouette in the Indian Ocean region. As the present dynamics indicate, the balance gravitates towards the latter, clearly signalling that it would be a long wait before Sino-India relations are manifested in terms of being smooth and unblemished as silk.

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India's Maritime Diplomacy in West Asia: Challenges and Responsibilities

Dr. Saleem Ahmad

"...a nation's social and economic well being is intricately linked to the seas, not only for trade but also how it faces threats to its own security that develop across the seas... to achieve high growth can be realised only if our maritime frontiers and assets are safe, stable and act as enablers. The Indian Navy, as the primary element of India's maritime power, has the challenging task of safeguarding the country's maritime interests."

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India¹

The Significance of Waterways

The waterways of West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region are among the most important in the world. They facilitate the export of large volumes of oil and natural gas from the region and also bridging traders in the Eastern and Western worlds through the Red Sea and Suez Canal of Egypt. The political tensions have played part in these waterways since the mid- 20th century and the vulnerability of naval security has been exacerbated in recent years by the failure of bordering states to promote internal stability and therefore the lack of adequate maritime security capabilities that have caused serious threats in the region. Three waterways in the WANA region are at particularly high risk namely the Suez Canal, the Gulf, and the Gulf of Aden. In the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden, maritime commerce is threatened by the severe lack of stability in the regional governments around the waterways. The situation in the Gulf of Aden, as the poor economic and security conditions in Somalia have led to the development of piracy endeavours that target commercial traffic in the Gulf and broader Indian Ocean Region.² Further, no waterway is more vital to the international trade of oil and natural gas than the Gulf in general and the Strait of Hormuz in particular. As the gateway of the world's largest energy exporters, the Strait of Hormuz is a critical node to international trade. It consists of a narrow corridor that passes between the southern coast of Iran to the north and the coasts of the UAE and Oman to the south. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) considers the Strait of Hormuz

to be "the world's most important oil chokepoint". The Gulf of Aden serves as a link that connects the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, therefore, serving as a key transit point for East-West cargo travelling to or from the Suez Canal. The Gulf of Aden opens to the northwest to the Red Sea through the Bab el-Mandab, a waterway that narrows to 18 miles between Yemen and the coastlines of Djibouti and Eritrea. This waterway is considered a "chokepoint" for oil trade. To the east, the Gulf of Aden opens to the Arabian Sea and eventually to the broader Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean waters off the east coast of Africa and extending to India have become prime environments for piracy in recent years, likely due to their vital importance to regional and global commerce.³

India and West Asia

Though, India is not frequently seen as having direct interests in West Asia but it seems very important from various historical, social, and economic linkages. Kerala's Syriac Christians trace their origins to St. Thomas, who arrived in Kerala in 52 CE. The first Muslims in India, goes back further to the eighth century arrival in Sindh of Muhammad bin Qasim, were in Kerala, the result of maritime Indian Ocean trade with the Gulf during the seventh century. Connectivity by sea, across the Indian Ocean, reveals a history of deep trading linkages between India and the Gulf throughout modern history. India's energy needs have led to extensive oil and gas relationships with the West Asia; the Gulf is the main source for India's oil imports, accounting for 82 per cent of its overall needs as well as the source of important energy requirements.⁴ Therefore, India shares a deep historical, cultural and civilizational links with the West Asia. In the second half of 20th century, these relationships were further reinforced as the two emerged from their colonial past and started weaving new realities, building new bridges of understanding and synergies to deal with the common interests and new challenges of the 21st century. For India, West



Asia is a part of our extended neighbourhood and as such continued peace and stability in the region is in our strategic interest. To understand the depth of our multidimensional engagement in West Asia, the region is home almost 8 million Indians, who contribute around US\$ 40 billion in remittances annually. Our economic and commercial engagement with the region is around US\$ 186 billion per annum (2013-14), making it the largest trading regional partners of India.⁵ The West Asia is a source for more than 60 per cent of our oil and gas requirement, which is critical for India's energy security. The Maghreb region is a major source of phosphate and other fertilizers that is a significant factor in our food security. In view of the current situation in West Asia, new areas of defence and security cooperation have also emerged which include counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, piracy, money laundering, small arms smuggling, financing terror activities, etc. Specific measures for strengthening institutional security mechanisms can also include: greater naval presence in the Gulf region; regular participation in Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) meetings; stronger regional cooperation through naval assets in the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea for protection of India's maritime trade. Therefore, India attaches high priority to its political, economic, and security relations with the countries of West Asia.⁶ However, India's present maritime diplomacy towards the West Asia region has many layers. Its focus is almost exclusively on the Arabian Gulf nevertheless its interests and capabilities have been growing slowly across the region, though it continues to feel the region is too volatile for India to seek an active geo-political involvement in it. But recently, the sectarian issue has been entered into the equation of regional politics: India is also concerned about the rising of Shi'a-Sunni conflicts in West Asia and the possibility of these conflicts might spread to its own Muslim community. India is home to the third largest Sunni and the third largest Shi'a populations in the world.⁷ Further, India has cultivated a number of important bilateral relations in the region which include Israel, Iran and some of the Gulf monarchies such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and etc. However, India would prefer not to have to choose between them, it avoids playing a larger role in the region. Nevertheless, India's maritime diplomacy is not limited to the naval domain; trans-border

infrastructural development is a major priority for the NDA led Modi government. This proposal is similar to China's plan for a maritime silk road linking the Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. For India, which appears wary of China's plans for the Indian Ocean, West Asia, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor could be the first step towards building its own maritime silk road.⁸ Because major maritime lines of trade and energy routes intersect in this region, India's interest lies in a peaceful and balanced strategic environment in West Asia. India's anti-piracy efforts from the Horn of Africa to protect the vital sea-lines have been applauded. India's defence cooperation and effective partnerships within the countries of this region have helped them to stem the tide of terrorism and extremism. India has stressed on building energy security through long term arrangements and mutual investments and linkages.⁹ This region is full of challenges and responsibilities, but India as a rising power and an economic giant cannot afford to be a mute observer. There are few long and short term policy options which New Delhi can use effectively. The long term options include prioritizing the region, understanding the political efficiency of contemporary world politics, promoting soft power, fostering counter terrorism cooperation, recognizing contestation for the regional leadership, committing to a balanced and pragmatic approach between Israel and the Arab nations and moving towards creating conducive entrepreneurial environment.¹⁰

India's Look West Policy

The ongoing turmoil in West Asia has created an opportunity for India to engage with the GCC and complement it with the interaction of Iran. The GCC is also one of India's largest trade partners, with trade valued at \$150 billion in 2013-14. As discussed earlier, India has a unique asset and a responsibility in the region with the presence of its community about 8 million in the GCC, with about 3 million each in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, well over half a million in Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, and just below half a million in Bahrain. In fact, Indians constitute the majority community in at least three GCC countries the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain; they are also the largest expatriate community in every country of the GCC. The Indian work force in the GCC remits to India about \$40 billion annually. Assuming that one expatriate worker supports at least four to five others at home, it can be



safely assumed that about 40 million Indians benefit directly from the Indian presence in the GCC.¹¹ From the GCC perspective, India represents the narrative of economic and technological achievements in a multicultural democratic order. India has the added advantage in its foreign policy posture that it adopts positions that are non-intrusive, non-prescriptive and non-hegemonic. India is thus well-placed to take the lead in setting up the proposed diplomatic initiative in West Asia. The India-Gulf relationship is taking an upward trajectory, and India's stakes and interests have grown with the passage of time; thus, it is time for India to adopt a formally articulated Look West Policy, in line with the successful Look East Policy. India's engagement with the region and its critical importance for India's security means that standing aloof is no option.¹² A Look West Policy should focus on strengthening bilateral political, economic, and security ties with the countries of the Gulf region. Regular interaction at the highest levels will infuse further confidence in the relationship. Thus, India must articulate its interests in the region clearly through a Look West Policy, backed by road maps and resources. PM Modi's recent initiatives in the region reflect its growing desire to strengthen defence and security ties with the Gulf countries. There are several issues such as terrorism, piracy, criminal activities, money laundering, and small arms smuggling which call for increasing security cooperation between India and the Gulf countries. India has to play a more effective role in the shaping of the new maritime security architecture in the region. If India misses out, its interests will be affected in future.¹³

Moreover, PM Modi's visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in April 2016, resulted in stronger security partnerships with the expanding cooperation in the region. Saudi Arabia and India have also agreed on the need to intensify bilateral defence cooperation, through exchange of visits by military personnel and experts, conduct of joint military exercises, and exchange of visits of ships and aircrafts. Furthermore, they have made an unprecedented agreement to jointly develop arms and ammunition in India. This is a diplomatic victory for India which highlights the importance of the Gulf States that place on elevating ties with India. In addition, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's close relations with Pakistan have always dominated their

relations with India. But Islamabad's refusal to provide greater military support to Saudi Arabia's regional policies opened the new opportunity for New Delhi to reshape these partnerships. As the Gulf countries look for alternative security partners, an elevated Indian profile in the region will allow India to ensure its place in the region.¹⁴ According to Shivshankar Menon, West Asia and the Gulf countries, therefore, are very important for India and affect our security and prosperity directly. And yet, if we are so vitally connected to West Asia, why is India's footprint in the region so light. It was in the 1950s when we took positions, built military relations, and worked politically with friends in the region, ranging from Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt to King Ibn Saud and the Shah of Iran? As our familiarity with the region has grown gradually and our capabilities have increased, we have become more and more aware of the nature of the problems in the region. Since, the First Gulf War in 1990, changes in the situation in West Asia and our increasing capabilities make it advisable that India must adopt a much more active forward policy in the region, if we are to pursue our growing geo-strategic interests. Simply put, our interests in West Asia have grown exponentially as India has grown.¹⁵ The oil and natural gas that we import, on our exports to West Asia, and on the security of the sea-lines which passes through and to the Gulf and the Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, and all along the western littoral of the Indian Ocean. Maritime security in the region is among our primary concerns. This is why we chose to deploy naval assets to counter piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast since 2008, along with other countries. The demand from our friends in the Gulf region, therefore, Indian involvement in their maritime security has grown gradually. The West, particularly the US Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, has been a traditional provider of security, the situation and local demands are clearly changing, and space is opening up for a greater Indian role in providing maritime security.¹⁶ In the last decade, we have made a beginning with Oman, Qatar and others in the Gulf region on maritime security. India and West Asian regimes must share intelligence and act together against these terrorists but now recognise terrorism as a threat to themselves and to India. Such cooperation is useful and can be extended in future as well. Therefore, the geo-politics has made West Asia even more important to our future. For



India, West Asia represents our access to Central Asia, Russia and Afghanistan, and, potentially, overland to Europe. If we are to ensure these vital communications links, we must work actively with Iran to actually implement long discussed but unrealised ideas of the North-South Corridor, the development of the Chabahar Port, the India-Pakistan-Iran oil pipeline, and other connectivity projects. Certainly, India cannot achieve all its goals in this increasingly complex and uncertain region alone. We will need partners from the West Asia region.¹¹ Not one but several come to mind and have been seeking a greater Indian role and partnership:

- Iran is central to many of our concerns – maritime security, access to Central Asia, peace in Afghanistan and so on. This is simple recognition of the facts of geography and weight.
- Saudi Arabia has become a valued partner in counter-terrorism in recent years, as have other countries in the Gulf, as with Qatar, there is room to work together against the terrorist groups which target us.
- Egypt, whatever her regime, has been a factor of stability in the region, which is exactly what we seek.
- And the Gulf States are naturally interested in a greater Indian contribution to peace in the area.¹²

Therefore, PM Modi's recent visit to Tehran marks a new geo-political beginning in the Arabian Gulf and putting the Chabahar port in the grand chess board of India's strategic calculus in the West Asia region. Just about 72 km away from Gwadar port of Pakistan developed by China, India signed the strategic Chabahar port agreement with Iran which analysts describe as India's calibrated stroke against China's expanding regional influence. India is carefully but creatively crafting a strategically reliable Maritime Goodwill Curve in the region. Iran's geo-strategic location can add to India's benefits in securing its national interest. During the visit, India and Iran signed a dozen agreements like a pact to set up an aluminium plant; and on laying a railway line for India's connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Moreover, India, Iran and Afghanistan also signed a tripartite agreement on the Chabahar port for a land-cum-sea corridor for the transit of goods to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries circumventing Pakistan. In the larger geopolitical

context, the Chabahar port deal is no doubt a strategic victory for India.¹³ The recent visit by Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, offered to invest up to \$20 billion in oil, petro-chemicals and fertiliser projects in joint ventures with Iran if Tehran provides land and gas at concessional rates. He also expressed an interest in setting up an LNG plant and a gas cracker unit at Chabahar port. The official lifting of western sanctions against Iran in January 2016 has expanded the scope of Indo-Iranian engagement significantly and India is trying to recalibrate its Iran policy. Iran's crude oil exports to India are now three times higher compared to last year.¹⁴ New Delhi has signed an air services agreement with Iran enhancing the number of flights between the two nations and allowing each other's airlines to operate to additional destinations. The two sides have also inked a memorandum of understanding that is aimed at increasing bilateral trade to \$30 billion from \$15 billion. Plans are afoot for greater maritime cooperation, and Iran has already joined the Indian Navy's annual initiative, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which provides a forum for the navies of the Indian Ocean littoral states to engage with each other. But as the balance of power in the region unravels, new equations are emerging and older paradigms are no longer sufficient to engage the region.¹⁵

India's Maritime Diplomacy in West Asia

India's maritime diplomacy is a desire of the state to preserve, protect and promote her maritime interests in West Asia. The pursuit, promotion, preservation and protection of India's maritime interests are focussed upon a single axiom that "India wishes to use the seas for her own purposes while simultaneously preventing others from using them in ways that are to her disadvantage", and also defines that maritime diplomacy is an instrument of state policy.¹⁶ There are some basic principles of India's maritime diplomacy which are as given below:

1. Protection from sea-based threats to our territorial integrity.
2. Ensuring Stability in our Maritime Neighbourhood.
3. Creation, development, and sustenance of a 'Blue Economy' incorporating: The protection of India's maritime resources and offshore infrastructure within and beyond the Maritime Zones of India.



4. The promotion, Protection and Safety of our Overseas and Coastal Seaborne Trade and our Sea Lines of Communication including the ports that constitute the nodes of this trade.
5. Support to Marine Scientific Research including that in Antarctica.
6. Provision of support and extrication-options to our Diaspora.
7. Provision of holistic maritime security that is freedom from threats arising 'in' or 'from' the sea.
8. Gaining and maintaining a regionally favourable geo-strategic and geopolitical maritime position.²³

Energy security, of course, is a key ingredient of India's maritime interest in the West Asia region. India is dependent on imports for 80 per cent of its oil needs, but this ratio could decline slowly as India diversifies with an increased focus on African countries. The rate at which India's energy demand is growing; it is currently the world's fourth biggest oil consumer with import dependence projected to increase to 90% by 2031. India's increasingly multi-dimensional relations with GCC states support these energy security efforts. The Indian Diaspora in the Arab states, a valuable connection and the possibilities for investment go beyond the energy sector.²⁴ The UAE has agreed to invest \$75 billion in Indian infrastructure, Bahrain is looking to invest in financial services and high value added manufacturing among other areas, and countries like Kuwait have sovereign funds ripe for targeting. Security and geopolitical considerations are, naturally, threaded through these economic engagements. Factor in India's potential role as a maritime net security provider for the Gulf States, reliant as they are on energy shipping through the Indian Ocean region. According to the Indian Navy's Maritime Security Strategy, the Arabian Gulf is a primary area of interest. The possibilities for cooperation are significant. In 2040, India will overtake China as the largest source of rising demand for oil. The time has come to securing its interests in West Asia and to hold strong position in the region.²⁵ According to Maritime Military Strategy of India, published in 2007, which has "articulated the Navy's maritime strategic outlook, defines the parameters of its employment, and provided over reaching guidance for its evolution as a combat force", and it has four principal features. First, major sea lines of the world are crucially important for India, particularly those

that ensure the free flow of oil and commerce from the Gulf of Aden to the Asia-Pacific, termed Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, as India's global mercantile trade has grown phenomenally and now constitutes more than 43% of its GDP. As much as 77% of India's trade by value, and over 90% by volume is carried by sea.²⁶ Secondly, the maritime diplomacy is also vital for India's energy security. India's economic growth would continue to be critically dependent on the unhindered flow of oil. India also imports coal from 10 countries including Mozambique, South Africa, Indonesia and Australia, many of which are Indian Ocean littorals. This is also true of its LNG imports from Qatar, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Africa. Thirdly, India's maritime diplomacy also includes the safety and well being of Indian workers in the Gulf and West Asia; the significance of the remittances they send home cannot be underestimated. Besides, populations of Indian origin are scattered through the littoral states of the Indo-Pacific region.²⁷ Fourthly, the Indian Ocean that presents the prospect of wealth and prosperity contains also the seeds of future conflict i.e. under sea resources. India has a mineral rich EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone), currently extending over 2 million sq km, and the successful exploitation of these could lift the country from economic backwardness. By taking into account, firstly, the above mentioned maritime diplomatic interests, India's Maritime Doctrine of 2009 had talked of "the use of appropriate maritime forces" so that the Indian Navy can acts "to deter or defeat any threats or aggression against the territory, peoples or maritime interests of India, both in war and peace". Secondly, the doctrine said that the Navy would "project influence" in India's maritime area of interest with the Navies of the friendly countries through mutual visits and joint exercises to further the nation's political, economic and security objectives.²⁸ It also mentions that the Indian Navy would provide maritime assistance in India's maritime neighbourhood. In sum, the Indian Maritime Doctrine of 2009 elaborated four primary missions for Indian naval forces: (1) sea-based deterrence, (2) economic and energy security, (3) forward presence, and (4) naval diplomacy. In this way, the latest India's maritime diplomacy is an improvement? As Admiral Dhowan says, over the last few years, India's "security-cum-threat calculus" has changed considerably, "with the expansion in scale



and presence of a variety of 'non-traditional' threats" such as terrorism, piracy and increasing incidents of natural disasters as well as regional instabilities that necessitate increased deployment of the Navy for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.²⁹ Therefore, it is now an expanded outlook of the Indian Navy, which has been given the additional mandate of looking after the overall maritime security of the country, including coastal and offshore security in West Asia. There is "a clearer recognition of maritime security being a vital element of national interests and international engagement. Today, India employs maritime security engagements as a cornerstone of her regional foreign policy initiatives in West Asia. There is also wider acknowledgment of the role the Navy can play in strengthening and enhancing maritime security in the West Asia region".³⁰ Therefore, the concept of maritime diplomacy, the Indian Navy has not only expanded its maritime engagement with regional navies but has also built "bridges of friendship" through regular ship visits to countries along the Indian Ocean Rim. The Navy's diplomatic turn has been especially noteworthy in the expansion of naval cooperation with Arab Gulf states, offering critical support to India's foreign policy initiatives in West Asia. Since 2008, the Navy has consciously nurtured its relationships in the Arabian Sea. Apart from partnering regional navies in anti-piracy duties, it has played an important part in supporting and training Gulf Cooperation Council maritime forces. More significantly, Oman has played a key role in sustaining India's security efforts in the Gulf of Aden by offering berthing and replenishment facilities to naval ships, and hosting a crucial listening post in the Western Indian Ocean.³¹ An appreciation of its strategic potential has led New Delhi to cultivate stronger maritime ties with Muscat. Importantly for India, the ongoing engagement with Arab navies has not been to the exclusion of a maritime relationship with Iran. It has been gaining confidence as a regional maritime power. India offers the most potential for such a partnership. The Indian Navy's burgeoning ties with Arab Gulf navies demonstrate the utility of maritime power as a foreign policy tool. India's maritime diplomacy has shown that the political role of sea power remains as important as its wartime uses. Through its Arabian Gulf initiatives, the Indian Navy has shown that by positioning itself as a reliable and supportive partner of regional maritime forces, a navy can shape the broader strategic environment, forge lasting relationships and effectively deter challengers.³²

Challenges and Responsibilities

The most risky areas in any Sea Lines of Communications are those that have choke points and as such the most notably are the Gulf of Aden, Strait of Hormuz near the Arabian Sea, and Malacca straits in the Indian Ocean. They have become the bane of present and future challenges, in light of Somali piracy which is the largest contributor to this problem, among piracy by other groups. It becomes feasible for major naval powers like US and India that have the opportunity to tie efforts to reduce cost of anti-piracy operations, by sharing the large area of responsibilities.³³ Even though, the latest data indicates that the threat to piracy is reduced, in the Gulf of Aden region off the coast of Somalia, the gain could be short lived if effective counter measures are not kept in place. The ability of the Indian Navy was recently seen in *Operation Rahat* which rescued more than 5600 people included 4640 Indians and 960 foreign nationals who belonged to 41 nations. India's strategic reach is what India brings to the table for serving interests during war torn situations for other nations.³⁴ Moreover, the terrorist attacks at sea are aimed at destroying ships, taking control of seaports and traffic through strategic straits and waterways. Consequently, this triggered a debate over the manifestations of maritime terrorism surged in West Asia. The debates also question the effectiveness of anti-maritime terrorism policies embraced by countries to counter these activities of terrorist organizations. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific defines maritime terrorism as "the undertaking of terrorist acts and activities within the maritime environment, using or against vessels or fixed platforms including oil production and refineries at sea or in port, or against any one of their passengers or personnel, against coastal facilities or settlements, including tourist resorts, port areas and port towns or cities" for political ends.³⁵ This differentiates between maritime terrorism and piracy. That is, pirates' activities are mainly economically driven as pirate gangs seek to make material gains through capturing vessels and selling their cargo, holding crew members hostage to extort ransom money for their release, while terrorist organizations focus their acts on inflicting maximum human and material loss on all parts of the maritime sector with the aim of damaging security and stability. These include the activities of these organizations are no longer limited to attacks against maritime traffic, attempts to seize ports and oil terminals, maritime piracy and illegal trading in oil and commodities with the aim of enhancing their



financial resources.³⁶ As Indian dependence on imported crude oil and raw materials grows, and as the demand for consumer goods increases, India's strategic maritime objectives are to ensure the security of SLOCs from the Arabian Gulf, Europe, and East Asia. The security of these vital shipping lines is also vital for the country's exports—most notably the increasing quantities of refined distillates, fuels, petro-chemicals and etc.³⁷ Moreover, effective maritime diplomacy means that the need to address several emerging challenges at the same time. These include constructing instrumental regional mechanisms for economic and resource governance of the maritime commons, meeting security like traditional and non-traditional threats at sea and enunciating effective deterrence against conventional and strategic maritime threats. The 'use of force' if necessary in the high seas should remain a viable option in India's maritime diplomacy. Towards that end, the Indian Navy's strategic mandate is to bolster India's maritime power projection capabilities in West Asia region. Greater capacity building will strengthen the Indian Navy's ability to assume increasingly maritime responsibilities in the wake of emerging security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. In the years ahead, maritime diplomacy is set to assume a salient role in attaining India's strategic objective of fostering a peaceful and secure maritime order in West Asia, the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.³⁸ Therefore, Indian navy's areas of interest are expanding, and reflecting its willingness to play a larger role in the West Asian region. The Red Sea, previously a secondary area of interest, as per the revised Maritime Doctrine of 2009, is now an area of primary interest for the Indian navy. Additionally, "the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and their littoral regions, the Southwest Indian Ocean, including Indian Ocean Region island nations and East Coast of Africa littoral regions" now all are of primary interest to India's maritime security. In fact, there has been a shift in India's maritime diplomacy that has made clear through the navy's engagement under the Modi government. India will emerge as a crucial leader and critical player in the evolving security architecture in the region.³⁹ India would have to work towards developing a strategic architecture wherein her status as a predominant power in this region is recognized. It is in her maritime interest to create an environment in which she can ensure free and unhindered flow of energy and trade from the West Asia.⁴⁰

Conclusion

In sum, West Asia is a very significant region for India's maritime diplomacy in general and the Gulf Cooperation Council in particular because India is dependent for its large part of energy requirements in the region, and similarly, the security of waterways in West Asia has also become the need of hour for India to create a maritime security mechanism for its geopolitical and economic interests. In the era of globalization, the goods have been trading by the sea-routes because of the low costs in transportation, and therefore, the importance of sea-routes is also growing steadily, and consequently, the countries of the world want to use sea lines of communications for their trade and shipping activities. Nevertheless, the maritime terrorism and the severe threats posed by pirates in the region have threatened the regional countries such as India and the GCC, subsequently; they are trying to develop strong maritime security architecture in West Asia. At the present, India and the Gulf countries have convergence of interests in the field of maritime strategy, and this is the right time for India to take greater responsibilities in the region and prepared for the challenges in the future. It is in India's geo-political interest to have naval footprints on the grounds in the West Asia region, and the development of Iran's Chahbahar port is a best example of India's successful Maritime diplomacy in West Asia. We need to have strong relationships with the regional countries of West Asia so that we can secure our interests in the region.

End Notes:

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The Proviso of India and Iran Alliance: Premonitions and Probabilities

Ms. Sneha Kulkarni

In the context of India's Strategic Environment, often consideration of the intellectuals is that, "it is in the vicinity of the Indian Ocean concavity absolutely". In this regard the explanations about India's strategic proximity stretches to the Strait of Hormoz and the Persian Gulf in the west; according to some claims the eastern coast of Africa as the western-most border of this strategic arena. In the space capacity to the east, India's neighbouring strategic zone includes the Strait of Malacca and extends up to the South China Sea. In the vertical block sector, the north is constituted of Central Asia, and to the south, it reaches out to Antarctica. In contradiction to India's view about its neighbouring strategic presence, analysts from numerous states articulate peculiar aspects of it, ranging from dividing this region into four sectors as, Sector I: Southwest Asia, Sector II: Central Asia, Sector III: South Asia and Sector IV: Southeast Asia. India with its geographically graced and gained location, positioned at "Strategic Crossroads", where in different frame of relations with neighbouring countries, we can apply multiple and overlapping analytical policy filters that incorporate India in more bold implications of developing strategic relationships, where Southwest, Central and Southeast Asia coincide.

In this consciousness, we must have to pore over India's foreign policy and defence policy comprehensively, where these unfolded strategic environs, India has imperative strategic interests; like to be the preeminent power within the Indian Ocean Region, also India possess a natural role in producing and shaping regional security measures to uphold the stability, and most importantly India is willing to be proactive to foster developments that are fundamentally in its as well as regional interests by using economic and political influences. In rapport with this holistic set of interests within the entire Indian Ocean Region, India has strongly pursued a "Look East Policy", in which Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has made a number of openings to the

Southeast and Northeast Asian states. India also has a practically cultivated preeminent "Middle East Policy" which includes Israel, Iran, and several Arab states. In the extension of this course of action, India is continuing its efforts to strengthen its strategic infrastructure in the Central Asia and in Afghanistan, for which specifically Iran presents tremendous importance.¹

India and Iran Synergism

India and Iran have consistently shared vibrant social, cultural, economic and political associations and affinity that have fortified both the social well-beings. The use of the Persian language at the Mughal courts is just one example of Iranian cultural influence in north India. With the formation of Pakistan in 1947, India and Iran lost the geographical connection which both the nations had lived it up for centuries. The Cold War saw a period of turbulent relations between the two countries, as the Shah of Iran allied his country with the U.S., whereas India preferred to remain non-aligned. However, the end of the Cold War and the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini expanded a way of opportunity for India to clear away misunderstandings and enhance its relationship with Iran. Regardless of Islamic ties with Pakistan, Iran began to propagate strong ties with India. Mutual associations also remained extremely neighbourly during Iran's years of global chastisement for its nuclear program, with the exception of a short period during which, India was unable to deal with the dynamic of Iran-U.S. divergence. Overall, India's diplomacy with Iran has been rooted in economic interests and buttressed by social links. India's au courant symbiosis with Iran is mainly commenced on India's energy security, Admittance to Afghanistan and Central Asia, and its permanent hostility with Pakistan. It is worth emphasizing that India's interests in Central Asia are substantial, and it needs to bolster its presence in the region and can only be reasonably realized through Iran. India and Iran also share many similarities: Extra regional ambitions and a strong



sense that they pursuing an independent foreign policy are common traits in the diplomatic behaviour of India and Iran and likewise both the countries relations have a domestic political dimension as well. India's large Shia population has been an important variable in India's association with Iran.

India has found it difficult to balance the inescapable of improving its ties with the United States with the need to have a sound relationship with Iran. Now, India has given clear indications of its plans to push India and Iran to warmer ties. For instance, there was a time when Iran and Russia cooperated with India in strengthening the Northern Alliance's resistance to the radically fundamentalist Taliban movement with its anti-Shia and anti-Iran tendencies. With territory from Pakistan to the Mediterranean becoming home to some of the most vicious jihadist terror groups, with global, national and regional linkages, India and Iran could well be motivated to return to cooperation in tackling the threat of terrorism. Also, Chabahar port, which is a symbol of Indo-Iran economic and strategic cooperation, will give India access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan entirely. Chabahar port is also linked to India's receiving natural gas imports from Iran, as the port would also serve as the point of origin for the proposed Iran-Oman-India pipeline. World can also view this port as a strategic counterweight to China's pursuit of a port in Pakistan's Gwadar.²

However, there are some misinterpretations between India and Iran, including major and others inconsequential, just as there are similarities and shared interests. India is going to face some unpleasant realities about its most fundamental policy departure: a negative vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) against Iran's nuclear record. There are valid reasons to suspect that Iran might not show too much enthusiasm in responding to India's economic or strategic openings. Inevitably, as so often in international politics, there is no permanent friend and there is no permanent foe, only permanent is national interest and accordingly the right side of it which is beneficiary for bringing the successor steps through it. India was faced with what looked like either/or question on Iran's nuclear program. It was the outcome of Indian policymakers' failure to conceptualize a grand strategy went beyond narrowly

defined national interests. A lot depends on what counts as "long term" in Iran's strategic calculations. It is more appreciable that, when Americans and Europeans are more than willing to resume business with Iran, it is giving priority to rebuild its economic ties with India and at contemporary state India is certainly facing stronger opposition from technologically advanced American, European, Russian and Chinese companies as far as investing in Iran is concerned. Another regional dynamic that may force India to moderate its ties with Iran is the undeniable fact of India's deepening engagement with Israel and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Iran and India have a history of high-level contact, including visits from the shah to post-independence India and visits from Prime Minister Nehru to Iran, as well as two high-level state visits in 2001 and 2003 and the signing of the New Delhi Declaration in 2003. However, participants explained that the relationship has been stymied by a range of issues, such as India's voting record against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency and India's refusal to stand by Iran during the sanctions period. India's historically close ties with the Arab nations have also proved to be a stumbling block for developing close strategic partnership with Iran.

Iran's Approach and Apprehensions

With reference to Iranian panorama, giving hand to Indian cooperation includes potential areas of synergy and many more. The significant sectors are security, economy, energy and infrastructure. Economic cooperation is the weightiest element in this list. Investment in the petrochemical sector and in the Oman-Iran-India pipeline could be potential areas of alliance. In fact, India is viewed as a country with a capacity to invest not only in the Chabahar port but also in other projects in Iran. India and Iran could establish joint refineries and in addition, since for both India and Iran, the Indian Ocean is the pathway for connecting with various Asian countries, a focus on the Indian Ocean would be more precise for designing regional security measures from piracy. In this regard, the Association of Indian Ocean Rim countries (AIOR) could be a beneficiary instrument of teaming. Within the Iranian academic community, it is argued that India and Iran are going to be natural partners in the South, Central and West Asian regions given their



common interests, geographical proximity and regional realities. India's policy towards Iran is driven by its energy security, countering terrorism and building infrastructure to improve connectivity in the region. In the past, due to the imposition of sanctions, many projects were moving slow. However, after the removal of sanctions, there is forward movement on many projects and many new opportunities are opening up for greater cooperation. Indian's involvement in the Chabahar port project is termed as a "peace port" and "Transit Diplomacy". It is argued that India and Iran can be constructive contributors in dealing with the problem of terrorism in the region.³

If we consider the Iranian outlook, the main objective evolves as; both India and Iran need to understand the ground realities in the changed geopolitical situation in the South Asian and especially in the Indian Ocean Region. As a friendly country, Iran expects India to understand its security issues and concerns. It is argued that India needs to have a deep rooted approach on expanding its cooperation in the area of connectivity and other trade related issues keeping aside all the short term gains. Similarly, in the security areas, Iran believes that it is facing challenges on both the eastern and western fronts of its borders and it is therefore looking for strong strategic partners who could help deal with these security challenges. It is suggested that there is a need to start a new chapter in India and Iran relations with the concern of security solidarity. Though there is great encouragement and increasing hopefulness in Iran about cultivation of bilateral cooperation with India, but the challenges cannot be ignored. The ground reality as articulated by an Iranian expert is that "India's ties with Iran are actually largely underdeveloped as compared to its much more substantive engagement with the Arab States in the Persian Gulf and Israel..... Hence India-Iran relations can be best described as developing relations." While terrorism remains a common area of cooperation, and cooperation in economy and trade will also continue, the two countries are not indispensable for each other on this matter of affairs. Further, some Iranian experts are of the view that in the next 20 to 25 years, India and Iran may have to make strategic choices in the up surging geopolitics. They believe that at present the US is the sole global power which has moreover

decided to employ an offshore balancing strategy to deal with what it perceives as a major challenge from China. Enhancing cooperation between India, Japan, South Korea and Australia is the American way of balancing China and at this stance; China is likely to form its own bloc, mainly a "China-Pakistan-Iran" triangle; and that's why here, India is going to be in the US orbit. Since China is likely to bring Iran into its orbit, India and Iran will have to find a middle path to manage their relations, as Iran's expectations from India are far likely different as compared to that from China, US and Europe. India's strength, in the Iranian view, lies in "Soft Power", but Iran does not expect "Soft Power" attitude from China.⁴

Some Indian experts have argued that "India requires to navigate its regional strategic partnerships more carefully, and also independently of the U.S. agenda", while China remains a major emulator for India in West Asia, Pakistan does not figure prominently in India's policy towards this region. Also, there is general consent among the Indian strategic community that Iran occupies a significant position in the West Asian Region and that its strategic location connecting South, Central and West Asian region combined with its hydrocarbon stockpiles make a strong case for India's interest in developing harmonious relations with Iran. Some experts are of the view that "regardless of the impediments placed by Western sanctions, India and Iran ties are based on "Deep Strategic Considerations" emerging from India's vision of its role in regional affairs...." More specifically Iran is looking for countries that are willing to invest in its energy and infrastructure sectors and here, India can play a key role. Indian Ministers in their statements have welcomed an expansion of all out ties with Iran, as Indian officials believe that "political instability can be offset through greater economic engagement with the region."^{5 6 7 8 9}

India's Connectivity through Iran: Concerning Most Critical Issues

India has been transforming its Iran strategy for some time now, as India has signed an air services agreement with Iran, for enhancing the number of flights between the two nations and allowing each other's airlines to operate to additional destinations. Both the nations have also inked a memorandum of understanding that is aimed at increasing bilateral



trade to \$30 billion from \$15 billion. Plans are afoot for greater maritime cooperation, and Iran has already joined the Indian Navy's annual initiative, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which provides a forum for the navies of the Indian Ocean littoral states to engage with each other. More symbolically, the two nations have decided to hold "Structured and Regular Consultations" on Afghanistan. Both India and Iran are unlikely to accept an Afghanistan, which serves as a springboard for the Pakistan military's interests. After years of dilly-dallying by the United Progressive Alliance government, the Narendra Modi's government decided last year to invest \$85.21 million in developing the strategically important Chabahar port in Iran, allowing India to sidestep Pakistan and open up a route to landlocked Afghanistan. The port, located 72km west of Pakistan's Gwadar port, holds immense strategic and economic significance for India. It is already connected to the city of Zarand in Afghanistan's south-western province of Nimruz and can serve as India's entry point to Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond. New Delhi and Tehran both view Chabahar as critical and crucial for developing a straight connectivity with Kabul and as a geopolitical lever vis-à-vis Pakistan. This is a high-priority issue for the Modi's government.

On Iran's nuclear aspirations too, India has been making sophisticated developments in its approach, as India has expressed disapproval of sanctions by individual countries that restrict other countries' investments in Iran's energy sector. Despite existing sanctions, it is encouraged by Indian companies to invest in Iranian energy so that economic cooperation can predominate political makeovers, not foreclose it. But the Indian bureaucracy has been dragging its feet for a swift implementation of economic and trade deals with Iran. The most significant disruption to this relationship has come in the form of China, which is now Iran's largest trading partner. China has invested massively in Iran, with more than 100 Chinese companies on the ground seeking to occupy the space vacated by Western firms that had grown skittish about international pressure on the country. The partnership with China benefits both sides: Iran evades global isolation by courting China, which in turn gains access without any real competition to Iran's energy resources. India has always enforced dutifully any

United Nations measures against Iran, often to the detriment of its energy investments in the country. Yet China, which as a member of the Security Council helps shape UN policy towards Iran, has been able to sustain its own energy business in the country without much trouble.

India has been endeavouring to plant a balance between preserving its strategic interests and managing its global obligations and its ability to manoeuvre in Iran had been limited so far because of Iran's inability to find a workable solution with the West on its nuclear ambitions. As a Shia-Sunni divide fractures West Asia and as American outreach to Iran begins to reshape the region's strategic environment, Indian diplomacy will be forced to navigate these tricky waters with diplomatic finesse. The certainties of the past with which India has lived so far are coming to an end and a new uncertain scenario will challenge Indian foreign and defence policy in the coming years and India will have to dump its ideological trappings of the past where domestic political imperatives continue to restrict India's options. A thaw in US and Iran relations, heralded by the new nuclear understanding between the two, should alleviate some of Indian concerns and will allow it to push forth with a more purposeful regional engagement. The development of Chabahar Port, critical to enabling such connectivity, has lingered for 14 years, also a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Indian and Iranian ministers for transport in 2015, allowing for the openings of negotiations for the leasing of existing berths at the Chabahar Port, but progress remains stalled due to a failure to agree on terms. India's inability to deliver on this project has negatively affected not only Indian credibility, participants added, but also its economic and strategic interests.

Coupled with the Chabahar Port, the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) can be the cornerstone of the India and Iran relationship. The INSTC trade corridor, running through Iran and Afghanistan, is a consolidated transportation network, including rail, road, and water transport connecting Mumbai to Moscow, via Bandar Abbas in Iran. It would allow India to bypass the overland routes through Pakistan and China to Central Asia. Not only does the INSTC have the potential to



serve as a strategic counterbalance to China's One Belt, One-Road Initiative, and it would also allow India to integrate with Eurasian markets and firmly establish itself in Central Asian oil and gas production. Given that India is a net importer of energy and Iran a net exporter, it is essential to mark that this sector provides a foundation for bilateral relations, as Iran's abundant oil and gas fields have the potential to meet India's increasing demands. The signing of an agreement to develop the Farzad-B gas fields, which had been stalled during the sanctions period, would be a leapfrogged step in this direction. India must also assure the government's support for private investments such South Asia Gas Enterprise's proposed \$4.5 billion undersea pipeline from Iran to India. Iran would also serve as a safe and stable transit point for Central Asian gas and oil, either via pipelines or other means; hence therefore India must however act decisively so as to not lose any advantage in these critical areas like Iran.¹⁰

Iran's Interactions with Pakistan, China and Afghanistan

The fact evolves out of Iran and Pakistan relationship is, Pakistan's rapprochement with Iran is an outcome of a strategy that has been well thought through. To maintain neutrality in the Iran and Saudi tussle, Pakistan has already decided to distance itself from the regional sectarian war and the issue of stability in Afghanistan has brought Iran and Pakistan together, because Iran has expressed support for the settlement process in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan has been playing the role of mediator. The threat emanating from the Islamic State is being seen as a challenge by both Iran and Pakistan. Meanwhile, China's energy needs have become an economic lifeline for Iran. China accounts for approximately 50 percent of Iran's total crude oil exports. China relies on Iran for a tenth of its foreign energy imports and Burgeoning energy ties between Iran and China have turned on with the strategic alignment.

As China and India shares border disputes, realists would predict that the potential for conflict between India and China over influence in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean Region, and Central Asia remains alive as long as China continues to hinder in India's northeast and Kashmir, whether directly or indirectly, by seeking to use Pakistan as a contender

to India. Demand for energy resources in India and China is also a potential issue for battling interests between India and China, creating more contestants for access to energy in resource rich countries in the future, specifically like Iran. Beijing signed an agreement with Islamabad in April 2015 to construct a pipeline from Pakistan's Gwadar port to Nawabshah. The Iran-Pakistan pipeline is expected to supply gas from Iran's South Pars field sufficient to generate 4,500 MW of electricity, covering Pakistan's current shortfall in power production. Energy cooperation between Iran and Pakistan goes a long way to mitigating historical suspicions that have separated Shia Iran and predominantly Sunni Pakistan. The energy projects will not only alleviate Pakistan's crippling energy shortages but also produce hard currency for Iran's hard pressed economy. Iran has already built its section of the pipeline to the Pakistani border. Pakistan will build the remaining 80 km of the pipeline from Gwadar to the Iranian border once sanctions on Iran are formally lifted.

The strategy being followed by China is well crafted, more futuristic and fact based. Beijing is taking an extremely favourable view of the IP pipeline due to its geopolitical potential. The pipeline is sure to become a key component of China's ambitious Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road (OBOR) initiatives. The IP pipeline agreement is also a part of a \$46 billion infrastructure package to establish the "China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)", being financed and constructed by Beijing. The CPEC, which is aimed at building critical infrastructure that could kick-start economic growth, will extend from Pakistan's Arabian Sea Port of Gwadar to China's Kashgar city in Xinjiang province, one of the principal launching points for China's OBOR initiative. Iran has shown interest in extending the Pakistan gas pipeline to China. How can India be expected to compromise its opposition on CPEC when Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir continue to be hit by gunmen from across Pakistan, is the fundamental security issue India have to scrutinize on urgent basis.¹¹

Indian Impulse of Building Strategic Sorority with Iran

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran on 22-23 May, 2016 has carved a new chapter of cooperation and strategic partnership between India



and Iran. It is surely considered to be a most awaited but a significant visit by an Indian Prime Minister since former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who paid a state visit in April 2001. This visit needs to be analysed in the context of the opening security situation in West Asia and India's security and economic interests in the region that have led the Modi's Government to rebuild and shift arena towards Iran. India's increasing diplomatic activism towards this region is indicative of its effort to build stronger economic and security ties with West Asian countries by securing ties with Iran. India's diplomatic activism to engage Iran comes at a time when Iranian leadership is trying to build new equations with countries at regional and global level after lifting of the sanctions. Europe, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and many other countries are looking at establishing long-term trade and energy ties with Iran in the post Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) period.

For making cement solid strategic partnership, India has inked 12 agreements in the area of connectivity, trade, culture, education, science and technology including investing billions of dollars in infrastructure and setting up of joint ventures in aluminium smelter and urea plants in Chabahar free trade Zone. The visit was intended to develop an all out comprehensive strategic economic cooperation with Iran. "The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes expansion of relations with India, which is one of the emerging and progressive economies in the world, and (Iran) is serious in implementing bilateral agreements and is not influenced by any policy," Khamenei said.

The most significant agreement signed between the two countries has been the bilateral contract on Chabahar Port for port development and operations between "India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGL)" and Arya Banader of Iran. This contract envisages development and operation for 10 years of two terminals and 5 berths with cargo handling capacity. The signing of trilateral agreement of transit and transportation corridor between India, Iran and Afghanistan signals the increasing effort on part of three countries to improve regional connectivity between South West and Central Asia. This is a significant development for all the three partners since

this will provide direct access to India bypassing Pakistan to Afghanistan and Central Asia via Iran. The MoU between Indian Railway PSU IRCON and Construction, Development of Transport and Infrastructure Company (CDTIC) of Iran will enable IRCON provide services for the construction of Chabahar-Zahedan railway line thus connecting India-Afghanistan and Iran. India has committed to invest around \$1.6 billion in this project.¹²

The Chabahar deal clearly reflects the strategic component of the evolving relations between the two countries. This deal clearly lays down the ground for deep, long term strategic partnership between the two countries. President Rouhani said that Chabahar port serves not only as point of connectivity between the two countries but also between India and Afghanistan. It can also play a pivotal role in Iran India cooperation on various industries including aluminium steel, and petrochemicals. Besides, the construction of the Chabahar-Zahedan-Mashhad railway line can boost bilateral economic cooperation between India and Iran as well as with other regional countries. From the Indian perspective, Chabahar is definitely a land mark deal for which India has been trying since 2003. Because of sanctions and related problems movement was very slow on this project. However, improving US and Iran relations and lifting of sanctions have opened many opportunities for India. Development of the Chabahar port on the long term bases also provides India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia which has been denied by Pakistan since 1947. For many experts this is also a fine balancing act by India and Iran to balance China and Pakistan in the region. Though Iran has endorsed the Chinese initiative of "One Belt one Road (OBOR)" and India has not opposed this project, because India would want to build its relations with Iran separate from its bilateral ties with China, Saudi Arabia and Israel.¹³

In the past India, Iran and Russia were working very closely to improve the connectivity in the region through the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) project, and rebuilding of Iran and India ties, there is a forward movement on this project as well. This is a regional project aimed at enhancing trade and economic cooperation among the regional countries of South, Central and West Asian countries with Russia and Europe. India, Iran



and Russia along with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, along with, can create a greater alliance in the altered security paradigm of this region.¹⁴

Policies for Premonitions and Probabilities

Pakistan has always preserved prestigious diplomatic relations with Iran, but still, the rise of Shia killings coupled with attacks on Iranian border guards by Sunni groups in Pakistan have brought into the light, the strong reactions within Iran condemning Pakistan. Pakistan's refusal to commit troops in Yemen on behalf of Saudi Arabia helped bilateral relations, but a covert hostility between Pakistan and Iran over Afghanistan continues. Despite turbulence in their relationship, Iran and Pakistan are likely to maintain close ties for strategic reasons. Iran has maintained contact with the Taliban, to ensure its eastern borders remain free of influence from the self proclaimed Islamic State. The differences between the Taliban and Iran will not have long term consequences, and that is why India must ensure Iran's objectives in Afghanistan are clearly outlined to determine their convergence with India's goal of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.¹⁵

India must find a way to balance competing imperatives with Iran, the Arab Gulf, and Israel, though India does not have bilateral issues with any of the major players in the Gulf, it should avoid zero sum diplomacy and constructively engage with this region in a more absolute and expanding manner. India's approach toward this region must be motivated by whole national interests, whether through economic cooperation with Gulf Cooperation Council states or through robust defence ties with Israel. As a neutral player with legitimate security interests, India can also play a role in building the Security Architecture of the region to further its interests. This is the right time for India to clearly spell out its bilateral issues and policies particularly on Afghanistan, transport corridor and gas pipeline. Iran is important particularly in dealing with the large Shia population within India, and with the rest of the Muslim world. India has some domestic advantage, which it can use as inputs to rejuvenate and refine its strategic relations with Iran. The presence of the second largest Shia population in India can be a factor to take further this relationship in a stimulating avenue.

There is need to emphasize and underline that, what India's national interests are and that India's increasing relations with the West and particularly with the US is not at the cost of its relations with Iran, and India needs to design a policy to engage with Iran without antagonizing the US. India and Iran relations should be anticipated and watched through the historical connections, because both the nations have shared a longstanding cooperative relations right from Indus and Persian generations. The international and regional geopolitical scenarios are altering rapidly and therefore it is desirable for India to change its applicable neighbouring policies accordingly the neighbours and fluctuating national interests of friendly and hostile groups.

India can take the initiative and host a dialogue with regional powers including Iran, Israel, GCC, Pakistan, US, Afghanistan, and discuss and deliberate upon critical burning security issues, as it is the hiking time for such diplomatic proposal propagation by India. It was argued that there is no conflict on the nuclear issue. India needs to downplay this issue and engage Iran rather than being hawkish. Overemphasis of the nuclear issue provides an opportunity to various factions within Iran to develop different policy perspective with regards to India.

The strategic pathways which might be supportive in remodelling as well as enriching India and Iran relations can include the facts like: Mutual dialogue and visits are needed at high level authorities with the increased frequency; A clear message should go to the private sector of India about policy with respect to Iran and simultaneously Iran should clearly spell out its foreign investment policy for Indian companies, as it must apprehend Indian companies do business based on purely economic considerations; Ensure a well developed staff in the Indian embassy with knowledge of regional languages, and it will deliver an expediency while dealing with responsiveness with Iran's culture and ethos; India can take a cue from how Japan and Italy have managed and built close relations with Iran despite being US allies; Building and maintaining Indian Information Agencies in West Asian countries to foster India to formulate and deliver its foreign and defence policy with more efficacy, on the basis of regular information and news.¹⁶



Despite these various premonitions and probabilities for numerous policies establishments between India and Iran, with the inclusion of positive development ties, both the rising powers will have to manage their relations addressing new threats and challenges to sustain the momentum of cooperation scenario and structures.

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India-Myanmar Joint Statement during the visit of the President of Myanmar to India (29 August 2016)

(Contd. from Page - 63)

August 29, 2016

- The two sides agreed to promote trade and expand cooperation especially in agriculture, banking, power and energy sectors. Both sides expressed satisfaction that the trade between the two countries has shown resilience to the global trends. They agreed that both Governments would work to identify and remove various impediments to bilateral trade. In this context, both sides appreciated the useful deliberations at the India-Myanmar Business Conclave held in Yangon in May 2016 which was attended by a high-level business delegation led by Indian Minister of Commerce Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman. Indian side conveyed that leading Indian companies are prepared to invest in Myanmar's hospitality and automobile sector, and requested that this may be facilitated.
- Indian leadership thanked Myanmar for accepting its request and giving a license to the State Bank of India to open a bank branch in Myanmar, and sought support while it sets up its office in Myanmar. Both sides expressed the confidence that the commencement of direct banking operations would help greatly to expand bilateral trade and commerce.
- The two leaders also expressed hope that the modalities of operation of border haats may be finalised soon so that trade can also start taking place through border haats.
- Both sides agreed that an arrangement for supply of pulses from Myanmar to India would be in the mutual interest of Myanmar farmers and Indian consumers. They encouraged Indian companies to cooperate with Myanmar farmers in order to improve the quality of pulses production and thus ensure better marketability of the produce in India.
- The President of Myanmar thanked India for the power supply that commenced from India across the Moreh-Tamu border on April 8, 2016. Both sides agreed that this is a small but critical step towards further integrating our countries and economies for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. Both sides will consider infrastructure strengthening of the transmission network to increase supply in future.
- In order to provide a framework for bilateral cooperation in this key sector, the Indian and Myanmar leaders resolved that the proposed MoU between India and Myanmar on Cooperation in the field of Power should be negotiated at the earliest.
- The Indian side invited Myanmar to participate in the International Solar Alliance Initiative, which is intended to allow solar resource rich countries to address their special needs and collaborate to reduce costs and improve generation capacity.
- The two sides recognised the presence of Indian companies in the oil exploration and hydrocarbon pipeline sectors and agreed to further expand this collaboration. Myanmar side agreed to invite Indian companies to participate in competitive tender for petrochemical and petroleum products marketing infrastructure and setting up LPG terminals.
- Reviewing ongoing bilateral cultural exchanges and cooperation, both agreed to further promote cultural and academic exchanges. They expressed satisfaction at the ongoing pace of work on the project for conservation and restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan, Myanmar, by the Archaeological Survey of India. The Indian side confirmed that a project to preserve and conserve stone inscriptions and temples of King Mindon and King Bagyidaw of Myanmar in Bago Gya would be undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India with financial support from Government of India. The two sides also agreed on joint technical support for preservation and conservation of the two stone inscriptions. The two sides noted with satisfaction that the 'Festival of India' in Myanmar was well with popular support and participation.
- The two sides agreed to encourage people-to-people contact and facilitate movement of people across land borders of the two countries. The two sides also discussed on setting up immigration facilities at the Tamu-Moreh and Rhi-Zowkhathar border crossing points at an early date.
- The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together in all international multilateral organizations and, in this context, agreed to make efforts to coordinate national positions on important issues that figure high on the international agenda. Recognising that terrorism is one of the most serious threats to the international peace and security, and underscoring that there can be no justification whatsoever for acts of terrorism, the two sides called for further strengthening of the international legal regime to combat terrorism, and in this context, called for early finalisation of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism presently being negotiated in the United Nations. Both sides recognised that early reform of the UN Security Council is an essential element in the overall effort to reform the United Nations to make it more representative, effective and better adapted to the needs of the 21st Century. Myanmar side reiterated its support for India's efforts to become a permanent member in an expanded and reformed UN Security Council.
- India expressed its support for the progress made by Myanmar in its ongoing reform process under difficult circumstances including its efforts towards achieving an inclusive and broad based national reconciliation. In this context, both sides agreed that the delegations of India and Myanmar will continue to work together closely during deliberations in all relevant UN fora.
- During the visit, the following documents were signed:
 - MoU on Cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine
 - MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Renewable Energy
 - The MoU on Cooperation in the Construction Upgradation of the Bridges and Approach Road in Tama-Kyagon-Kalewa section of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar
 - The MoU on Cooperation in the Construction Upgradation of Kalewa-Yugyi road section of the Trilateral Highway in Myanmar, and
- Both sides welcomed the various steps taken to strengthen regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. The Myanmar side informed the Indian side that State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will participate in the forthcoming Outreach Summit between BRICS and BIMSTEC partners to be held in India on 16 October 2016. The Indian side welcomed this.
- The President of Myanmar thanked the President of India for the warm and gracious hospitality extended to him and to the members of his delegation during their stay in India.
- The President of Myanmar extended an invitation to the President of India and the Prime Minister of India to visit Myanmar at mutually convenient dates. The invitations were accepted, and it was agreed that dates for these visits would be decided by mutual consultations through diplomatic channels.

(Courtesy: MEA)

Beyond Maritime Silk Road: China's Objectives and Strategies in the Indian Ocean Region

Dr. Teshu Singh

Introduction

The term Maritime Silk Road (MSR) was first used by Chinese President, Xi Jinping at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit held in Bali in 2013. Ever since then the MSR has become a major proposal of the new leadership in China. During Chinese Premier's visit to Brunei, he announced the establishment of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund with USD 48 million allocated by China for sponsoring ASEAN-maritime cooperation projects. Further, to take this initiative forward China has set up a ten billion fund for this proposal. The initiative will be funded by the China Development Bank and China-Africa Development and would largely focus on development of the infrastructure in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh where China has already made infrastructure investments (Krishnan, 2014). At the BRICS summit held on July 2014 China announced the establishment of a bank for the smooth functioning of the MSR. The BRICS declaration led to the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The MSR will be one of the main projects of the AIIB announced by China. The funds of the bank will be used to support the infrastructure along the MSR (Li, 2014).

With so much of investments on the project; China is trying to venture this proposal as a win-win opportunity for China and the related countries (Sri Lanka, India, Maldives and ASEAN countries). The essay delves into the economic and strategic aspect of the MSR. Further it looks into the larger objectives and strategy of the MSR and plausible Indian responses.

History of the Maritime Silk Road

The MSR originated during the Han Dynasty and flourished until the Ming Dynasty. Essentially, it was a trading route for silk between China and South Asia, Europe and North Africa; thus covering almost entire Indian Ocean. It linked China to Europe, via Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The MSR starts

from the port city of Quanzhou in Fujian and extends around Nairobi, Kenya to Horns of Africa with a stop at Athens before it finally meets the land Silk Road in Venice (Tieuzzi, 2014). In contemporary times, the MSR would transit the Malacca Strait to India, Kenya and then north around the Horn of Africa, entering and using the Suez Canal to enter the Mediterranean before meeting the land-based Silk Road in Venice via the Adriatic. It can also be seen as effort by China to link Asia, Africa and Europe with China as the focal point. To further illustrate the route China has released a map on May 2014. Primarily, it was viewed as an alternative to the terrestrial Silk Road, or the "Silk Road Economic Belt".

Economic and Strategic implications of MSR

Despite the fact that China holds the highest proven oil reserves in the Asia-Pacific region, in 1993 China became a net importer of oil. Since the 1990 in order to control the level of pollution China had discouraged the usage of coal as a source of energy consumption. China's own extractable oil is only 2.6 tons per capita; this is 11 percent of the world average. On the contrary, the demand side has increased by thirty percent (Ji, 2007). The increasing dependence on the Sea Lanes through the IOR can be understood in terms of its increasing energy needs, 'Malacca Dilemma', Strategic Petroleum Reserves and the rising importance of the Indian Ocean per se.

Firstly, according to US Energy Information administration, China's reliance on foreign energy sources is expected to increase in the coming years; it consumed 10.7 million bbl/d of oil in 2013 which is approximately 4 per cent more than 2012. Needless, to mention, oil and gas forms a major part of China's economic growth and social stability too. Hu Jintao in 2007 stated that "to develop maritime issue is one of strategic tasks to boost our national economic development" and emphasised on the importance of developing China's ocean economy. For this securing the route through the Indian



Ocean is certainly the first preference. The increasing dependence on foreign oil and gas in turn has made the transportation of these resources as a critical issue.

Secondly, concern for China is that its eighty percent of oil currently passes through the Strait of Malacca. The Strait is a complete 'chokepoint' and in the Chinese Foreign Policy parlance it has already been termed as the "Malacca Dilemma". In November 2003, President Hu Jintao, called for adoption of new strategies to ease the seeming vulnerability. The narrow corridors represent areas of concentrated shipping that are vulnerable to transport interruption. In the same area China is sceptical of the US presence in the South China Sea region. All through the maritime passage China is finding ways to make a smooth transit. Thus China's interest in the IOR is primarily dominated by its search for securing energy resources and safeguarding the supply routes through the region particularly through the Strait of Malacca. The resources and energy security concerns are extremely critical for country's national security. Increasing insecurity of supply today accompanied by growing demand potentially leads to a dangerous security dilemma.

Thirdly, to increase its energy security and increase its Comprehensive National Power (CNP) China has taken steps towards building its Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) to ninety days by 2020 (Nikita 2009). China started building its four Strategic Petroleum Reserves on its coast to facilitate the transfer of crude oil from the ports. The reserves are located in Zhenhai, Zhejiang province; Daishan, Zhejiang province; Hauangdao, Hangdong province and Dalian, Liaoning province (Mulvenon). It needs to replenish its reserves constantly.

Fourthly, driving China's interest in the IOR is the growing importance of oceans per se and also the new maritime strategies of many developed countries, i.e., the US, Russia, Japan and Republic of Korea. Maritime developments in these countries have acted as a catalyst for driving China's own strategy in the IOR (Jiang Zhong, 2010).

Thus bearing in mind the strategic importance of the region Alfred T. Mahan has appropriately said, *whoever controls Indian Ocean dominates Asia*. The ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the twenty first century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters (Mahan, 1987). Needless to mention, the geopolitics of Indian Ocean Region will be indeed crucial in the making of 'Asian century'. The entire development can be seen in terms of larger China's Strategy of developing extensive transport networks roads, route, railway lines, ports and energy corridors. The MSR caters to China's Peripheral Diplomacy and Good Neighbourly Policy.

Soon after assuming the power at the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference (24-25 October 2013), Xi Jinping elaborated on China's strategic objective for this diplomacy. During the conference he mentioned that China should start connecting with the countries in the route to hasten the infrastructure connectivity to construct the MSR. As a part of the peripheral diplomacy strategy, China follows the guidelines of friendship and partnership with neighbours, sticking to the principle of helping stabilizing and enriching neighbours and highlighting the ideas of intimate, sincere, benefiting and tolerant. The peripheral diplomacy further suggests that "doing a good job on the peripheral diplomatic work is needed to realize the struggling objective of the 'two Centennials' and to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation." Notably, the two one -hundred year goals refer to the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2021-when China is expected to become a moderately prosperous socialist country" that is prosperous, strong, democratic, civilised and harmonious- and -the 100th anniversary of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2049.

China along with Sri Lanka has come up with the idea of 'along the way'. As per the idea, as route covers huge maritime area, it will bring economic prosperity along the countries it sails through. It will promote Asia economic integration and cooperation and promote economic development in the region. Needless to mention, China is stressing too much on the commercial nature of the MSR. Through MSR China is trying to strengthen the peripheral diplomacy so that there is less tensions in



its periphery. This will lead to optimum utilisation of their resources and energy would promote economic growth. A stable periphery will reassure China's Peace Rise/ Development. Like the ancient route the new MSR is expected to bring considerable profits to its neighbours. China's territorial maritime disputes with the Southeast Asian countries have already created complex circumstances for itself in building good relations in the region as an effort to build good neighbourly policy China is willing to initiate talks with Southeast Asian countries to sign a good-neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation. On the other side booming Chinese economy acts as an engine of growth for most Asian economies and is already the leading trade partner of most of the countries.

China is giving too much emphasis on its good neighbourly policy that is a vital component of 'Chinese Dream'. Overall, emphasising on these policies China is trying to create a stable and positive environment that is conducive to the sustenance 'China Rise/ Development. Even before Xi Jinping, his predecessor Hu Jintao had emphasised on the 'maritime destiny'.

Through its peripheral diplomacy and good neighbourly policy China is using its 'charm offensive' so that it can dispel the growing anxiousness among Asian countries relating to 'China Rise'. Secondly, it is yet another means to highlight 'Sino Centrism' emphasising on Chinese maritime history and inspiring its citizens for grand strategy (Holmes, 2010).

China has started emphasising on its ancient maritime expeditions in the IOR. During the Ming period (1405-1422) under the supervision of *Zheng He* China had sent seven naval expeditions. His expeditions made China the first country to maintain a naval squadron in the Indian Ocean. Chinese merchant vessels had already travelled through these routes but *Zheng He*'s seven voyages reflected an unprecedented use of maritime power by the Chinese emperor. It is depicting *Zheng He*'s expeditions to emphasise its benign presence in the region. Weaving his expedition into an intricate soft power diplomacy China is depicting the rapid growth of its maritime power as a new phase in its peaceful rise.

China's Objectives and Strategies

China's objective in proposing MSR is to counter the "String of Pearls" theory. In a study entitled *Energy Futures in Asia*, Booz Allen Hamilton, in a report written for Pentagon 2005, has stated, 'China is building strategic relationship along the sea lane from the Middle East to the South China Sea in a way that suggest defensive and offensive positioning to protect China's energy interests, but also to serve broad security objectives'. Second objective of China is to establish its images as a benevolent state and by making commercial investments it is trying to project its legitimate interests.

For the above mentioned objectives China has made economic investment in the countries which lie on the way of transportation of its energy resources; Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Kyaukkyu in Myanmar and Chittagong in Bangladesh. This is further exemplified by the fact that a report in the China Securities Journal provided concrete details of the proposed MSR, noting that a priority of the Indian Ocean based initiatives was port construction and free trade zones, along with infrastructure construction of countries along the route, including ports of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with China hoping to coordinate customs, quality supervision, e-commerce and other agencies to facilitate the scheme. The MSR will build on the Indian Ocean port initiatives.

It is evident that China's interest in helping the countries in the development of their port facilities is related to its need to ensure the security of its energy supplies from West Asia and Africa. The main drivers being refuelling, re-restocking, rest, recreation facilities for oil and gas tankers and naval ships deputed for anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden.

For this purpose off late, China is giving too much of emphasis on Sri Lanka by "calling it a reliable friend and important cooperation in South Asia in the IOR". Sri Lanka forms the eastern part of the MSR. Using its soft power diplomacy Xi Jinping has said that Sri Lanka is an important partner in building the twenty first century MSR and the AIIB projects. During Xi Jinping's visits to Sri Lanka in 2014



agreement was signed on the second Phase of the Hambantota Port Development Project. Agreements were also reached to enhance maritime cooperation and proceed with the construction of the Colombo Port City Project. The establishment of a Joint Committee on Coastal and Marine Cooperation to explore the feasibility of areas for cooperation which would include ocean observation, ecosystem protection, marine and coastal zone management, search for wreckage of *Zheng He's* fleets off the Coast of Sri Lanka, maritime security, combating piracy, search and rescue, and navigation security was also signed.

Xi Jinping made three South Asian tours in September 2014, amongst several other issues he emphasised on the MSR. The Map released by *Xinhua* clearly shows that the three countries of his visit form strategic point in the MSR. Since Gwadar was not in the route the President cancelled Pakistan from the itinerary (however there were other reasons also for the cancellation). During his visit to Maldives President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom positively, described the MSR initiative as a 'dynamic' endeavour by China that would bring it closer to its Asian neighbours. Maldives is keen to avail all the opportunities that come in during the process. The country is keen in the partnership and looks forward to offer its full support to the project and comes up with slogans such as 'Maritime Silk Route the Dream of the whole Asia'. The visit itself by the Chinese President after 42 years exemplifies the importance of Maldives in the project.

Another agenda of Xi Jinping visits was to invite India to be part of the MSR. However, India has not responded to the proposal yet. India has come up with a new proposal 'Project Mausam' to position itself at the macro and micro level. It would link cultural route and maritime route across the Indian Ocean. Basically, it would contribute to the dissemination of culture and civilisation across the Indian Ocean.

China's Naval Capability for Power Projection in the IOR?

The People's Liberation Army and Navy (PLA-N) was established for the purpose of coastal defence (*jinhai fangyu*). Changing naval threat perception

led to the revision of the doctrine to "active defence, offshore combat".

China's 'offshore defence strategy' which is a component of its 'active defence strategy' has a maritime component. It aligns with the China's 1982 naval maritime plan outlined by *Liu Huqing*. It specified three stages for China's maritime outreach. In the first stage, from 2000 to 2010, China was to establish control of waters within the first island chain that links Okinawa Prefecture, Taiwan and the Philippines. In the second stage, from 2010 to 2020, China would seek to establish control of waters within the second island chain that links the Ogasawara island chain, Guam and Indonesia. The final stage, from 2020 until 2040, China would put an end to US military dominance in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean using aircraft carrier as a key component of their military forces.

One major concept relevant for the discussion of PLAN is the concept of Near Sea and Far Sea. With the ambition of global Navy by 2020; China's naval strategy has undergone two major changes from near-coast defence (*jinnan fangyu*) strategy prior to the mid 1980s and then to the advancement of a "far-sea operations" (*yuanhai zouzhan*) strategy by the mid 2000s (Li, 2009).

The 2004 Defence White Papers talked about PLA-Navy in detail. It stated the PLA Navy is responsible for safeguarding China's maritime security and maintaining the sovereignty of its territorial seas along with its maritime rights and interests. The Navy has expanded the space and extended the depth for offshore defensive operations.

The eighteenth party congress work report for the first time defined China as a "maritime power" that will "firmly uphold its maritime rights and interests." The Chinese President Hu Jintao, during his keynote address at the National Party Congress in Beijing on 8 November 2012 called for "enhancing Chinese capacity for exploiting marine resources, resolutely safeguarding China marine rights and interests, and building China into a maritime power" (*Xinhua*, 2012). Further the Chinese media elaborated on the rise of China as a maritime power (Global Times, 2012). *People's Daily* commented that this



was the "Century of the Oceans", and the world powers were all making maritime rights and interests a top priority (Global Times, 2012).

China's naval modernization effort also includes reforms and improvements in maintenance and logistics, naval doctrine, personnel quality, education, and training, and exercises. Although China's naval modernization effort has substantially improved China's naval capabilities in recent years, observers believe China's navy continues to exhibit limitations or weaknesses in several areas. Apart from naval modernisation, emphasis was also given to the maritime infrastructure building. This was duly backed and supported by formulation of appropriate policy guidelines for providing the requisite directivity to these endeavours (Agnihotri, 2013). The most significant development of the PLAN over the past year has been the sea trials and commissioning of China's aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*. It was commissioned on 25 September 2012. Subsequently, the J-15 aircraft conducted its first takeoff and landings on 26 November 2012.

Additionally, China is building the Anti Access Area Denial strategy (A2AD) to counter the US power projection into the Western Pacific and the process has intensified with the US 'pivot' to Asia. It is mitigating the process of securing SLOC also through the 'Access Denial strategy'. The PLA Navy is in the forefront of China's A2/AD developments, having the greatest range and staying power within the PLA to prohibit third-party forces. In a near-term conflict, PLA Navy operations would likely begin in the offshore and coastal areas with attacks by coastal defence cruise missiles, maritime strike aircraft, and smaller combatants, and extend as far as the second island chain and Strait of Malacca using large surface ships and submarines. At the moment, China does not have the power projection capability in the IOR. Despite the fact that China is emphasising the commercial nature of the MSR one cannot ignore the fact that eventually MSR would help PLA-N to enhance its strategic reach and give it a foothold in the IOR.

Here it is pertinent to mention about the statement given by Prof. Sheng Dengli, "Whether the overseas military base has a proper name is not

important. What is important to contact the host countries which allow our Navy to take a rest."

Abovementioned, facts indicate that currently China is trying to acquire foothold in the IOR. It is close to striking a deal in Gulf of Aden and PLAN ships were deployed in 2008 for counter piracy operation. Today, Salalah in Oman is already a supply port for Chinese warship.

It can be argued that within the larger framework of MSR China is definitely drawing a blueprint in the IOR. Some of the ports along the IOR where China has already made investments and enjoys secure and good relations can be prospective 'place'. There are other factors such as locations, internal stability, and recreational opportunities for sailors that influence decisions on the PLA-N ships visits (Daniel, 2011). Notably, the type of investment that China is making in the IOR comes under the category of facilities. It is easy to upgrade the facility into a base but difficult to convert a base into a facility.

Already in 1985 China made a port call to South Asian ports in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. China and Pakistan held first ever joint exercise in 2003 and the second bilateral exercise was held in the Arabian Sea in November 2005. At the moment, China's actual military presence in the IOR is minimal that too in the form of Human Assistance and Disaster Relief, AMAN series exercises, the Peace Ark missions and recently in the MH370 search operations. The development of the entire network in the IOR has been projected by China as a natural outgrowth of an ongoing counter piracy mission; rescue and relief. These can be treated as indications of PLA-N strategies in these global waters.

China's increasing dependence on the IOR littoral is a response to its perceived vulnerability, given the logistics constraints it faces because of its distance from the IOR. It is not a South Asian power, but has been seeking to build up for itself a strong South Asian presence which could cater to its strategic needs in the long term. Today, China is looking beyond the MSR and in order to expand its trade and securing SLOCs it is strengthening infrastructural facilities in the Indian Ocean Region. Thus looking beyond MSR the larger Chinese strategies is to project a benign



view of China Rise/ Development worldwide. It is trying to use the MSR as a cover to legitimise its presence in the IOR. Much also depends on how much of magnanimity China will show towards its Southeast neighbours in solving the South China Sea dispute. It must dispel its policy of intimidation of smaller countries with which China has territorial and maritime disputes, which creates suspicion of Chinese motives in the region and invites US in the region. The SCS dispute will always remain a thorny issue in MSR. Notably, when the US declared that 'pivot to Asia' they substantiated it; however this may not be applied for China in the IOR.

With the US pivot to Asia the IOR will be most significant area in the global politics than it has ever been. China is following a policy wherein it is seeking cooperation with the IOR littorals and making gradual infrastructural investment in these countries thereby catering to its SLOC impasse. MSR is symptomatic of China's ambition in the IOR. However, they have not made it clear as to how they would implement it. It remains to be seen as to how China is going to implement the MSR.

Maritime Silk Road: Options for India

Clearly, MSR is an ambitious initiative. As a response, India has launched three related initiatives; Spice Route, Cotton Route and the Project Mausam. India intends to respond to MSR through the "Cotton Route" for the simple reason that silk was not the only product transported through the IOR. The route aims to firm up diplomatic and economic relations with the Indian Ocean Rim countries. India's first cotton export dates back to the 1st century. During those days Cotton used to be transported from present day Maharashtra to different parts of the world. There is evidence of archaeological discoveries from sites at the Red Sea ports of Berenike and Myos Hormos. Sources also claimed that cotton was exported to Central Asia via the ancient Silk Road (Choudhury, 2015). In addition, to the cotton yet another famous commodity transported through the route were the Indian Spices. The spices have often been cited as *raison d'être* for the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese and the English to sail to the Coromandel coast of Southern India (Mukherjee 2014).

The Project Mausam is a regional initiative by the government of India to revive its ancient maritime routes and cultural linkages with countries in the extended neighbourhood. PM Modi's visit to Indian Ocean countries- Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka was also in context of promotion of project Mausam. The visit "shows India is determined to adopt an asymmetrical strategy to secure a dominant position in the Indian Ocean through bolstering military and security cooperation with these island nations"

Other options for India in the region are to strengthen its bilateral relations with the IOR littorals and ASEAN countries. Andaman and Nicobar Island should be developed as a modern transport and shipping hub for the Bay of Bengal Basin and tourism should be encouraged so that it can help in generating revenue for the development of the Union territory.

On March 8 2016, Chinese foreign minister said, "ASEAN is also our preferred partner in maritime cooperation. We want to explore the possibility of establishing a South China Sea littoral states cooperation mechanism, and work together to maintain and build our common home, the South China Sea" (Wang 2016). China has shown very adamant behaviour on the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Hague award on the China-Philippines territorial dispute. India noted the award and supports the freedom of navigation and the UNCLOS in the region (MEA, 2016). As a part of its 'Act East Policy', India should also start being active in the South China Sea region and try to trace her historical and cultural linkages in the region. Given the geopolitics in the region it can no longer remain India's secondary area of interest. This region is very important for India as almost 55 per cent of trade pass through this region.

Notably, any development in MSR is bound to affect India as it criss-crosses through India's zone of maritime interest. India needs to adopt a very well calibrated policy in order to deal with the emerging security architecture in the region.

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Indian Response to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR)

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At present two powers in Asia India and China are competing to capture the maximum advantage by expanding their networking with the adjoining as well far located countries. There are several factors which have promoted such enthusiasm but the major factors driving their activism is grounded in their search for better markets and the energy resources and related economic-political gains which may help them to place in a better stead at the global level.

China initiated this activism and India was not much behind. China initiated the One Belt One Road initiative, India started the Mausam Project and the Spice routes project; albeit the initiatives of both the countries at the outset appear to be different but the close scrutiny reveals that their major aim is similar; which relates to enhance the economic cooperation with the new partners and to serve their interests.

Indian response to One Belt One Road

India realized that One Belt One Road was a pragmatic policy framework of China. Its concept emerged when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Central Asia and Southeast Asia in September and October of 2013, he raised the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road), which have attracted close attention from all over the world. At the China-ASEAN Expo in 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the need to build the Maritime Silk Road oriented toward ASEAN, and to create strategic propellers for hinterland development. Accelerating the building of the Belt and Road can help promote the economic prosperity of the countries along the Belt and Road and regional economic cooperation, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations, and promote world peace and

development. It is a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world. (Action Plan, 2016)

The project was having multipurpose objectives and goals. Primarily the Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multilayered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries (and) the initiative is open for cooperation. It covers, but is not limited to, the area of the ancient Silk Road. It is open to all countries, and international and regional organizations for engagement, so that the results of the concerted efforts will benefit wider areas. (Action Plan, 2016) the initiative was to connect the different countries in functional manner. At the operational level the OBOR's most publicised segment is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which directly impacts India and was announced by President Xi Jinping in Islamabad in April 2015 and is valued by Pakistani analysts at \$46 billion. Another section was operationalised in May 2015 when Xi committed \$15.7 billion in Belarus and concluded other agreements during visits to Kazakhstan and Russia. The CPEC is an example of the diplomatic and military support that China plans for OBOR. With the CPEC, Beijing overtly supported Pakistan's territorial claims and dispelled the ambiguity it had maintained for over six decades on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. (Jayadeva Ranade, 2016)

The Project Mausam

India having analyzed the full potential of the project decided to match it and two projects were envisaged viz. the Mausam and the Spice Routes. These were conceptualized at the external affairs level as a policy to integrate the India with the other stream of



countries which had linkages with India in any sphere including the climate relationship or linkages in the area of spice trade. These were innovative ideas as such policy frameworks were never been conceptualized before. These policy decisions provided a workable plan to push Indian efforts for better relationship with those countries which had cultural and trade relations with India. Though this was not as wide as the China had planned because Chinese plan was highly expanded as the proposed "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) is an approximately US\$ 1.4 trillion project. China claims to be willing to make a huge financial commitment upwards of US\$ 300 billion in infrastructure financing for the project in the coming years, though some multilateral and bilateral pledges may overlap. Underscoring China's commitment, the official China Daily reported on May 28, 2015 that Beijing plans to invest US\$ 900 billion. The OBOR is planned to be completed over 35 years, in time for the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China in 2049. (Jayadeva Ranade, 2016) Still India decided to place its initiative in comprehensive ways. The 'Mausam' project envisages the re-establishment of India's ancient maritime routes with its traditional trade partners along the Indian Ocean. The 'Spice Route of India', visualises the India-centered linkup of historic sea routes in Asia,

Europe and Africa. (Aneja, 2015)

Thus Project Mausam Is an exciting, multi disciplinary trans-national project that tries to rekindle long lost ties across the Indian Ocean Littoral and forges new avenues of cooperation and exchange between India and states of the Indian Ocean. Launched by India in partnership with Member States, Mausam will enable a significant step in recording and commemorating this important phase of world history from the African, Arab and Asian world perceptive. (Bhaswati Mukherjee,2014) The project has multidimensional approach as it aims to serve the wider interests with the help of rekindling the cultural relations. The endeavour of Project 'Mausam' is to position itself at two levels: at the macro level it aims to re-connect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean world, which would lead to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns; while at the micro level the focus is on

understanding national cultures in their regional maritime milieu.

The central themes that hold Project 'Mausam' together are those of cultural routes and maritime landscapes that not only linked different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral, but also connected the coastal centres to their hinterlands. More importantly shared knowledge systems and ideas spread along these routes and impacted both coastal centres, and also large parts of the environs. (Project Information, 2016)

Project spice routes

As far as the spice routes are concerned, there is emphasis to reawaken the forgotten relations of India with those countries with which it had close spices related trade contacts. This approach was aimed to revitalize the relations in order to serve the wider interests which have expanded from economic cooperation to the political cooperation. The present century has laid emphasis on the economic relations among the nation states but at the deep level these countries gradually also incorporates the political contacts which proves quite useful in due course of the time. The spice routes and Mausam project are also not exceptions to these realistic developments in the international politics.

From ancient times, as early as the 3rd millennium BC, fishermen, sailors and merchants travelled the waters of the Indian Ocean linking the world's earliest civilization from Africa to East Asia in a complex web of relationship. The commodities exchanged included gems, metals, medicines and most importantly spices. In fact spices have often been cited as *raison d'être* for the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese and the English to sail to the Coromandal coast of Southern India in search of these valued condiments, essential for preservation and flavouring of food and also used in ritual practices. For this reason, this coast line became known as the Spice Coast. (Bhaswati Mukherjee,2014) In this project the role of Kerala which is spice capital of India has been widely recognized. In this respect the noteworthy point is that an important initiative of the State Government of Kerala, supported by the Government of India is the ongoing effort to revive the two millennia Spice Route. Besides re-establishing Kerala's maritime



trade relations with 31 countries associated with the ancient spice route, the project seeks to rekindle interest among modern travellers to this ancient maritime route which was responsible for bringing travellers across the world in ancient times to India. It would result in the revival of cultural, historical and archeological exchanges and would also boost tourism across Southern India but particularly in Kerala. (Bhaswati Mukherjee, 2014) Spice route project is also a component of India's soft power by which it wants to restart the trade routes which were operational in the ancient time and India was leader in that age but in the modern time these have been abandoned though some remnants still exist as India is still major supplier of the spices to the MENA areas. These relationships are unique in the sense that these show that ancient relations are still viable to be expanded to a higher level. These relations may also push for the strong political relations between India and its partners in the region. It is expected that there are several other countries which may be associated with spice export diplomacy and the close political relations with these countries may be established.

Chinese interests and the doubts

These two projects of India have been recognized by China and it has expressed its desire that it wants to participate in the India initiated projects. Chinese officials have maintained that China is ready to work with South Asian countries, including India, Sri Lanka, to strengthen policy communication, identify the meeting point of their development strategies, explore effective ways of mutually beneficial cooperation and common benefit of the region, countries and the people (Aneja, 2015) but it has a catch which India is well aware of. In fact the recent transformation of China as a major arms exporter has alerted India and the other powers at the global level. There are doubts about the true Chinese intentions about its integration of its Maritime Silk Routes (MSR) with the Indian Projects. The doubts emerged when it was analyzed that China after the successful implementation of the project which may allow flooding of its goods in the linked countries as well the more adverse impacts may include China's efforts to enlarge its arms trade which has already expanded in the recent times. MSR could also be used to shift low-end Chinese defence industry to the huge regional markets, thereby facilitating arms exports to the regional countries.

This driver transcends 'economics', and goes into the domain of Beijing's 'national-strategic' objective to create a security dependence of the regional countries upon China. As MSR enables China's regional influence to facilitate its arms exports, Chinese-origin hardware being operated by IOR countries would accrue strong military strategic dividends for China in terms of the sustenance of its naval forces in the Indian Ocean through overseas technical and ordnance support, virtually akin to 'overseas bases'. (Sahuja and Chan, 2016)

The reality is that Chinese interests in North East extend beyond the trade interests. China has not performed with trust in this region when India attempts to identify its contribution in the growth of peace in the region. China has looked to the area with its national interests. Hence as far as 'Belt and Road' initiative of China is concerned, India has been part of the initiative with the signing of the BCIM — EC. The work is in progress. As India's Look East Policy has been widening in scope, the BCIM- EC is another area where the policy could be integrated, especially when we are thinking of developing landlocked and underdeveloped northeast region of India. We certainly need to take a leaf out of China's experience as to how it has developed and connected its south-western and southern states to ASEAN. Is New Delhi ready to forgo its sensitivities in Northeast in turn of economic development of the region? Needless to say, the Chinese arms supply to the insurgents need to be tackled sternly and China need to do much more in this front. (Deepak, 2016)

Indian projects and soft power

Indian projects have been conceptualized with certain objectives which span from cultural integration to the economic cooperation. If the projects are looked as only the representative of the cultural integration then these are approached with the limited viewpoint. The projects at the fundamental level are cultural but at the pragmatic level are aimed to serve the wider economic interests. These have been presented as the part of the soft power diplomacy with the aims to fulfill the broad objectives of enhancing the politico-economic interests. India has identified 39 countries under the Project Mausam which has a typical cultural orientation. Its breadth is quite extensive and with the help of ancient cultural contacts the present



objective of economic integration can be initiated albeit it may not be in the stated list of cooperation at present but it is the final end point of the Mausam projects due to the pressing economic needs of the nation states including India. This project aims to explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world' – collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean – extending from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka to the Southeast Asian archipelago. The project will promote research on themes related to the study of Maritime Routes through international scientific seminars and meetings and by adopting a multidisciplinary approach. It will encourage the production of specialized works, as well as publications for the general public with an attempt at promoting a broader understanding of the concept of a common heritage and multiple identities. (Project Information, 2016) At outset the project is focused on the common roots, shared heritage and the independent still linked existential identities. This is not the only objective of the Mausam, in fact this is edifice on which the next phase of the project may be launched which relates to the economic cooperation among the nation states which fall within the periphery of the project Mausam. The project is expression of the soft power at the global level, a successful foreign policy tool of India. The notion of "soft power," associated with the work of Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye, is defined, simply, as "the ability to attract people to our side without coercion." The phrase was first used by Nye in an article published in 1990 in the journal Foreign Policy, where he contrasted this "co-optive power," which "occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants," to "the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants". "Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power," Nye argued. "If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow". (Thussu, 2013) Project Mausam is closely integrated with the soft power of the country. As it is well evidenced that cultural ties with other countries often help shape a country's foreign policy. Countries that share common values, beliefs, attitudes, and historical experiences tend to develop close relationships. These

relationships are often cemented by family ties, cultural activities, and frequent interaction between people from the various countries. (Payne and Nassar, 2015)

Projects and the fulfillment economic interests

This emphasis in the closer relations with the help of cultural edifice may lead to the economic benefits. This integration is not an institutional at present but may take a strong structure in the years to come. A case study of the Mausam project can be made where the climatic relationships have been closely linked to the cultural relationships. The final objective has been aimed to move in closer economic relationships with strengthened political relationships. Project Mausam has relevance in this respect. As for illustration some efforts have been made in this respect in positive manner by India to engage the East African countries. Supporting India's Trade Preferences for Africa' (SITA) is one such collaborative project. India is well-positioned as a partner to improve the productive and export capacities of African partner countries. With the growing importance of South-South cooperation, India's expertise can be leveraged to build trade capacities in African partner countries through the sharing of knowledge, technology and lessons learnt. In this context, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's Department for International Development (DFID) mandated the International Trade Centre (ITC) to design and implement a project, called 'Supporting India's Trade Preferences for Africa' (SITA). On 9 March 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between DFID and ITC, marking the start of the project. The project responds to the challenges that selected East African countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania – face in increasing and diversifying exports. It also addresses trade priorities of the beneficiary countries so they can achieve sustainable development. (Information SITA, 2016)

This development is likely to make strong impact on the East African economy. East African businesses are set to trade more with India by learning how to take advantage of the country's duty-free market access scheme, facilitated by the Supporting India's Trade Preferences for Africa (SITA) project of the International Trade Centre (ITC). Following



an amendment made two years ago in India's Duty-Free Trade Preference (DFTP) scheme, least developed countries (LDCs) will receive preferential zero-duty access on 98 percent of the Indian tariff lines. It means goods exported from LDCs should have a competitive edge when entering the Indian market. As for illustration further investments from India would help Tanzania make better use of the scheme. (IANS, 2014)

India has also decided to focus the Arabian Peninsula with the policy framework of the Project Mausam. Though it aims to integrate the relations on the concept of the soft power but its emphasis in long term will focus on the economic cooperation. Saudi Arabia is leading country of the peninsula and India though not having very close contracts at the political level targeted it. The emphasis on the economic relations was emphasized at the political level.

The new government has devised a new policy framework about the region. Saudi Arabia and India have been trade partners since millennia. Arab traders exchanged goods and commodities between the Arabian Peninsula and India and also worked as intermediaries between the Indian and the European markets. They took Indian spices and agricultural products from India to the Hormuz and deeper inside the Gulf coast; from there, they took the commodities to the hinterland of the desert by camel caravans. Indian goods reached as far as Damascus and the Kuwaiti coast. Some Arab tribes, such as the Shammars, were actively providing security to the trading caravans passing through their territories. This practice continued till the British themselves came as a power in the region, particularly on the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula. (Hussain, 2016) The focus on the region started with Saudi Arabia but other nation states were also focused and in 2004 Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation between India and member states of the cooperation council for the Arab States of the Gulf took place signaling the India's emphasis on the region. After the adoption of Mausam the cultural links have been rediscovered and Indian approach to the region is largely governed by the application of soft power and then to reap the benefits which may be centered on the economic then on political spheres. Saudi Arabia is the 5th largest market in the world for Indian exports

and is destination of 3.6% of India's global exports. (MEA, 2016) Equally true is that Saudi Arabia is 47th largest investor in India which is not a good rank in any terms; hence need is to attract the investments from the region. Project Mausam may help to converge their interests.

This is visible by the political interaction with the region. Indian Prime Minister visited UAE, Saudi Arabia and India participated with focused approach in the Arab League Forum meet in which India spoke in support of Palestinian cause without any hesitation. There is also possibility of the investment by UAE in India though this is a sluggish in progress due to certain reservations of the UAE. When on 24 January 2016, the Manama Declaration was adopted it also emphasized the cultural relations in emphatic terms. The declaration stated the two sides recalled the historic and civilizational ties that exist between the Arab World and India and underlined the contribution of the commercial and cultural ties in binding the two sides together. They hailed the strong foundation, great potential and wide-ranging prospects for the Arab-Indian Co-operation and the role this Forum can play to advance Arab-India relations towards capacious horizons. (Manama declaration, 2016) The declaration follows the major elements of the soft power diplomacy of the country. The project has taken several innovative diplomatic policy assignments which have exhibited the positive results. The project encourages the production of specialized works, as well as publications for the general public with an attempt at promoting a broader understanding of the concept of a common heritage and multiple identities. An objective of the project is to prepare a dossier for trans-national nomination as World Heritage. The time of commencement and completion of the Project Mausam as per SFC Memorandum is April 2015 and March 2017 respectively. Total cost of the project as per SFC approval is Rs. 150, 244, 502/- A joint Sail Voyage by Indian Navy Sail Training Ship Tarangini and Royal Navy of Oman Sail Training Ship Shabab Oman was conducted from 24 November to 03 December 2015 to commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relationship between Oman and India and as an event under 'Project Mausam'.

These contacts have been targeted under the auspices of the Project Mausam but it is much likely



that such closer relationships will ultimately lead to the integrated economic relations between India and the identified 39 countries. The case study of the Arabian Peninsula clearly exhibit that India is on right track and the project may evolve as a viable platform of integration not only with the Arabian Peninsula but also with the east African and the other remaining countries.

Conclusion

Indian response to China's One Belt One Road is well structured and is largely governed by the soft power approach. Chinese policy is solely dependent upon the economic interests whereas the India policy starts with soft power diplomacy but is also aimed to reach to develop the close economic-political relationships with the targeted countries. Indian response is more practical and is based on the understanding the needs of the concerned countries. The start has been made with simple efforts as the maritime cooperation, interaction at the trade discussion level. The response is not as aggressive as is in the case of China which has hidden interest as its establishment of economic corridor with Pakistan has larger interests than only the economic interests. Chinese objectives are wider and wrapped in the economic blanket but Indian policy framework is aimed for economic goals with soft power approach.

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Maritime Security, Silk Road and India: Issues and Dimensions

Abhishek Pratap Singh & Diwaker Patel

The concern for security has been an important theme in global politics and diplomacy. It has become an ubiquitous feature for contemporary decision making and its implications. The term was a major component and part of cold war politics. It was the concern for security which formed the very basis of cold war also leading to its manifestation in forming of political and military alliances. But the trajectory of international politics has led to the changing nature and scope of security which in the past was largely understood in purely conventional terms. The end of cold war became the turning point in this direction and has marked this growing trend which strives for understanding the concept of security in broader terms. The traditional concerns of strategists increasingly became subsumed during the 1990s. The fading of old idea of collective security gave birth to new concepts like common, cooperative and comprehensive security compelling major powers to get involved in disseminating these concepts through bilateral and multilateral instruments.¹ This process unfolded in theorizing security studies and its analysis in relation to newly emerging areas of security concern and it led to development of understanding the concept of "maritime security" as major component in security studies.

Understanding Maritime Security

The scholarship in international relations and security studies remains largely disagreed on the uniform meaning and definition of maritime security. Although there may be some broad agreements on parameters of maritime security but there is still a lack of consensus on its nature, scope and basic constituents. For instance, the critical academic debate is still primarily focused on the locating maritime security whether within broader framework of security studies or as an independent academic discourse. On the one hand, maritime security could be seen to reflect the wider conceptual debate on security. It thus might be viewed simply as an another dimension

of security, although the security studies literature does not reflect that, perhaps surprisingly, maritime security is never identified as an independent issue sector.² On the other hand, each dimension of security can be applied to maritime sphere considering the fact of each possessing maritime elements. The existing literature on maritime security has tended to focus on the characteristics of the sea and its varied uses, and the threats posed to those uses.³

Till has placed his analysis of maritime security within the larger framework of restoring "good order at sea", where by sea as a resource, as a medium for trade and information exchange, and as an environment, faces "risks and threats to the good order on which their continued contribution to human development depends."⁴ The study of Dalhousie University defined maritime security as "a process of maintaining stability in the international system on, over, under and from the sea". The Canadian study group identified four basic principles which govern the use of the oceans in their understanding of maritime security. It stands as like recognition of ocean as a source of wealth, as a life support system, a medium of trade and communication, and as a tradition that who use oceans should do so in peace and security.⁵

The new U.S. Maritime strategy views maritime security in the following terms as specified in U.S. National Strategy for Maritime Security. "The creation and maintenance of security at sea is essential to mitigating threats short of war, including piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities. Countering these irregular and transnational threats protects our homeland, enhances global stability, and secures freedom of navigation for the benefit of all nations".⁶

Maritime security is best achieved by blending public and private maritime security activities



on a global scale into an integrated effort that addresses all maritime threats. The broad principles guiding U.S. Maritime Strategy rest on three basic principles namely, preserving the freedom of the seas, to facilitate and defend shipping based commerce and lastly facilitating the movement of desirable goods and people across the borders, while screening out dangerous people and material.

One fundamental concept which implicitly underpins the notion of maritime security in above definitions is the peaceful uses of the oceans. It largely attributes to an equitable and stable order at oceans that governs all forms of human activity. However, the critical problem with these ideologically charged and normative understanding of maritime security is that they suffer from any kind of enforcement mechanism to concrete these norms. Similarly, the realist globalist world order has enough potential to cast its effect on fair application of these norms. Maritime security, if viewed in such terms, would equate to nothing more than an essentially meaningless programme of political idealism. The encompassing feature of maritime security on varied areas necessitates its conceptualization in larger framework so as to bring out its clear understanding.

Different Approaches to Maritime Security-
Maritime security cannot be limited to peaceful use of sea resources because it is a condition characterized by freedom from danger arising in or from the sea. It stands some where in between peaceful uses of oceans and legitimate security concerns and measures being adopted by state.

According to theoretical conception which has been put forward by environmentalists. They argue that with in the concept of maritime security the most critical component must be of ensuring *ocean security*, in the sense that ocean itself should be the security objective of maritime politics and needs to be "secured" for its own sake. This view places protection of the marine environment and conservation of both living and non living marine resources at the forefront of maritime security concerns.⁷ This argument has an strong ecological bias, based on an understanding of the importance of a healthy ocean environment. This argument finds support even in U.S. National Strategy for Maritime

Security, which lays heavy emphasis towards counter terrorism in the maritime domain, but lists its strategic objectives the safeguarding of the sea itself and countering illegal resource exploitation.⁸ This argument reflects a shift in thinking from the earlier notion of freedom of seas to freedom of seas.

Another framework conceptualizing maritime security is from the point of *ocean governance* approach. It places political and legal framework that sets the context for ocean management.⁹ The very concept of promoting "stable maritime regimes" lies at the heart of this idea which also founds place in UNCLOS principles. But in the absence of any kind of efficient global regulatory body which can oversight ocean governance, the idea of establishing such regime stands gloomy. However, even if it comes to existence it may very well serve as a means of resolving conflicts over access to and enjoyment of benefits of ocean resources. The idea has already took the form particularly in Asia-Pacific region, with a number of institutions have been involved with promoting regional ocean governance including Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific(CSCAP), Asian Regional Forum (ARF), Japan's Ocean Policy Research Foundation (JOPRF), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Seoul Oceans Declaration and also Bali Plan of Action.

The main problem with idea of ocean governance is with those who belief that sound management of the oceans in and of itself would be sufficient to ensure conditions of peace and stability at sea.¹⁰

The other related dimension of maritime security demands effective protection and *conservation of maritime resources* by coastal states under their stringent maritime jurisdiction. The principle is related to maritime protection within borders of sovereign nation states. The post UNCLOS period witnessed a growing desire among coastal states to claim increasing and exclusive jurisdiction over their adjacent areas. The safeguarding of marine resources under national jurisdiction has thus been an important driver of maritime border protection measures by coastal states and some times it also causes tension with



adjacent state resulting into raising mutual maritime security concern.

The realist approach to maritime security finds its clear manifestation in its critical dimension of performing *military activities at seas* for the sake of maritime security. It emphasizes on high level of arms variability at seas for the sake of maritime security. The approach imbues in it a very concern for building advanced level of naval weaponry to ensure maritime security. It tries to justify militarization as a valid ground for it. However, this has not gone well in the international discourses. The approach has been severely criticized for its uniform position on achieving maritime security from military point of view mostly in unilateral terms. It was also noticed in the report of Independent World Commission on the Oceans (ICWO) which explicitly promoted demilitarization, particularly the reduction and eventual elimination of sea based nuclear weapons.¹¹ It can be concluded that multi-dimensional character and nature of maritime security and its inherent dynamics makes it hard to define it in exact concrete terms to the acceptance of everyone. However, the concept largely includes safety and security of shipping, ports, maritime trade, maritime resources and off-shore installations, especially from threats of piracy, terrorism and also natural disasters under the global monitoring based on establishment of independent maritime security regime.

Backgrounder to New Maritime Silk Route-

The concept of the 'New Silk Road' has been widely debated in the last few years by policy makers, think-tanks and universities in the US and Asia. There are two versions of this proposed route—a US version and a Chinese one. The US version of the 'New Silk Road' project aims at linking South Asia to Central Asia via Afghanistan. The project envisages the creation of a transcontinental trading network linking Afghanistan, Central Asia and Europe. The Chinese version of the 'New Silk Road' is quite different from the US version. It is based on the creation of three main corridors across the Eurasian continent, called the Eurasian Land Bridge, which will serve as the 'main artery' from which offshoots consisting of railways, highways and pipelines will be built. The first one is the existing Trans-Siberian Railway running from Vladivostok in eastern Russia to Moscow and

onwards to Western Europe and Rotterdam; the second runs from Lianyungang port in eastern China through Kazakhstan in Central Asia and on to Rotterdam; and the third runs from Pearl River Delta in southeast China through South Asia to Rotterdam.¹²

The Maritime Silk Road (MSR) idea is part of this wider attempt by China to construct multiple lines of communication to its economic heartland in eastern China since the early 2000s. The underlying aim of such a geo-strategy is to also develop inner Chinese provinces and shape China's regional periphery by exercising economic, political and cultural influence. Multilateral bodies like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have been forcefully pitching for a 'Silk Road' akin to the earlier one. The ADB promoted the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) initiative, which was established in 1997. The program had the key aim of giving a fillip to economic cooperation among countries in Central Asia, as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan and notably the People's Republic of China (PRC). The MSR is an attempt to promote economic cooperation and connectivity by reviving the ancient maritime Silk Road trading route. To this end, China has pledged US\$40 billion in the Silk Road Fund to develop infrastructure along the route. The main aim of China's One Belt, One Road initiative is to develop its landlocked western provinces and enable them to access the markets of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, thus shaping China's regional periphery by exercising economic, cultural and political influence.

India and New Maritime Silk Route-

India was formally invited to join the MSR at the 17th round of Special Representatives (SRs) Talks in New Delhi in February 2014. The Indian response was lukewarm, and certainly not one of immediate acceptance. However, the first high level dignitary to comment specifically on the 'New Silk Road' was External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna who, at a meeting of foreign ministers held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011, said that the project would support the 'building blocks of our vision for Afghanistan as a hub linking Central and South Asia through pipelines, trade and transit routes for the common good of the people of our region and the world'¹³ So far, India has been



reticent in its response primarily owing to a lack of clarity on the 'how' and 'what' of China's plans, and whether the MSR has a geo-economic rationale or a more security-oriented approach. Chinese officials themselves have only offered general contours of the MSR, 'such as boosting regional maritime connectivity, and cooperation on disaster mitigation and fisheries development conceptually, the up gradation of maritime connectivity between the Indo-Pacific and extending it further to East Africa and onto the Mediterranean is consistent with India's own broader maritime economic vision.'¹⁴ During the visit by India's Vice President, Hamid Ansari, in his recent China visit: 'In the discussions in the last two days the subject has been mentioned. We have asked for more details to be able to study the proposal in all its fullness. In Feb 2014 during the Special Representatives Talks in New Delhi, when the Indian representative had declined any comment or opinion on the issue.

"When China initiated the MSR in 2013, then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his national security advisor Shivshankar Menon expressed support and interest. But current Prime Minister Narendra Modi changed India's attitude toward MSR after he came into power," the article written by Liu Zongyi, a fellow of state-run Shanghai Institutes for International Studies said.¹⁵ External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during her visit to Beijing last year, said India will not give a blanket endorsement to the MSR project but support where the synergies of the two countries meet. Modi's visit to three Indian Ocean countries in March 2015 shows that India is determined to adopt an asymmetrical strategy to secure a dominant position in the Indian Ocean through bolstering military and security cooperation with these island nations. Also India enforced its military and strategic coordination with the US, Japan and some Southeast Asian countries which have islands disputes with China in the South China Sea. There are multiple views over India's approach towards Silk route.

According to this view, MSR should be understood as part of a rising China's attempt to 'reorder Asia' and 'undermine American alliances' in the region. China is attempting to create trade and economic relationships with Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries through trade, port and continental land bridges to countervail the United States (US) influence and to draw the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) littorals within its sphere of influence. The fact that China is promoting two corridors (continental and MSR) as part of its evolving regional Geo-strategy and that 'India lies on both the Maritime Silk Route and the Southern Silk Route'¹⁶ poses opportunities and challenges for India.

On the other hand it has been argued that, although the continental project, the Silk Road Economic Belt, China is planning to boost development in the economies of its western provinces and administrative regions. The launch of the project will provide new export markets for Chinese goods and capital. In the above backdrop, 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. Such contradictions imply that India would take a hard look at the evolution of the MSR proposal since it cannot afford to be excluded from the emergence of a new geo-economic trend in Asia's political economy. Some analysts argue that India can, simultaneously, conceptualize other strategic options with Japan and ASEAN to present alternative regional initiatives.

Indian Concerns to New Silk Route

Although the MSR is couched as an economic initiative, to the maritime analyst, it has deeper, particularly security, implications. What troubles Indian strategists is the fact that China's long-term ambition of establishing permanency of presence is being aided by the structure of 'outposts' from Myanmar to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, Sudan, Tanzania, Seychelles, Mozambique, and a couple of others in the pipeline. Another question posed is whether the MSR is part of China's attempt to neutralize its 'Malacca Dilemma'. In 2003, Hu Jintao had publicly expressed the 'Malacca Dilemma', which describes the vulnerable SLOCs crucial to China's trade and their potential to



interdiction from another state.¹⁶ There are also concerns over the role of Pakistan's and its strained relationship with one neighbour (Afghanistan) and an unpredictable one with the other (India) raise serious questions about it being a committed stakeholder in the project. Moreover, the relationship between the Central Asian countries is itself shaky, with some of them embroiled in political and economic conflicts. Relations between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are strained and trade agreements in the region are fragile, with politics inevitably taking precedence over economics. This point is well borne out by the fact that the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has been closed for 18 months, following last summer's violence in southern Kyrgyzstan.¹⁷ Bilateral tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have taken their toll on the economic relations between both countries.

If the MSR leads to important neighbours like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka drifting into the Chinese orbit, it would represent a serious setback to India's traditional conception of the subcontinent as a privileged sphere. Because nearly every Indian neighbour in the IOR littoral already has strong economic ties with mainland China, the perception is that these smaller states are finding it difficult to resist internalizing Chinese norms for Asian security. Since 2006, China-South Asia trade has increased by 280 per cent to US\$ 100 billion.¹⁸ Another perception is that South Asian states have already discovered the option and ability to play the 'China card', that is, exploit Sino-Indian mistrust to advance their national and developmental objectives. For, India's neighbours, the MSR is perhaps another potential opportunity to play the 'China card' in their strategic bargaining with India.¹⁹ Another view is that China will pursue both continental and maritimelines of communication. If the MSR loses traction or is delayed, the land corridor to Gwadar can become an important commercial hub for both China and Pakistan. Gwadar's proximity to the Persian Gulf and its ability to support both naval and commercial activity in the Arabian Sea makes this Silk Road too attractive to be dismissed. Moreover, since the MSR will probably be a long-drawn process, India will need to scale up its own investment in its immediate neighbourhood in precisely those capacities where China is investing (ports, logistics, shipbuilding) to dissuade India's

neighbours such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka from becoming Chinese 'political outposts'. From the neoliberal interdependence perspective, the MSR resonates as an inevitable trend of globalization and the rise of new economic centers of power in Asia. In the 'complex and interdependent nature of modern geo-economics and global business', the idea of zero-sum games is a passe²⁰. Another qualified endorsement is that the MSR 'can be used to our benefit for greater bilateral and regional cooperation. But we also need to ensure that our presence is also made sufficiently effective along these routes so that we retain the ability to influence any major decisions'²¹

Conclusion

To quote *Sir Julian Corbett*, the real point of sea power is not so much what happens at sea, but how that influences the outcome of events on land.²² The MSR's essential rationale is the leveraging of Chinese soft-power. The aim apparently is to shore-up China's image as a benevolent state. Beijing's would also conceivably use the project's commercial investments to establish its legitimate interests in the Indian Ocean.²³ And while China can be expected to do everything in its power to force region states to join the project - including offering economic aid to potential partners - the bottom-line for it will be to make an offer to India that is hard to refuse. India's appreciation of the MSR must be based on an objective appraisal of these new realities. Even assuming the project delivers on its economic promise, it could well turn out to be detrimental to India's geopolitical interests in the IOR. As Beijing becomes more involved in building infrastructure in the Indian Ocean, it will play a larger part in the security and governance of the IOR, which could pose a challenge to India's stature as a 'security provider' in the region and also adversely affecting New Delhi's strategic purchase in its primary area of interest. Saying 'yes' to the MSR will, however, serve as an Indian endorsement of China's supposed 'benign' motivations in the IOR. Worse, as informed voices point out, joining the project will not in any way serve to allay India's original concerns about a 'string of pearls' in the Indian Ocean.

Chinese investors announced 315 greenfield investments with a combined value of \$75.9bn across



Belt and Road countries in the 18 months to June 2016, twice as much as in the previous 18 months, according to figures from greenfield investment monitor fDI markets. The Shenzhen Yantian Port Group hit the headlines in May when it teamed up with Indonesia's Lippo Cikarang to development a 190tn rupiah (\$14.5bn) industrial zone in West Java, a key outpost along the maritime leg of the Belt and Road initiative looping around Southeast Asia and on to the Indian Ocean all the way to Europe through the Suez Canal. At the same time, "made in China" thermal power plants are springing up all over the Eurasian continent, from Indonesia to the Middle East. However, China's military-strategic intent behind the MSR cannot be discounted. The unprecedented docking of a PLA Navy submarine at Colombo port in September 2014 is a bellwether for future developments in the Indian Ocean. China is likely to seek naval access to the maritime infrastructure that it is helping to create, thereby increasing its strategic presence in India's backyard. The PLA Navy could seek replenishment facilities in Chittagong, Colombo, Gwadar and Hambantota. Hence, it is yet to be seen how India needs to be torn between two competing ideas. The one is of working together with China in the maritime domain, and the other is the long-standing goal of limiting Beijing's influence in the Indian Ocean.

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China's Silk Road in Central Asia and Pakistan: An Emerging Rivalry between India and China

Mudassir Mohiud Din Wani

China is building the world's greatest ever undertaken economic development and construction project: One Belt One Road (OBOR) or which is being also called The New Silk Road. The project aims at no less than a revolutionary change in the economic map of the world. It is also seen by many as the first shot in a battle between east and west for dominance over the Eurasian sub-continent. Beginning with the marvelous tales of Marco Polo's travels across Eurasia to China, the Silk Road has never actually ceased. Now, the ancient cities Samarkand, Baku, Tashkent, and Bukhara are once again attracting the world's attention.

Xi Jinping officially proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt (connecting China and Europe overland) in September 2013 during a speech in Kazakhstan, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (linking Asia, Africa and Europe via sea routes) during a speech in Indonesia, also in 2013. As part of the financing of the plan, in 2014, the Chinese leader also announced the launch of an Asian International Infrastructure Bank (AIIB), providing seed funding for the project, with an initial Chinese contribution of \$47 billion. The ambitious vision is to resurrect the ancient Silk Road as a modern transit, trade, and economic corridor that runs from Shanghai to Berlin.

Buttressing this effort, China plans on injecting at least \$62 billion into three banks to support the New Silk Road. The China Development Bank (CDB) will receive \$32 billion, the Export Import Bank of China (EXIM) will take on \$30 billion, and the Chinese government will also pump additional capital into the Agricultural Development Bank of China (ADB). Chinese enterprises invested USD 14.8 billion in 49 countries along the New Silk Road in 2015. Many Western media compare the value of the Silk Road with a value of Marshall Plan of USA for the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War, causing the indignation of the Chinese

authorities. The rapid economic growth of China in the last two decades has made it economically a superpower.

Both political and economic reasons are behind which motivated Chinese to start OBOR (One Belt One Road). Economic objectives of the "Belt" are the redirection of export flows of goods and capital in those countries that previously remained outside of global trade. It is with these regions China has begun to cooperate last decade. OBOR also aims to increase connectivity and economic development along both routes through the movement of goods and services along with information, people and also the exchange of culture, greater integration between China and its neighbors and energy security through diversification of import sources. It is also believed that OBOR is to give an outlet for its domestic overcapacity. China has overcapacity in several sectors, owing to the economic drive and building boom of recent decades. China has also accumulated a large amount of foreign exchange reserves and capital. OBOR presents channels for outward investment and the diversification of foreign exchange reserves. OBOR also aims to provide new market for Chinese products and services. Diversifying export markets, especially in developing countries, will extend the lifecycle of Chinese products and will lay the ground domestically for the upgrading of traditional industries.

OBOR (One Belt One Road) is also motivated by geographic compulsions of China. China's most western and southern parts are land-locked. Its excessive dependence on the sea route for exports and energy security (almost 80% of China's oil come from the Middle East and Africa) passes through the narrow and busy Strait of Malacca, which posits the quintessential 'Malacca Dilemma'. Both the road and sea infrastructure are poised to help the land-locked



interior and address the excessive reliance on the notorious Malacca choke-point.

The Central Asian region is strategically an important region, it connects the key zones of Asia and Europe together, and historically it has always been at the centre stage due to its geographic significance. Before the emergence of the concept of "Great Game" the region was used as a crucial passage for armies since centuries. Since Alexander's invasion of the east during the times of ancient Greeks, to the Mongols and Timurid's invasion of the West during the medieval period, the territorial significance of the region has never been in doubt.

It is also becoming clearer by the day that geopolitical conflicts over the project could lead to a New Great Game for dominance in Eurasia. No doubt a project as large and complex is certain to face many western geopolitical obstructions. Assuredly, the "great game" will continue. The "struggle" is basically about the politics and economics of competing pipeline projects to connect the off-shore and on-shore Caspian Sea "hydrocarbon resources to world markets, via Russia and the Black Sea, via the Caucasus and Turkey, via Iran, via Afghanistan, or via Kazakhstan to China". The U.S, India and China want to develop their own infrastructure in order to fulfill their own economic and political objectives and also lessen the dependency of Central Asian countries on the Russian infrastructure to transport their oil and gas. However, United States main concern is the stabilization of Afghanistan.

The competition for the Central Asian region will not be between U.S and China, but will be between India and China. India can not only serve as a potential power to neutralize the security threats in the region, but can also prove to be a potential competitor to keep the influence of China and Russia at bay in the Central Asian countries. U.S also wants India's economic and political influence to grow in the region to counter China's influence.

There is no shortage of historical baggage between China and India, ranging from a half century of unresolved border disputes; China's growing relationship with Pakistan, India's longtime adversary; and India's close relationship with the US and Japan,

both opposed to China's claims in the South China Sea.

China sees Central Asia as an important region in its backyard that can fulfill its growing energy demands, as Central Asia is having one of the world's largest hydrocarbon reserves. China considers the Central Asian region important for its economic interests, also source for the cheap raw material and market for its produced goods. China is investing heavily in the infrastructure of Central Asian countries and is building roads, railways and pipelines with the Central Asian countries. China has been showing great interest in developing multilateral partnerships with Central Asian countries in many areas such as energy, trade and transportation routes. One of the most important energy cooperation between the Central Asia and China is the gas pipeline that runs about 1100 mile, which transports gas from Turkmenistan to China through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Another important pipeline "runs from Kazakhstan's Atyrau port in northwestern Kazakhstan to Alashanoku in China's Xingjiang region. This pipeline exported about just over 20,00,000 barrels of oil to China in 2010". In 2014, Xi Jinping concluded deals worth \$30 billion with Kazakhstan, \$15 billion with Uzbekistan, and \$3 billion with Kyrgyzstan.

After the Silk Road Economic Belt agreement was signed in November 2013 by 24 cities in eight countries along the Silk Road, a series of Chinese inland cities including Chongqing, Chengdu, Zhengzhou and Xi'an have successively opened international shuttle trains to the Eurasian continent. Northwest China's Shaanxi Province, the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, has been carrying out economic and technological cooperation with countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt.

The major economic development project which concerns India more is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Chinese have been working for years, building and financing a strategic deepwater port at Gwadar, on the Arabian Sea, that will be managed by China as the long-term leaseholder. Similarly, the vigorous Pakistan-China joint venture of building road and railway network aims at connecting the Pakistani port city of Gwadar with China's Xinjiang province through the mega project of China-Pakistan Eco-



nomic Corridor (CPEC). As frequently anticipated, the CPEC project is going to become one of the most essential land routes for world's emerging economy. In addition, the Gawadar endows China with an impending naval pedestal in the vicinity of the oil supplies of the Gulf. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is precisely being termed as a game changer for the whole region. The trade and transportation route from Kashgar to Gawadar is the benign opportunity for the landlocked Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries to access the easiest trade route and claim their due share of economic benefits by exporting their goods to the international markets.

India shares the view of several countries that far from being an enterprise founded on wide and substantial cooperation, the OBOR could in fact be the vehicle for China's influence, if not hegemony, across Asia. After all, China is promoting the OBOR just when it is flexing its muscles in East Asia, particularly in regard to asserting its territorial claims unilaterally in the South China Sea.

India, on the other hand, sticks out of Eurasia like a vast rogue spaceship. In order to heighten the political, economic and cultural ties with the Central Asian republics, India has launched several policies and official frameworks such as "Extended Neighborhood", "Immediate and Strategic Neighborhood" and "Look North Policy" and the latest "Connect Central Asia" to redesign its foreign policy vis-à-vis the region. These policies sound very good, but if India is compared vis-à-vis other 'New Great Game' powers like the China, the US and Russia, it is at the lowest ebb in terms of trade and investment.

However over the last few years, India has shown keen interest in Central Asia as an important region for its economic growth and has increased the engagement in the region. Currently India has considerable economic and security interests, as well as geopolitical considerations that incline India for increased engagement with Central Asian countries. India is an emerging "global economic power house", and to keep the steady economic growth, Indian economy will require vast oil and natural gas in near future. Today "India is the 4th largest oil and 7th largest gas consumer in the world. India's oil demand is expected to increase to two hundred million tons by

2025". According to Stephen Blank, there are three major aspects of Indian interests in Central Asia; energy, security, and the regional balance of power.

In order to overcome the political and geographical barriers India is encouraging the International North-South transport Corridor (NSTC). The crucial Silk Road port in this case is Chabahar, in Sistan-Balochistan province in southeast Iran. Chabahar means "Four Seasons"; that is, a port that may be used all year long. Thus its importance in the broader Iran-India strategic partnership - not only in terms of Central Asia, but for India's commercial relations with Southwest Asia and the wider Middle East.

The Chahbahar port of Iran which is being built with Indian assistance of \$340 million, will serve as India's gateway to Central Asia through the 220 km long Zarang-Delaram highway of Afghanistan in Nimroz province, which is also built with India's assistance. Zarang- Delaram is connected to the Garland highway which links up with the Central Asia. The Chahbahar port will give India access to Central Asia without relying on Pakistan and the Bandar Anzali port which is being built on the Iranian coast will give access to Russia. India has already invested \$136 million on the road that connects Chahbahar port with the Zarang-Delaram road in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, it has already invested \$ 2 billion in the development of infrastructure over the past decade and wants to get access to the Hajigak iron ore deposit which is worth of \$ 1 trillion to \$3 trillion. India also wants to build a railway line of 900 km long from Hajigak mines in Bamiyan to Chahbahar port.

Central Asia is also very important for the national security of India. The major concern for India in the region is Pakistan's economic and political presence in Central Asia. As traditional rivals both Pakistan and India want to not only surpass the other, but also politically and economically weaken the presence of the other in the region. Afghanistan is the key manifestation in this competitive game. Pakistan tries to have a friendly regime in Kabul, so it does not want to have a regime in Kabul that is friendly towards India and is going to neutralize any attempt that will be against its interests in Afghanistan. India



similarly wants to maximize its presence on the western border of Afghanistan, so as to secure and expand its trade routes. This has been the reason, that India has done such a huge investment in trade, aid, infrastructure development and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan. Furthermore India also fears that emergence of militant groups in the Afghanistan will pose a direct threat to India's security, particularly in the contested state of Kashmir.

From the last decade, New Delhi has sought to enhance its security assets in the Central Asian region. One of the major achievements is the acquisition of a first foreign military outpost in Tajikistan. Tajikistan is of particular importance to India, as a narrow stretch of 20 km of Afghanistan's territory separates it from the Pakistan administered Kashmir. India began to renovate the Ayni airbase in 2004, reportedly investing \$70 million in aid to Tajikistan. Another air base in Tajikistan Farkhor is operated by Indian air force in collaboration with Tajikistan air force, which the Indian military used as a small medical facility until 2002 to help the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Farkhor is the first and only Indian military facility outside its territory.

Conclusion:

Indeed, India enjoys far greater influence in the Central Asia than China does and is a more acceptable role-player in addressing the security and economic concerns of the region. The Central Asian countries will also avoid firm alliances with world powers and, like India, will generally pursue policies of flexible alignment. India's advantage is not location, and certainly not demographics, but its inherent and implicit pluralism. As Sirdar Aqbar Ali Shah, an Indian Afghan author and diplomat once remarked: "The secularism of India is not rooted in modern Western concepts of materialism or atheism, but in the immemorial concept that the next man has as much right to his inner experiences as I". Thus, while India has

every reason to watch developments relating to Gwadar with close attention, there is no reason to despair. However, we need to be clear that Pakistan is not going to allow access to India to take benefit of the emerging New Silk Route connecting China with Europe, which passes through Central Asia. There is no option but to aggressively pursue the Chahbahar route for access to Central Asia and perhaps band wagon on the New Silk Route too. For this, we need Iran more than ever before. A multi-polar Asia already exists and India is an important part of it.

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ANALYSIS OF INDIAN DIPLOMACY, FOREIGN POLICY AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS CONVERGE AT WORLD FOCUS.

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Terrorism and Geopolitics

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Narendra Modi, Prime Minister in Singapore



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WORLD FOCUS

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EDITORIAL

This issue on Terrorism and Geopolitics presents some unique cases and challenges. It shows us that terrorism has been often resorted to in the contemporary world and the nation states are finding it as a menace that is spiraling out of bounds. While the method of terrorizing innocent citizens anywhere in this world is deplorable, the frequency with which the attacks are taking place presents all the more challenges. Dealing with it has been on the minds of all the policy makers and extra efforts are being put forward to handle the situation when the terror strikes occur.

While terrorism itself is quite appalling, carrying it in the name of God and religion is one of the most absurd things that is happening around the world. We all have been taught since our childhood that peace brings happiness and multiple advantages. It promotes universal brotherhood, harmony, goodwill and faith, thus making it one of the most required and most sought after virtues. Therefore, attacks on humanity, especially in the name of God and religion, seem not only illogical but also unwarranted. There is a good old adage: life is an echo, give the best and the best gets back to you. Similarly, love begets love, peace begets peace and hate begets hate.

The region of West Asia has been under a constant turmoil. Differences of all sorts exist in this region. At the same time, the region offers profound opportunities and gains; it is oil rich and shares its resources with the world and is one of the most sought after regions for forging meaningful relations. It is to be noted that it has been battered with internal differences between the members and have become prone to extra-regional interferences. Syria and Iraq present a grim picture of horrific incidents that have been against humanity.

It is the time the world unites against the unwanted elements that terrorise people and try to bring governments under their control through dreadful means. There is need for better coordination amongst members so that these dreadful incidents do not proliferate and harm people further. The resultant effects of the disturbances in this area stunt not only their democratic growth but also hurt their economic well-being and culture. It is in the best interest of the region and the world if it remains peaceful and progressive. As the world is moving ahead, what we need is not violence. All we need is peace and its permanent existence. The geopolitics of the West Asian region poses major challenges. It is for the world to make a united forum and address this menace and settle it once and for all. Religion should be used to bring peace, not war and violence.

New Delhi
February 2016

G. Kishore Babu
Editor

Terrorism & Geopolitics

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Violence and Terrorism in West Asia: Implications for India's Security

Prof. A. K. Pasha

In contemporary West Asia, terrorism normally brings to our attention the mindless violence committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS] and elsewhere in the region and beyond. In addition bomb blasts in Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Turkey, and growing violence in Syria and Lebanon remind us of indiscriminate terrorism. Many have condemned terrorist attacks on US and French marines in Lebanon in the early 1980's when peace keeping forces from these and other countries were stationed in and around Beirut soon after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. Lebanese President Basher Jamayil and Lebanese Minister Elias Hobeika and others were killed in 1980's as also Rafik Harriri former Lebanese Prime Minister and many Lebanese journalists and leaders. Other important leaders in West Asia like UN Representative Count Bernadette, King Abdullah of Jordan, King Feisal of Saudi Arabia, Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Yitzhak Rabin of Israel have also been victims of terrorist violence. Many such violent attacks targeting prominent people and large number of innocent civilians can be cited as evidence for prevalence of terrorism in West Asia.

In the context of contemporary West Asia, one has to honestly address the legitimate anger and genuine political despair which provide fertile ground for terrorists to exploit. US approach to West Asia especially due to US support to Israel which has been consistently rejecting UN Resolutions on the issue of withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and expecting full compliance/strict implementation of UN resolution by Iraq, Libya, Iran, Sudan and other Arab/Islamic states as also threat of unilateral military action for any defiance. It should also be noted that "the ability of the US to persuade peoples and governments in West Asia to effectively reject terrorism has been significantly undermined". To throw more light on this issue one has to look at the recent past history of the region and recall that the West perceived Arab (secular) nationalist movement (Nasserism) in the

1950's and 1960's "as the primary destabilizing political force in the region (West Asia) and viewed Islamic groups, especially those supported by friendly governments as more desirable and more stabilizing". Israel viewed PLO as a threat to its security and encouraged Islamic groups in Gaza and West Bank which led to the emergence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which have used violence on a bigger scale compared to the PLO. Many in West Asia, however, see the operations of Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad not as terrorism but as acts of national liberation. The aim of the Palestinian groups is viewed as legitimate i.e. liberation from Israeli occupation, especially from the clutches of an enemy which has vast military capability. Thus, suicide bombings/terrorism is seen as a powerful weapon of the weak, desperate, and helpless facing a far stronger and vicious enemy.

The suicide bombings as a method of political violence did not materialize at the push of a button. It took several years before it was put to frequent use. Its genesis can be traced to the failure to get the Israeli military to redeploy its military forces stationed in Palestinian territories – a key failure of the 1993 Oslo Accords. The Palestinian Authority's (PA) failure to secure the redeployment and to guarantee Israel's security demands led to political factions opposed to negotiations and disposed towards suicide bombings gaining popularity. Under article 8 of the Oslo accords, the PA was allowed to establish "a strong police force", while Israel would continue to carry "the responsibility for overall security of Israelis for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order". Although the sharing of security responsibilities between Israel and the PA was working well with minor problems until Ariel Sharon of the Likud Party became Israeli Prime Minister in February 2001, but faced with mounting problems even the US (CIA) intervention couldn't make the mechanism work. The creation of the Palestinian security services, under the Oslo Accords,

with a mandate in Palestinian populated area (Areas A) of the West Bank has been irrevocably undermined. Similarly, the territorial division of the West Bank that resulted from the Oslo process – the creation of Areas A, B and C – is no longer relevant to the reality in the West Bank and Gaza. Thus, there is only one area and that area is controlled by the IDF without Palestinian intermediaries. The Sharon/Netanyahu governments determined that Yasser Arafat and the structures he represented – PLO and the PA - are no longer diplomatic or security partners. Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas failed to play the role outlined for them, and so they are no longer “relevant”. As *Haaretz* reported on April 14, 2002, “the logic of Sharon’s plan was this : a military defeat would convince the Palestinians and the international community to leave these security zones, including major population centers, under effective Israeli control for many years.”

The establishment and expansion of Jewish settlements led to widespread violence against the settlers. Since the Oslo accords, successive Israeli governments continued to build new Jewish settlements and expand existing ones where the number of Jewish settlers doubled since 1993. The 20 largest settlements in West Bank and Gaza in 2002 had 138,660 settlers. Also the 20 smallest settlements in 2002 had 2,261 settlers. By 1993 there were 32,750 housing units in the Jewish settlements completed since 1967 when Israel captured these Palestinians lands from Egypt and Jordan. Since the Oslo accords, according to one study 20,371 new housing units have been constructed representing a 62% increase in eight years from what had been built over roughly a quarter century. About 10 lakh ie one million Israeli settlers now live in some 300 settlements that dot the occupied Palestinian lands and are linked to one another by means of 450 kms of highway and “bypass” roads which also serve to isolate Palestinian population centers from one another turning them into Bantustan- like little islands. The rapidly increasing Jewish settler colonies strengthened the political power of those Palestinians who rejected the Oslo Accords. Israel expected full cooperation from PA irrespective of their colonial/expansionist policies and what effect these negative policies were having on popular Palestinian support for PA. Whereas the Clinton Administration was willing to devote

enormous time to resolve the thorny Palestinian-Israeli dispute, the new Bush administration since 2001 adopted a ‘hands-off’ approach and wanted both the parties to resolve their problems bilaterally. But there was a crucial difference. Whereas Clinton would talk to Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders’ along with the Israeli leaders, George W Bush ignored Arafat and built up close ties with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The Bush administration appeared to side with Sharon who argued that Israel would not talk to the PA until there is a “complete cessation of violence”. The September 11, 2001 attacks on World Trade Center and the Pentagon gave Israeli leaders a unique chance to win US support for their war against the Palestinians. Sharon was hopeful that he would make Israel a partner with the US in the war against international terrorism.

The US administration very quickly realized that Israeli PM Sharon tried to take advantage of the 9/11 events to push forward his own agenda against the Palestinians. Colin Powell made it clear that “Israel will not be part of any anti- terror military action” against Afghanistan or elsewhere. The US administration realized the significance of Arab support in its war against terrorism. To win over the Arab/Islamic world and the Palestinians US President Bush called for the establishment of a Palestinians state with East Jerusalem as its capital in September 2001. More and more Israeli leaders began to fear that the US is getting closer with the Arab states and the Palestinians in the anti-terror war with Israel being seen as a burden or ignored. This led to strain in US-Israeli ties and ultimately Sharon had to express regret for provoking this public row.

Whereas Bush invoked international justice to justify the war in Afghanistan but the same standard of justice to the Palestinians was not applied. Even though Yasser Arafat was the first Arab leader to denounce the September 11 attacks but when Arafat faced Israeli attacks the US squarely blamed the PLO leader for his predicament as “largely of his own making” and openly ignored/sidelined him and called for the election of new Palestinian leadership. As a result its Arab/Muslim allies in West Asia find their ability to delegitimize terrorism undermined. As we have seen earlier, soon after the 9/11 events the US led a global campaign against terrorism and especially

the Al Qaeda network with its attack on Afghanistan. Although Al Qaeda appears to have been disrupted as its members were either killed, imprisoned or they fled to safer places, but terrorist means have increasingly become legitimate and popular in the perceptions of most people in West Asia. It is interesting to note that those carrying out terrorist acts in West Asia and elsewhere (not just Al Qaeda) are claiming to do it in the name of Islam. If seen objectively Islam is not central to the terror issue, although one cannot say that religion plays no role. Some groups in the West Asian region may be dangerous not because of their Islamic character but due to their violent methods and intolerant ends. The actions of a few (misguided) radical Muslims should not be seen as a general phenomenon flowing from Islamic faith. It is interesting to note that Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad were treated by the US as local movements fighting against occupation, and not as part of the global terrorist networks like the Al Qaeda and so not included in the list of 27 terrorist organizations whose assets were frozen by the US Congress. Early resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue is crucial to avoid the specter of terrorism spreading worldwide. Here it must be mentioned that US state Department reports had identified that West Asia was not the leading region in the number of terrorist incidents throughout the 1990's. It was also not the leading area as far as the number of attacks against US targets was concerned. Five years before the 9/11 incidents terrorism in West Asia had significantly declined every year and by 2000 West Asia had emerged as a region with the fewest terrorist attacks of any around the world except North America. This global trend must be kept in mind to counter the futile attempt to link Islam with terrorism.

Since the secular groups could not recruit the number of members as the Islamic groups did, no wonder they began to emulate the suicide method. "The suicide bombing phenomenon has thus become secularized." This is born out of the hopelessness and humiliation at the hands of Israeli and other oppressors. Since the Islamic doctrine prohibits suicide, the perpetrators and their sympathizers may have used religion to suit their ends. It must also be stressed that suicide bombing are not confined to Islamic groups in West Asia. Suicide bombings have been effectively used as an instrument of violence

by the Japanese in the Second World War and by the Tamil tigers in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Dilip Hiro in his book *War without End* says the ongoing war on terrorism "is a war without end". He emphasizes the need to go to the root cause of terrorism, and argues that US threats to Iraq – an established government amounts to terror. According to him, "Americans always blame others, never themselves. Whatever happens to America, it is their own fault. Americans won't like to hear that. This war (on terrorism) will go on because of the definition Bush has put on it. He himself is threatening established governments:" so long as anybody is terrorizing established governments, there needs to be a war". More and more people in West Asia now believe that their governments due to the authoritarian nature of the political system and also under US influence cannot do anything to relieve their humiliation and improve their lot. Hence the emergence of more radical Islamic groups which employ suicide bombings. Moreover the secular groups also follow this strategy under popular support. According to one writer, "suicide bombings take root because they free the desperate from the need to rely on governments. Rather than being sponsored by states, this form of violence challenges states." Lack of democracy and suppression of political opposition drives people to join groups and repression alone cannot eliminate terrorism. "Any successful counter terrorism strategy must thus address both the opportunities available to militants and the level of their motivations".

Undoubtedly movement towards democratic reforms, new innovative methods for economic cooperation and evenhanded policies on the Arab Israeli conflict and towards the WANA region as a whole would go a long way to turn people away from terrorism and violence as it will inspire hope for a better future as the region has witnessed revolutions, coups, several wars, unprecedented violence, insecurity and instability for several decades due to external interventions and internal mismanagement/despotism. Hence state terrorism and counter terrorism have become vicious cycle with action and reaction before Israel and the Palestinians and also gradually spreading to other parts of the world.

Indian interests in West Asia: For India, West Asia and North Africa in general and the Gulf region in particular are important for a number of reasons. First, nearly 80 per cent of India's oil and gas imports come from the region and the demand for it is growing at 8-10 percent annually with domestic oil production gradually declining. India annually imports oil and products to the tune of billions of dollars. Any disruption of supplies or increase in prices due to uncertain security situation in the region will/has adversely affect Indian economy both in the short and long term. Secondly, nearly seven million [70 lakh] Indians are gainfully employed in the Gulf region who send over \$50 billion dollars annually as remittances. Not only this foreign exchange is significant but the Indian workers safety and security is of prime importance to India. Indian labor is growing in GCC States. Thirdly, the region is important in terms of trade especially exports (over 18 percent of India's total) which fetch us valuable foreign exchange [over \$200 billion]. Fourthly, the WANA region is also becoming increasingly important for India's food security due to large imports of chemical fertilizers, phosphate especially from Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Egypt and other countries of WANA. Besides these factors investments from the region both official and private are significant for the Indian economy. Also a large number of Indian public-private companies are engaged in lucrative joint ventures and in building various projects and their profits are important. Therefore, not only for the above reasons, but also security and stability in the entire WANA region is very important for Indian interests.

It must be noted that US/Western and Israeli policies in the region and also growing differences among the regional states are creating instability and opposition groups are increasingly using violence and terror groups are growing due to US-Israeli domination of the area through its military/naval presence as also control of oil resources and blind support to Israel. In countries like Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states such policies are encouraging religious extremism and many people are embracing terrorism and groups may resort to greater violence/terror in future not only against the US/West/Israel but also against US friends in the area. Since bulk of the Indians live and work in GCC states which are slow in initiating genuine democratic reforms and

where US influence is predominant, hence some Indians are likely to be influenced due to mounting extremism preached by certain groups.

The large scale purchase of arms by oil rich states in the Gulf region would not only lead to pressure on India's defense budget but also may lead to presence of foreign military advisers especially from Pakistan in these states and probable transfer of weapons to states hostile to India. According to a recent US report there has been a shift of focus for terrorism from West Asia to South Asia. Although there has been open cooperation with Israel in the field of agriculture now there is growing tendency to talk more openly about defense/security cooperation. As part of the Make in India project, the NDA government has eased restrictions on defense manufacturers especially foreign who are willing to set up R&D and factories in India. Many Israeli firms like Aerospace Industries and Rafael are interested in setting up manufacturing units in India. There is proposal to build Barak air missiles to be exported to foreign countries. Israeli defense minister visited for the first time in 2015 for air show in Bangalore. There is no doubt about Israeli technological lead in agriculture, water and cancer treatment, space research and defense but trade which was \$200 million in 1990s has increased to about \$4.5 billion in 2014-15 as compared with over \$200 billion with other WANA states. In 2016 there is even talk about Israeli PM Netanyahu and PM Modi visiting each other as also to accelerate the FTA and push trade to \$15 billion in future. It has also become obvious that both Israel and the Palestinians are incapable of reaching a solution to their conflict, which very often threatens peace and security in the WANA region. Moreover other regional problems and contentious issues are getting interlined with this problem thereby posing greater danger of terrorism acquiring a much larger regional dimensions, and perhaps transnational dimensions as well. Since India has come to establish good relations with the US, UK, Russia, France, Israel and other countries, it has become imperative to find an external solution to the vexed Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Any delay in the resolution of this conflict has the potential to adversely affect peace, security and stability in the WANA region with consequent implications for India.

Although India has had historical ties with Syria/Iraq and now vital interests in the Gulf region, any support to new US military adventure against Syria/Iraq would in the short run only make the US-UK-Israel happy but in the long run have adverse consequences both on India's domestic and foreign policies as also alienate India from the masses in the WANA region. Our support to Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis is still fondly recalled by Arabs all over the region. India must be with the people of the region and support their aspirations for greater participation in the decision making process and the broader issue of democratic reforms and also safeguard our vital interests. India must work with the secular-democratic forces in the region as also the dominant world powers which have vast stakes in the region to maintain security and stability so very essential to protect our vital interests and also to prevent the spread of violence and terrorism from this volatile region to India in future. Hence India needs to enhance its interaction with the countries in the WANA but Gulf region especially to seek greater role in cooperation with the states vital to our interests especially to enhance our oil security. With its abundant oil and water and human resources and strategic location, these states were well on their way to becoming a major Arab powers, much to the dislike of Israel. But since the last 25 years they have suffered immensely due to war and poor leadership. In the event of division of Iraq, the strategic benefits to Israel-Water and Oil will further enhance its power/influence in the region. This scenario apart from altering the status quo in a fundamental way would also increase anti-Americanism (which is already widespread in the region) but in the absence of any genuine democratic transformation in the Arab world, despite US promises (in 1991 US promised democratic reforms in the region but did not deliver) to work seriously for political reforms, political discontent and religious extremism may create an explosive situation in the area as frustrated and angry people feel they have been let down by their own rulers. The pretense democracy electoral process and rubber stamp consultative Assemblies which now exist are no longer taken seriously by Arab people as they have lost hope in the ability of the present autocratic rulers to bring about genuine democratic change. Saudi Arabia the most conservative Arab country — a close ally of the US- where family rule is total and absolute, is

perhaps the most vulnerable to US manipulations in the post-Iran plus P5+1 nuclear deal scenario of July 2015. The US has identified Saudi Arabia as the breeding ground for religious extremism in the region and the Saudi rulers are apprehensive that the US will keep them in focus until it undergoes basic transformation to satisfy US concerns. No wonder the Saudi rulers have now (after 9/11) taken initiative for democratic transformation in the Arab world. Former Saudi King Abdullah proposed a charter to reform the Arab condition which called for an "end to the silence that has gone on for too long" and has urged "internal reform and enhanced political participation (which are essential steps towards building Arab capabilities and providing conditions for comprehensive Arab revival". If the Arab regimes are reformed, modernized and genuine political transformation takes places through which people's participation in the decision making process is guaranteed under constitutional supervision, then the regimes can avoid the incoming cataclysmic changes and effectively marginalize the extremists religious elements and hence terrorism. In the absence of this, there could be an upsurge in terrorism not only in the West Asian region but also in South Asia and the West. India should actively encourage the process of political change and modernization because once the Arab regimes become democratic and responsive to popular demands, not only their legitimacy would be enhanced but also more significantly their dependence on outside states especially the US and Russia would come down and this may lead to reduction in outside military and political intervention which has periodically undermined peace, security and stability in the region thereby adversely affecting India's interests as well.

Genuine political reforms would give the politically oppressed people a stake in the running of the political system as also much needed political stability and smooth transition. The abundant oil resources could then be used to advance economic development so as to engage the Arab people in the process of political and economic progress. Undoubtedly for India the threat of religious extremism and terrorism from the West Asian region would be contained if this democratic process takes shape. Along with these steps towards democratic transformation, steps to resolve the thorny Arab-

Israeli issues would also be debated, discussed, at all forums thereby allowing Arab countries to take initiatives for meaningful steps along with serious US-Israeli steps (which are very essential) to tackle the Arab-Israeli dispute. Both these steps would reinforce the momentum for change and India could then look forward to greater peace, security and stability in West Asia in the future. It is far easier to control terrorism and religious extremism in liberal democratic political systems which have high level of legitimacy and strong domestic control than the present political set up where the rulers want to remain in total control of all state affairs. The long overdue change has now become

inevitable but if it is not coming soon internal/ regional terrorism may be directed against such autocratic regimes unwilling or unable to initiate reforms. As seen earlier, instability, religious extremism and terrorism in West Asia could spill over into South Asia as security and stability in both the regions are mutually interlinked through a number of factors. The most credible option to tackle these twin menaces which are posing a new challenge to India's composite culture, liberal democratic structures and also national security is to adopt a political course that prevents alienation of any segment.

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Central Asia: Problems and Struggle To Escape Being ISIS Target

Prof. R. G. GidadhUBLI

Declaration by ISIS that the Central Asian States (CAS) will be one of the targets has been a matter of great concern not only for these concerned countries but also for those which are closely politically and economically linked with Central Asia. Hence several questions arise. Why are the CAS targets of the ISIS and what are the problems facing the CAS due to this declaration by the ISIS? What policy measures are taken by the state authorities of the CAS to deal with this situation? What are the perspectives and challenges?

Problems Facing CAS

There are several factors which are contributing to the interest of ISIS in the CAS. There are five states in Central Asia which were formerly part of the former Soviet Union-Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These are Islamic states having close geographic proximity to Syria. While Tajikistan has Persian ethnic identity, all other four CAS are of Turkic ethnic identity.

The CAS have been facing several problems which are contributing to the prevailing situation. Firstly, a major problem facing the CAS has been that these countries have witnessed recruitment of a large number of youth who have joined ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq. Even youth below 18 years are attracted to join ISIS, which is a great advantage for this organization. Hence according to Kyrgyz official sources the number of its citizens might exceed 500 fighting with extremist militants. A large number of youth are recruited from other CAS as well. For instance, the Kazak foreign minister Idrissov has stated in September 2015 that an estimated 200 Kazakh nationals were fighting in Syria.

As stated by a Central Asia expert, the Islamic State (IS) militant group is notorious for recruiting, training, and exploiting children and teenagers on the battlefield. Children and teens who want to

die waging jihad are especially praised by Islamist groups in Syria. Majority of those recruited are prepared to give their life for Jihad.

Secondly, the CAS are witnessing a deepening divide in the society between those supporting secular forces, and those in favour of conservative section and radical groups. For instance, seeing the rise of Islamic State and other extremist groups in recent years, the Tajik authorities have done their best to eliminate outward displays including type of dress, keeping type of beard etc. what they see as dangerous and imported aspects of Islam in recent years. At the same time, as candidly stated by some analysts including John Heathershaw, any repressive measures could encourage radicalization. It means those who do not want to be in line with the state-sanctioned guidelines, might go underground and become militants.

Tajikistan has been the worst sufferer of militancy, civil war and terrorism during the aftermath of the breakup of the former Soviet Union, as more than 100,000 Tajik citizens have been killed. As opined by Helene Thibault a specialist on Central Asia at the University of Montreal in Canada the situation is not entirely stable even at present. According to her, "There are always some fault lines, some regions, where political antagonism, regional antagonism, are still there."

Thirdly, the CAS have been facing many socio-economic problems after the breakup of the former Soviet Union. For instance, economic condition of the CAS has worsened during the last few years. In the case of Tajikistan the growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) slowed to 6.7 (pc) percent in 2014 from 7.4 percent in 2013 and that it could drop to 3.2 percent in 2015. Kazakh economy has suffered significantly due to decline in oil prices during 2014-15 and GDP might be as low as 2-3 pc in

2015 while it enjoyed high growth rates of 8-9 pc a few years back. There is significant decline in industrial and agricultural production. Due to economic decline, unemployment has been increasing which is one of the major factors used by leaders of IS to recruit the unemployed youth. As per some reports, one among six persons cannot find job in Central Asia. In fact a large number of youth from CAS particularly from Tajikistan and Kyrgyz republic were getting jobs in Russia during the last about two decades and sending money to family members for their maintenance. A Central Asia analyst Mirzoev has opined that due to economic recession in Russia itself, many have returned back to Central Asia which has worsened economic and social conditions for a large section of the population. Denied of jobs many are attracted by the IS which not only promises jobs but also high remuneration for joining the IS.

But in reality contrary to promises made to the youth, there are reports by some of those who have returned from Syria that they were not properly paid. Their experience might be far from happy as told to a correspondent by Saidmurat from Jalalbad in Kyrgyz Republic in September 2015. He became invalid as he was badly injured in the fight and is now recuperating in a hospital. He is disillusioned as he was not paid hard cash that he was promised before joining the IS to fight on the battlefield alongside Jabhat al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate. Moreover, living condition was far from satisfactory as they were forced to live in cold and dark rooms and there was not much to eat. He met several persons from Central Asia and Chechnya. This statement has been further supported by the head of the Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security Kanzharbek Bokoev, who has made candid statement 'that those who had been recruited to Syria are victims of fraud'.

Fourthly, ISIS has been interested in recruiting not only fighters but also highly qualified persons from Central Asia. For instance, as reported by Khusan Mamurov, an analyst with Uzbekistan's National Security Service (SNB) in September 2015 that IS militant group had been recruiting doctors, engineers from the CAS including Uzbekistan. They were promised high salary ranging from \$ 20,000 to \$ 30,000 and also advised to bring their families to IS con-

trolled territory which meant that they will be available for long period. But the situation seems to be pathetic. As reported by journalist Jenan Moussa, IS threatened to confiscate the property of doctors and pharmacists who have left. The SNB analyst estimated that 500-600 people from Uzbekistan are still fighting alongside IS even as reliable data was not available.

Fifthly, indoctrination has been a major factor in attracting the youth. There are organizations and also some religious heads that have succeeded in this task of indoctrination in the name of Jihad. It is also reported that some youth from Central Asia are indoctrinated in Chechnya and other Islamic regions of Russia.

Sixthly, the CAS are also victims of internal security threats. For instance, Tajikistan has been a victim of civil war during which several thousands of people were killed. Subsequently there were instances when few political leaders and officials used their position to acquire wealth by corruption and drug trafficking directly or indirectly supporting criminal and antinational groups threatening the stability of the country. As opined by some analysts, the case of former Deputy Defense Minister Abduhalim Nazarzoda was unique since he managed to get as many as 100 armed supporters of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRTP) and fled to the rugged Romit Gorge area east of the capital and wanted ultimately to overthrow the government. On this issue IRTP leader Kabilri who is self-imposed living in exile has refuted these allegations and criticized Tajik government by skillfully eliminating Nazarzoda. Similarly, Ghaffor Mirzoev was another government ally who in 2004 was arrested and accused of accumulating a large amount of weapons with the purpose of staging a coup d'etat.

Policy Measures by the CAS

The authorities of CAS are taking several policy measures to deal with the problems facing them. Firstly, being worried about recruitment of their citizens, they are taking serious measures including sentencing those found guilty of joining ISIS and putting them for several years in jail. For instance, on the 16th November the Kyrgyz government arrested its

national on charges of recruiting youth for ISIS. As per reports he belonged to the banned Katibat al-Imam al-Bukhari group and he was detained at the Osh airport since he was about to travel to Turkey. A spokesman for the Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security (UKMK) Rakhat Sulaimanov, told on 17th July 2015 that the militants were planning several terrorist attacks in the country, including one against the Russian-led Kant military base, in Kyrgyzstan's north, and another targeting mass Eid al-Fitr prayers in Bishkek, thus justifying strict policy measures to prevent such terrorist acts.

Similarly, on the 30th September 2015 Kazak's regional court sentenced 30 year old Orazbek Apakashev who was found guilty of being a member of the Tablighi Jamaat group which is banned in Kazakhstan. Some Islamic groups have been under increased scrutiny from the Kazakh authorities since a suspected Islamist militant carried out the country's first-ever suicide bombing in the northwestern city of Aqtobe in 2011.

Tajik government facing similar problems has banned its citizens to join extremist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq. In July 2015 as per official sources 420 cases were filed in court against the citizens joining the ISIS. Tajik government has serious concern because it has admitted that the number of Tajiks fighting in Syria and Iraq has grown during the last couple of years to over 500 as stated by the Interior Minister Ramazan Rakhimzoda in June 2015.

Tajikistan has become a victim of terrorism since in September 2015 there were armed attacks in the capital. As opined by some analysts, subsequently the Tajik government banned the IRPT and blacklisted by the Court and arrested its leadership. But on this issue there seem to be differences as some analysts contended that in recent past IRTP was a moderate Islamic section of society and banning it might not be proper. A Central Asian analyst Hodizoda has been candid in opining that they might go underground and would be more radical. But on this issue disagreeing with the views of analysts, the Tajik President Rahmon has been quite frank in arguing that rolling back Islamic influence in Tajikistan was necessary to stop growing militancy among Is-

lamists and security and stability interest of the country. In fact it is appreciable that the Tajik government has proposed to give amnesty to those returning from Syria who have informed the 'atrocities' they faced which might deter others joining the IS.

Secondly, authorities in Central Asia have proposed to take serious policy measures being concerned by threats of radicalized youth who ordered to propagate to overthrow the elected governments. For instance, in the first week of December 2015 Tajikistan's regional court of Khatlon sentenced seven youth up to 27 years of imprisonment for being guilty of supporting ISIS and publicly calling to overthrow the Tajik government. Similarly, the Uzbek authorities are concerned about extremist attacks in the aftermath of acts of terrorism in many parts of the world. As stated by Bruce Pannier in November 2015 more than 160 people were detained in Uzbekistan on suspicion of involvement with the ISIS.

Thirdly, it is a matter of serious concern for the authorities in Central Asia that some officials at high levels have been found to be involved in anti-national activities and supporting these terrorist groups. For instance, in July 2015 a former Kyrgyz lawmaker belonging to Ak-Jol (Bright Path) party was suspected of supplying weapons to militants linked to the Islamic State group. He was detained while attempting to fly out of the country.

In Tajikistan also there are a few cases where Tajiks at high level have joined Islamic State having resigned from their official positions in the government and political parties. For instance, the Tajik Interior Ministry's Special Forces, Gulmurod Halimov, appeared in a video clip saying he had joined the Islamic State extremist group to protest the government's ban on Islamic dress in schools and offices. Even a more serious case is that of former Deputy Defense Minister Abdulhalim Nazarzoda, who resigned from his position and actively participated in Islamic State activities against the government and was killed in police operation. He was also alleged to be a member of IRPT party which has been banned in the country.

As stated by Central Asia analysts, the IRPT played an important part in Tajikistan's 1992-1997 civil

war, which left tens of thousands dead and more than 1 million people displaced. It was the only officially registered Islamic party in the former Soviet Union, and was represented in the Tajik parliament for 15 years until it failed in elections in March to meet the threshold for parliament. But as per official statements due to several alleged terrorist acts committed by members of IRPT, the government had to take strong measures on this organization. In fact the decision of the court in September 2015 forced the closure of the IRPT's *Najot* (Salvation) newspaper and banned the distribution of any video, audio, or printed materials related to the party's activities. The perception of some international agencies on this issue seems to be different. For instance, as per reports on 2nd October 2015 UNHCR expressed reservation over Tajikistan's banning the IRPT and this UN refugee agency has expressed concern over the risk of increasing human rights violations in Tajikistan.

Fourthly, the CAS are concerned about certain political groups that are involved in extending financial support to the extremist organizations. For instance, as stated officially by the Kyrgyz state, Ak-Jol party is suspected of financially supporting members of the Islamic State group targeted in counterterrorism raids and providing them with at least two Kalashnikov assault rifles. There is a similar case in Tajikistan where a political unit known as the New Tajikistan movement was found to be involved in financial irregularities including support to antisocial elements. Hence as per reports it was crushed in 2013 and the founder of the party has been given 29 years of imprisonment on charges of financial crimes.

Fifthly, there is genuine concern on the part of the authorities that some sections of religious heads in Central Asia are active in propagating extremist acts. In several cases they are being convicted for doing so. For instance, on 7th October 2015, a court in the Osh region of Kyrgyz state found Imam Rashod Qori Kamolov guilty of inciting religious discord and the possession and distribution of extremist materials and hence sentenced him to five years in prison. It is reported that Kamolov, a 37-year-old ethnic Uzbek, is the imam at the As-Sarakhs Mosque in the Kara-Suu district.

Sixthly, for almost 20 years, authorities in Turkmenistan have tried to isolate the country by constantly referring to its UN-recognized status as a 'neutral country'. But as the country proposed to celebrate the 20th anniversary in October 2015, due to worsening security conditions, its policy of "positive neutrality" was undergoing a change. This is mainly due to the fact that events both regionally and globally have started to erode this strategy and cracks were appearing. Hence the definitions of "positive neutrality" needed to be revised.

For instance in October 2015 the situation in northwestern Afghanistan, in the areas adjoining Turkmenistan particularly Faryab Province was getting from bad to worse. In fact since the last one year or so security condition was getting worse and in May 2014 three Turkmen body guards were killed. There was realization of security concern since both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not members of a military bloc and hence cannot depend upon any country for their external security threats. In terms of defense capability Turkmenistan is worse than Uzbekistan since the Uzbek leadership started building up its military shortly after becoming independent. But being exposed to threat in 2014 Turkmen authorities have been working to build up the armed forces and strengthen the presence along the frontier with Afghanistan. As per some reports from the USA, in March 2015, the Turkmen expressed a desire to acquire U.S. military equipment and technology to address threats to their security from Afghanistan.

Contentions and Contradictions

The state authorities and opposition groups and critics have differences on security related issues and on activities of organizations. For instance, it is contented by some critics that there is discontentment over the increasingly authoritarian style of governance which is potentially more dangerous since that might be partly contributing to recruitment for ISIS. It is alleged that there is widespread unhappiness over the dire socio-economic situation in Tajikistan apart from lack of political freedom. The Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, who has led Tajikistan since 1992, has been criticized for his authoritarian-style rule and his regime's poor human and civil rights records. Same

is the case so far as Uzbekistan is concerned. But the official position in Tajikistan is that security and stability of the country is important and policies are taken to safeguard national interest. The Tajik government while allowing religious freedom does not want external elements to influence their citizens. It is contended by some analysts, the president has controlled Islam by keeping the nominally independent Muftiat which appoints Muslim clerics. Majority of the Tajiks are followers of Hanafi Islam and any other Sunni sects are considered by the government as detrimental to social cohesion. Hence as opined by Sojida Djakhfarova the Salafi (Wahhabi) sect of Islam is officially prohibited in Tajikistan. The rise of IS and the recruitment of Tajiks to its ranks has provided new opportunities for Tajikistan to link certain brands of Islam, particularly Salafism, with the IS group and therefore also with threats to national security. Hence as opined by some specialists the government believes that Wahhabis plan to destroy Tajiks' fundamental beliefs of Hanafi Islam and the foundations of the secular state.

Similarly, as opined by some critics, the Uzbek government had earlier banned Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir linking it to Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and now linking it to ISIS. In the 1990's in Uzbekistan the case of Mullah Abdullo was significant who formed IMU, which has been designated by several countries as a terrorist organization. Hence the Uzbek authorities have taken strong measures against suspected terrorists when 160 people were arrested having links with this banned groups supporting the cause of the ISIS. But some analysts are candid in stating that this is overreaction and many of them might not belong to the IS. But contrary to the state official position, as opined by some analysts Hizb ut-Tahrir has sought to create an Islamic caliphate but disavows the use of violence to achieve this goal. But from the perspective the national interest the Uzbek president Islam Karimov wants to take preventive policy measures. Hence for security reasons in the spring of 2015, the Uzbek law enforcement agencies conducted a series of exercises in Uzbekistan's section of the Ferghana Valley, which is a very sensitive region in Central Asia.

In the aftermath of the Uzbek independence in the 1990's IMU was one of the oldest organizations with aggressive ideology in Central Asia and is also highly controversial. Overtime the leadership of IMU has changed and according to some analysts it has become weaker during the last about a decade. Moreover, the location of IMU has changed from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan and subsequently to Pakistan. Apart from that as opined by analysts there has been change in its alliance s from Taliban to ISIS.

Perspectives and Challenges

In the background of what is stated above, it is worthwhile considering perspectives so far as efforts are made to find solution to terrorism and security threats facing the CAS. Firstly, Council for Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional organization led by Russia concerning security related issues of the member countries. Considering the fact that Tajikistan witnessed several terrorist attacks recently and in September 2015 when more than 20 people were killed including police officers threatening stability in the country, Vladimir Putin has assured Russian help and support to ensure that Tajik armed forces were "successfully dealing with the problems that arise." In fact at the CSTO Summit Putin expressed his concern for likely spillover of violence from Afghanistan into Tajikistan and other CAS. As a part of its support in October 2015 Russian officials have announced plans to increase the number of troops stationed in Tajikistan to 9,000 over the next five years and to provide more military equipment through 2020. Russian media have reported that Moscow is also prepared to grant Tajikistan \$1.2 billion in military aid over the next few years.

Similarly, at the CSTO summit meeting held in the Tajik capital city of Dushanbe in the second week of September 2015 during which the heads of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan discussed the need for greater economic cooperation and signed a new "strategic partnership". This shows that efforts are being made by the regional leaders to find solutions to the intraregional differences and problems facing them including threats to security by terrorist organizations. Similar efforts are being made by the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) to deal with the security issues concerning all the member states. It is a

challenge for both the CSTO and SCO which have been in existence after the Soviet breakup, to effectively resolve persisting intraregional issues and solve the security threats facing the CAS at present. On the 21st December 2015 leaders of CSTO and EEU met in Moscow during which the Russian presidential aide Yury Ushakov stated that adopting a statement on the fight against terrorism will be an important item of agenda, which is an evidence of the seriousness of the problem facing all the member countries including the CAS.

Secondly, it is a matter of great geo-political significance that on the 16th of October 2015, leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) signed 17 agreements including a statement on combating international terrorism and also an agreement on military cooperation. This is particularly relevant for the CAS. But CIS has a major challenge to revive itself and ensure that agreements signed become effective in reality to solve problems facing the CAS. It is appreciable that during the conference held in Kazakhstan, the Russian president Vladimir Putin specifically mentioned that the situation in Afghanistan is critical and one of the goals of Islamic terrorists is to penetrate the Central Asian region. Tajikistan and Kyrgyz being neighbor of Afghanistan could be the worst sufferers. But the position of Uzbekistan is somewhat different. As per reports, speaking in Tashkent on 1st September 2015 at a ceremony marking the 24th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence, Islam Karimov was candid in stating that the Uzbek armed forces will never be involved in any military activities abroad. Karimov's statement comes five days after the United States said it had asked Tashkent to join the multinational coalition against the Islamic State group. This assumes significance since the country needs the support of USA and other powers to contain terrorist threats for its security. Hence it is to be seen whether there will be change in the policy of the government as situation changes for worse affecting the security of the country.

Thirdly, while the CAS are coming close to Russia, they are moving away from Western countries and in some cases closing the military bases which were set up by them in Central Asia to deal with

conflict arising from Afghanistan in the aftermath of 26/11 attack in New York. For instance, Germany has to close its base in Termez in Uzbekistan, in 2014 USA closed its Kyrgyz base in Manas so also France closed its base in Dushanbe in Tajikistan. This could be partly because the term of contract was over and partly due to pressure from Russia. But under the prevailing circumstances, it will be a challenge for the CAS to bring about policy revision with regard to these military bases by the West from the perspectives of their own security.

Fourthly, the Kazak president Nazarbaev during his meeting with Putin in October 2015 reiterated the need for a united front against terrorism. He has also been supportive of the role of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in dealing with economic and other related issues. "We are proposing the creation of a forum on Islam against Terrorism, and if we receive support this will be the right action to take," the Kazakh leader said. For the EEU which has been formed only recently focusing on issues of economic cooperation, it will be a formidable task and challenge to be an effective organization to deal with task of combating terrorism in Central Asia.

Lastly, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov has urged world leaders to unite efforts to combat the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS) group. On this issue the Kazakh president Nazarbaev has made historic speech at the UN in September 2015 highlighting the need to create a Global Anti-Terrorist Coalition to defeat the threat to the world. He asserted that the conflict in Syria is the greatest challenge which needs to be resolved by the international community. A political settlement in Syria is the only way to stop the violence and that there is need to develop universal, anti-terror legal instruments. He reminded the recent UN Security Council Resolution on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, cosponsored by Kazakhstan. This has to be achieved even as it is a major challenge. It is very important that both Russia and the Western powers and particularly the USA have to compromise and collectively take policy decisions, which is a challenging task. But there is no alternative to solve the problem of terrorist threats posed by the ISIS.

Terrorism and Geopolitics in West Asia

Anil Kamboj

Introduction

Oil has been a major driving force behind foreign interests, regional and domestic balance of power, and territorial conflicts in the West Asia. As a result of the ‘9/11’ terrorist attacks debates on oil and the United States’ security agenda have significantly shifted. If on one side, those opposing US military interventionism have argued that the ‘war on terror’ provided one more convenient cover for a renewed ‘imperialist oil grab’ in this region; on the other, links between oil and terrorism pointed at problems of governance in oil-producing countries. As the ‘war on terror’ became justified as a ‘war of liberation’ against oil-funded dictators, the US portrayed its foreign policy as shifting from ensuring free access to oil for the world market, to ensuring that oil is delivering ‘freedom’ to local populations. Although engaging the crucial issue of oil governance, there is yet little evidence given the number of war victims and potential vested interests that a US policy shift from ‘free oil’ to ‘freedom oil’ is genuine and viable.

The geopolitical and the security environment in West Asia have undergone dramatic changes during recent years. Before the Arab uprisings, Afghanistan and Iraq were considered the centre of the crisis in West Asia, however the Arab movements led to the emergence of new focal points of crisis in various countries of the region, from Syria to Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Great powers and regional actors not only have not been able to manage these crises but also have pursued a strategy with zero-sum results. Therefore, the new developments have unprecedentedly increased tensions between regional powers. Strategic surprises or unexpected events have taken place which had remarkable impact on the distribution of power at international or regional levels. For instance, the collapse of the Soviet Union and 9/11 can be seen as strategic surprises in the history which had impact on foreign policy of number

of countries. During the last four years, numbers of strategic surprises have occurred in the West Asian region, including the Arab uprisings, the civil war in Syria, the rapid domination of ISIS over vast territories in Syria and Iraq and the Saudi Arabian invasion of Yemen. As this list indicates, recent years have witnessed many more strategic surprises than any time in the past and have changed the geopolitical situation of the region. Today, it is non-state actors who have become the main sources of strategic surprises in West Asia in the form of popular movements or terrorist groups. The change in the sources of strategic surprises has made crisis management much more difficult than the past and has an impact on other parts of the world. Another emerging development in the West Asia security environment is the rapid and frequent changes in the status quo of the actors which can be called a “changing status.” In other words, the regional balance of power has become more unstable than earlier periods. The primacy of regional actors is rapidly becoming unstable and winners are becoming losers. With this in mind, regional actors, facing the increasing fluctuation of balance of power, will find their geopolitical positions unstable. Needless to say, preserving the geopolitical interests in the fluid balance of power is much more costly than in stable conditions.

Tension in West Asia

The Sunni-Shiite tension in the Middle East has been on the rise since the civil war in Iraq that followed the US-led invasion in 2003. Next were the clashes between Sunni and Shiite militias in Lebanon in 2008, while the Shiites in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia stepped up their campaign for more political and cultural rights in the two Sunni-ruled monarchies. To be sure, historical animosities do play a part, but contemporary sectarian tension in the Middle East is driven primarily by inequality. It typically thrives in environments where one religious group has – or is perceived to

have – privileged access to government, wealth or place in a nation's cultural life. The Shiites in Bahrain want equal access to senior government positions, while the Sunni minority in Iraq feels side-lined by the Shiite-dominated central government. But this is only one side of the story. Growing level of sectarian tension is also closely linked to the regional cold war between the Sunni Saudi Arabia and the Shiite power Iran: to mobilize regional support, Riyadh presents itself as the protector of Sunni communities, while Tehran seeks allies among the Shiites in Lebanon in Iraq.

The wave of anti-government protests that began in 2011, known as the Arab Spring, only exacerbated these fault-lines. Not because the Arab Spring protests were religious in nature, but because they threatened to shatter the existing political orders in the Middle East. This alarms both Saudi Arabia and Iran, and Arabs living in mixed Sunni-Shiite areas find themselves between a hammer and the anvil.

Trouble Spots in West Asia

Bahrain: Majority Shiite at 65-70% being ruled by the Al Khalifa, a Sunni royal family. Most senior positions in government and the security apparatus are reserved for the Sunni minority. The Arab Spring has given new life to the mostly Shiite anti-government movement. Backed by Saudi Arabia, Bahraini government has crackdown on the uprising, accusing Iran of inciting the Shiite majority. Bahrain's largely Shiite opposition continues its struggle against the Sunni royal family, even though it has met little international support. Here are reasons why crisis in Bahrain won't go away:

In response to protests demanding greater democracy that began in February 2011, the ruling Al-Khalifa family promised constitutional reform but little has been delivered. Even reform-minded royals, such as Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, fear that a rush to democratic reform would be a start of a slippery slope, allowing the opposition to one day dispense with the system as a whole. The Al-Khalifa do not claim absolutist, divinely inspired authority like the Saudi royals, nor do they preside over a Syria-style one-party system. Bahrain has multi-party elections and opposition media. The kingdom

remains a highly authoritarian state where elected legislative bodies hold little control over narrow royal elite. The fact that senior government posts and positions in the security apparatus seem almost exclusively reserved for Sunnis has always added a distinct sectarian dynamic to Bahraini politics. For its part, the government consciously encourages suspicions of protesters' alleged loyalties to the Shiite Iran. Bahraini rulers lack the luxury of abundant oil reserves to keep the masses happy with massive welfare programs and cosy government jobs. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has pledged \$10 billion in budgetary support, but ongoing unrest is deepening.

The regime may maintain dialogue with moderate opposition parties, such as al-Wefaq, but there is no short fix for income disparities and growing social tension. The principal safety valve of Khalifa rulers is the staunch support from Saudi Arabia and other GCC members who sent troops to Bahrain in March 2011 to quell the unrest. The wealthy Gulf monarchies simply cannot allow one of their own to go down, while the US is reluctant to poke at the last bastion of pro-American rulers in the Middle East. Unfortunately for Bahrainis, the future of their country has become firmly embedded in the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Bahraini and Saudi governments have long claimed Iran's hand in domestic unrest, although we have yet to see any solid evidence of that.

Iraq: Sunni Arab minority approximately at 20%, Kurds and others 20% are being governed by majority Shiite Arab (around 60%). Central government is dominated by Shiite parties, causing resentment among Sunni Arab groups which controlled the Iraqi state under ex-leader Saddam Hussein. Attacks on Iraqi security forces and indiscriminate targeting of Shiite civilians have mushroomed since the withdrawal of US troops in December 2011. Extremist Sunni groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda are trying deliberately to reignite Sunni-Shiite violence to destabilize the state. Al Qaeda in Iraq operates under the umbrella of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), a coalition of militant groups that boast a long track record of fighting the US troops. The worst days of violence in Iraq may be over, but the deadly ISI remains a major

destabilizing factor for Iraq and the wider region. Al Qaeda in Iraq is based in the country's north-west, an area populated predominantly by Sunni Arabs, who held top government positions under former president Saddam Hussein. ISI thrives on local resentment of the Shiite-dominated government in the capital Baghdad, blamed for lack of economic development and jobs in this part of Iraq. ISI's traditional base is small Sunni towns in the Anbar province, but its unofficial capital is now Mosul, Iraq's third largest city. Since late 2011, ISI has been extending its operations from Anbar into neighbouring Syria.

ISI has its roots in the Sunni Islamist insurgency that emerged after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, when dozens of armed groups declared a jihad, a holy war, against the new Shiite government and all foreign troops. Indiscriminate attacks on Shiite civilians triggered a de facto civil war in mixed Sunni-Shiite area. Main Sunni jihadist groups formally joined forces under the ISI umbrella. Although not all of these groups were affiliated with Al Qaeda, ISI leadership under the notorious Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (killed 2006) swore its allegiance to Osama bin Laden, making the militant coalition an official Al Qaeda branch in Iraq. US troops successfully recruited leading Sunni Arab tribes into the so-called "Awakening Councils" to fight against Al Qaeda, after religious extremists alienated the local population with their brutality and fanaticism. ISI lost ground in the Anbar province and became increasingly reliant on foreign jihadists. Iraqi security forces won the war against the militants, but many Sunnis now feel side-lined by the government. ISI is tapping into this discontent, linking new recruits with old militant networks under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

ISI wants to establish an Islamist state encompassing all of Iraq, based on Al Qaeda's strict interpretation of the Sunni doctrine. ISI's more immediate and more realistic objective is to regain its former strongholds in Anbar province and establish clear territorial control with parallel government structures. To this end, it tries to reignite sectarian conflict and destabilize the Iraqi state. Research by RAND National Defense Research Institute in late 2010 showed that more than 50% of the funds came

from selling stolen goods, including construction equipment, generators, and electrical cables. Looting and extortion is also being carried out. Besides that now that it has captured number of oil fields, it is selling crude oil and earning millions of dollars.

The media outreach has a strong sectarian tone, posing ISI as a protector of Iraqi Sunnis against both the Shiite Iran and the US. This gives ISI (Islamic State of Iraq) a distinctly local brand, although the group still threatens to strike at targets in the US, Europe and other parts of the region. Violence has increased sharply since the withdrawal of US troops in December 2011, with at least one large-scale attack per month. ISI is systematically subduing local government structures in its north-eastern strongholds, while trying to discredit the central government by orchestrating regular bombings in Baghdad. This Islamist group appeals to low-income Shiites with a network of charities. Its armed wing has fought against the government forces, rival Shiite groups, and against Sunni militias.

Kuwait: Kuwait is ruled by a Sunni royal family where the Sunnis consist of almost 70% of the population and rest are Shiites. Sunni-Shiite relations are markedly better than elsewhere in the Persian Gulf, although Shiite politicians complain of anti-Shiite prejudice. Shiites form part of the merchant elite and have their representatives in Kuwait's vocal parliament. Fortunately, in Kuwait sectarianism has always been a non-starter. Though aware of sectarian differences, these were never highly politicized. The Shias in Kuwait has been an integral part of society before there was even a polity to speak of. They make up roughly one half of the country's merchant class. Unlike in Bahrain, the Shia hold high government positions and 9 of Kuwait's 50 elected members of parliament are Shia. Although some neighbourhoods are becoming more homogenously Shiite, contrary to the situation in Bahrain, the vast majority of Sunnis and Shia live beside each other—and have for decades as houses generally stay within families. Simply put, the Shias are fully Kuwaiti, and have long been regarded as such by the government and Kuwaiti Sunnis.

There are two issues for which talking heads have raised unfounded questions; namely Shia origins

and loyalty. Polemical comments about shiites have played into deliberate othering tactics in efforts to drive a wedge between Sunni and Shiite communities, and have unfortunately been picked up by the masses. Setting aside the historical fact that many Kuwaitis of Arab origin are Shia and Kuwaitis of Persian origin are Sunnis; many programs are propagating an idea that Shia have Iranian origins and are thus an alien presence.

Anti-Shia sentiment has come at a time for the Shia in Kuwaiti national politics, as they must juggle their relations with the populous and the government, who are themselves at odds. The ruling family, with whom they have a very good relationship, continues to front a very unpopular prime minister, leading to countless stalemates within parliament. Although Shiite MPs are now in solidarity with those who wish to oust the “corrupt” prime minister, the initial reluctance of some to do so (and potentially jeopardize relations with the ruling family) was identified as proof that the Shia does not really want what is best for Kuwait. Kuwait will not become Bahrain in terms of outright violence, but if media in Kuwait continues to draw lines in the sand between the sects, these lines could very well become perforations over time and perhaps more quickly if tensions in Bahrain continue to escalate.

Lebanon: In a country where the Shiites consist of at 40%, Sunnis 20% of the total population and Small Alawite community which has settled in the northern city of Tripoli. (Though no official census since 1932 has been conducted), top positions in government are divided strictly along the confessional lines. Shiites are only entitled to the position of the parliament speaker, but they control by far the strongest armed militia (Hezbollah). The uprising in Syria has greatly exacerbated sectarian tension in Lebanon. Lebanon’s Sunnis sympathize with, and in some cases aid, the largely Syrian rebels, who are setting up a base in northern Lebanon. The Shiite Hezbollah is allied to the Syrian regime and is backed by Iran. Violence has flared in Tripoli between Sunnis and a local Alawite minority which sides with the Syrian regime.

The impact of the Syrian uprising on Lebanon will be as closely watched as the events in Syria itself.

No other two Arab countries have their destinies so closely intertwined, and no country in the region is as divided on the issue of the Syrian uprising as Lebanon. Overwhelming support for Syrian government comes from the close alliance between Assad and Hezbollah, the main Lebanese Shiite party. Vast majority of Lebanese Sunnis sympathize with the largely Sunni-led uprising in Syria. The Christians are divided between political parties that rely on Assad’s support and those strongly opposed to Syria’s influence in Lebanon. The stakes are high for Hezbollah which controls the largest and best-equipped armed force in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Syrian refugees, army deserters and rebel groups stream to the largely Sunni northern Lebanon, where they can count on substantial local support. But pro-Assad Lebanese groups are unlikely to sit back and watch the area become a rear base for Syrian rebels, making northern Lebanon a proxy battleground of the Syrian conflict.

Saudi Arabia: The Shiite minority about 10-15% populates the oil-rich Eastern Province. All power rests in the hands of Al Saud, a Sunni royal dynasty. The government is cracking down on largely peaceful Shiite protests for greater religious and cultural freedom and better access to government employment. State officials blame Iran for the unrest, although there is yet no evidence of Tehran’s involvement. It is the richest State in the region.

Syria: The majority is of Sunni Arab (around 70%) and the Alawite are in minority (10-15%). Ruling Assad family belongs to the Alawite minority, an offshoot of Shiite Islam. Alawites control top positions in the army and the intelligence apparatus. At its core, the civil war in Syria is not a religious conflict. The dividing line is one’s loyalty to the Assad’s government. However, some religious communities tend to be more supportive of the regime than the others, fuelling mutual suspicion and religious intolerance in many parts of the country.

Syria is an Arab country with a Kurdish and Armenian minority. In term of religious identity, most of the Arab majority belongs to the Sunni branch of Islam, with several Muslim minority groups associated with the Shiite Islam. The Christians from different denominations represent at least 10% of the

population. The emergence among the anti-government rebels of hardliner Sunni Islamist militias fighting for an Islamic state has alienated the minorities. The outside interference from the Shiite Iran and the Sunni Saudi Arabia makes matter worse, feeding into the wider Sunni-Shiite tension in the Middle East. President Bashar al-Assad belongs to the Alawite minority, an offshoot of Shiite Islam specific to Syria (with small population pockets in Lebanon).

The Assad family has been in power since 1970 and although it presided over a secular regime, many Syrians think Alawites have enjoyed privileged access to top government jobs and business opportunities. After the outbreak of the anti-government uprising in 2011, the vast majority of Alawites rallied behind the regime, fearful of discrimination if the Sunni majority came to power. Most of the top rank in the army and the intelligence services are Alawites, making the community as a whole closely identified with the government camp in the civil war. A majority of Syrians are Sunni Arabs, but they are politically divided.

True, most of the fighters in the opposition Free Syrian Army come from the Sunni provincial heartlands, and many Sunni Islamists don't consider Alawites as real Muslims. The armed confrontation between largely Sunni rebels and the Alawite-led government troops has led some observers to see Syria's civil war as the conflict between Sunnis and Alawites. Most of the regular government soldiers fighting the rebels are Sunni recruits (though thousands have defected to the opposition), and Sunnis hold leading positions in the government, the bureaucracy, the ruling Baath Party, and the business community. Some businessmen and middle class Sunnis support the regime because they want to protect their material interests.

The war in Syria has attracted number of countries. Russia and Iran are supporting President Bashar al-Assad. The US is supporting the Sunni rebels. To create more confusion, Germany, France and Britain are fighting and trying to destroy the ISIS. Russia says that it is also fighting against the ISIS but it is also supporting Assad in fighting against the

rebels. ISIS has been created out of the Sunni rebels in Syria and Sunni rebels from Iraq with its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They have been joined by highly radicalised educated and technically qualified / trained youth from different countries. These persons are motivating, brain washing and radicalising the youth from all over the world through their social networking and propaganda, to join the IS in Syria for what they call as Jihad. Large numbers of youth from all over have been joining the IS. Most surprising was that the Muslims from European countries have joined the IS. About 1200 trained fighters from Columbia have travelled from such far off country to join the IS. We can say that while communication technology has done wonders, it has also enabled terrorist networks to encrypt their communications effectively. Due to the fighting in Syria thousands of Syrian have fled the country and have entered European countries as refugees creating a big chaos and economic crisis in Europe.

Yemen: Zaydis, a Yemeni offshoot of the Shiite Islam, form around 45% of the population, the rest are Sunni. Political alliances are built primarily on regional/tribal loyalties and commonality of interests, rather than religious affiliation. Religious differences never played a central role in Yemeni politics. The long-serving President Ali Abdullah al-Saleh was himself of Zeydi extraction. However, a rebellion against the state by a Zeydi clan, the Houthis, and the menace of Al Qaeda-affiliated Sunni extremists, has the potential to exacerbate religious fault-lines. This rebel has attracted number of countries who have jumped into the fight. Iran is supporting Houthis with arms equipment and other aid. Whereas the Sunni dominated countries like Saudi Arabia are supporting the Sunni clans with all the aid and equipment. India and number of other countries have pulled out their citizens from Yemen. This has also attracted number of radicalised Islamist groups who have also jumped in. People have been fleeing from Yemen to other neighbouring countries.

Global Fight Against Extremism

During 2015 Islamist terrorist activities has been long and grim. In any given month, people have been killed in the name of a pernicious ideology. This spreading terror is not confined to the atrocities committed by

the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; it has become a global problem. For that reason, the international community needs a comprehensive strategy to defeat Islamist extremism—one in which force, diplomacy and development work together to achieve a more stable world. The most urgent pillar of this strategy is dismantling the Islamic State, which must be eliminated not just in Syria and Iraq, but also in Libya and everywhere else. All the countries must do what is necessary to defeat a group that has seized territory in five countries and declared a new state ruled by fanatical ideologues. Because the group cannot be negotiated out of existence, a broad group of allies—with the right political strategy—must defeat it everywhere. Victory over the Islamic State will be only a first, albeit essential, step to a just outcome in Syria, which means a settlement that allows the country to progress and fully respects its minorities. Moreover, the Islamic State is merely the most virulent manifestation of an extremism that has afflicted the world for decades. We must construct a global force able to fight extremists wherever—and whenever—they try to gain a foothold. The security threat from the Islamic State is not at our door; it is within our home, and we have an overwhelming interest in eradicating it in the short and medium terms. In the longer term, we must recognize that the problem is the ideology of extremism itself. Islam, as practised and understood by the great majority of believers, is a peaceful and honourable faith. But we cannot keep denying the nature of the problem we face. The political leaders should think of West Asia and Islam as being in a process of transition: West Asia towards rule-based and religiously tolerant societies and Islam towards its rightful place as a faith of progress and humanity. Seen in this way, this is not a mess to avoid, but a life-and-death struggle in which whole world's fundamental interests are at stake. Also, the leaders must recognize in the coming year the crucial importance of resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. It would also contribute to good global and interfaith relations—and powerfully reassert the principle of peaceful coexistence on which the international order rests. There is also a need to forge a foreign policy by the political leaders that embodies the lessons of the period since 9/11. Such a policy would recognize the need for active engagement—refined, rather than incapacitated, by our experience. The fight against

extremism will not only require force, but it will require education and cooperation too.

Russia's Intervention

President Vladimir Putin's decision to intervene in Syria marked a major turning point in Russian foreign policy in 2015. Over the past 15 years, Putin has increasingly relied on the use of military power to achieve his domestic and foreign policy objectives. Putin's Syria gambit was the logical, if dramatic, next step in Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policy. Putin hopes for solidarity and support from the international community for his actions in Syria. Pro-Kremlin commentators point to US secretary of state John Kerry's recent trip to Moscow as proof that military intervention to fight terrorism in Syria has ended Russia's international isolation and generated new respect for its standing as a responsible global power. Russia is back, so the argument goes, because the world needs Russia. In the long run, Russia could become a partner in the global fight against terrorism. And, in principle, the US, the European Union and countries around the world should welcome Russian cooperation in this mission. In practice, however, several key short-term issues must be resolved before the long-term goal of cooperation with Russia can be achieved. Firstly, Russia, which has intervened to defend its client, President Bashar al-Assad, must stop bombing Syrian opposition forces supported by the US and its coalition, and start fighting the Islamic State. In the first weeks of the Russian bombing campaign, the strategy was obvious: eliminate all third parties in the civil war and thereby force the world to choose between the lesser of two evils, Assad or the Islamic State.

Secondly, Putin must engage more seriously in the global efforts to launch a political transition process in Syria. Assad cannot stay. He could serve in an interim, transitional role, as some dictators have done in other transitions from authoritarian rule. Moreover, the vast majority of victims of Syrian government military operations are civilians, not terrorists. As a demonstration of Russia's influence over the regime, Putin should first pressure Assad to stop killing civilians. Thirdly, Russia must change its bombing methods. Too many civilians are dying. These types of attacks by Russia generate more

inspiring footage for jihadi channels on YouTube—exactly what the Islamic State wants. Fourthly, Putin needs to stop the flow of fighters from Russia into Syria. Even Russian estimates suggest that by September 2015, some 2,400 Russian citizens had joined the Islamic State. Finally, to be a useful partner in Syria, Russia must stop expecting concessions from the US on Ukraine. Such linkage will never work.

Geopolitical Situation

Within hours of the execution of the prominent Shiite dissident Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr on 02 January 2016 by Saudi Arabia, the Shiite theocracy in Iran took it as a deliberate provocation by its regional rival and displayed their anger on the streets of Tehran. There were demonstrations in front of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and its consulate in the eastern Iranian city of Mashhad. The angry protesters set the embassy ablaze with firebombs, climbed the fences and vandalized parts of the building. After the incident, the Saudi government and its staunch ally Bahrain, and Sudan, severed diplomatic ties, giving Iranian ambassadors 48 hours to leave. Bahrain one of Iran's most important regional trading partners. The United Arab Emirates reduced its representation to the level of charge d'affaires. Saudi Arabia's move to isolate Iran raises the spectre of deepening conflicts in the volatile Middle East after the biggest meltdown in relations between the two regional powers in almost three decades. The clash exposes again the fault lines in the world's tinderbox and risks worsening conflicts in Yemen and Syria, where Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran are fighting proxy wars. The widening rift follows Saudi criticism of the US-led deal last year over Iran's nuclear program. It also comes as the collapse in the oil price strains domestic finances in a region that accounts for more than half of global reserves. Markets reacted, the oil price rose, while stock markets in China, Japan and across Europe tumbled on the first full trading day of 2016. While concern was mainly about the Chinese economy, the prospect of more strains in the Middle East initially contributed to the turmoil. Oil futures at one point were up more than 3% in London to \$38.50 before retreating. Now, Iranian leaders are suddenly forced to reckon with whether they played into the Saudis' hands, finding themselves mired in a new crisis at a time they had been hoping to emerge from

international sanctions as an accepted global player. Iran might have capitalized on global outrage at the executions by Saudi Arabia, but instead it finds itself once again characterized by adversaries as a provocateur in the region and abroad. Besides Nimr's case, there have been several flash points between Iran and Saudi Arabia in recent months, with the nuclear deal and the wars in Syria and Yemen driving most of the tension. Within Iran, there was also intense anger over the Saudis' handling of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Then, in September, hundreds of Iranians were among those killed in a stampede by pilgrims near Mecca. Saudi's opposition to the nuclear deal and the lifting of sanctions against Iran has driven more hard feelings here. Many Iranians were quick to point out Saudi Arabia's alignment of interests with Israel, a hated enemy. As per Hamid Reza Taraghi, a political analyst and conservative politician, both the countries are opposed to the nuclear deal; both want it to fail. There is tension within Iran also for the nuclear deal, which some criticized as giving away too much to foreign interests. Their Parliamentary elections are due in February.

Conclusion

All the world will have to unite together to solve the crisis in West Asia Region. The fight against extremism will require force, unity and cooperation among all interested nations. It will require education, so that all nations to forget their personnel interests and unite together. It will require cooperation—not least in the messy business of real-world diplomacy. The year 2015 was difficult, punctuated by declining growth forecasts, horrific terror attacks, massive refugee flows and serious political challenges, with populism on the rise in West Asia. In this region, chaos and violence has continued to proliferate with devastating consequences. As a result, productivity growth is slowing and the region is not progressing. The key to managing the disruptions and assuaging people's fears is governance. People saw the world fall apart a century ago not because human knowledge stopped advancing, but because of widespread governance and policy failures. As 2016 starts, we must focus on adapting governance, in all of its economic and political dimensions, to the 21st century, so our resources and knowledge produce inclusive progress, not violent conflict.

Navigating Terrorism Labyrinth

Prof. Snehalata Panda

Introduction

Engendering fear to be in command of resources is in vogue since the dawn of human history. But extreme fear by use of violence and threats corroborating “terror” as a form of state sponsored political violence was displayed in France, during *Le terreur* when systematic use of violence to attain political ends was codified by Robespierre. He deemed it as “emanation of virtue” that delivers “prompt, severe and inflexible” justice, as a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied..to most pressing needs” of France (1) In his words “If the basis of popular government in peacetime is virtue, its basis in a time of revolution is virtue and terror- virtue, without which terror would be barbaric; and terror, without which virtue would be impotent”, (2) Since then terrorism has manifested in different forms, morphing into more radical, devastating, ruthless, organized and militarized activity with superb technical and propagation skills. In recent history the machinations to end the cold war and collapse of Soviet Union bestirred organized groups attacking liberalization. Governments retaliated by the use of hard and soft power but their number multiplied in all parts of the globe in different names using the same tactics -that is violence. In recent history US intervention in Afghanistan and Kuwait –Iraq feud resulted in chain of violent events causing death and destruction beyond imagination .Apparently it is associated with Islam though no religion believes in “violation of human dignity and rights especially the Right to Life and Right to Security”.

State terrorism originating during the Reign of Terror in France has not subsided but morphed into subtle plans as rulers of all types have used oppressive and suppressive measures to control the ruled or a section of it. Ever since the crusades religion motivated fanatics .This is manifested in its worst form in the present century as factions of the same religion use violence against the other. Ideology

has tremendous influence in shaping the mindset .Irrespective of organizational base resorting to violence remains unchanged. Terrorists defend their action as rational but it is undeniably irrational when individuals fall back on a violent strategy for satiating pleasure or even to achieve a political goal. Now terror is used as means for defending issues like environment protection as well as to sell narcotics which are not necessarily political issues .It is also used for political issues like secession of a territory from a dominant state for alleged negligence and marginalization .The ultimate aim being traumatizing it uses any means that fits into its perceived “effect”.

Terrorism has been studied extensively since 1970s as a field of International relations. Interestingly the study of terrorism is enriched with Political Science approach. Historical, Sociological, Economic and Psychological approaches have unraveled various dimensions of the phenomenon. Psychology offers impressive analysis of the motivations preceding terrorist action. But consensus is lacking on a uniform definition perhaps because the nature of the problem is complex though effect is more or less same. This paper attempts to critically examine quite a few definitions but inadequate to explain the menace. It is an extremely complex issue involving wide variety of people, their country of origin and adoption as well as multifarious causes. Clubbing all its manifestations together makes the link tenuous. It is therefore, argued that the features accompanying its various manifestations are better to explain the complex issues in international relations in general and terrorism in particular.

Exploring definitions

Over the years terrorism has assumed horrific dimensions with specific characteristics which frustrate attempts to dovetail with a single definition. Almost all definitions have focused on reasons for terrorism involving wide variety of people, their country of origin and adoption .Powerful states use

violent means to tighten their control .Colonial history is replete with instances of invaders using violent means to consolidate their rule .Terror may be used by the people and by the ruler with different approaches. Therefore, assigning a single reason to terrorism is difficult. The convention of experts to deliberate on root causes of terrorism organized by the Norwegian Government in 2003 identifies it as a “strategy of combat; it is premeditated use of violence against non combatants for psychological effect of fear on others than the immediate target groups”. But there is lack of consensus about groups to be identified as terrorist. It has analysed four levels of causation namely “structural, facilitator, motivational and triggering”. But the causes seem to be linked with one another ultimately leading to action. The reason for emergence of a terrorist group may not remain same over a period of time and individuals joining the group might continue to be in the group for different reasons at different times. “Ethnographic conflicts and ideological conflict lead to violence as a pressure tactic”. According to Gupta ideology and “political entrepreneurs” motivate the terrorist who are categorized as ‘true believers, mercenaries and captive participants’. The mercenaries involve for achieving their selfish interests and the captives get into out of fear. (5)On the basis of public opinion poll conducted on a selected sample, Maleckova concluded that economic deprivation may not be a strong motivator for terrorist activity. (6) Poverty and lack of education are usually considered as leading people to extremism and indulge in criminal activity including joining terrorist organization .But this is not ubiquitous as educated youth have indulged in terrorist activities. There may be multiple reasons for such action particularly if rewards are more than punishment. Age is a major determinant .Suicide bombers are inspired by words such as “martyrdom for the sake of one’s religion and nation”. Retaliation following a terrorist activity stimulates the psyche of people to join groups that assure revenge against victimization. Horgan views terrorism as a complex process as no single reason can be attributed to involvement in terrorism. Hijacking of planes and kidnapping foreigners are violent pressure exerted by terrorists for political response from a government. (7) Though the state supported as well as non state terrorists assess the possible consequences but it seldom turns out to be in their expected direction .In

other words actions might be based on inadequate information and knowledge where as reactions may not be in the expected manner.

United Nations (UN) defines it as –”an act destroying or injuring civilian lives ...by individuals and groups independently ... for some political goal”. But this definition seems to exclude state sponsored terrorist activity. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines it as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political and social objectives.” All the member nations of UN do not agree to accept a uniform definition of terrorism though there is over all consensuses on its main elements. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1267 allows states to eliminate safe havens of terror, disrupt terror networks, financing channels and their cross border movements.

A “new phase” has begun in the method of terrorizing with the use of social media and electronic communication by the terrorist groups. The San Bernardino killing of fourteen people at an office party by a radicalised Islamic couple is described as “home grown” terrorism. To curb such menace US would revive legislation that requires social media to inform government about posts in various social network sites deemed to promote “terrorist activity”. (13) It has also become a campaign issue in the 2016 U S presidential election. One important fall out of such terrorist attack is increase in sale of guns. People defend purchase of guns for self protection. ‘Home grown’ terrorism has defied intelligence agencies who never gave warning about the attack. President Obama has appealed to reach out to Muslim communities to help identify threats, stimulate contrary Muslim voices to counter extremist propaganda, encouraging people to watch one another etc. But this will revive debate on privacy versus security.

Features

Understanding features of terrorism for its relative expedience to describe the phenomenon is a better approach. These are mainly motives, violence and creating public fear. Motives are basically social, economic and political. It can be domestic or home

grown, originating and indulging in violence within a particular country. Obtaining killer gadgets crosses the domestic boundary and it requires joint action between the country, the supplier and the supply chain. In the process the terrorists may target all the countries involved thereby spreading domestic terrorism to a foreign country. This in turn leads to combined action affecting bilateral and trilateral relationship with gestures solicited from a powerful country as the case with cross border terrorism. Counter terror partnership is forged between countries for security of their personnel and property in foreign countries, the most recent being India –Japan counter –terror partnership. (17) India and US have agreed to “finalise a pact for enhanced intelligence sharing and exchange of information of terror watch list”.(18) A Saudi Arab led coalition of 34 nations in Asia and Africa is being formed to fight terrorism which will work with other countries and international institutions to support counter terrorism. Saudi Arab is fighting the Shia Houthi rebels in Yemen .It is also a part of US led coalition to fight Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). (19)

In the present century transnational terrorism that is terrorist violence with international impact has been the subject of academic deliberations. Terrorists address a wider audience with well planned and executed strategy .Thus three categories of factors are discernible from its strategy that is the victim, the perpetrator and the audience. It is difficult to identify the victim and perpetrator as they may or may not be innocent people. Perpetrators are defined as individuals and sub national groups but states in some cases might support such individuals and groups. The audience may be few or spread across the world (20)

The motives are changing over a period of time. Much of it was for setting up a state by an ethnic group when secession was not allowed through a democratic process. Now it is motivated by several ideologies, religious suppression, intolerance, social injustice and other issue specific goals. Mode of operation too has changed. The fear is that such organizations will devastate the world by using nuclear device. In fact, such an apprehension resulted in US-Iraq war and the consequences of the war continue to scare the world with forceful retaliation by ISIS.

Political motivation may be articulated against restrictions imposed by a government perceived to be unacceptable .It may also be to alter the political relationships mostly on ideological basis .Leaders champion certain ideologies attracting good number of followers who justify terrorist means to achieve their ends. Planned attacks threaten communities, institutions and people in power. Leaders with a mission to ensure revolutionary changes in the society and polity justify terror as a means to achieve political ends. Their followers resort to violence where as the leader remains a remote counselor inspiring their action whose influence flows from the resources under his control.

Use of violent means to achieve political ends excludes wars of various types, civil as well as international because it is less organized and limited in scale. Scholars have attempted to differentiate between assassination and terrorism mainly basing specific target in the former and indiscriminate killing in the latter. Alex Schimidt describes terrorism as “anxiety –inspiring method of repeated violent action employed by (semi) clandestine individual, group or state actors for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons … the direct target of violence are not the main targets.” (21)

ISIS has aligned the notch on history of the past century with the present expressing ideology as the primary motive for terrorist activity. It is inspiring people of Islamic origin by stirring their consciousness about the Caliphate. The eighth century Abbasid Caliph Harun –al - Rashid is epitomized as the most successful ruler .His success might be due to toleration as a principle of governance than the tactics which the ISIS has resorted to. (22) It has claimed to have killed “home bound Russian tourists, youngsters enjoying a rock concert in Paris, an office party in US and underground commuters in London”. The group calls it a *jihad* to resurrect the caliphate that was dismembered after the end of World War I. On the face of it, its activities world over forebode beginning of World War III. (23) Historically both Christianity and Islam occupied territory and converted people to their faith .Plundering and killing were rampant by both. Caliphate controlled Byzantine North Africa and Andalusia by the early eighteenth century. The Mongols ransacked Central Asia and

South Eastern Europe .Later the Ottoman Empire claiming to be the Caliphate controlled Southern Europe, Northern Africa and a major portion of Central Asia. It collapsed after World War I .The British and French had installed rulers in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Trans Jordan etc. where dictators over rode the popular will that in turn created dynastic rule. Different factions of Islam indulged in war financed by oil money. Now threats to US, Europe and Russia are the Islamic State (IS), a breakaway group of al Qaeda which reiterates rivalry for supremacy in different centuries through action and counteraction. For example US led coalition claims to have wrested back territory from the IS and eliminated some top leaders .Its forces have cut off supply lines and put pressure on Iraqi, capital of the proposed Caliphate. IS asserts to expand Islamic territory not only where US humiliated and killed Saddam Husain but across the middle east and parts of Africa reviving the Caliphate.US sources revealed that there are many groups within the al Qaeda one such being al Qaeda of Indian Subcontinent. Presently the ISIS is the most influential and irrepressible among terrorist groups with strong foreign recruits, mastery in electronic communication and sound financial status. (24) Reportedly it is generating \$80 billion per month to finance its expenses about fifty percent of which comes from taxation and confiscation, around 43 percent is generated by oil and the rest from sale of electricity and donations. (25)

The psychology of terrorists has been explored by Ross who has identified seven approaches to understand mind of the terrorists. (27) Assuming that none by itself can explain the psychology of the terrorist he has integrated five core features in the model “etiological features of terrorism listed in order of importance”(28) This model is fixed into “historical and structural factors that define the context”. It is drawn on several hypotheses about causal paths which could facilitate further research but excluded political, ideological, socio economic and organizational factors. According to Crenshaw terrorist behavior is a strategic choice.(29) For Hoffman a terrorist is a “violent intellectual ,prepared to use and indeed committed in using force in the attainment of goals”(30) All such behavior seeps out from mind set built upon information they access and analyse to suit their perceptions.

Radicalisation is a learning process of people committed to ideology which moves through a continuum beginning with alienation, joining a group that feeds mind with ideas similar to the idea of the person, training and action. Usually young people plunge into action while the elderly keep on infusing the ideology and training.(31) Now the terrorists have weapons to inflict severe violence on its target as well as technological skills to counter the target.(32) Carter et al evinced ‘catastrophic terrorism” was proved in al Qaeda’s attack on the twin towers of New York . IS is the principal threat to US, Europe and Russia and many other countries. Its sub groups are active in almost all parts of the world. Now the terrorists have weapons to inflict severe violence on its target as well as technological skills to counter the target. (33) At least eight militant groups are identified as the franchisees of ISIS. These are categorized as “affiliates that pose the most immediate threat to the United States and Europe. (34)

The strategy to overcome the menace has been mostly violent though it changes keeping in view the strategy of the perpetrator .Now Pentagon has proposed for building up “a string of military bases in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East .for “collecting intelligence and carrying out strikes against the terrorist group’s far flung affiliate.(35) US and Russia are closing in to impose tough sanctions against countries doing business with IS and expediting process in the UNSC for a political settlement of the Syrian problem .(36)

Concluding Observations

Terrorists and their organizations are proliferating irrespective of the nature of society and polity. Economic reasons are inadequate to explain as it is present in developed as well as developing countries. Authoritarian and democratic political systems, ethnically diverse and homogenous societies too have experienced terrorist violence. In all these contexts the psychological underpinnings seem to be credible reasons for the perpetrator and the victim who survive with consistent trepidation but insufficient to formulate a comprehensive definition.

Terrorist organizations have changed in structure, outreach and method though violence as a

means to achieve their goal remains unchanged. They are no more secret but operate under cover to elude punishment. In its long history terrorism has muted in form, multiplied and almost all societies are scared of its menace .In twentieth century the strategy, motivation and weapons of the terrorists have changed from what they were in the preceding century. Left wing terrorists and anarchists have disappeared with intensive state action. Its base is now ethnic and therefore the support base is extensive. Terrorist organizations in the middle- east and South Asia have different orientations .The comparatively younger members indulge in violence and the older members guide their action through their economic, political and intellectual clout.

States with strong democratic credential with sound administration are as much victims of terrorism as those with weak democratic governments Opinion is almost unanimous on US “track record in the region from overconfident intervention to reinvent Iraq to the underwhelming effort to end Syria’s civil war”. The region is paying for the pitfalls of oppression under western backed dictators followed by western intervention which could not usher in a stable government. For example US initiated “consociational democracy” in Iraq is afflicted by “strengthening of localized centres of power” rather than emergence of a strong central authority .It is a “soft theocracy” where the support of the clerics is unavoidable for political survival of the ruling elite.

May be the past is recreated to ensure that the values of present leadership are suitably accommodated in the society. The clash between modernity and tradition is a continuous process and collision between both has been witnessed in every age. ‘Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it turns to be not what they meant, other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.’ But the fight must avoid destruction of life and property of people as every step towards progress means improvement in life.

It is the new technology of communication that has globalised threats accruing from the clash compelling innovation of new modes of operation to succeed in subduing each other but the hydra-headed

monsters seldom satisfied in a state of hibernation. It is proliferating because of the Medias of communication and easy availability of weapons both conventional and ultra modern. Terrorists now have their own resources obtained through clandestine economic processes.

In the present century religious fanaticism has manifested in its worst form and a civilisational war between the Christians and Muslims has spread across the globe. Such terrorists are far more difficult to detect which exacerbates the fear that they could use means that was never used in the past. Proliferating use of online services like banking and business, information sharing and communicating make societies vulnerable to terrorist attack by net miscreants thereby upsetting the state and society. (39) The technical expertise among the teenaged people barren of ethics is more dangerous as a single or minuscule number can devastate the society. (40) “Social network is an important media to access information, ideas, and new recruits. Modern war is net war, a lower intensity battle by terrorists, criminals and extremists with a networked organizational structure” (41) Terrorists will disable people by technological devastation by attacking networks and accessing classified material stored in network devices. This will cause drop in business, consumer spending, travel, banking services, security establishment and so on.

Strategy to counter terrorism is more combative than preventive. The number of people killed by terrorists in Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan is many more compared to those killed in Europe and US. Backward economies perceive it as imperialism by proxy. The impact of colonial rule and actions on the eve of their independence to a great extent has shaped the mind sets of the people in these countries. Mutual rivalry between Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and other countries in the region has whetted the problem and US has intervened for its own interest. In a hierarchical world system comparatively poor countries are not treated as equal with their developed counterparts. “True, it is a sad world where all lives are not yet equivalent, where some can be killed without mourning ...our initial responsibility, in a pragmatic sense, is to our families and friends: when our Third World societies fail, our towns collapse, it

is our failure, not that of Europe or America, no matter what their vested interests' ... (42) The mind boggling question is the propriety of ethnic, social, political, economic and religious boundaries that create differences among people in a society. Measures to shape the world view in an uniform pattern according to the needs of any one government is resented by people .They rally round specific ideas to overcome such attempts .Academic deliberations on equanimity and mind of the perpetrator seldom delve down to the level of practice in commonplace interactions. Intolerance is the ultimate fall out in societies where the distinctions are reiterated in all types of relationships ignoring the humanitarian values.

Terrorism can be understood by Action - Reaction Syndrome. Deep rooted causes shape the mindset of the terrorist for indulging in violent action .It is the manifestation of careful preparation seeded with consciously selected targets .More often than not the response from government follows extremely devastating action. As the terrorist groups have dissimilar reasons at different times and in different locations the response may not be successful by the government /the ultimate target. It is not occurrence but recurrence in different situations by different groups whose motivations and methods do not follow a uniform pattern.

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Terrorism and International Order

Prof. Manas Chakrabarty

Introduction

In the present day world community, the term ‘terrorism’ has drawn the attention of all people across the globe. It is because of its deep rooted effect on the social set up. Before we go into the analysis of the term and its effects, it would be proper to analyse the term. In fact, it is a disputed term and there is no agreement amongst the scholars regarding the exact meaning and a well accepted definition. The difficulty lies in the fact that it has a wide political connotation. However, the term “Terrorism” owes its origin to a French word *terrorisme* and originally referred specifically to state terrorism as practiced by the French government during the period 1793–1794 Reign of terror. It should be stated that the French word *terrorisme* in turn was derived from the Latin verb *terrere* which means “to frighten”. Although “terrorism” originally referred to acts committed by a government, currently it usually refers to the killing of innocent people for political purposes in such a way as to create a media spectacle. However, terrorism is a violent act of terrifying the common public anytime be it in the day or night. Terrorists have many objectives such as spreading threat of violence in the society, fulfilling political purposes, free the hostages or just to commit brutal activities for reasons best known to them. It has been seen that usually, they make the civilians of the country as their primary target.

In fact, terrorism is an unlawful use of violence or threat of violence aiming to inculcate fear among the masses. It is a philosophy of violence which terrorists use to destabilize the social and economic set up of a country. In modern times, terrorism is being used to deliberately create communal tensions, and disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of a targeted society or country and destabilize the social set up. It should be noted that the primary goal of the terrorists is the fulfillment of their demands by the government of a specific country. Their main aim also includes ‘publicity’. In order to get publicity, they contact online

social media or newspaper, magazine and other printing media in order to spread their voices to the general public and also the government. It can be stated with a fair amount of certainty that terrorism flies in the face of diplomatic process, purposefully disrupting peace and safety in order to achieve a goal. It is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political, economic or social objectives. It targets ethnic or religious groups, governments, political parties, corporations, and media enterprises. It should be mentioned in this connection that terrorism that occurs throughout the world is known as **global terrorism**. It is accepted by all that it is probably the worst type of crime that ever exists. It not only kills the people but at the same time, it destroys livelihoods, economies, and civilized world order that took millennia to form. The results of terrorism are almost always catastrophic. Individuals or groups that commit these crimes are called terrorists. Terrorists exist all over the world. There are a few that operate alone, but mostly they are part of one of many global organizations. It is the usual practice that the terrorists or the terrorist groups usually maintain a close liaison amongst themselves. The whole world is of the view that terrorism is a hazard for mankind. The world is confronted with many problems but spreading terrorism is a grave menace to the world and has been most frightening of all. It is accepted by all that terrorism is the cruellest crime of all because it kills less criminals and more innocent citizens.

It should be stated that assassinations, bombings, hijackings, diplomatic kidnappings-terrorism is the most publicized form of political violence. The history of terrorism goes back a very long time, but the very fact that there is such a history has frequently been ignored, even suppressed. This may be because terrorism has not appeared with equal intensity at all times. When terrorism reappeared in the late

twentieth century after a period of relative calm, there was the tendency to regard it as a new phenomenon, without precedent. The psychological study of terrorism has never been much in fashion. But this neglect has left a number of crucial questions unanswered. (Laqueur, 2011). Acts of violence committed by terrorists have become a staple of news reports in modern times, from hijackings to bombings, kidnappings to assassinations. How are we to understand both the causes and the consequences of these disturbing events? The key, this volume of original essays shows, lies in linking terrorism to the different contexts—historical, political, social, and economic—in which it occurs. (Crenshaw, 1995). It is therefore of dire necessity that we should try to find answer to these long standing questions.

Definition

It is really difficult to provide an accepted definition of terrorism. This idea is reflected in the observation of Angus Martyn who has pointed out that “The international community has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism. Terrorism expert Walter Laqueur also has counted over 100 definitions and concludes that the ‘only general characteristic which is generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence.’ It should be stated that every country has defined terrorism in its own way as per its own suitability. It must be said that there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. However, the term ‘Terrorism’ can be defined as the use of violence against civilians for political purposes. The major purpose of the terrorists is to draw attention to a group’s grievances and they use to frighten governments so that they resort into making concessions. It is further defined as political violence in an asymmetrical conflict that is designed to induce terror and psychic fear through the violent victimization and destruction of noncombatant targets who may be put under threat of a violence. This type of activities mainly serves the purpose of sending a message from an illicit clandestine organization who operates from behind the scene. It is seen that the terrorists usually never comes to the surface. They carry out their operational activities from behind the screen. It is an established fact that the purpose of terrorism is to gain attention of the media and wide publicity so that it can deeply influence the targeted

audience(s) in order to reach short- and midterm political goals. It is therefore clear that it indulges the use of violence to instill fear, generate publicity, and mostly its aim revolves round the main objective to destabilize governments.

However, according to Bruce Hoffman “terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one’s enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. However, the U.S. code has presented an all comprehensive definition of terrorism which may be stated as under.

The U.S. Code Title 22 Chapter 38, Section 2656f (d) defines terrorism as: “Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”

Basically, terrorism may be classified into:

- (a) International Terrorism; and (b) Domestic Terrorism.

“International terrorism” means activities with the following three characteristics:

1. It Involve violent act or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
2. It appears to be intended :
 - (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;
 - (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or,
 - (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and
3. It occurs primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcends national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.

On the other hand, **“Domestic Terrorism”** means activities with the following three characteristics: Involve acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;

- (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;
- (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; Or,

(iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping;

The major purpose of terrorism is perhaps the idea of power. The concept of power is central to international relations. Yet, disciplinary discussions tend to privilege only one, albeit important, form: an actor controlling another to do what that other would not otherwise do. By showing conceptual favoritism, the discipline not only overlooks the different forms of power in international politics, but also fails to develop sophisticated understandings of how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates. We argue that scholars of international relations should employ multiple conceptions of power and develop a conceptual framework that encourages rigorous attention to power in its different forms.

Causes of Terrorism

Like the definitional aspect, the causes of terrorism have been under much debate. A question is frequently asked as to what are the causes of terrorism. Normally, it can be said that the following are the major causes that lead to terrorism.

Social and Political Injustice

Usually, the people or the general mass choose terrorism when they are trying to fight what they perceive to be a social or political or historical wrong. At a point of time when the people finds that their basic rights are being denied, they resort to an act of terrorism.

As a result of the belief that an act of violence or its threat will be effective to gain the desired goal and it would usher in change in the social structure, the people resort to the acts of terrorism. Again, there is a belief that violent means justify the ends. It may be stated further that the terrorists resort to terrorism mainly because of the fact they do not have any choice. Further, in some cases, people who choose terrorist tactics are also persuaded that violence, or the threat of violence, is effective to gain the desired goal.

Ethno- Nationalism

Ethno nationalism is another important cause of terrorism. The desire of a population to break away from a government or ruling power and create a state

of their own can cause the formation of terrorist groups. In the 20th century this was seen often times with regions or states attempting to gain independence from their colonial era masters. Ethno-nationalism will continue to be a significant source of terrorism. So far as the records of history are concerned, the people have often resorted to this type of terrorism in order to get a justice to their ethnicity status.

Religion

Religion is regarded as one of the most potent cause of terrorism. It may be said that most commonly held the belief today that terrorism is caused by religion. Although it is not the main cause for terrorism but it can be said that religion definitely does play a significant role in driving some forms of it. As Hoffman points out in **Inside Terrorism**, religion in conjunction with political/ethno-nationalist drivers has long been a factor of terrorism. In fact, religion plays a very potent and important role for fomenting terrorism. In today's world, religion as a part of terrorism has been mainly attributed to Islamic fundamentalism. It should be stated that as a driver of terrorism, the true danger that religious doctrine poses is its encouragement of attacks that are more violent in nature than other types of terrorism. By being promised rewards in the afterlife, terrorists are more likely to carry out suicide bombings and other such "all in" tactics. In such cases religion truly plays the role as an opium and the people are directed to act as an agent of terrorist activities.

Socio-Economic Status

Terrorists may also be driven by a sense of relative deprivation and lack of upward mobility within society. Globalization and the modern media have given the 'have nots' an acute awareness of their situation compared to the 'haves'. As Omer Taspinar states in **Fighting Radicalism, Not "Terrorism,"** Globalization creates an acute awareness about opportunities available elsewhere. This leads to frustration, victimization, and humiliation among growing cohorts of urbanized, undereducated, and unemployed Muslim youth who are able to make comparisons across countries." Seeing the economic differences between themselves and the Western world can infuriate some in underdeveloped countries, increasing tension and hostilities. This allows terrorist organizations to gain attention and entry to societies

that have felt wronged by these perceived social injustices.

Unfortunately, the only real way to mitigate this is through economic development of the community, country, and region, but that takes time. For the foreseeable future there will always be those that are disgruntled by the comparison of living standards of the wealthy section around the world versus their own, opening the doors to frustration and anger. Thus, this driver is remarkably hard to combat as globalization allows for more mechanisms of comparison between varying global socio-economic levels.

Terrorism and World Politics

Terrorism is one of the gravest problems that the world society faces today. It is an issue of global concern. The presence of terrorism can be felt throughout the length and breadth of the world. Without any doubt, it is a much debated issue in all the countries of the world, both developing and the developed. The 21st century has witnessed unforeseen events which have altered the course of history forever. The world has received the blessings of technological advancements but at the same time the biggest challenge is undoubtedly the emergence of terrorism and it has become one of the biggest global threats. Terrorism has been insidiously affecting lives of people all over the world and has resulted in spoiling the world peace at an alarming rate. It is affecting all countries of the world whether it is a super power like the United States of America or a less developed country like India or any other country where terrorism continues to spread its roots but yet no concrete solution to this problem could be developed or achieved. It has not only debilitated national security but has also led countries into a situation of anarchy with far reaching consequences.

There is no doubt that terrorism is a global threat and even though countries have come to recognize it, they have to work harder in order to ensure world peace which is very difficult to achieve. It has been suggested by many leading international scholars that in order to achieve world peace, all the countries of the world must come forward together in order to counter the growing menace, i.e. terrorism and take concrete steps to stop the violence, fear,

panic and blood shed and loss of human resources. It should be remembered that it is definitely a mammoth task and certainly not an easy one and all the nations would have to collaborate and reach consensus on how to achieve their goal for a terror-free globe. All of us should take it for granted that it is sine qua non that restoration of world peace is the only lasting solution to many of the problems which hampers all the nations across the globe.

Further, all of us should be concerned because terrorism is a growing problem in this unstable world. The present day world has become deeply connected with terrorism. It has become a part and parcel of the modern society because of social and economic factors. It is well understood that global problems affect the modern world. The modern world is experiencing rapid changes which have made all the countries more interdependent than ever before and the whole world has been converted into a global village. With growing development of the society, the world grows smaller, and any event in any one area leaves behind a greater impact on other parts of the world. Thus, terrorism makes world politics more complicated. It allows non-state actors to affect the world, leaving states unsure as to how to respond to attacks and get free out of the clutch.

Conclusion

There is no denying the fact that terrorism is a major problem at the moment which has engulfed the whole world. Its effects penetrate deep and exert tremendous influence and it can deteriorate a country's economy to a very significant extent. The economy of a country is the backbone of any society. Terrorism badly affects the economic structure of a society and hence it is absolutely necessary to face and block it with utmost sincerity. So far as human history is concerned, terrorism has put it in a topsy turvy position many a times and it is high time that we should be very much concerned about it. As it stands today, terrorism has become a big national and international problem throughout the length and breadth of the world and we are confronted with several key problems. They are: First, what constitutes terrorism? What is new about the "new" terrorism? Why is the Muslim world the most potent breeding ground of this new terrorism? To what extent is religion itself a factor? Is there a clash of civilizations between the Muslim world and

the largely Christian or post-Christian West? Is America at fault? Israel? Did European nations turn a blind eye to terrorists and their sympathizers in their midst? To what extent are poverty and oppression the causes of terrorism? What is the likelihood that terrorists will obtain weapons of mass destruction-chemical, biological, or nuclear? Why was the United States unprepared for 9/11? Why the intelligence failure? Are Islamic terrorists the only terrorists we need to fear? What about other terrorists from the right of the left, eco terrorists or anti-globalization terrorists? And finally, what is the best defense against terrorism? (Laqueur, 2003). We can see examples of this today. The best example is Al-Qaeda. Its 9/11 attacks damaged the United States without giving the US a clear enemy to attack. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, it was clear that the US was now at war with Japan. After 9/11 it was much less clear. The US ended up at war with Afghanistan and later with Iraq, but not with Saudi Arabia, the home country of the majority of the 9/11 attackers.

The governments of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia did not directly participate in the attacks, making it somewhat complicated and difficult to know how to respond to the attacks. In fact, the destruction of the World Trade Towers demonstrates the horrifying consequences of a terrorist strike. (Walter Laqueur, 1999).

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ISIS: The Geopolitics of Terrorism

Prof. Rajesh Dogra

Introduction

The Present Article focuses on Geostrategic and Geo-political Importance of terrorism in Persian Gulf, this region being the centre of conflicts in the Middle East. Iraq and Syria are the two dominant countries of this region. The United States is an important extra-regional power that has considerable influence in this region. The article further argues that peace in the Persian Gulf is a critical necessity for stability in the Middle East. Such an order would be a product of the policies of two important players; Iraq and United States, besides the other states of the Persian Gulf. Peace in the Persian Gulf would ensure stability for the region of the Middle East and also in the long run, provide for containing the so-called Civilization Clash, which is emerging in the World today.

The Middle East and its sub-region, Persian Gulf region, have long been amongst the most volatile regions of the world and major centres of world affairs; strategically, economically, politically, culturally, and religiously sensitive areas. The location of the Persian Gulf has given the region a significant economic and strategic position. Both the Middle East and Persian Gulf region remain areas of unresolved and dangerous conflict involving the external powers, arms proliferation and ethnic and religious hatreds that go back centuries.

The Origin of ISIS

When in the afternoon of 4 July 2014, ISIS leader Abou Omar al Baghdadi climbed the stairs of the Imam's minbar pacing himself one step at a time to deliver the sermon of the Friday prayers at the Great Mosque in Mosul, Iraq, an important moment in the saga of Al Qaeda played out. A few days earlier, on 29 June 2014, ISIS' spokesman, Abou Mohammad al 'Adnani, had announced (in a statement released in Arabic, English, French, German and Russian) the

birth of an 'Islamic State' with al Baghdadi as "leader Caliph Ibrahim."

On 1 July 2014, al Baghdadi himself had issued a "Message to the Islamic Umma" calling on Muslims from around the world to immigrate to the new Emirate. The coincidence of al Baghdadi's sermon with the first Friday in Ramadan and with the United States' Independence Day was hardly fortuitous, and such timing added indeed to the climactic theatricality staged by a group bringing its own market.

The ISIS story thus indicates that for all the decentralisation, there remains among Jihadis a yearning for a global leadership, as it once existed under the heyday of Bin Laden's Al Qaeda al Oum (1995-2005). ISIS is certainly filling a vacuum and regenerating a brand that was successful among those militants. Yet, without establishing a modicum of political legitimacy, ISIS will not be able to build an enduring movement.

The franchising was accepted because it was decreed by Bin Laden and it made sense tactically as Al Qaeda also avoided structural collapse by welcoming generational shift. Al Qaeda who tellingly refers to itself officially as Qaedat al Jihad (the basis of the Jihad) saw itself as an enabler, whereas ISIS' centrifugal dynamics indicate otherwise revealing the limits of the franchise model.

The Islamic State Goals

On Sunday June 29th, 2014, the first day of the holy month of Ramadan, the extremist group ISIS announced the restoration of the Caliphate and the renaming of its group to the Islamic State (IS). This declaration was made by official ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al Adnani via a publicly released audio message. The newly established Islamic State has

made major appropriations in Iraq, including the capture of major cities, oil refineries, weapons and military armaments. Jabhat al-Nusra, or the al-Nusra Front, is an organically grown extremist organization within Syria that derived from old cadres of AQI, but has since remerged in Syria's 2011 uprisings to become al-Qaeda's preferred affiliate within the region.

The leader of al-Nusra responded to Baghdadi's announcement by denying any notions of a merger and reiterating its allegiance to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Furthermore Zawahiri, who had become the leader of AQC following the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, openly rebutted the merger of al-Nusra and ISI. In a June 2013 letter to Baghdadi, Zawahiri noted that he was neither consulted, nor informed of such a merger and requested the dissolution of ISIS immediately. Eventually Baghdadi expressed his differences with Zawahiri, explicitly revealing the rift that had evolved between ISIS and AQC.

There was a clear divide between Zawahiri and Baghdadi. Furthermore, Baghdadi was becoming more independent and no longer required the perks of being under the al-Qaeda brand. On June 29th, a few months following ISIS and al-Qaeda's split, ISIS announced the establishment of the long-desired Caliphate and rebranded their group at the Islamic State (IS). Accordingly to religious interpretation, it was also requested that Muslims everywhere give bay'ah (allegiance) to the Caliphate and its leader, Baghdadi. In other words: you aligned with al-Qaeda or the newly established Islamic State. The implications of this announcement will be discussed in detail at the conclusion of this brief.)

The Historical background of ISIS

In 2013 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi decided to merge his forces in Iraq and Syria and to create ISIS to spread his zeal for violent actions in order to apply Salafi-jihadi ideology and to create a caliphate. This move was negatively criticized and was seen as an unrealistic way to promote the goal of an Islamic State in Syria by the leadership of Jabhat al-Nusra (Victory

Front) and by the Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri who dictated that ISIS should be operating only in Iraq.

On June 14, 2013 al-Baghdadi rejected al-Zawahiri's statement and decided to expand the operations in Syria, ignoring demands for mediation. The leader of al-Nusra, proceeded with the disbanding of ISIS but after a few months he decided to halt the attacks on ISIS without reaching any reconciliation point and with severe losses of fighters who were loyal to al-Baghdadi and committed to help ISIS remain in Syria. The same year, in February 2014, Al-Qaeda decided to disavow relations with ISIS.

Factual background

The split of ISIS from Al-Qaeda didn't weaken the group as it became larger and more powerful through operations in Syria and Iraq, fighting against the governments of Iraq and Syria, rebel groups in Syria and tribal groups and militias in Iraq. In January 2014, it defeated for the first time the Iraqi forces, exploiting the political instability created by the Shia-led government and the minority Sunni Arab community, and it took over Fallujah30 and in June 2014 it seized control of Mosul, Tikrit and Al-Qaim (Iraq-Syria border town) and then advanced to the South towards Baghdad.

On June 2934, ISIS announced the foundation of a Caliphate that erases all state borders with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Caliph, the world's ultimate authority on the estimated 1.5 billion Muslims, and decided to change its name from ISIS to Islamic State (IS) and called for all Muslims to join the new Caliphate. The belief of its members is that the whole world consists of non-believers who want to eradicate Islam, something that justifies the attacks against people who are or are not Muslims. They believe that they are the only true believers and that all their violent actions are cited in the Koran and Hadith. That is why this is considered one of the most extreme interpretations of Sunni Islam.

Recruitment of ISIS

Holding lands in Syria and Iraq renders necessary for the Islamic State the creation of a governing body which will stand as a supportive pillar towards its endurance and survival. Under this scope, ISIS has attracted more than 20,000 foreign fighters who, in many cases, have been victims of the organization's propaganda and recruitment strategies. More specifically, targets of ISIS recruitments are usually foreigners deprived of voting rights, educated youth, as well as victims of religious, political and economic inequalities and from lower classes.

Funding of ISIS

It is a fact that ISIS represents the well-funded terrorist organization in the world. Having a constant flow of resources and being able to raise millions of dollars from a variety of activities in daily basis, the estimated worth of the wealthiest terrorist organization comes up to \$2 billion. To an extent, the Islamic State is considered self-financed. Controlling territories of strategic importance in Iraq and Syria provides them the opportunity to capture and take advantage of important resources, such as dams and oil infrastructures.

According to a report by the U.S Treasury Department in 2014, the estimated revenue of oil smuggling reached almost \$2 million a day. Simultaneously, the imposition of strict taxes on its citizens, charges on basic services (for example electricity and access to means of communication), duties on imports, kidnappings and hostage taking, as well as ransacking banks, looting museums, money laundering and human, firearms and drugs trafficking, consist a combination that provides ISIS a vital source of income. But sustaining and controlling such a vast area, cannot be achieved only by the aforementioned funding sources. Thus, it is undeniable that external funding plays a significant role towards the efficient functioning of that entity.

Why Are They Successful?

It was reported that 30,000 Iraqi soldiers retreated against an opposition of only 800 Islamic State fighters in the attack on Mosul Iraq's second largest city. Two important geopolitical factors attribute to IS's success.

Iraq's military has continuously struggled in combat readiness and effective leadership since Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki came to power. Corruption is widespread and a lack of morale plagues the ranks of the Iraqi Security Force. There have been many recent cases of senior military officers abandoning their outposts unannounced and ordering their troops to follow suit after facing threats of an IS attack. Many of Maliki's former generals and commanders were replaced with loyalists to his regime those who weren't as experienced and trusted by their soldiers.

Reasons for the rise of ISIS

The identification of the actions that led to the rapid rise of ISIS creates a problematic that cannot be easily answered. A variety of historical facts combined with a succinct approach of countries policies could provide an enlightenment of the current crisis in the Middle East. Thus, trying to detect the reasons of the rise of ISIS, we are going to present the basic factors from the root, rather than focus at the tip of the iceberg.

Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism

Since Islamic State (IS) swept into the global media spotlight in June 2014, the international community has watched in shock as the group has terrorised en masse those that do not comply with its violent and extremist worldview. Journalists, humanitarian aid workers and human rights activists have been brutally murdered events that have been documented by the group and boasted about as part of its propaganda machine. At present, it is estimated that over 2,500 Western Europeans alone have journeyed to join in the crisis in Iraq and Syria, most joining IS.

International governments have been galvanised into action against IS and its self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group presents challenges that the international community has not before been faced with. It controls a huge amount of territory, administers the civil lives of some eight million people and rejects all norms of international law. However, in spite of its prominence,

IS strategy, motivations and structure are often misdiagnosed by onlookers.

Just like Islamism, jihadism is a category of action. Al-Qaeda and IS are both part of a form of Salafi jihadism, loosely based upon three concepts: hakmiyyah, jahiliyyah and global jihad. Broadly, hakmiyyah refers to a theological understanding of Allah's ultimate sovereignty over political, social and economic affairs as first defined by the South Asian ideologue and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami Abul 'Ala Mawdudi. The term jahiliyyah, in this context, refers to the worldview of Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb, one that deems the Muslim community to 'have been extinct for a number of centuries', and have reverted to a pre-Islam state of affairs in the absence of a global leadership. Because of this, radical and violent change to the existing order is urgently justified.

Lastly, global jihad refers to an understanding of jihad developed by Abdullah Azzam. In a fatwa issued in 1979, he ruled that all Muslims, regardless of their nationality, are obligated to fight defensive jihad against any enemy invading a Muslim land that cannot defend itself. The above concepts were combined to form an ideology that could be used to justify violence against apostate regimes, and all those supporting them.

Grass Root of terrorism

While its ideological roots go back much further than the 1980s, al-Qaeda, the group that was destined to become the standard-bearer of global jihadism, emerged as a largely abstract entity over the course of the Afghan War in the 1980s, during which Islamists from across the world travelled to fight "defensive" jihad against the Soviets.

These foreign fighters were predominantly, but not exclusively, composed of Arabs and shared a common ideology, even though they were not one homogenous group. Most of them had been galvanised into the jihadist cause by events of the previous two years, a time of great upheaval and empowerment in the Middle East, not unlike the years that followed the toppling of the Tunisian state in 2011.

Just like IS, al-Qaeda's emergence relied on a unique convergence of extrinsic factors: over the course of the 1980s, various state and non-state actors worked together with the Afghan mujahidin to aid them in the fight against Communism through recruitment, funding and training. One of the most prominent of these was an organisation formed in 1984 by Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Osama bin Laden, a prominent Saudi businessman with pre-established wealth and good connections. Named Maktab al-Khadamat (MAK), the organisation successfully channelled funds to the mujahidin from donors across the world. It was from the financial and political infrastructure of MAK and the ideological melting pot of the war that the ideology and praxis of al Qaeda was refined.

Socio-economic foundations of Terrorism

Some indicators of socioeconomic conditions possibly conducive to creating terrorists are Poverty, especially because of its severely unequal distribution among nations, is obviously one of the most important. It has been claimed that Islamic rage against the United States is caused in part by the relative failure of Islamic nations to achieve economic success. In addition to the level and distribution of income, we include gender equity, public health, education, communication capabilities, and exposure to violence.

The Radical Terror

The 9/11 attack awakened the United States to the danger of violent Muslim radicalism on its own soil. In the years that followed, traditional approaches to preventing repeat attacks have focused on preventing future strikes. Such approaches are inadequate, however, because they prevent the immediate danger but do not address the problem's long-term causes.

Redefining Jihad

The concept of 'jihad' is not simply the right of a state or nation to self defence in the face of aggression, but rather an offensive type of military Confrontation which can and was undertaken by Muslims in the past in order to expand Muslim lands.

Suicide terrorism

Suicide terrorism is based on a broad conception of violence, including epistemic violence, reminds us of the complexity of societal relations of power before, during and after violence occurs. It therefore does not agree with the narrow definitions of violence that mainstream voices consider crucial for studying terrorism.

Post-9/11 Jihadism

The geographical range of al-Qaeda operations towards the end of the 1990s confirms its transnational strategy. No matter where the attack was, the overall motivation remained the same: to destabilise international security and destabilise Western global economies. Despite certain al-Qaeda affiliates' deviation from it, bin Laden pursued this strategy, until his death in 2011. His successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has implemented it too, though with less success, in light of operational difficulties.

It was the sole objective of bin Laden to effectively achieve the global terror on 11 September 2001 (9/11), when three planes, hijacked by members of al-Qaeda, crashed into the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers and the Pentagon. A fourth was destroyed before it reached its intended target. The alleged motives for 9/11, outlined in bin Laden's 2002 Letter to America, were the US military presence in Saudi Arabia, sanctions against Iraq and the US' unconditional support of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

IS and the Syrian War

In 2011, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current leader of IS, sent a contingent of what were then ISIS militants, and led by Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, across the Iraq-Syria border to fight the Assad regime under the banner of Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). Al-Jawlani, an effective military commander, rapidly led his faction to become the most effective rebel fighting force in Syria, something which brought it to the forefront of the war. Seeking to reap the ideological and practical benefits of JN's successes, al-Baghdadi made an announcement in April 2013 that ISI would be no more; rather, its activities were extending into Syria

and hence its name would be changed to Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

In doing so, JN would be absorbed back into its parent organisation; something that al-Jawlani rejected soon after, affirming his allegiance to al-Zawahiri, not al-Baghdadi, and thereby effectively rejecting the latter's legitimacy. His repudiation of the merger was backed by the al-Qaeda leader, who attempted to mediate this rapidly deteriorating tussle by nullifying al-Baghdadi's claims and dispatching a top al-Qaeda figure to Syria to mediate between the two groups.

In the months that followed al-Zawahiri's statement, the infighting between IS and JN continued to escalate, with thousands of jihadists dying as a result. Due to its vehement rejection of all those who were not outspoken allies, IS soon became regarded as the more extreme of the two groups, something made evident by its execution of other jihadists notably its beheading of a leading figure of Ahrar al-Sham in November 2013 and the killing of Abu Khalid al-Suri, the al-Qaeda ideologue sent to mediate the IS-JN dispute, in January 2014. The latter's death was the straw that broke the camel's back al-Zawahiri's official excommunication of al-Baghdadi from al-Qaeda came shortly after, in February 2014.

If nothing else, what the above events demonstrate is that understanding the respective histories of al Qaeda and IS is imperative if one is to grasp the particulars of the current rift between al-Zawahiri and al-Baghdadi. The cleavage between the two groups, something that has only been solidified since the beginning of this year, owes itself not just to act on-the-ground developments in Syria and Iraq, as is commonly misconceived. Rather, the split has much deeper roots that can be found in the ideological differences of bin Laden and al-Zarqawi, and thus go back as far as the 1990s.

In many ways IS does not represent a new form of terrorism. The brutal violence exhibited by it beheadings, crucifixions, torture are, unfortunately, not new. However, there are some aspects to IS that

do make it distinct from other groups, a result of evolution rather than a clear break from past jihadist strategy. They have led some to claim it has driven AQ into obscurity, redefined Islamist-inspired terrorism and irreparably changed the game for counter-terrorism and counter-extremism practitioners.

The IS “Caliphate”

One of the most striking features of IS, something which renders it distinct from other jihadist Organisations are that, not only does it lay claim to a contiguous territory that stretches over a thousand miles across Syria and Iraq, but it has established within this terrain a “caliphate”, ‘the first real jihadist state’. In stark contrast to other jihadist groups that have, in the past, taken over swathes of land but then continued to operate more or less covertly, like AQIM in the Sahel and AQAP in Yemen for example, IS has operated openly.

Hence, while the sheer amount of land that IS controls are significant, it is not the most important thing to take into account. Rather, what is more striking is the fact that it is a de facto state? Its actions are not underground; it seeks and, to an extent, has popular legitimacy. Of course, this is possible only because of the unprecedented level of regional destabilization brought on by the Syrian civil war and Iraq’s cripplingly sectarian politics.

In this climate of instability, IS was able to quietly enlarge its sphere of influence, collect funds, train its fighters and consolidate its popularity like no other group before it. That the IS ‘state’ has purported, since 29 June 2014, to be a “caliphate” is of profound importance. In doing so, it is asserting itself as the vanguard of Islam, the only legitimate jihadist movement, and one that all other ‘emirates, groups, states and organizations’ are subordinate to. This comes as a direct challenge to the legitimacy of al-Qaeda, which, because it shares IS’ salafi-jihadist ideology, also has the establishment of a “caliphate” as its ultimate goal. In effect, al-Baghdadi has seized the initiative and made an enormous affront to al-

Zawahiri, something from which he will take time to recover from.

In August 2014, it looked like IS’ advances across Syria and Iraq had been obstructed, and this was primarily because of international intervention by arming its opposition and carrying out air strikes against it. However, the group has adapted accordingly. At the time of writing, air strikes from both local and international forces have not stopped IS from spreading; only slowed it at times. Luay Jawad al-Khateeb states, in order to be successful when implementing a strategy like this, ‘you would need to have people on the ground to give information’.⁸⁵ That the international community does not have adequate human intel has become eminently clear of late, with air strikes spectacularly failing to blunt IS offenses in Iraq’s Anbar province, in particular.

Use of Online Tools

Just like al-Qaeda, IS has a number of official outlets that produce propaganda videos and publications. However, it has raised the bar when it comes to their circulation and production value – indeed, IS’ centralised network of propaganda disseminators has flourished through online platforms and, accordingly, ‘can make a seriously big noise’. Using social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Ask.fm, VK and Facebook, the network delivers a high definition IS view of events in Syria and Iraq to an audience of millions.

Redefining ‘Global Jihad’

Both al-Qaeda and IS have channelled the concept of global jihad to facilitate the realisation of their respective goals and broaden international support for their ideologies. However, the two groups have taken different strategies in achieving their goals. Al-Qaeda’s reading of global jihad now revolves around the proliferation of affiliate groups across the world while at the same time promoting decentralized, so-called lone wolf attacks to destabilize target states and ‘enemy’ infrastructure as fard ‘ayn (individual Islamic obligations).

IS, on the other hand, has devoted most of its efforts to state building, calling on Muslims across the world to come to it, rather than set up shop in their home countries. In a sense, this marks a re-imagination of global jihad, one which sees the migration of Muslims to the “caliphate”, from whence they can help expand its borders, as more important than carrying out terrorist operations. IS’ declaration of the reestablishment of the “caliphate”, discussed above, is unprecedented. Some have suggested that its state-building efforts in particular its attempts at governance, social service provision, media and outreach are likely to become a new model for current and future jihadist movements, because they have clearly worked as a means of consolidating control in unstable political environments.

The Present Scenario

The use of ‘soft-power’, as is precisely what we’re doing now, Deploying Special Forces military advisors, launching unmanned aircraft surveillance missions in IS territory, and developing intelligence capabilities with the Iraqi government. The escalation of this current strategy to military intervention is uncertain, although President Obama is prepared to launch military strikes if intelligence suggested such a course of action.

It is almost unanimous among senior defence officials and scholars that our intelligence capabilities within the region must be rebuilt. Following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, our intelligence capabilities went with it. The U.S. currently relies on satellite imagery and signals intelligence and lacks human assets on the ground. With the recent Scenario, intelligence collection in these environments has only become more challenging.

President Barack Obama outlined the U.S. strategy

On September 10, 2014, President Barack Obama outlined the inchoate U.S. strategy to “degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISIL [the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as ISIS or the Islamic State].” At the core of that strategy, in both Iraq and Syria, is a systematic

campaign of air strikes against ISIS, coupled with support for local “partner forces” fighting ISIS on the ground. Subsequent analysis and policy attention have focused largely on the campaign in Syria.

This is partly due to the challenge of identifying effective local partner forces in the midst of the complex Syrian civil war. But it is also because U.S. policy makers tend to believe that they understand Iraq, after having occupied the country for more than eight years. The assumptions guiding U.S. policy toward ISIS imply that the Islamic State is inherently a self-limiting organization. Ideological fissures, it is thought, will shatter the alliance of convenience between ISIS and secular nationalist insurgents. Sunni Arab tribes will tire of ISIS’s brutality and its strict interpretation of Islamic law and will rise up against it. Iraq’s new government will successfully reach out to long-disenchanted Sunni Arabs, and the new Iraqi National Guard will smooth the integration of nationalist insurgents and tribesmen, who will “flip” and join the fight against ISIS.

The Nightmare Years to Come

The Greater Middle East has experienced numerous political, ethnic, social, and religious convulsions. While several regional states, such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, along with ISIS and Syria and its affiliates continue to capture international headlines, the Greater Middle East continues its drift toward violent, hardliner sectarianism fuelled by immense frustration and growing intolerance.

This deadly drift, an enveloping malignance, is rooted in decades-long failed authoritarian leadership, hardened feelings of sustained injustice, minimal essential services, ecological endangerment and diminished natural resources (especially water), poor and undeveloped economies, crumbling infrastructures, systemic corruption, and youth bulge unemployment among other shortcomings and challenges. With God on their side, jihadist combatants have minimal room for compromise, short of tactical accommodation.

The fear of Islamist extremists is so great that the Syrian moderate, secular opposition and the Damascus government ultimately may find common cause for a negotiated settlement that then would unite them in a fight against radical jihadists, such as Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Additionally, Syria's strife has morphed from a sectarian-driven civil war to a regional Sunni-Shi'a proxy war led by Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively, and renewed U.S.-Russia competition throughout the region. The Crimean crisis could diminish prospects for U.S.-Russia cooperation concerning Syria, and key players throughout the region, particularly Syria President Bashar al-Assad's regime, hardliners in Iran, Saudi Arabia's leadership, and Israeli decision makers will be watching its outcome closely.

Dislodging ISIS Will Be a Difficult Task

The ISIS advance toward Baghdad may be temporarily held off as the government rallies its remaining security forces and Shia militias organize for the upcoming Battle for Baghdad. There is a rather clear reason why the ISIS leader has renamed him Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, meaning the Caliph of Baghdad. ISIS will at a minimum be able to take control of some Sunni neighbourhoods in Baghdad shortly and wreak havoc on the city with IEDs, ambushes, single suicide attacks, and suicide assaults that target civilians, the government, and security forces, senior members of government, and foreign installations and embassies. Today, the Iraqis have no US forces on the ground to support them, US air power is absent, the Awakening is scattered and disjointed, and the Iraqi military has been humiliated badly while surrendering or retreating in disarray during the lightning fast jihadists' campaign from Mosul to the outskirts of Baghdad.

Conclusion

The actions of ISIS in the past few years have left the whole international community to stare feared with awe. The pace with which ISIS is expanding and the number of victims that leaves behind, has caused severe alert to all international organizations and States. The problems of the funding of ISIS, the

support from other terrorist groups, the internet propaganda and the foreign terrorist fighters are phenomena that are still hard to be 100% traced and solved. The brutal tactics that ISIS use and the messages it is trying to spread prove to us that they are a ruthless jihadist group, with geopolitical expansion politics, wishing to apply them not only to the Middle East but also in many other regions of the world. Therefore it is a highly demanding time for a structured and not divided response to tackle the threat of ISIS and subsequently of religious extremism, through the coordinated cooperation among States and organizations of all natures.

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