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INDIA'S SECURITY PROWESS: INDIAN NAVY BORDER SECURITY FORCE

Admiral Karambir Singh
PVSM, AVSM, ADC
Chief of the Naval Staff

Rakesh Asthana, IPS
DG BSF

DSATM

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WORLDWIDE

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**YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE**





MISSION

We endeavour to sound **ALERTS** and create **AWARENESS** about the myriad dimensions and manifestations of **DEFENCE** and **SECURITY** in India and around the world.



The power of a King lies in his mighty arms...

Security of the citizens at peace time is very important because State is the only saviour of the men and women who get affected only because of the negligence of the State.

- Chanakya

DSA IS AS MUCH YOURS, AS IT IS OURS!



Weather Gods limit options as seasons change. Crops, lifestyle, clothing, et al. are governed by limitations since climatic conditions influence decisions. Summer food and clothing are not possible in winter, and vice versa. Such situational awareness has always dictated human choices, and even more so when it comes to military matters. As far as operational choices are concerned, weather has an even more critical role to play since what is at stake is national success and costly human lives. Desert combat during summer, or a campaign during monsoon, is avoidable at the best of times.

Winter weather closes options for India in Ladakh as it confronts a Chinese ingress, but that needn't limit military choices for New Delhi as it seeks to find a way out of the quagmire. Endless rounds of military and diplomatic talks have not resulted in any forward movement in diffusing the crisis. Silence at the lack of progress won't solve the problem, rather it

only enhances China's belligerence and consolidates its positions in lands already occupied. But it needn't always be this way, for it is a reflection as much on China's perfidy as it is on self-imposed limitations.

New Delhi is located so far from the seas and an ocean that surround India that it cannot conceptualise national security options other than those which are land-based. This has conditioned most Indians to see national security from the prism of land-based threats, and all else is secondary, or even ignored. Nothing underlines this national malaise more than the stalemate in Ladakh, and almost nine months since it first erupted, India has yet to operationalise geography to its advantage. It doesn't take rocket science to see that India is at an advantage in the Indian Ocean and its seas.

Decades of relegating the navy to the least funded service, ignoring the economic logic of trade routes, and China's dependence on energy imports, has prevented India from exercising military pressure on the seas. New Delhi

has inhibited itself and no other country could be held responsible. After all India should be aware of its own geographical advantages, as well as a historical legacy of being a great seafaring nation. The Chola empire did not reach deep into Indo-China by simply sweet talking, but was backed by a formidable military capability centred on an impressive armada.

Even as India hopes to impress China and the rest of the world by hosting the latest Malabar series of naval exercises, it should realise that a military is only as good as the force it can apply at a point of advantage. Despite years of neglect and relegation, the navy is still a formidable force, and it must be allowed to demonstrate its capability far from the shores of India. Malabar exercises could well be conducted over Malacca, or further east where India and China meet, in South East Asia. That would be a more advantageous quid pro quo for Indian than any being contemplated over Ladakh. Which is, of course, the only language understood by a bully.

Manvendra Singh



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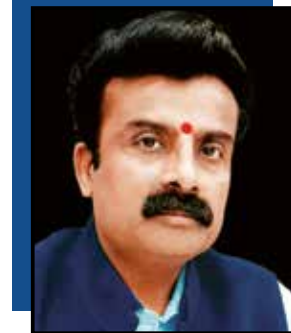
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Editor: Manvendra Singh**

WAR AND PEACE



Over the ages there have been wars and there have been negotiated settlements that have created a modicum of peace and stability. Almost from the first day of its existence as an independent nation freed from the yoke of British colonialism in 1947, when the world was still recovering from the second global conflagration, India has been confronted with a series of wars and no-peace situations because of the machinations of its neighbours—Pakistan and China.

It is so unfortunate that in spite of all the development and progress that the world has seen over the millennia that one single question still remains unanswered: Why Power By All Means? The world has already seen two world wars and many other wars among many nations for various reasons, losing millions of lives. Yet many nations have not understood that this one single point of concern remains immutable and a few on the world map still want to hold the entire power in their hands and are in the process of destabilising the whole of the world in their yearning for world power.

This notorious game of grabbing power by all means has been very well exposed in this era of social media influence. I don't mind quoting here that the growing consensus is that the biggest culprit of destabilisation of the world order is China with Pakistan hanging on to its coattails. Now China has been completely exposed and its agenda of world dominance is very clear for all to see. India opposed China in a big way in June 2020 in the Ladakh region and then at the global level. India has tightened its national security at all levels—be it is on the land, in the air or in the oceans. Our forces are well equipped and their morale is very high under the current leadership. The Indian Army has already shown its power to the Chinese Army on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in June 2020 and our brave soldiers are very well guarding the LAC in the minus 30 degree temperature with the same strength they had in summers. On the other hand, the Chinese Army has lost its morale and confidence in front of Indian Army and nature too.

The Indian Air Force has shown its strength and strategy very well to the Chinese forces as how quickly we can support our army at the highest peaks with all the best arms, ammunition and other requirements and it is on the highest alert to counter any attack by the Chinese Air Force at any point of time. Now another very interesting fact I would like to share with you, our readers, that our Indian Navy is equally alert to counter any Chinese attack and you will be thrilled to know that the Indian Navy's Marcos (Marine Commandos) are absolutely ready at the Pangong Lake in the Ladakh sector to counter any challenge by the Chinese.

There is an old saying that birds with the same feathers flock together and it was a historical moment when India, very recently, organised Malabar Joint Naval Exercises with the inclusion of Australian Navy (along with the US and Japan), thereby, enhancing the interoperability between the nations of the Indo-Pacific region. The separate bilateral exercise with France underscored the point that five major maritime nations have come together to ensure rule-based maritime behaviour by the users of the littoral thereby hindering China's rampant expansionism in the region in violation of the UN Conference on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).

December is the month when our two security forces are celebrating their Raising Day: Indian Navy and the Border Security Force. Team DSA salutes the entire Indian Navy and the Border Security Force which are doing a tremendous job in ensuring the security of India under their current leadership of CNS Admiral Karambir Singh and DG BSF Rakesh Asthana, IPS respectively.

I would also like to introduce Ms Samah Ibrahim from Jordan as our new columnist with this edition where she will be contributing a column in every forthcoming edition on the topical international issues pertaining to global challenges and threats on defence and security of the globe. Hope readers will like her contribution.

It's the last month of 2020 and I wish that good virtues come back in our lives with the first ray of 2021 with good health and positive attitude and safe and secure India.

Jai Hind

Pawan Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer



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INTERVIEW WITH CNS: ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH, PVSM, AVSM, ADC

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh has told Defence and Security Alert (DSA) in an exclusive interview that the Indian Navy is fully aware of the Chinese enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean and has combat-ready platforms to deter and counter any threats from the sea.

Pointing to the Covid pandemic, he said the Indian Navy has been in the forefront in combating this scourge within the Indian Ocean littoral through its Mission Sagar programme (assistance to island nations of Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles to deal with the crisis.

Defence and Security Alert:

In the context of the current trans-Himalayan tensions, has the deployment by China of an average of seven ships per month in the Indian Ocean Region constricted the Indian Navy's role?

Chief of the Naval Staff: We are aware of the security implications of the enhanced presence of Chinese ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean Region and maintain robust maritime domain awareness. We maintain seamless coverage in our primary areas of interest, be it on surface, sub-surface or in the air and have SOPs to deploy rapidly in case of any emergent situation. Furthermore, we also maintain combat ready platforms on Mission Based Deployments along with additional forces in readiness, to deter and counter any threats that may emanate from / at sea.

DSA: What is the status of Project Seabird at Karwar, Karnataka? Are Project timelines being met?

CNS: The Cabinet Committee for Security (CCS) sanctioned Phase IIA of the project for augmentation of infrastructure and other facilities at Naval Base Karwar on 06 December 2012. The government's sanction for the project has been obtained and the work has commenced. The Project Management Consultant (PMC) was appointed in November 2014. After the initial design Phase by the PMC, construction on-ground commenced in January 2017. The project is being executed in 13 Work Contracts. Six Work Contracts have been awarded. The remaining Seven Contracts are planned to be awarded over the next one-and-a-half years. All civil works of Phase I of the project have been completed. We are looking at the project being completed by December 2025.



DSA: Given that terrorism and the use of unconventional weapons (as China did in Ladakh) are now part and parcel of the modern-day 'hybrid warfare', what is the orientation of the National Maritime Domain System? Is it now fully functional?

CNS: IN is continuously evolving to meet emerging challenges to our maritime interests from traditional and non-traditional threats. With a clear long term plan, we have been able to keep pace with the developing security situation in the region by continuously augmenting Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). Towards



Admiral Karambir Singh, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, Chief of the Naval Staff.



this, IN launched the National Command Control Communication and Intelligence Network or NC3IN with Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) at Gurugram as its nodal hub in November 2014 along with four Joint Operations Centre (JOCs) at Mumbai, Kochi, Chennai and Port Blair. The IMAC links 51 IN and Coast Guard nodes across the country including island territories over NC3IN and maintains a 24x7 watch on the maritime activities in IOR. IMAC and JOCs are manned by IN and CG representatives.

IN is steering the National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) project which aims to integrate and share maritime data across seven GoI ministries and more than 15 national agencies. Under the project, upgradation of the existing IMAC to the NMDA Centre and the NC3I network to the NMDA network is planned. Further, NMDA nodes to relevant national agencies and apex level decision makers are also envisaged.

COVID-19 has been **a seminal event** in our lifetime and has thrown up **several challenges for navies** given our **unique operating** environment

The trans-national nature of maritime domain allows unfettered movement across regions. Hence, enhanced situational awareness at sea necessitates coordination with international partners. Towards this, IN established the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram in December 2018 for enhancing maritime security and safety in IOR. The centre is exchanging maritime information with participant countries and various maritime security centres around the world. The IFC-IOR has also commenced hosting International Liaison Officers (ILOs) from member countries. In the long term, a full-fledged IFC-IOR capable of hosting ILOs from

all member countries would be set up separately at Gurugram and necessary GoI approvals for the project are being progressed.

DSA: The Indian Navy set the trend for 'Make in India' immediately after acquiring the Leander class frigates. What should the nation expect in the next decade?

CNS: IN has been at the forefront of indigenisation and has aligned itself fully with the 'Make in India' initiative of the government. The navy has nurtured indigenous shipbuilding programme since 1960, and over 130 indigenously built ships have been constructed in Indian shipyards. In addition,

we have contracted for 12 Dornier aircraft, 16 Advance Light Helicopters and eight Chetak helicopters with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

The first indigenisation list of 101 Defence items was announced by the government in August 2020. The objective of this list is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the armed forces and offer it the opportunity “to manufacture the items in the indigenisation list by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The Technology Perspective and Capability Roadmap (TPCR) first issued in 2013 and later revised in 2018 also had a similar objective. However, it would be vital for the R&D agencies and Indian Defence Industry to meet the timelines as mentioned in the Indigenisation list, to enable the defence services to maintain the desired level of capability technological edge and operational readiness.

DSA: How are you managing the COVID crisis in the close confines of ships?

CNS: Considering the mode of transmission of COVID-19, the risk

of transmission is higher onboard ships and submarines due to its close confines and enclosed spaces. Hence, an Eight-Point COVID-19 Preventive Strategy (OCTAD plan) was devised by the Indian Navy to prevent spread of COVID-19 virus onboard ships and submarines, and to also curtail transmission in case of entry of the virus. The eight points of the OCTAD plan include frequent hand hygiene / wash, following respiratory etiquette, maintaining social distance, safe travelling, environmental cleaning and disinfection, awareness and screening, and, keeping mentally and physically fit.

From the start of the pandemic, hand wash facilities were established and wearing of facemask by all personnel was made mandatory. Going ashore of in-living sailors was restricted and mass gatherings were avoided. Alternate day rotation of ship’s company, where redundancy existed, was implemented. Online means for interaction was promoted to reduce physical contact. Meal times were staggered with social distancing in mess decks. Movement of personnel on temporary duty, leave and permanent transfer were curtailed and wherever inescapable, the personnel proceeding were issued with specific travel instructions. All personnel

reporting to ships and submarines post completion of temporary duty, leave and on permanent duty were placed in quarantine at shore facilities before entry on ships and submarines. Ships were regularly sensitised on preventive measures against COVID-19. All personnel were motivated to adhere to the instructions and keep themselves physically and mentally fit during COVID-19 crisis.

SOPs implemented to combat suspected case onboard ships and submarines including details of contact tracing and laboratory testing. Ships and submarines were stocked with adequate number of PPEs and disinfectants. The strict implementation of these measures has helped in managing the COVID-19 crisis within the close confines of ships. COVID-19 has been a seminal event in our lifetime and has thrown up several challenges for navies given our unique operating environment. We have, however, not let that affect our combat readiness. I have personally spoken with the ‘rank’ and ‘file’ of the IN on a number of occasions reiterating various issues. As a part of our FC initiatives, we have shared experiences, SOPs and best practices with IONS and other navies. As you are well aware, the IN was also at the forefront in Mission SAGAR. **DSA**



Formation and flight ops onboard INS Vikramaditya during Malabar 2020.

PANDEMIC/DRONES: NEW THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Director General Border Security Force Rakesh Asthana told DSA that the force is evolving methodologies to deal with the Pakistani drones like involving the local police and villagers to keep an eye on the sky. As far as tunnels are concerned, many have been discovered before they can create an access into Indian Territory. Women troops have added a new dimension to nation-building by encouraging education among village girls.

Defence and Security Alert:

This is for the first time that the nation has been confronted by a combination of a two-front war with China and Pakistan, a foreign instigated insurgency and what can, at this juncture, only be described as a “biological event” – the Coronavirus. How is the Border Security Force dealing with this situation?

Director General, BSF: The BSF is deployed along Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh borders. The foreign instigated insurgency and hot situation on Indo-Pak border, especially in J&K, has persisted since long. The BSF has been effectively countering and neutralizing the devious designs on both the fronts. As regards to China border, the situation is being dealt and monitored, both at the level of Indian Army (IA) as well as Government of India (GoI). The Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as an international

challenge. All due precautions and protocols are being followed and implemented to contain its spread amongst the men at the borders without hampering the operational readiness of the force.

DSA: The use of biological agents is a war crime and is shrouded in many layers of deniability as China has demonstrated. India will now have to prepare itself for both the accidental release and criminal use of such agents. How does the BSF intend to handle this multiple existential threat?

DG, BSF: The GoI is aware of these threats and is taking active steps to counter these. As regards BSF, efforts are on to train more and more persons to counter these threats.

DSA: Already, in the past one year, the China-Pak combine has improved its cross-border terrorism network with ‘home



delivery’ of weapons, munitions and explosives by using drones. Some we find, some we don’t. Is there a failsafe method to deal with this means of logistical support to terrorists since it may not be confined to the Line of Control (LOC)?

DG, BSF: The drone technology is a new challenge that is being encountered by security forces all over the world. The BSF is also adapting to these challenges by involving local police and local population to foil any such attempts. Technological solutions have also been explored in this regard.



Sh Rakesh Asthana, DG BSF reviewing DSA.

The **drone technology** is a new **challenge**. BSF is **involving local police and local population to foil** any such attempts. **Technological solutions** have also been **explored**

DSA: As predicted by DSA, after the Kandahar (Afghanistan) jail break in April 2011, tunnels have become the preferred means of infiltration both in Jammu and Kashmir and at the International border. Several tunnels have been discovered but it is difficult

to gauge how many persons have managed to infiltrate or how much warlike material has been transferred. Can digging activity be discovered while it is happening? Can we learn from the Korean experience?

DG, BSF: The BSF has successfully detected several

tunnels which were still under construction and yet to come up on Indian side. The BSF is regularly undertaking various anti-tunnelling exercises to detect any such activity by Pak-sponsored anti-India elements.

DSA: The porosity of the border also facilitates the use by Pakistan of drugs to undermine the social fabric of the martial races of Punjab and try and resurrect the Khalistan agitation. What can the BSF as an institution do to tackle this problem?

DG, BSF: The Indo-Pak International border is not porous.



Sh Pawan Agrawal, CEO DSA with Sh Rakesh Asthana, DG BSF during his interview.

It is well guarded round the clock and border fence / flood lights are in place. The BSF conducts various operations to curb this menace independently as well as with other specialized agencies like NCB, DRI, local police, etc. The seizures made by the BSF are indicative of this. In 2018, 231.176 kg heroin and in 2019, 232.561 kg heroin was seized on the border.

DSA: Do you agree that counter-terror, counter-insurgency (CT/CI) is a manpower intensive operation? If so, can dogs trained for specific requirements because of their eyesight and smell

BSF has successfully **detected several tunnels** which were still **under construction** and yet to **come up on Indian** side

capabilities be force multipliers?

DG, BSF: Counter-terror and counter-insurgency operations are pro-active in nature and hence, manpower intensive. The dogs are, undoubtedly, force multipliers because of their special capabilities. The dogs are regularly being used as part of operational teams in anti-naxal operations. In fact, the importance of dogs

as force multipliers had been realized much earlier and BSF has a training institution (NTCD) for training dogs in various roles.

DSA: Will you agree to consider changing the training curriculum of the dog squads to include free ranging deployment of packs of two/three ferocious dogs for 'search and chase' to

Interaction of women troops with local villagers in general and women in particular, **encourage them for education of girl child** and to make them **self-reliant**

catch infiltrators or intruders (as needed in Uri)?

DG, BSF: This matter is under examination and we will take appropriate steps accordingly.

DSA: The BSF has done exemplary job by inducting women in to frontline patrolling. Can this be used to change mind-sets at the village level to inculcate greater equality and respect for women?

DG, BSF: It is an extremely relevant point. The women troops are deployed in frontline, far-flung and remote areas. Their interaction with local villagers in general and women in particular, encourage them for education of the girl child and to make them self-reliant. In fact, many of our women troops are from remote villages of the country and are an inspiration to other women in their villages / locations.

DSA: Under the Atmanirbhar (self-reliance) code, what types of equipment that the BSF uses be converted to indigenous production from the village level upwards?

DG, BSF: • BSF is procuring from various sources.

- Procurement from Ordnance Factory Board is indigenous.
- In respect of other equipment, tenders are floated.
- Global tender is not permitted for value less than 200 Cr.
- There are various policies to encourage Atmanirbhar Programme by giving preference to vendors who have got higher local content in their product by way of price preference for those having more than 50 per cent local content. Those having content less than 20

per cent are not permitted in bidding process.

- The government has given licences to indigenous firms for various arms and ammunition. Once these firms start production, many products will become available at local level and dependence on foreign firms will decrease.
- BSF is also following norms of the government for procurement from MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).
- To support Indian initiative and institutions like KVIC (Khadi and Village Industries Commission) during the 1st Phase, CAPFs have identified blankets, duries, bedsheets and pillow covers for procurement. For second Phase, some more items will be under consideration.
- DRDO is also continuously developing indigenous technologies as per requirement of CAPFs and these are being transferred to local vendors so that more impetus is given to Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

DSA: In such troublesome times, what do you tell the men and women under your command to give their best and rise to the occasion?

DG, BSF: The BSF has been given an overall task of defending the borders being first line of defence. Immediately after taking over commands of the BSF, I am frequently visiting far-flung border areas and interacting with them. The troops are motivated and ready to take on any challenge. The recent achievements of BSF on various borders are a reflection of their persistent efforts. **DSA**



Female personnel of India's Border Security Force (BSF) patrol along the fencing of the India-Bangladesh International Border.

CHALLENGE FOR INDIA

India is facing an unprecedented security challenge not only to its territorial integrity but as the principal naval power in the Indian Ocean, to its strategic interests in the region as well. It must therefore not only secure its own maritime frontiers but must leverage its pivotal position in the Indian Ocean and its ability to monitor the movement of inimical extra-regional powers through the exit and entry points to this space. A robust well-networked multi-dimensional maritime security architecture with a strong undersea warfare component is an imperative that cannot be ignored.

The undersea dimension finds mention in the recorded history of maritime warfare from the time of the Peloponnesian Wars. Aristotle has also chronicled the use of divers and a submersible by Alexander the Great. In the millennia since, the importance of the sub-surface domain has evolved to an extent that in the last half century or so, the presence of strategic missile submarines operating many hundreds of metres below the surface of the sea have been

providing the most credible deterrence against a nuclear Armageddon. Submarines are synonymous with undersea warfare and constitute its most important element. However, this domain also includes multi-dimensional elements in the air, on the surface, below the surface, in the cyber and space domains and in the potential military applications of disruptive technologies. It is therefore no wonder that most nations are investing in their undersea warfare capabilities to develop the maritime edge which is leading to

a plethora of submarine and anti-submarine programmes taking shape worldwide.

The Submarine Edge

Submarines have the ability to shape the outcomes in the contemporary maritime battlespace and constitute the cutting edge of a nation's maritime power, be it at the strategic, the operational or the tactical level of warfare. Ever since Sgt Ezra Lee in his one-man submersible, the Turtle, carried out the first offensive submarine action against the British flagship HMS Eagle in New York harbour in September 1776 during the American War of Independence, the submarine has been an integral element in the maritime warfare calculus. Submersible and submarine development continued through the 19th century as daring and intrepid inventors, undaunted by failure and in many cases risking their own lives, continued experimenting with different designs. At a time when many in the Admiralty considered the submarine

A truly **credible capability** will be established when a **continuous-at-sea deterrence** can be maintained which will require a **minimum of three** operational SSBNs

to be unethical and underhand, it was the legendary British Admiral Sir Jackie Fisher, who saw the potential of the submarine to revolutionise naval warfare and was its ardent supporter.

It was in World War I that the effectiveness of the submarine was first seen; though it was in the Second World War that submarines came into their own and played a critical role in shaping the outcome of that conflict. In fact, if it hadn't been for the development of anti-submarine technologies and tactics which effectively blunted the German submarine offensive in the Atlantic, the outcome of the Second World War could have been different. In the Pacific too, the US' submarine offensive on Japanese merchant shipping after Pearl Harbour precipitated the Japanese surrender and the end of the war.

Indian Deterrent

The harnessing of nuclear power for military applications and its destructive capability, demonstrated in the horrific US' attacks on the

hapless populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the World War II soon manifested itself in the four-and-a-half decade long Cold War that followed. The horrifying consequence of nuclear weapons, aptly termed as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) notwithstanding, the USA, the Soviet Union and their allies armed themselves with weapons which gave them the capability, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to annihilate the world several times over. Deterrence thus became the cornerstone of the Cold War strategy and submarines with their ability to remain concealed in the ocean depths, the preferred choice for a credible second strike capability. In fact, it was the presence of ballistic missile submarines on both sides which ensured that the Cold War which raged for over four decades remained 'cold' despite numerous provocations. Three decades after the end of the Cold War, as talk of Cold War 2.0 gains traction, submarines continue as the main instrument of strategic deterrence and given



**COMMODORE ANIL JAI SINGH,
IN (RETD)**

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INS Kalvari (S21), first of the six Scorpène-class submarines currently in service with the Indian Navy.

the investment the nuclear weapon powers are making in developing the next generation of their SSBNs clearly indicates that they are here to stay. India too has joined this exclusive club with the successful deterrence patrol undertaken by INS Arihant in 2018; though a truly credible capability will be established when a continuous-at-sea deterrence can be maintained which will require a minimum of three operational SSBNs and an inventory of at least four armed with a ballistic missile capability of commensurate range to neutralise selected targets.

Strategic/Tactical

While the large SSBNs are ideally suited for a strategic role, nuclear attack submarines (SSN), with their high speeds, unlimited endurance, stealth and potent weaponry including land attack cruise missiles have the ability to effect maritime manoeuvre and deliver devastating effect on land and at sea and can therefore shape the battlespace in an operational theatre. They can do this either as part of a larger Task Force or even if deployed independently in a networked environment. India has been operating an Akula-2 class SSN on a 10-year lease from Russia which expires in 2022 and has contracted for leasing another similar submarine from 2025. The government has also approved a plan for six indigenously designed and built SSNs which one understands are on the drawing board. Given the complexity of these platforms and the design and technological challenges, it is unlikely that the first submarine of the class will enter service before the middle of the next decade. The SSNs are operated mainly by large bluewater navies as their cost and complexity make them unviable for small and even some mid-sized navies who are more focussed on defending their territorial and maritime interests in a limited littoral geographical expanse and do not aspire to shaping global

outcomes thus investing in smaller conventionally powered diesel-electric submarines (SSK).

Conventional Subs

The ability of the SSK to dominate the littoral spaces makes them an ideal platform in a restricted tactical battlespace. The proliferation of submarines across the world as more and more nations invest in this capability is a testimony to their effectiveness in the contemporary milieu. The SSKs, being smaller than their nuclear counterparts, are ideally suited for operations in the shallower waters of the littoral. They are extremely silent and therefore difficult to detect. Armed with a combination of torpedoes and missiles, they are the ideal instruments of sea denial against a vastly superior navy. The inherent limitations of endurance and range of the SSKs and their vulnerability to detection by the enemy when 'snorting' to charge their batteries has been mitigated with the introduction of technologies like Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) and the development of lithium-ion batteries which offer better speeds and greater endurance with lower indiscretion rates than the current lead-acid battery technology. The Japanese Navy (JMSDF) is the first in the world to operationalise this technology on their latest submarine while the other leading global submarine manufacturers are at various stages of developing theirs. Even the probability of a

submarine presence in a restricted battlespace can greatly inhibit a superior enemy's freedom to operate its forces. A submarine can therefore negate the enemy's qualitative and quantitative edge while itself retaining the advantage of surprise, stealth and concealment. The use of VLF and ELF communications now enables submarine to communicate while dived which further enhances their invulnerability to detection. The SSKs are versatile platforms; they can be used effectively for intelligence, surveillance reconnaissance (ISR) missions; they can support clandestine operations and their stealth enables them to lay limited offensive minefields while dived.

Political Indifference

It, therefore, becomes difficult to understand the lethargic progress of India's SSK programmes. While delays in the indigenous SSBN and the SSN programmes are not unexpected given the complexity of the platforms, the delays in SSK induction due to a combination of political indifference, bureaucratic apathy, inadequate industrial capability and a general systemic malaise cannot be excused. This has led to a point where in the next decade or so, while India faces an increasingly challenging maritime security environment, its submarine capability will actually decline both qualitatively and quantitatively. India's present SSK inventory comprises eight Kilo class

The Indian Navy has **regrettably allowed a situation** to develop where its capability **to defend against this** or even secure its own harbours from **a mine threat is virtually** non-existent and will remain so for the **next few years**



INS Kavaratti, anti-submarine warfare corvette of the Indian Navy.

submarines which are between 20 and 35 years old, four Type 209 submarines between 26 and 34 years old and only two of the new Project 75 submarines despite that contract having been signed over 15 years ago. The current status of the programme seems to indicate that it will take another three to four years for all six to be in service. The P75(I) programme which was initiated in 2007 is now being progressed under the Strategic Partnership model. Based on past experience, it can be safely assumed that the delivery of the first submarine of this class is more than a decade away. While some of the older submarines are being modernised and their service life is being extended, their advancing years will take a toll on their operational turn-around times and their performance at sea. This may alleviate the deficiency to some extent but will not address it entirely. From a force level perspective, the numbers in commission will remain more or less the same even a decade from now. The urgency of bridging the deficit in India's submarine capability is an imperative that cannot either

be ignored or compromised with unproven industrial strategies and business models.

Countering The Threat

The ability of submarines to remain dived for long periods and transit for days without exposing themselves makes them a valuable frontline asset and the reason why an effective Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capability is an inescapable imperative. Good ASW capability requires a multidimensional effort which includes surface combatants, fixed and rotary wing aircraft, cyber and space capabilities and emerging autonomous and disruptive technologies amongst other things.

Surface Anti-Submarine Warfare

Surface ASW, as the term suggests, is a navy's capability to neutralise the enemy's submarine edge by principally using its surface forces. Modern front-line surface combatants are equipped with a mixture of ASW sensors and weapons to detect, track and prosecute the submarine. These include hull mounted sonars, towed

array sonars, light and heavyweight torpedoes and anti-submarine rockets. However, the improvements in surveillance technologies which has increased battlespace transparency makes it difficult for surface forces to operate undetected. Modern long-range maritime patrol (LRMP) aircraft, satellites and unmanned platforms can reconnoitre vast swaths of the ocean and track the movement of enemy surface forces. This makes them vulnerable to threats from the air, the surface and from submarines and restricts their operational freedom and manoeuvrability. Hence, more often than not, it is the submarine which has the advantage. However, once a submarine is detected and tracked, a concentrated force of ASW ships and helicopters can bring considerable pressure to bear and limit its options to either evade or counter attack. Submarine engagement is like a cat-and-mouse game; if the submarine is able to sink a couple of warships of a Search and Attack Unit, the ensuing confusion of damaged and sinking ships, survivors in the water, fires on board the damaged platform



India plans to buy 24 Sikorsky MH-60R helicopters primarily for submarine hunting in the Indian Ocean.

etc. could enable a good submarine commander the opportunity to either slip away from the scene or use the depth of water and hydrological conditions to advantage to evade a counter-attack.

Security In Peril

The Indian Navy has invested well in its surface undersea warfare capability though some glaring deficits still exist which surprisingly, considering the nature of the threat are not getting the due attention, thus putting India's maritime security in peril. The recent commissioning of the fourth ASW corvette clearly indicates the priority being accorded to undersea warfare but the numbers and their capability are clearly not enough. Two Indian shipyards are in the process of building 16 ASW Shallow Water Craft armed with a comprehensive mix of ASW weapons and sensors which will provide a boost to India's surface ASW capability as submarines operating in shallow waters close to the enemy's harbours or coast are vulnerable to detection and attack because of the limited depth and sea room for

evasion or escape. These ships will effectively counter the conventional submarine threat to India in its waters, particularly from our western neighbour who is soon going to be equipped with eight Chinese AIP fitted Type 039 submarines in addition to the three French Agosta 90B AIP boats it already has.

ASW Helicopters

Perhaps, the most effective force multiplier for surface ASW is the integral ASW helicopter on board ships. These are potent early warning platforms with the ability to sanitise an area well ahead of the surface force thus pre-empting the submarine threat. Their sensor and weapon package enables both detection and attack. In the current scenario, a helicopter can continue tracking a submarine without fear of retaliation though the likely introduction of submarine-to-air missiles (presently under development) would effectively turn the tables and greatly inhibit the helicopter from boldly tracking the submarine for fear of an unexpected missile attack from beneath the surface. Most of India's surface

combatants are designed to carry an integral helicopter capability but the numbers are in short supply. The Indian Navy's existing Seaking 42B and Kamov-28 ASW helicopters have been overdue for replacement but the plan to build 112 Naval Multi Role (NMR) helicopters indigenously has made very little progress. As an interim measure, the IN is importing 24 MH-60R helicopters from the US which may address the immediate shortfall but is grossly inadequate for a credible ASW capability.

Fixed Wing Air ASW

In addition to helicopters, long and medium range maritime patrol aircraft with adequate anti-submarine sensors and weapons in the form of sonobuoys and lightweight torpedoes are valuable ASW platforms. The induction of the Boeing P8I Long Range Maritime Patrol (LRMP) aircraft has provided a shot in the arm to India's air ASW capability which had earlier been ably provided by the Russian TU-142M and the IL-38 aircraft but both these were long in the tooth and needed replacement. The P8I has not only enhanced the

Fixed underwater sensors can also be used **effectively** to monitor enemy **submarine movements** at the approaches to straits and at **entry/exit choke** points

ability to detect, track and neutralise any hostile submarine intent in the Indian Ocean but has greatly improved India's Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean.

ASW Below The Surface

During the Cold War, both protagonists used their SSNs to track the SSBNs of the other because the former were more silent and more agile. However, it is uncommon for a SSK to be deployed to hunt another SSK since there would be a remote possibility of one detecting the other. Modern submarines have similar stealth characteristics and their operating philosophies are meant to avoid detection. A submarine-submarine confrontation will therefore usually be a chance encounter and its success will depend largely on the quicker thinking of the two Commanding Officers in appreciating the position, depth and speed of the other and carrying out a successful urgent attack.

Static Sensor Networks

During the Cold War, the SOSUS (Sound Surveillance) network of fixed underwater sensors installed by NATO across the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap enabled the monitoring of Soviet nuclear submarines entering and exiting the Atlantic Ocean and thereby tracking their movements. Such networks can also be used effectively to monitor enemy submarine movements at the approaches to straits and at entry/exit choke points in the region of our interest. The Fish Hook is reportedly one such network extending across

the South China Sea developed to detect and monitor Chinese submarines. A similar network across the choke points of interest surrounding the Indian Ocean would be useful in mitigating the extra-regional submarine threat.


Cyber And Space Domains

The impact of technology in the maritime domain and its military applications have made it an indispensable element of the contemporary maritime security architecture and set to grow exponentially. Network centric warfare, tactical data link systems, advances in ICT and the use of space as a means of reconnaissance, communication, navigation and its increasing weaponisation is changing the very paradigm of conflict at sea including the ASW domain. The ability of widely dispersed forces at sea to synergise their efforts through real time connectivity has enhanced not only the optimisation of the use of force but also the flexibility to respond with agility to a developing situation. The Indian Navy is using technology as an effective force multiplier across the full spectrum of maritime operations. A robust network centric architecture will enable advanced theatre level situational awareness to pre-empt a developing situation in the Indian Ocean through efficient multi-domain synergy.

Mine Warfare

An unsung, low profile but effective undersea weapon is the mine. Offensive and defensive minefields

using smart pre-programmable mines are a cost-effective option in restricted waters where the limited room for manoeuvre makes both surface combatants and submarines, whether dived or on surface, vulnerable. In fact, mines are an ideal weapon to cause attrition to the enemy's forces at the approaches to harbours, in shallow passages and along an enemy coastline. The presence of mines could lead to considerable effort being invested in neutralising the threat besides either deterring or delaying a surface force from leaving or entering its own harbours or even venturing too close to the enemy's. The Indian Navy which is vulnerable to mine warfare in its shallow waters and around its offshore energy investments has regrettably allowed a situation to develop where its capability to defend against this or even secure its own harbours from a mine threat is virtually non-existent and will remain so for the next few years.

In the emerging maritime security scenario, the importance of undersea warfare is set to grow. Countries are therefore stepping up their investment in this domain. India too is facing an unprecedented security challenge not only to its territorial integrity but as the principal naval power in the Indian Ocean, to its strategic interests in the region as well. It must, therefore, not only secure its own maritime frontiers but must leverage its pivotal position in the Indian Ocean and its ability to monitor the movement of inimical extra-regional powers through the exit and entry points to this space. A robust well-networked multi-dimensional maritime security architecture with a strong undersea warfare component is an imperative that cannot be ignored. Presently, there are critical deficits which need to be addressed with the urgency they deserve. 

MERGING INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Quad should now take the next step of enhancing military cooperation amongst each other to signal intent to counter and thereby deter future Chinese attempts to further alter the status quo. This would take the form of improvements in interoperability, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities and access to logistics and infrastructure for power projection. A Charter and a Fund to define mandates and develop strategic Indo-Pacific infrastructure are subsequent logical steps.

“**T**he world had an international economy but a national polity...” This condition, though a true representation of the troubled order in the South China Sea, was in fact one of the key findings in the examination of the international anarchy that prevailed just prior to the First World War and indeed was its primary cause. Economics demanded that people maintain contact with the rest of the world which not only increased dependency but also enhanced prosperity. However, in the absence of a benign hegemon to oversee the movement of goods and services, nations began to carve out a part of the world system for exclusive exploitation leading to violent struggles and the formation of alliances that bolstered individual interests.

This article proposes to examine how best the Australia-India-Japan-US Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) can counter and balance the revisionist and expansionist ambitions of China.

NATO As A Template

Military alliances are related to collective security systems but can differ. The variance is explained by noting that historically alliances were designed to advance the national interests of the parties, and provided for joint military action if one of the parties became involved in conflict; whereas a collective security arrangement is directed solely against aggression. It seeks not to influence any ‘balance of power’ but to strengthen the ‘balance of principle.’

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was founded in response to the military threat posed by the Soviet Union. NATO’s creation also served three corollary purposes: deterring Soviet expansionism; structuring a collective security arrangement; and encouraging European political integration.

Significant to the Treaty and our enquiry is Article 5, where the signatories agreed “an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all”. Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty had important support purposes, Article 2 allowed civil cooperation while Article 3 laid the foundation for joint military preparedness.

Detente

In the 1960s, Cold War tensions re-ignited as a catastrophic conflict was narrowly avoided in Cuba and American involvement in Vietnam escalated. Despite this, by decade’s end what had been primarily a defence-based organisation came to embody a new phenomenon: détente, a lessening of tensions by acceptance of the status quo. Détente had many faces. One of its most perilous was the shift in strategic doctrine to “Flexible

The **international scene** has noted how **China’s posture** has turned on **its head from the Deng days**

Response” which sought to replace Massive Retaliation’s finality. Adopted in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Flexible Response offered a baffling posture of military responses that suggested control over escalation where none existed.

NATO, in the end analysis, fulfilled the post-World War II demand for an ideological bloc to thwart a common existential threat; its collateral aims were economic revival and integration. It must be said that the Treaty met its objectives yet it was driven by the starkness of survival.

China’s Revisionist Shenanigans

The international scene has noted how China’s posture has turned on its head from the Deng days; gone was the maxim to “hide capacities and bade time, to maintain a low profile and abjure leadership.” Xi Jinping today, has sought to strengthen the party’s control over a modernising society and bring China to its central place as a global power and, indeed, rejuvenate the nation. Further, Xi’s ‘Thought’ and political theory, “on socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” was, in imperial fashion, added to the Preamble of the Constitution as the new political doctrine. Xi’s message encapsulated in “His Thought” resonates with the central theme of national glory bound to the nation upholding his absolute leadership. It is never clear whether his constituency is the worker and the peasant (which it certainly appears not to be) or the Chinese netizen; at which time there is an apparent cleavage in society which underscores the unreality of ‘His Thought’.

China, in the meantime, initiated military measures to persist with claims within the 9-Dash Line in the South China Sea (SCS), precipitated a territorial embroilment in the

Ladakh/Arunachal region of India, begun a global infrastructure plan called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), drastically reorganized and modernized the military and enforced ideological purity in schools and the media — all parts of his vision of a rejuvenated China. Willy Lam, Xi’s biographer, declares “at any rate, Xi is susceptible to making big mistakes because there are now almost no checks or balances, he has become emperor for life.”

Lost Maritime Case In SCS

In the SCS, claims defined by the 9-Dash line have been judicially de-bunked by an International Tribunal at The Hague in 2016 and historically, the claim’s ancestry has been discredited by the fact that Zheng He’s seventh and final voyage ended in 1433, significant as they must have been, all Chinese maritime activity in the region was thereafter banned by royal edict. Yet, Xi has ordained ownership of 3.6 million square kilometres of the SCS, and has shown no qualms of using military power to make fast his hold.

In Ladakh, ever since the Doklam incident of 2017 and the current Galwan crisis, three factors would appear to have played on Beijing planners. First, the growing pugnacity of the “Quad” and the coalescing fall-out it has amongst the littorals of the SCS. In addition, hindrance that Quad’s intrusive presence poses to progress of the maritime segment of the BRI must cause some misgivings. Second, the rapid pace of, long neglected, infrastructure development and Indian military build-up along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and Arunachal is an augury of response to any military misadventure. Third, the BRI is critical to the generation of a Sino-centric global order, India’s steadfast rejection of the continental segment



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on grounds of sovereignty infractions undermines the very idea. The three seen together have, no doubt, aroused Beijing to use their military to test India’s resolve.

Is there a favourable presumption that may be made with regard to Xi’s motives, that, in fact total power in his hands may be for the good of China? The turbulence that we are witness to in the SCS,

By operationalising **the second phase of** the China-Pakistan Fibre Optic Project and announcing the **Huawei manufacture plant** in France, China has kept the **BRI in active mode**

the brinkmanship in Taiwan and Ladakh, strife in Hong Kong and Tibet, intentions to revise global governance, the Uighur atrocities, illicit trade practices, a cavalier approach to international conventions and an illusory security architecture predicated on a “community with a shared future” are disconcerting and would suggest anything but making agreeable assumptions about intent.

Quad-Quest For Common Strategy

The Quad was resurrected in 2017 with the aim to support a ‘free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region’. While there are differing discernments among the four countries on threat perceptions, military capability, strategic priority and intensity of retaliation, these variances place confines on cooperation but do not preclude it.

Amongst Quad states, there exists not only broad consensus of strategic perceptions but also an agreement that recent Chinese policies and actions are a threat to the status quo. However, there are apparent disparities between the Quad states on nature of impact. The principal among these are their differing threat perceptions — this is the core impediment to collective undertakings that limits the scope of any action the four countries might take together. This is also what differentiates the NATO from the Quad. Divergence in threat perceptions is based on a range of factors, including the existence

or absence of direct territorial disputes with China, perceptions of the potential risks of retaliation by Beijing, the economic and military capabilities that each state can bring to bear should retaliation occur.

It would now be appropriate to examine individual interests at play in order to highlight common ground.

Individual Interests

Japan perceives militarisation of the East China Sea and territorial threat to the Senkaku Islands to be a part of China’s “two-ocean” strategy that aims at redistributing forces in the Indo-Pacific region by expanding its naval operations from the South China Sea and Western Pacific into the Indian Ocean, where it seeks to secure its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean and bolster its Maritime Silk Road. The development of this strategy will not only inhibit freedom of navigation but would also upend the strategic balance across the Indo-Pacific. Japan would like to complicate China’s “two-ocean” strategy by forcing it to stretch its naval resources than over a broader geographic area.

India

India’s refusal to back down during the Doklam and the more recent Galwan standoff was a successful counter to Chinese continental ‘nibbling’. China may have considered such a stratagem that involves incremental territorial annexation to be perceived as not significant to justify military

retaliation. However, in taking a firm stand and appropriately mobilising its strike elements; India demonstrated the resolve to counter with force any action to disrupt the status quo on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

India’s perceptions of the oceanic threat from China have also increased considerably, with the extension of PLAN power projection capabilities into the Indian Ocean as a part of its “Two Ocean Strategy” and to secure its Maritime Silk Road. India views such moves as deliberately threatening its strategic space.

Australia

Despite Australia’s opting out from the Quad’s first avatar in 2007, over the last three years, it has challenged Chinese policies that have transgressed rule-based order. Australia opposes the use of disputed features and creation of artificial islands in the South China Sea for military purposes and supports the resolution of differences based on international law. Thus far, Australia’s actions have targeted economic entities. It has banned the Chinese telecom giant ‘Huawei’ from the 5G deal, introduced legislation to champion an international investigation of the origins and accountability for the uncontrolled spread of the Wuhan virus pandemic.

The US

The United States views itself in a direct clash with China which it describes as a “revisionist” authoritarian state that seeks to re-write the rules of the US-led post-war order “while exploiting its benefits”. In response, the 2019 US Indo-Pacific Security Strategy Report makes clear that its priority is in reorienting its own forces toward the Indo-Pacific region. The US’ trade war with Beijing has



Line of Actual Control.

already demonstrated its resolve to challenge China's economic practices. It has cut China's supply of semi-conductors that enable 5G systems; setting back China by over a trillion dollars' worth of network deals. No company is allowed to sell semiconductors made using the US' software or equipment without a licence if Huawei was involved at any stage of the transaction.

Common Strategic Grounds

It is unrealistic, for reasons examined earlier, to imagine the Quad intervening in continental conflicts with China. Perhaps with greater maturity, it could adopt a collective indirect approach to imposing economic and social sanctions a la Washington in the 5G semiconductor episode. However, it is in the maritime domain that common strategic grounds exist, be it to check and curb unfair practices associated with the maritime Silk Road, violation of conventions laid down in the "Law of the Sea" or illicit claims and indeed in the freedom of navigation.


The pandemic has exposed the risks associated with dependence by all four states on trade with China. The policies and plans on how to establish alternative supply chains for strategic and critical sectors are currently underway. In addition, the devastating economic and health fallout from China's lack of transparency over the origins of the virus, and failure to limit its spread beyond China's borders, has reinforced the importance of adopting a collective approach to hold Beijing accountable.

Further, the implications of the Maritime Silk Road for the strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific are now rapidly unfolding. China's 'debt to lease-trap' diplomacy through large infrastructure lending for strategically important but commercially unviable projects to countries unable to repay. The most notable example is of Sri Lanka which was forced to give Beijing a 99-year lease on Hambantota Port in partial repayment of its extensive debts. The governments in

Malaysia and the Maldives are now attempting to avoid the same fate in response to infrastructure deals with China.

Next Step

Quad should now take the next step of enhancing military cooperation amongst each other to signal intent to counter and thereby deter future Chinese attempts to further alter the status quo. This would take the form of improvements in interoperability, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities and access to logistics and infrastructure for power projection. A Charter and a Fund to define mandates and develop strategic Indo-Pacific infrastructure are subsequent logical steps.

The Quad has the opening to institute measures against China that anticipates and counters policies which undermine the existing rules-based order. The opportunity must be seized lest globalisation be held to ransom by nationalism. 



PRESENCE AT SEA NEEDED

Indian Navy has taken part in 23 Malabar Naval Exercises since 1992 with the United States' Navy (USN), and with Japan's Maritime Self Defence Forces (JSDF) since 2015. To facilitate common Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Pentagon had cleared the internet controlled CENTRIX only for the duration of the exercises with the US' Navy Sea Riders embarked on Indian Navy ships. Computer typed communication replaced voice communications for swiftness and safety in surface, aerial and submarine operations with net centricity.



India celebrates its 48th Navy Day on 04 December, after it has successfully achieved net centricity for Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) with the US' Navy which has supplied Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System (CENTRIX) modems and password enabled connectivity to ships and Naval Headquarters (NHQ). Navy's P8i MR aircraft also carried out operations over the seas for MDA and in support of the army on India's troubled borders with China and MiG-29Ks flew in support of the Indian Air Force during China's Ladakh incursion. The navy's regional MDA plot at the Indian Maritime Fusion Centre at Gurugram (IFC-IOR) can be fused with the MDA plot provided by the Pentagon which includes satellite data. The US' Navy liaison officer supports the IFC and all this has been made possible; thanks to the four Foundational agreements (GSOMIA-LEMOA-COMCASA and BECA) that India has signed with the USA for security cooperation discussed later in this article.

However, this year, Navy Week celebrations will be in a 'No Contact Mode' with Covid restrictions. It is therefore hoped that the media shines the spotlight on India's small navy's future needs and achievements by its 117 ships, 17 submarines - many aging, which includes two nuclear boats and 200 aircraft. Post the Doklam 73 day army standoff in Sikkim in 2017, the navy's allocation of the defence budget has been reduced to 13 per cent from 18 per cent. Four LPD, five Naval OPV and the third aircraft carrier orders have been shelved, yet navy's platforms have maintained a high tempo of exercises and freedom of navigational operations (FON Ops) in the IOR and the Indo-Pacific. The navy needs more platforms to catch up with its target for 200 ships and 400 aircraft planned for 2027.

Fourth of December commemorates the night in 1971 when three Osa class missile boats ingeniously struck Karachi in Op Trident with their long range Rangout radars and P-15 Styx missiles, and sank



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PNS Khaibar, PNS Muhafiz and MV Venus Challenger with loss of 222 Pakistani souls. Since then, in 1999, in Operation Talwar, the navy's Eastern and Western Fleet ships assembled in the Arabian Sea and successfully put pressure



Phase II of Malabar 2020 with ships from the Australian and Japanese Navies.

from the seas to blockade Pakistan in the Kargil War. It accelerated Pakistan's withdrawal. In the 2004 Tsunami, the Indian Navy's swift relief to neighbouring nations as the first responder in the IOR, proffered an awareness to the government of maritime power as an essential asset for prevention of war, in war and to show the flag for the nation's coercive diplomacy and for Humanitarian Relief and Disaster Relief (HADR) in peace.

China-India Equation

India, as a growing economy, needs to possess a strong navy in the years ahead as an insurance against India's nuclear neighbour, China. The PLA (Navy) took a lead with rapid expansion registering 335 platforms in 2020 with its increased allocation of 33 per cent of China's defence budget of \$175 billion. The PLA Army was trimmed by President Xi Jinping from 2014 and he urged the PLA (Navy) to meet aspirations of the China Dream 中国梦 to take on USA's maritime power in the East and in the IOR. China has an alliance with Pakistan to become a resident IOR naval power with bases at Djibouti and the facilities it is constructing at Gwadar and Ormara, connected with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, India's Navy, due to its geographical ability to dominate the Malacca Straits and experience of operating with leading navies, has an advantage despite having less ships, but India cannot rest on its oars, even though the navy with BrahMos and Barak missiles and MF/Star radars is equipped with a level of lethality.

Ecosystem

The driver for China was Indian Navy's rise in quality and closeness to the US' Navy in Exercise Malabar's since 1992 and 26 SIMBEXES with Singapore in the

South China Seas where China has been flexing its muscles. The Indian Navy diligently built up an indigenous ship-building ecosystem which has provided continuity to the serving and even retired personnel which has contributed to the construction of over 85 warships. The latest 3,000 tonne Project 28 ASW corvette INS Kavaratti built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata was commissioned by COAS General Manoj Mukund Naravane on 22 October at Visakhapatnam, when CNS Admiral Karambir Singh was busy inspecting the Western Fleet off Goa for readiness with missile firings. The Kavaratti has an indigenous content of 90 per cent including weapons and is a good example of Atmanirbhar (Self-reliance) designed by Navy's Design Directorate with modern composite upper superstructure.

The navy's **allocation of the defence** budget has been **reduced to 13 per cent** from 18 per cent

Nuclear Triad

India has risen as a power after it blasted its way into the nuclear club in 1998 as a non-NPT member, much to China's chagrin. In 2016, India commissioned a homemade nuclear armed submarine after successfully operating a Charlie class nuclear submarine K-43 INS Chakra on lease from Russia from 1987 to 1991. The INS Chakra operated till 1990, covering 72,000 nautical miles (133,000 km). The reactor remained active for 430 days with five 63 km ranged Amethyst missile firings (SS-N-7 Starbright) and 42 Cet/Test torpedo launches and exercised with Fleet ships. The supervising Russian Captain A Terenov wrote, "The Indian Navy's ATV nuclear submarine base at Visakhapatnam and the crew are as good as any in Russia", and paid handsome tributes to the professionalism of the navy's submariners. Currently, the navy has INS Chakra II; an Akula on lease

Soviet-built Indian Charlie I class cruise missile submarine INS CHAKRA underway.





India successfully test-fired BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the Indian Navy's indigenously-built stealth destroyer INS Chennai.

from Russia since 2012. Based on the Nilgiri Leander model of buying a design, the Navy's ATV under DRDO and PMO bought out a nuclear submarine design from Rubin of Russia and built and commissioned nuclear armed submarine INS Arihant with 750km K-15/B-05 missiles by 2016 and the navy joined India's triad for deterrence from the seas.

Indian Navy has taken part in 23 Malabar Naval Exercises since 1992 with the United States' Navy (USN), and with Japan's Maritime Self Defence Forces (JSDF) since 2015. To facilitate common Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Pentagon had cleared the internet controlled CENTRIX only for the duration of the exercises with the US' Navy Sea Riders embarked on Indian Navy ships. Computer typed communication replaced voice communications for swiftness and safety in surface, aerial and submarine operations with net centricity.


The foundational General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, enabled the

US' Congress to release military equipment to India and C-130s, C-17s, Apaches and Chinooks and P8is were ordered and are operational. In 2016, after experience of maintaining the 13,000 tonne LPD INS Jalashwa (USS Trenton) bought in a Foreign Military Sale (FMS) arrangement for \$48 million in 2007 with support of spares and fuelling at sea, led to the signing of the Logistic Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement (LEMOA) and made it possible to order fuel and stores from the US' Navy not only for Indian Navy but Air Force and Army. India has similar agreements now with Japan and Australia. The QUAD navies can provide mutual logistical support to each other with seamless escrow accounting, and LEMOA recently saw a US' Navy P8A MR Poseidon aircraft fuel at Port Blair.

Access To US Technology

In 2018, the USA and India signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) for sharing and provision of restricted US' communications and equipment which has a Maritime Information Sharing Agreement

(MISTA) clause. Pentagon extended the Internet CENTRIX by releasing passwords and black boxes to view the Indo-Pacific MDA on consoles and plotting tables along with QUAD nations to track ships and submarines for swift and safe naval operations. The 24th edition of the MALABAR 2020 naval exercise Phase 1 was executed from Visakhapatnam from 03-06 November in the Bay of Bengal with USS John S McCain, Japan Maritime Self Defence Force JMSDF Onami, and Royal Australian Navy RAN Ballarat and IN platforms. In the second phase from 17th to 20th in the Arabian Sea, INS Vikramaditya with MiG-29Ks and USS Nimitz with F18S along with IN ships and submarines and P8i aircraft and two destroyers of the Australian and Japanese Navies will join off the Coast of Goa as the first QUAD Malabar to understand the ethos and level of training of each other's navies, commanders and personnel with CENTRIX.

The signing of the foundational agreements and BECA on 26 October allows the sharing of classified satellite and other information from the US' government and American companies with India. Going ahead, the Indian Navy expects to commission the indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant along with its second nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine, Arighat and P15 B destroyer Visakhapatnam and the third Scorpene submarine and hopefully order torpedoes for the Scorpene. The plans are likely to fortify the Andaman and Nicobar Islands so that India can project power beyond the Malacca Straits and facilitate interoperability between militaries with high end technology, as the navy recites its Motto 'Shan No Varuna' (May Lord Varuna Bless Our Navy) on Navy Day. 

INDIA'S STRATEGIC OPTION

From the Indian perspective, access to the Duqm Port will definitely provide India with an option to challenge Chinese domination and to a certain extent, the Pakistani presence in the Arabian Sea region. In this regard, it can prove to be a significant strategic move for India. This can be considered to be India's topmost strategy choice.

India's Look West policy saw a major push in the last few years when the approach changed from "Look West" to "Act West". Over the last few years, the bilateral relations between India and various West Asian nations were focussed on the energy trade and Indian diaspora residing in the region. However, there is a need to develop this relationship into a comprehensive strategic partnership. In this, India's access to West Asian nation, Oman's al Duqm Port, can play in favour of India's strategic interests. In case of India, the development, operation and maintenance of the Chabahar Port in Iran and the access to this strategically located Duqm Port in the Persian Gulf waters fit into the larger scheme of

diplomatic manoeuvres. In such a scenario, India's gain in accessing the Duqm Port is a vital asset in enhancing the port's strategic position and for the broader interests of safeguarding the regional security vulnerabilities. In this context, this paper will try to analyse India's options and current situation vis-à-vis Oman's Duqm Port.

Strategic Positioning

The port is located on the southeastern seaboard of Oman overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean providing access to eastern Africa and the Red Sea via the Gulf of Aden. Duqm is a port town on the Arabian Sea, a district of the al Wusta Governorate located in central-eastern Oman. It was a small

fishing settlement of the Janubah tribe on the coast of Oman. It is approximately 550 km from the capital of Oman, Muscat. One of the crucial selling points of this port is that it is located outside the Strait of Hormuz, the most contested water space in the West Asian region through which the bulk of oil passes. Opening directly into the international waters in the close proximity of international trade route between Asia and Europe has increased the significance of this port for major international players such as the US and China including India. This has made Duqm an important connection that can change the maritime chessboard of the West Asian nation. (Figure 1)

From the **Indian perspective**, access to the **Duqm Port** will definitely provide India **with an option to challenge** Chinese domination



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/access-to-omani-port-to-help-india-check-china-at-gwadar/articleshow/62908230.cms>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

Large SEZ

In fact, Duqm Port has emerged as the flagship project of the Omani government moving towards Oman's port expansion policies. Furthermore, the Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is aimed at facilitating the country's efforts towards economic diversification to a post-oil economy. This development of SEZ is part of the strategic plan to move away from oil-dependent economy under "Oman Vision 2040." The Duqm Port set within the SEZ which encompasses the geographical area of almost 2,000 sq km, approximately 90 km of coastline along the Arabian Sea. It is one of the largest SEZ areas in the whole West Asian North African (WANA) region. Not only that, the port entered in the early operations phase in 2012 and contains the fully

functional commercial quay capable of handling heavy-lift general cargo, dry bulk and containers. All these factors make Duqm Port a quite plausible alternative option for nations which are dependent on West Asian region for their energy transport and trade and desirous of avoiding the Strait of Hormuz as an energy transit option.

Facilities

Also, there are number of facilities at the Duqm Port such as availability of marine pollution prevention facilities (MARPOL at the dry dock), freshwater supply, fuel bunkering and domestic waste collection and treatment facilities. Oman's plan is to transform Duqm SEZ as a fundamental aspect of its comprehensive strategy aimed at diversifying and developing the



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Duqm Port, Oman.



Qarn Alam oil fields, Oman.

economy. Consequently, Asia figures prominently in these plans due to the large hydrocarbon market as well as design and implementation. This is based on the Malaysian model of management often referred to as Tanfeedh and the Singaporean example of turning it into a trans-shipment and logistical hub. All these indicate towards the larger task of a post-oil transitioning of the Omani economy.

The strategic significance of this port can be highlighted by the fact that the US and Oman signed a significant strategic agreement in April 2019 which allows the US' navy to call at the Ports of Duqm and Salalah. This will, in fact, provide the

US with greater flexibility to conduct maritime operations in case there is an escalation of tensions between Iran and the US. At the same time, it has also increased the possibility of strategic competition between the US and China considering that China is also one of the major players and top trading partners of various West Asian nations. China's growing influence in the West Asian region aimed at weakening the American influence there can be considered

as one of the significant reasons for America's move. At the same time, this American move is also partly driven by a desire to monitor Chinese activities in the region and to curtail Chinese commercial and logistical expansion. However, it cannot be ignored that the US' involvement in the Duqm Port will also help in facilitating India's efforts not only in Oman but also in the larger West Asian region.

Getting access to the Duqm Port is **quite crucial for India** in order to **augment its** naval activities

Asia figures prominently in these plans due to the **large hydrocarbon market** as well as **design and implementation**

India's Strategic Ideations

The significance of India's relationship with Oman is visible from the fact that it is a top trading partner of Oman with the bilateral trade between the two nations being almost \$6 billion in the year 2018-2019. Definitely, India's pact with Oman related to Duqm Port will help New Delhi in expanding India's footprint in the western Indian Ocean, the Arabian Gulf and eastern Africa. Not only that, Oman is also the oldest defence partner of India in the region. Both the nations have signed various Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) related to security and defence cooperation including maritime security between the coast guards of both the nations. Indeed, keeping Duqm in mind, there is a broader scope for cooperation in building strategic oil reserves as India has

already invited Oman for the same being a significant importer of oil from the latter.

The signing of the Maritime Transport Pact between Oman and India in 2019 has significantly boosted India's desire to expand its footprints in the West Asian region as well as focus on bilateral and regional security aspects more closely with Muscat. For the past two years since the signing of MoU with Oman related to Duqm Port, there has been a significant increase in Indian maritime activities and maritime traffic at Duqm. Indeed, getting access to the Duqm Port is quite crucial for India in order to augment its naval activities in the Indian Ocean and addressing India's maritime security concerns related to piracy in the Arabian Sea region. But it cannot be ignored that India's

foremost aim was to thwart any threats posed by the ongoing Chinese activities in the Arabian Sea region under the premise of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which can be of concern to India considering West Asia to be its extended neighbourhood. In this scenario, access to Duqm Port provides a much-needed option to India in order to keep a check on these issues.

Nonetheless, the international competition related to the usage of Duqm Port appears to be an effective technique adopted by the US and India to counter and control the increasing Chinese penetration and dominance in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman. From the Indian perspective, access to the Duqm Port will definitely provide India with an option to challenge Chinese domination and to a certain extent, the Pakistani presence in the Arabian Sea region. In this regard, it can prove to be a significant strategic move for India. This can be considered to be India's topmost strategy choice. **DSA**



The Government of Oman signs Maritime Transport Cooperation Pact with the Indian government.

QUAD: A WORK IN PROGRESS

This year's exercise has increased the future expectations of the Quad. Several new improvements could help in furthering the Quad's mission, such as to offer Australia a permanent seat in the annual Malabar Naval Exercise. If Australia does not participate next year, it may be seen as a step backwards. While none of the Quad members have mentioned it, a formal quadrilateralised Malabar would enhance their coordinated activities in other regions of the Indo-Pacific as well.

On 3 November 2020 witnessed the commencement of the first phase of the Malabar Naval Exercise. This is

the 24th edition of the annual exercise. For the first time in over a decade, all four members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or Quad) – Australia, India, Japan and the US – participated in

the exercise that took place near the coast of Visakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal. This year, the naval exercise was conducted in two phases – the first phase was held from 03 to 06 November in the Bay



In Tokyo, Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne and US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo at the second ministerial of the "the Quad."

of Bengal and the second phase from 17 to 20 November near the Coast of Goa in the Arabian Sea.

Every year, participants from the Quad countries meet in the host country and transfer crew members between the ships for observation before the drills begin. However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's naval exercise had a non-contact, at sea only format, which means that none of the participants could meet in person this year, and no crew members were exchanged as a precautionary measure.

Significance

The Malabar Exercise was initiated in 1992 as an annual bilateral naval exercise between the Indian Navy (IN) and the United States Navy (USN). In 2015, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) became a permanent member, making it an annual trilateral exercise. Every year, different areas of the Indo-Pacific are chosen for the training. The exercise was conducted near the Coast of Guam in Philippine Sea in 2018 and at the Coast of Japan in 2019.

The navies of Singapore and Australia participated in the exercise as non-permanent members in 2007. With Royal Australian Navy (RAN) joining again this year, all Quad members come together to enhance their maritime security cooperation.

The exercise is conducted with the aim of working towards a free, inclusive and open Indo-Pacific. This is strengthened by the collective support given by the Quad countries to enhance the global maritime security regime. This includes a commitment towards the rules-based international order, ensuring Freedom of Navigation (FoN) and the Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONops) in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with no individual nation trying to dominate the ocean.

The outcome of this crucial exercise involves a better knowledge of the capabilities and training of each other's navies. Such an exercise not only signifies the joint efforts of the Quad navies but also enhances the capabilities of individual members, builds trust and cooperation among them and showcases their shared security interest of building a prosperous and an open Indo-Pacific.

Ex Malabar 2020

This year's exercise was conducted in two phases, having advanced and complex naval exercises. Some of the exercises included surface, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare drills, cross-deck flying, and weapon firing exercises

The first phase, held between 03-06 November, involved the participation of USN's United States Ship (USS) John S McCain (DDG-56), which is a guided missile destroyer; RAN's



TANVI GUPTA

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Her Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) Ballarat (FFH-155), which is a long-range frigate, along with integral MH-60 helicopter; JMSDF's Onami (DD-111), a destroyer, with integral SH-60 helicopter and the Indian Navy's Ranvijay (destroyer), Shivalik (frigate), Sukanya (offshore patrol vessel), Shakti (fleet support ship) and Sindhuraj (submarine). Additionally, P-81 (long-range maritime patrol aircraft), Hawk (advanced trainer jet), Dornier (maritime patrol aircraft) and helicopters participated as well.

The second phase, which took place between 17-20 November, witnessed a full spectrum exercise between Indian Navy's carrier Vikramaditya with the MIG-29K fighters and United States Navy's super carrier Nimitz with the F-1 fighters, two destroyers of the Australian and Japanese navies as part of the war games. At least 70 foreign warships

About **70 foreign warships** patrolled the area between the Persian Gulf and **the Arabian Sea** as China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) was conducting **anti-pirate operations** near the **Gulf of Aden** around the same time



The Royal Australian Navy Anzac-class frigate HMAS Ballarat (FFH 155) prepares to come alongside the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) during divisional tactics while conducting integrated operations.

patrolled the area between the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea as China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) was conducting anti-pirate operations near the Gulf of Aden around the same time.

Unique Australian Participation

While the Malabar Exercise is formally independent of the Quad Security Dialogue, the presence of Australia and coming together of all four nations, makes it connected to the Quad.

Previously, Australia had only participated in the exercise in 2007. However, Australia withdrew from the Quad shortly after, as it received

This **exercise is only one factor** in the Quad's **mission to contain China's** power

opposition from China. Due to this, Australia did not participate in Malabar 2008, or any other naval exercises post that. The war games continued between India, the US and Japan as trilateral exercises. In 2017, the Quad revived as a security dialogue between the four nations, but India resented Australia's admission into the Malabar Exercise as India feared that Australia would withdraw again under China's pressure. Despite this resentment,

India and Australia were conducting separate bilateral naval exercises. In 2018, Australia along with Japan, insisted India to let Australia join Ex Malabar – yet again, India opposed this request. Finally, this request was accepted in 2020, and Australia was allowed to participate after 13 years. This has come in the light of severed economic ties between Australia and China and the latter's increased presence in the South China Sea.

With this, India shed its apprehensions about Australia's intentions towards the Quad and its joint military alliances. The coming together of the Quad signifies their ambitions of promoting peace, prosperity, freedom, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Strong Message To China

While the Quad members have not directly referred to China and have promoted the agenda as one based on shared interests, openness and democratic values, several factors indicate the Quad's resentment towards China's assertiveness in the region.

Due to China's behaviour in the last one year – its military and political influence on Hong Kong and Tibet, threats to Taiwan and the militarisation of the South China Sea – it has received a global backlash. This has motivated the Quad to counter China's actions. Moreover, India's ongoing border conflict with China in the Himalayas, across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has only served as an incentive for India to include Australia and ensure that the Quad works jointly.

As a Quad, like-minded Australia, Japan, India and the US have posed a diplomatic threat to China's power in the region. The Quad coming together in the seas further strengthens their resolve to counter China's dominance. This year's Malabar Naval Exercise points to the united aim of the democratic states to restrain the dominance of the expansionist China in the Indo-Pacific region.

China's discontent about the coming together of the Quad is already visible. While there is no official ban, the Chinese importers are being discouraged to buy Australian products. Soon after the end of the first phase of the Malabar Exercise, China launched an anti-dumping



JS Onami DD-111 Takanami class destroyer.


investigation on the Australian wine, imposed high tariffs on the import of barley, banned the import of timber on the grounds of it being infected with pest and is not accepting imports of other products like coal, copper ore, sugar, and lobster from Australia. Such actions will create a worrisome condition for Australia and lead to huge economic losses as almost one third of Australia's exports are to China.

Geopolitics

The coming together of the Quad clearly indicates that Australia, Japan, India and the US not only want strengthened diplomatic relations but also to jointly serve as economic and military counterpoints to China.

This year, the Malabar Naval Exercise was bigger than ever and has strengthened all the Quad members. However, this exercise is only one factor in the Quad's mission to contain China's power. All Quad members are also improving their individual, bilateral and trilateral naval capabilities. This includes USA's development of the hypersonic missile and long-range anti-ship missile to counter China's missiles. Australia, too, is making huge investments of

up to \$270 billion to upgrade its defence industry. With the aim of modernising its air force and due to China's interference in Ladakh, India has been enhancing her military capabilities. India recently purchased around 140,000 assault rifles from the US. At the same time, India has started considering China as equal a threat as Pakistan, if not more and has redirected its army, navy and air force in the regions from where China could assert its dominance. Finally, Japanese Navy has been developing its naval capacities by investing in the technologies for submarines.

This year's exercise has increased the future expectations of the Quad. Several new improvements could help in furthering the Quad's mission, such as to offer Australia a permanent seat in the annual Malabar Naval Exercise. If Australia does not participate next year, it may be seen as a step backwards. While none of the Quad members have mentioned it, a formal quadrilateralised Malabar would enhance their coordinated activities in other regions of the Indo-Pacific as well. 

A CONVERGENCE OF STRATEGIES

A Biden Presidency must be able to learn from Obama's Rebalancing Asia and Trump's Free and Open Indo-Pacific and understand that the US cannot engage with China alone. His vision of renewing the alliance of like-minded democracies should also accommodate the current multipolar world. Attaining sustained peace and solidarity means avoiding being stuck on the narrative of the old world, of strategic competitions and of the Cold War mentality.

The nexus of the 21st century international order is in the Indo-Pacific. The region and its strategic geographical position are a testament that "cohesion in diversity" is possible and is happening. States in the

region's ability to function within a broader, global system despite difference in culture and varying levels of development is evidence that despite growing uncertainties and disruptions, the Indo-Pacific has the ability to thrive and shape the regional order in line with its interests. The inherent plurality has

proven to be timely with the friction between the two leading global powers, the US and China, that has left many to question whether the world is entering another Cold War.

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) actions however should never be viewed solely as a means for ideological survival and primacy lens, nor can states expect the Party to adhere fully to liberal democracy. Similar to other states, CCP frames its policies and governance approach according to its roadmap for national development and internal stability – the Chinese Dream under President Xi Jinping. However, its approach is characterised by the comprehensive use of political power and influence within the gray areas short of deterrence and well within the vulnerabilities of states and systems. Its actions in the South China Sea were a clear rejection of the arbitral ruling and a circumvention of international law. Its use of non-military vessels



The then US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping attend a business leaders event in Beijing.

to exercise de facto control over South China Sea, to extend its presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and to employ area access denial operations over Senkaku and Natuna Islands challenged the traditional rules of engagement in maritime security. Moreover, with the threat to national security of emerging technologies, China is seen as having one foot ahead of the world given that policies have yet to catch up with the intricacies of its capabilities.

The CCP is well-aware that its power and influence are not enough with the presence of the United States whose influence among its regional counterparts run deep into traditional alliances, defence pacts and democratic relations. Nonetheless, the inordinate focus being placed on the US-China strategic competition and all the talk of a “new Cold War” undermines the greater role that middle powers have in shaping the regional order. Although the deteriorating relations of the US and China should be taken into consideration, the region cannot afford to isolate or remove any of the two global powers from the equation altogether. Each state has its distinct relation with the US and China but all states demand regional peace and stability.

Middle Power Strategy

Regional mechanisms such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have provided a platform to

discuss security issues and ways forward to address these. These discussions have led to a recalibration of their respective foreign policies to address immediate issues and to align long-term goals for regional stability. This is further evidenced by the security cooperation among states in countering non-traditional security threats such as piracy, trafficking and terrorism, and even, disaster risks and humanitarian aid.

The concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) was first officially coined by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2016, where he emphasised on the establishment and maintenance of the rule of law and the freedom of navigation; the promotion of economic prosperity; and a commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region, especially through capacity-building and security assistance. From then on, it has become a major foreign policy direction of Japan and was quickly adapted by most of the Quad members treading between being too assertive or having too soft a stance.

Australia, elevating its 2016 Defence White Paper, released a 2020 Defence Strategic Update where it emphasised the extent of participation of its military power in order to mitigate the risks posed by the deteriorating strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific. An important aspect of this update is that the force structure and defence planning of Australia has been



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Talk of a **“new Cold War”** undermines the **greater role** that **middle powers** have in **shaping** the regional order



Free and Open Indo-Pacific map.

completely aligned to the immediate surrounding environment of the region. The country has also been one of the more vocal middle powers. It has actively sought to engage with India which resulted in a defence pact for logistical support as well as made its tour in Southeast Asia to discuss the evolving security environment.

Indian Posture

As early as 2015, India has promoted its own concept of the Indo-Pacific with the term Sagar which translates to “ocean” and also means “Security and Growth for All in the Region”. The principals of which were somewhat similar to Abe’s FOIP concept: “to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other’s interests; peaceful resolution of maritime issues; and increase in maritime cooperation”.[5] With the land border clash in Ladakh region, India-China relations have been strained with PM Modi highlighting that India’s relations with other states are built on security and trust. Besides its

new pact with Australia, India also signed a military pact with the US and Japan.

As for Japan, the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has committed to the sustainment of his predecessor’s Indo-Pacific strategy. This commitment is already taking action with his first overseas tour being Vietnam and Indonesia as well as the hosting of the Quad Foreign Ministers Dialogue. The specific visits to these two Southeast Asian countries have been highlighted due to the current chairmanship of Vietnam in ASEAN while Indonesia’s growing defence posture and relations with counterparts. These visits have also been heavily criticised by China as an effort of Japan to bring ASEAN member states to align with the US and Japan’s Indo-Pacific framework.

Equi-balancing

The Quad members have massively shifted their policy direction towards equi-balancing by implementing a stronger

stance in maintaining the rules-based order. Last 06 October, the Quad met in Japan to discuss the COVID-19 outbreak and the need to broaden cooperation for the realisation of the FOIP vision. An important aspect of that meeting is the emphasis they placed on ASEAN. The US, being in the Quad, heightens China’s insecurity given that its traditional alliances is one of its major challenges in the region and its pursuit of the Chinese Dream. In contrast to the Quad, ASEAN has a more non-threatening posture allowing it to navigate around the very “hierarchical” global order. Southeast Asia, as much as it is the center of the Indo-Pacific, is also at the center of the Indo-Pacific concept that could effectively balance interests without isolating bigger powers.

The ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook emphasised the organisation’s collective leadership to maintain its role amidst the strategic environment of competing interests. The principles of the ASEAN Way have often been criticised for failing to address certain

Sustainability of these strategies is **heavily reliant** on **legitimate** leadership of **participating states** and its ability to maintain the course of **implementation**

issues due to the lack of consensus-building. These structural issues in dispute resolution however can be resolved through minilateral collaborations where engagement is based on the issue. This same approach can also be utilised to the broader region in dealing with China through the expansion of defence cooperation among middle powers and through strengthening the defence posture of smaller states. Indo-Pacific must go beyond the US-China strategic competition with middle powers at the center of the strategy bridging the gap between great power politicking to maintaining regional stability.


Biden Wild Card

In a state of global disorder, the direction of the US' Asia policy

must be in line with its allies and partners: Collaborative leadership. The 2020 US' elections is coming to a close with Biden leading unofficial count. During his presidential campaign, he unveiled his foreign policy with a special focus on democracy and recognition of the evolving national and global security threats. A Biden Presidency must be able to learn from Obama's Rebalancing Asia and Trump's Free and Open Indo-Pacific and understand that the US cannot engage with China alone. His vision of renewing the alliance of like-minded democracies should also accommodate the current multipolar world. Attaining sustained peace and solidarity means avoiding being stuck on

the narrative of the old world, of strategic competitions and of the Cold War mentality.

It is essential for the US to shift away from outdated strategies to the new world order. For the US to regain its allies' trust and confidence, under Biden, it must adapt new strategies or revitalize its existing ones taking into consideration utilizing strategic coalitions and partnerships to address these new threats in the cyberspace domain and gray zone operations and hybrid warfare.

Despite these promising developments in the region, sustainability of these strategies is heavily reliant on legitimate leadership of participating states and its ability to maintain the course of implementation. Just as how unilateral acts of a state against another is damaging, the lack of reciprocity and outright ignorance to threats are just as damaging and contributes further to the deterioration of the rules-based order. The convergence of strategies and policies equally demands an alignment of values and vision. 



Joe Biden is the president-elect of the United States 2020.

CHINESE OUVRE

A successful implementation of the BRI will serve a litmus test for China's co-optive power. If China is successful in persuading the participants of BRI's legitimate objectives, its effectiveness as a win-win model and reassure the sceptics of its long-term sustainability, the dream project of Xi Jinping has the potential to reshape the international economic and political order by extending China's geo-economic, political, and cultural influence across the world.

For years, China firmly believed in keeping a low profile in international matters and religiously followed Deng Xiaoping's dictum of "hide your strength and bide your time". However, in 2013, burying the old strategies under the new mantra of "Striving for achievement", the Chinese President Xi Jinping called for "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". Asserting a larger and pro-active role for China in regional and global affairs, he unveiled an unprecedented and unparalleled initiative of 'The Belt and Road' (BRI) that proposed to develop infrastructure and strengthen trade and energy ties between China and nearly 70 countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe. With an estimated coverage of about 60 per cent of the world's population, 30 per cent of global GDP and 75 per cent of energy consumption, the BRI initiative marks a huge shift in Chinese economic and foreign policy. If successfully implemented,

it may have profound implications for China's power status and a significant shift in the existing regional and world order.

Contrary to its nomenclature, while the 'Belt' refers to the overland trade routes and economic corridors stretching from China's west through Central Asia and finally to Europe, the 'Road' is a maritime network of shipping lanes running from China to several countries across the Indo-Pacific. Given its enormous size and scope, BRI has been a focus of intense debate and expert commentary on its motives, implications and challenges.

Hidden Weapon?

Xi Jinping's announcement raised a plethora of questions about China's

objectives or possible hidden motives behind the BRI project. Is it just an endeavour in the spirit of free trade or an act of China's benevolence, sharing the fruits of its development through regional cooperation or a model for realising 'Pax Sinica'? Whether it is driven by China's domestic compulsions or its external ambitions or both?

Banking on its huge economic resources and experience in infrastructure building, China announced its masterplan with a focal aim to "Break the bottleneck in Asian connectivity" via means of stimulating trade, communication, and cultural exchanges. However, sceptics argue that the BRI is Chinese version of the Marshall Plan (where the USA created its sphere

Sceptics call it a Chinese **grand strategy** for creating a "Sino-centric financial and economic order"

of influence by providing loans to rebuild Europe post World War II devastations) for extending China's dominance in the region. Many foreign policy analysts concur that through this vast programme of economic integration and creation of alternative financial structures like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), New Silk Road Fund and New Development Bank (NDB) to facilitate funding for BRI projects, China aims to assert its economic and financial leadership in the region. They call it a Chinese grand strategy for creating a "Sino-centric financial and economic order". As reiterated by Xi on several occasions, it is said to be one of the most important means to achieve the 'China Dream' i.e. to reclaim China's historical global position.

Meanwhile, taking a milder view, some analysts call it China's "charm

offensive" strategy to deepen inter-civilisation exchanges and build cooperative partnerships with countries along the infrastructure routes, thus, boosting China's attractiveness and image as a benevolent power.

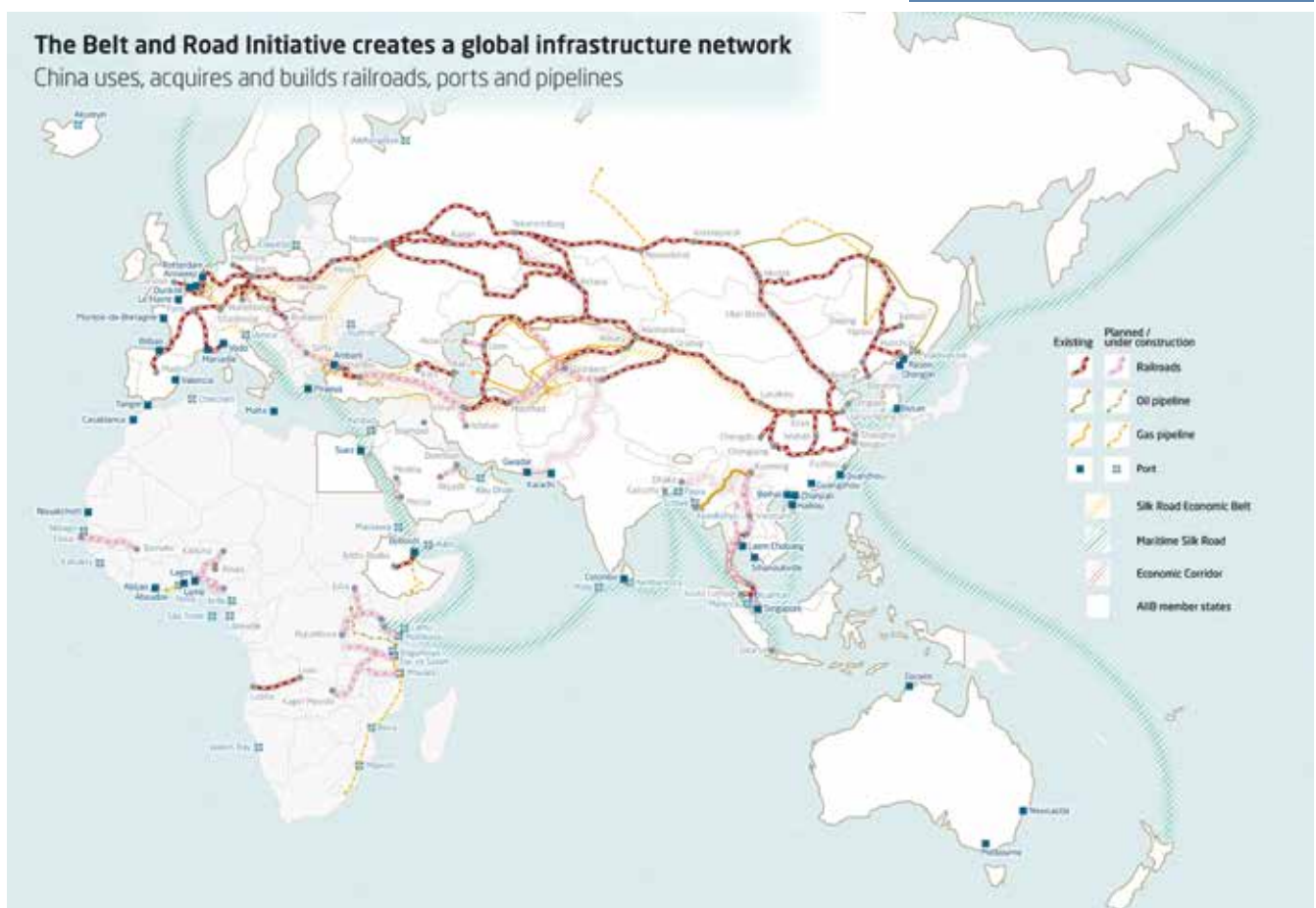
Alternative To Dollar?

However, while there are theories and suspicion about Beijing's external motivations behind the project, the underpinning economic and domestic compulsions of BRI shall not be overlooked. The aggressive plan of BRI undoubtedly reverberates China's economic compulsions and strategic interests, as well as its insecurity dilemma. The Chinese observers and analysts call it a 'going-out' strategy for Chinese companies to access new markets to absorb huge excess of its manufactured products and construction capacity. It is



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Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).



Employees make face masks on a production line at a glove factory, which has started producing face masks as overseas orders for masks at an all time high amid the Coronavirus outbreak, in Shenyang, Liaoning Province of China.

also supposed to be a means to internationalise Chinese currency, the Renminbi (RMB).

Nevertheless, it can't be denied that BRI will definitely help satisfy China's huge appetite for energy and overcoming its "Malacca Dilemma" through what is called 'the buckle in the belt': the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (connecting China's Xinjiang province to Pakistan's port city of Gwadar) allowing it a greater access to energy supply from Africa and Middle East. Not to mention, BRI is also an effort to address China's deepening regional disparity and further state-building in its underdeveloped provinces of Xinjiang and Yunnan.

Blessing Or A Trojan Horse?

The official discourse on the BRI with its overarching aims to boost economic development and bridge the infrastructure gap in the participant countries by tapping the market potential, promoting investment and creating millions of job opportunities sparked the interest, excitement, hope and thus open arms acceptance by many emerging markets. Today, Beijing boasts of up to 137 countries and 30 major international organisations in the official list of the Belt and Road as participants. The most visible part of BRI has been the infrastructure development projects. China has built a series of infrastructure mega-projects like deep seaports, railway tracks, airports,

bridges in underdeveloped Asian and African countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, etc. It was the prospects of improving road, rail and maritime infrastructure that attracted many developing countries hungry for economic growth and modernisation.

Nevertheless, China's gigantic investments and lucrative offers have been successful to lure not just poor and emerging economies, but many enthusiastic rich partners in Europe as well. The developed nations of Italy, Luxembourg, and Portugal were among the first to join the BRI project as they found it an effective platform for multi-dimensional cooperation in digital, space, technology, maritime, and overland connectivity.

By operationalising **the second phase of** the China-Pakistan Fibre Optic Project and announcing the **Huawei manufacture plant** in France, China has kept the **BRI in active mode**

However, as per sceptics, there exists a deep chasm between the rhetoric and actions of the Chinese government. They call 'BRI' a Chinese hidden design to ensnare the borrowing countries into an unsustainable level of debt, creating leverage for Chinese geo-political ambitions. Chinese infrastructure financing has led to a crippling debt situation for several countries like Pakistan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Maldives, Laos, Djibouti, Montenegro, and Kyrgyzstan. It has become an economic and a political trap for countries that receive generous infrastructure aids from China but cannot make the repayments. The instances of China seizing Sri Lanka's Hambantota for 99 years, buying Maldivian islands on lease, and building its first military base in Djibouti after years of infrastructure aid and development highlights Chinese design to gain foothold of key strategic locations and marks its militarisation ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region.

Game Of Seesaw

Facing an alternating up-and-down motion and response, the BRI initiative has become a game of seesaw. At one hand, BRI witnesses a waning enthusiasm of many stakeholder countries with a rising wave of suspicion and distrust over its financing motivations. The fear of debt burden and the danger of an unsustainable economic dependency threatening their sovereignty and independent foreign policy has cautioned countries like Malaysia, Sierra Leone, and Kyrgyzstan to

downsize or postpone the key BRI projects. The increasing number of complaints of delays and half-finished projects, focus on quantity over quality, adverse environmental impact, opaque bidding processes and low transparency, lack of inter-organisational coordination and absence of a unified strategy at home has created reluctance in many to buy into China's initiative.

On the other hand, we see the COVID-19 pandemic bringing major twists in the scene. While, with its crippling effect on world economies, the crisis exposed the risks and cost of the BRI scheme, it also revealed over-dependency of the globalized world on China's supply chains. Against the emerging sentiment of protectionism and self-dependency, China made a smart move by adding a new health dimension to BRI, i.e. the 'Health Silk Road'. Exploiting its tremendous capacity of production and edge in exports and supply chain logistics, China has been continuously supplying essential medical equipment (such as surgical masks, respirators, ventilators, masks, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits) to pandemic-stricken states. China's timely assistance to countries across the world not only enhanced its bargaining power but also scored it a competitive advantage in bilateral relations.

The crippling effects of the pandemic left no economy unscathed. China too struggled economically, significantly hampering its outward investments, halting, or delaying many BRI

projects, thus pushing many Afro-Asian states to request China to consider deferring payments, which could not but affect China's BRI ambitions. However, after successfully bringing the pandemic as well as its economy in order, China has been roping in investments from AIIB and NDB China to build public health infrastructure in developing countries. It has opened new avenues to expand its market access and recuperate some returns on its investments by opting for joint development of BRI projects with countries like Germany. Despite American sanctions and the UK's reversal from the 5G network deal, China continues to accelerate its 'Digital Silk Road' programme. By operationalising the second phase of the China-Pakistan Fibre Optic Project and announcing the Huawei manufacture plant in France, China has kept the BRI in active mode.

A Litmus Test

In Chinese, the word for "crisis" is "Weiji" where "wei" means danger and "ji" means opportunity, reflecting the dialectic thinking of looking for positive aspects in extremely difficult times. In the current situation of the drowning economies and dwindling soft power of China, the future of BRI depends on how quickly and effectively China re-invigorates its infrastructure projects, manages the surgery of its soft image, and controls the global narrative.

A successful implementation of the BRI will serve a litmus test for China's co-optive power. If China is successful in persuading the participants of BRI's legitimate objectives, its effectiveness as a win-win model and reassure the sceptics of its long-term sustainability, the dream project of Xi Jinping has the potential to reshape the international economic and political order by extending China's geo-economic, political, and cultural influence across the world. 

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, was the trigger for Arab Spring. The conditions were ripe for revolution and success in one country had cascading effect and motivated population of other countries for revolt. A similar situation is likely to emerge in Pakistan wherein conducive environment for revolt exists and waiting for a trigger.

History has proved it repeatedly that the failure of large nations leads to balkanisation (splintering—an inherent attribute of nation-states situated in the Balkans in Europe). The disintegration of USSR and Yugoslavia are the best examples of balkanisation in modern history. The various fault-lines in Pakistan which pave the road to balkanisation are discontentment amongst various ethnic groups like Baloch, Pashtun, Mohajir, people from Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, rising debt and inflation, low GDP, atrocities of Pakistan Army, excessive domination and privileges of Punjabis, unequal distribution of funds between the provinces, corrupt leadership and multi-power centers challenging the authority of the government.

Balkanisation 1.0

The formation of Pakistan was unnatural which led to the

Balkanisation 1.0 i.e. creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The severed Pakistan could survive for half a century to serve the interests of the US and the West in South Asia. At the end of 20th century, the religious leaders of Pakistan with radical beliefs challenged the policies of the US and the West, and ended the unnatural marriage between the West and Pakistan.

The players preventing balkanisation process consists of Pakistani Army, dominant population of Punjab province, China to safeguard CPEC, Iran to safeguard territorial integrity of Sistan and Balochistan Province and Saudi Arabia to maintain Sunni domination in South Asia. The players which favour balkanisation

consist of oppressed population of Pakistan and secular nations of the world to prevent spread of radicalisation in South Asia.

Timeline For Balkanisation 2.0

The process of Balkanisation 2.0 has almost commenced with the current uprisings and mass protests by the population of Pakistan. The present time is ripe for revolt with weak leadership of Imran Khan. It is a known fact that Pakistan Army is strong enough to curb the rebellion but Arab Spring (2011) in Middle East has proved the futility of employing army against its own citizens. Also, sabotage of corrupt military hierarchy of Pakistan by foreign Intelligence agencies to

The **US' withdrawal from Afghanistan** would provide an opportunity to Afghanistan to **refocus** on the **issue of Pashtunistan**

facilitate Balkanisation is a high possibility. Saudi Arabia is an ally of the US and diplomatic efforts could make Saudis to act as neutral during the uprising in Pakistan. The primary international resistance to prevent balkanisation would be from China and Iran.

Why Balkanisation Is Imminent

Corrupt and Weak Leadership:

It is well appreciated that to bind the unnatural coalition of multi-ethnic groups, a strong leadership is required like Tito of Yugoslavia. The present Pakistan leadership under Imran Khan is extremely weak and is incapable of handling strategic crisis. There are several power centers in Pakistan like Sharifs, Bhuttos, Haqqanis and warlords in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baloch provinces. These power symbols are up in arms for the cause of their province and not Pakistan as a country. Imran Khan and Pakistan Army Chief have lost their credibility especially post-Balakot strikes and after historical decision by India to revoke Article 370 in J&K. Therefore,

the present weak leadership of Pakistan is incapable to prevent Balkanisation of Pakistan.

Poor Economy and GDP: The GDP of Pakistan is only 2 per cent, literacy rate is 57 per cent and 55 million people still live below poverty line. Pakistan's education system has been taken over by radical religious leaders and they have chosen radicalisation over economic growth. This has resulted in total collapse of economy and the country is largely surviving on loans and aid being provided by other countries. This model has created a large pool of discontented population ready to revolt at an opportune moment.

Radicalisation in South Asia:

Taliban is a brainchild of Pakistan and radicalisation in South Asia is more or less attributed to Pakistan supported by funds from Middle East. The effect of radicalisation in South and Southeast Asia has adversely affected the global peace. The present political, religious and economic conditions in Pakistan would further give rise to radicalisation. Therefore, to



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Anti-government protest rally in Karachi.

serve larger global interest, secular forces in the world would have to act as catalyst to the process of Balkanisation 2.0 to comply with the global responsibility.

Balochistan Issue: The atrocities of Pak Army on Baloch population including air raids in 2014 have left no option but the creation of independent Balochistan. The area would be 40 per cent of the total landmass of Pakistan and extensively rich in mineral resources to include 19 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves. One of the world's deepest port—Gwadar is located in Baloch province and can support export of minerals and finished goods to sustain the economy of independent Balochistan. The creation of Balochistan have serious implications for China as it will threaten China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But, China along with India may negotiate with Balochis and revised term of contract may safeguard interests of China.

The prolonged **discrimination policies** have **alienated** the population of **Gilgit-Baltistan** and fuelled the anger due to which **separatist's** movement is on rise

Pashtunistan post-US Withdrawal: The US' withdrawal from Afghanistan would provide opportunity to Afghanistan to refocus on the issue of Pashtunistan. The Pashtuns living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have faced enough atrocities of Pakistan Army and social and economic conditions are prime for revolution for a big change.

Gilgit-Baltistan: Currently, the mass protests are being staged by the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan. The area has strategic importance as it has large number of glaciers which are the water source for Pakistan. CPEC has its gateway through Gilgit-Baltistan and a large portion of CPEC passes through it. China is

also involved in several infrastructure projects in this region. Despite all these facts, the infrastructure in this area largely remains underdeveloped. The prolonged discrimination policies have alienated the population of Gilgit-Baltistan and fuelled the anger due to which separatist movement is on rise.

Punjab Province: There is absolute dominance of Punjab Province in Pakistan Army and the national politics. They have considerable control over the resources and over the past 73 years, they have channelised most of the resources for the development of Punjab Province. The superiority complex syndrome of Punjabi community and discrimination with population of East Pakistan resulted in the creation of Bangladesh (Balkanisation 1.0). In the present scenario, the Punjabi community treats balance population as inferior race and this social fault-line would finally become one of the major causes for Balkanisation 2.0.



Baloch Human Rights Organization stage demonstrations against ongoing forces' operation in different areas of Balochistan.

Implications For India **Two and Half Front Threat** **(China, Pakistan and Terrorism):**

Balkanisation of Pakistan would result in effectively handling of two and half front threat. The disintegration of Pakistan would reduce the threat on western borders of India as the size of Pakistan would reduce to mere Punjab Province. The terror emanating from Pakistan soil would be marginalised. China would lose control over CPEC and India would have strong base to negotiate with China on the boundary issues



Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan.

and its interference in the Indian sub-continent.

Disintegration of Nuclear Facilities in Pakistan: Presently, Pakistan has its nuclear facilities divided in all the provinces like R&D and testing facilities, location of nuclear arsenals, human resource for nuclear department, fissile material creation facilities, etc. The balkanisation would loosen the control of government over the nuclear arsenal and there are chances of it falling into the hands of non-state actors. This may provide capability to the non-state actors to launch attack on Indian soil by a dirty bomb (if not exactly nuclear attack). As per the nuclear doctrine, India may go for a massive strike which would result in nuclear war in South Asia. The Intelligence agencies of India must keep a close watch on the nuclear facilities in Pakistan and prevent nuclear arsenal falling in the hands of rouge elements.

CPEC: Balkanisation of Pakistan may lead to the failure of CPEC. Either China would negotiate with fragmented nations separately or else CPEC would become a failed project. The worst scenario for China would

be orchestrated merger of Gilgit-Baltistan with Jammu and Kashmir as it would facilitate complete control of CPEC by India. Currently, there are mass protests being staged by the population of Gilgit-Baltistan against the Government of Pakistan. The independence of Gilgit-Baltistan would be in favour of India as it will provide lever to India against China. The control of this area would result into control of water flowing to Punjab and Sindh provinces. India should have plan ready to integrate Gilgit-Baltistan with Jammu and Kashmir. Even if integration is not possible, then diplomatic efforts should ensure diplomatic and political leaning of Gilgit-Baltistan towards India instead of China and Pakistan.

Refugee Issue: Pak Balkanisation 1.0 i.e. the creation of Bangladesh resulted in refugee problem for India which has not been resolved in the last 50 years. It is appreciated that during the process of Balkanisation 2.0, India would receive a large number of refugees from Sindh province and Gilgit-Baltistan due to the atrocities of Pakistan's security forces. India need to have a plan to handle such criticality.

Rise in Terrorists' Attacks:


Pakistan has always blamed India for providing covert support to Baloch separatists. Instead of focusing on internal fault-lines, Pakistan would attribute the process of balkanisation to Indian Intelligence agencies. The process of balkanisation will fuel anger in Pakistan and they would plan and execute terror attacks like Parliament attack 2001, Kaluchak incident 2002, Mumbai attack 2008, Uri attack 2016, Pulwama attack 2019, etc. A very high degree of Intelligence cover would be required to avert these actions.

Investment Opportunities:

Independent Balochistan rich in minerals especially natural gas with deep seaport like Gwadar would provide extensive opportunities to invest by Indian companies.

Indus Water Treaty 1960: The treaty would become null and void and India would revise the terms in favour of Indian Territory. The negotiation would take place between newly formed weak states and an unbiased treaty fulfilling water requirement of India would be formulated and implemented.

Conclusion

The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, was the trigger for Arab Spring which toppled several governments in Middle East/ North Africa (MENA) region. The conditions were ripe for revolution and success in one country had cascading effect and motivated population of other countries for revolt. A similar situation is likely to emerge in Pakistan wherein conducive environment for revolt exists and waiting for a trigger. A partial success in revolt by one province would result in simultaneous revolt in remaining provinces to finally result in Balkanisation of Pakistan. 

BOOK REVIEW

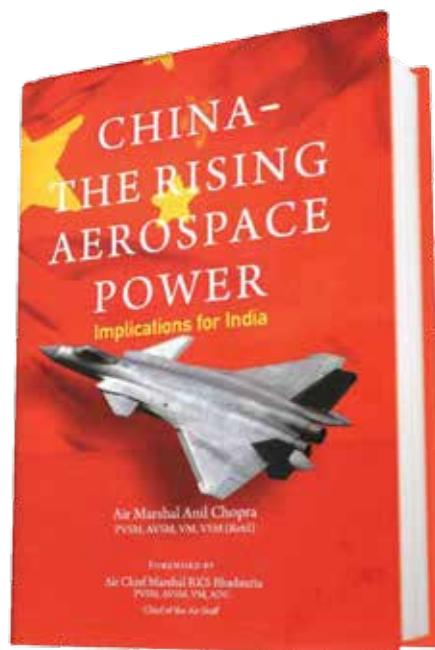
CHINA - THE RISING AEROSPACE POWER: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

Book reviewed by: **By Air Marshal Daljit Singh PVSM AVSM VM**
(former AOC-in-C South Western Air Command)

The induction of the formidable Rafale Fighter jets into the Indian Air Force (IAF) amidst the ongoing standoff between China and India at Ladakh, has led to an interesting and continuous front page analysis of the Chinese Air Force and the Indian Air Force, by both the national and international analysts. Air Marshal Anil Chopra, a renowned Mirage 2000 pilot and an avid analyst of Aerospace Power, has comprehensively analysed the Chinese Aerospace Power in a recently released book titled 'China - The Rising Aerospace Power: Implications for India'. The book was recently released by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, at Air Headquarters. This has been a timely release of the well-researched and well-analysed book on the contemporary subject.

The author started the book with the background of the aerospace concepts, with glimpses of the Air Wars fought, starting from the World War II, Arab-Israeli Wars, Indo-Pakistan Wars and covering the Gulf Wars, Afghanistan Wars, and he summarizes with the current technological advances and the future of the Sixth Generation Fighter Aircraft. The doctrinal concepts of the USAF, as well as the IAF have been well described. In fact, this chapter lays the foundation for the reader to thoroughly understand aerospace concepts evolved over the years and provides the template for assessing the PLAAF capabilities. While covering the historical background of the aerospace operations, coverage of the involvement of the

PLAAF during the Korean and the Vietnam Wars would have brought in additional continuity in understanding the development of the PLAAF.



The book with eleven chapters has very eloquently described all aspects of the Chinese Air Force. The reader would find a good description of the Chinese approach to building the aerospace capability in a dedicated chapter and, thereafter, each chapter describes in great details the aviation industry, modernisation plans, "Vision 2035", the push in space sector, including the Chinese crewed space program, the deep space program and the Beidou Navigation satellite system. The Army and Maritime Aviation and the PLAAF Rocket Force have also been dealt with.



The book was released by the Indian Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria at a brief ceremony in Air HQ.


The Air Marshal has dwelt well on the geopolitical situation and the strategic balance in the Asia Pacific region. There is a dedicated chapter on how China supported Pakistan in building its military industrial complex, with special reference to aerospace. It also puts into clear perspective of how the two militaries train and exercise together.

The most relevant chapters to the academia and the analysts are the ones dealing with the Chinese Air War Strategy in the TAR Region and the 'Indian options to counter the Chinese Air Strategy'. Even though the author has analysed the 'The Indian Option' at the end of each chapter, an exclusive concluding chapter provides detailed recommended strategy for the IAF. The author has analysed the operational infrastructure in the TAR Region, including the airfields, air defence forces, rail-road network, strategic dams, training status, and command and control setup. The author opines that the PLAAF would employ the PLARF to neutralize the airfields, infrastructure, AD

forces network, followed by Cyber and EW attacks to decimate the C2 Network. As recommendation to the IAF, the author has projected the priority to fill up the depleting fighter fleet and build indigenous capability to manufacture fighters, ensure seamless net-centric operations and develop sensor technology. To my mind, it is important for the IAF to have persistent all-weather day and night surveillance capability across the borders up to 300 km. This will ensure transparency of the operational area, provide actionable intelligence and avoid any more surprises. Along with space-based and air-borne (Manned/Unmanned) surveillance systems, the IAF must acquire independently targetable simultaneous attack long range standoff Precision systems that can take on deeply buried hill embedded hardened targets in the TAR region in a GPS/IRNSS denied environment. Comprehensive EM Spectrum Dominance is considered essential to ensure high degree of mission success rate. The IAF must acquire the capability of

employing its high-end fighters as omni-role sensors and shooters to exploit the maximum capabilities and cut down on reaction times. In this regard, the upgrade of the SU 30 MKI fleet must be given the highest priority (also recommended by the author), to remain effective in the present environment. The IAF is an experienced force that has been regularly participating with the USAF, RAF, French Air Force, Israeli Air Force and many other air forces. The Chinese Air Force lacks in training caliber and this would be a significant advantage for the IAF. While the PLARF has good arsenal of dual use ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, induction of the S-400 class of SAM in the IAF and other terminal defence protection systems would provide sufficient protection against such terminal threats. Considering the expanse of the borders and the requirement to have more controllers onboard the Airborne Warning and Control System, with good persistence capability, the IAF may consider investing more in the bigger platform like the Airbus 330, Boeing 767, for AWACS.

The author has done extensive research from diverse sources including the American, the Indian and other international Institutions, that ensured a well-balanced view and analysis of not only the Chinese Air Force but also the prevailing geopolitical situation. The book is, therefore, considered relevant and worth reading as an excellently compiled reference book and analytical reference in the Indian context.

Published by Pentagon Press LLP under United Service Institute of India (USI) research project, the book (ISBN 978-93-90095-14-8) is available at major stores and portals online. 



GEO-STRATEGIC SHIFT TO RED SEA

There is an apparent increase in the presence of regional powers in the Red Sea which this article will try to explore in accordance with the tensioned regional relations, the growing rivalries, and competitiveness between state actors. The centralised position within the global waterways network makes the Red Sea a critical route for global maritime trade and crude oil exports. Its geographic location in the heart of the Middle East / North Africa (MENA) region positions it as a nexus between the Indian and the North Atlantic Oceans by connecting the Mediterranean Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea. Such factors can, understandably, make the Red Sea a subject of international interests. Therefore, an extensive regional geopolitical contest is evident in the construction and concession of ports, historical sites, military bases and others. The rapidly changing political and security environments of the countries bordering the Red Sea, especially the African coast, are providing opportunities for the regional powers to secure footholds in the area.

The Horn of Africa in the South of the Red Sea is one of the world's most militarised regions due to an ongoing build-up of military bases and naval forces of international security actors like Europe, the US, and Asia, as well as regional ones from the Middle East. The constant change in the security environment of the Horn of Africa and the global energy security has been driving the competition between these actors to have a foothold in this critical area. However, it is becoming notable that the race is no longer limited to the Horn of Africa as the recent years have shown an exceptional increase in the geopolitical competitiveness that is extending to the Red Sea.

Epicentre

The southern part of the Red Sea plays a critical role in the global energy security as the Strait of Bab el Mandeb is considered one of the globe's most important

chokepoints for trade movement. According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), in 2018, an estimated 6.2 million b/d of crude oil, condensate, and refined petroleum products passed through Bab el Mandeb toward the US, Europe and Asia. Geographically, Bab el Mandeb is located between Yemen which is currently a warzone, Djibouti and Eritrea which share a long history of border conflict. Moreover, this area has been subjected to piracy and terrorism. These elements have attracted plenty of counter-piracy and counter-terrorism operations. And as a result, there is an American, British, Chinese, Emirati, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Saudi military presence in the areas surrounding the strait.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, it has long considered the Red Sea as an option for an alternative

Turkish presence forms a triangle that covers the majority of Middle East and creates **a significant network** that connects the **Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf** through the **Red Sea**

to the Strait of Hormuz for its oil shipments in times of conflicts for decades. This option has become more of an urge in the shadow of the escalating tension with Iran that has been using its access to the Persian Gulf in retaliation for the American / Saudi policy against it. As one of the most important strategic body of water, the Strait of Hormuz has witnessed a series of incidents over the last decades that jeopardises its security. In 2018, 21 per cent of the global petroleum liquids flowed across it and in the case of worst scenarios, diverting the direction of the oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz is through the Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline (ADCOP) and the East-West Crude Oil Pipeline (or Petroline). While the

ADCOP only bypasses the Strait of Hormuz through UAE to the Gulf of Oman, the East-West Pipeline provides a better opportunity as it passes through desert of Saudi Arabia to Yanbu on the Red Sea. This pipeline was always a part of Saudi plans especially during times of conflicts within the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia has decided, after last year's incidents, to expand the pipeline by 40 per cent in two years.

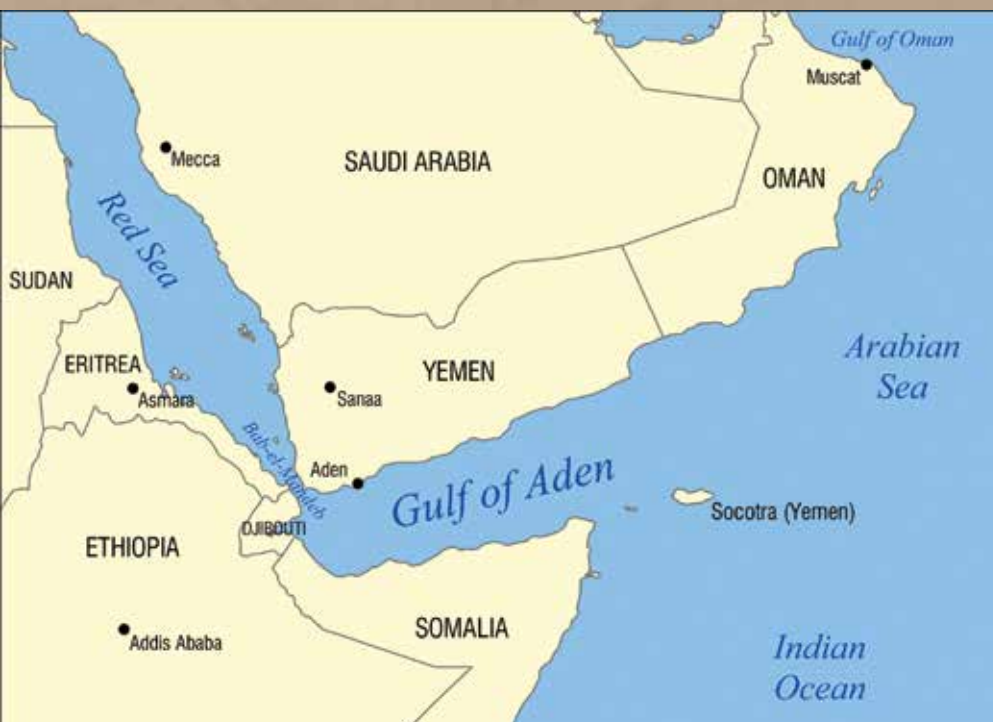
Alternate Routes

However, within the parameters of the Saudi-Iranian competitiveness, the security of the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb can be reciprocal. So, when an incident occurs in one, its likely to be retaliated in the other. Iran claimed that the commercial



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Gulf of Aden map.

routes of the Red Sea are not safe. It stated that three of its tankers were attacked near the Saudi coast during a period of six month before the previously mentioned attacks in the Persian Gulf have taken place.

Another determining factor is the war in Yemen that added new insecurity since Iranian backed Houthi rebels are now in control a big part of the Yemeni coastline. The Houthis have used long-range missiles and other means to target American, Emirati and Saudi warships beside Saudi tankers and commercial ships passing through Bab al Mandeb. And since most of the Saudi crude oil exports are directed toward Asia,



China's first overseas military base, in the Horn of Africa country of Djibouti.

it is faced with the dilemma of Bab el Mandeb's security in the case of diverting its oil route.

Turkish Expansion

Qatar's interests in the Red Sea can be dated to 2010 when it played a mediating role amid the border clashes between Eritrea and Djibouti. It returned to the scene in 2018 by establishing a deal with the Sudanese government at that time to jointly develop the Port of Suakin. Nonetheless, this deal was recently secured by the Qatari ally, Turkey. Given that if Qatar was to get hold of this deal, it could have escalated tensions with Sudan's neighbour, Egypt, a persistent ally of UAE and Saudi Arabia. Still, Qatar tries to maintain presence in the Red Sea through other means like a joint military drill like the one in Sudan's Red Sea province.

The locations of the Turkish presence form a triangle that covers the majority of Middle East and creates a significant network that connects the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf through the Red Sea. Starting from the first Turkish foreign military base in Qatar where Turkey expressed its intent to expand it to include air and naval assets and with its military base in Cyprus, it seems legit that Turkey will look into the Red Sea to connect these two bases. Accordingly, in 2014, Turkish company took over the rights to manage the Port of Mogadishu which makes Somalia the host of Turkey's biggest overseas military base. The latest addition is the Sudanese Port of Suakin. Turkey initially announced that Suakin will host a military base which Sudan denied, under

regional pressure, but confirmed that the Turkish presence will only be for the renovation of the Ottoman historical sites of the port. Meanwhile, Turkey is set to launch its first, multipurpose aircraft carrier, TCG Anadolu which will make Turkey one of the few countries who own such carriers and capable of entering the waters surrounding the region. It is worth noting that only regional country to have assault ships is Egypt—which inaugurated the largest military base in Red Sea—but they do not reach the potentials of the Anadolu, especially in its ability to operate warplanes.

UAE Interests

UAE recognises the long-term challenges faced in the Strait of Hormuz that turned its focus toward the Red Sea. Bab el Mandeb


UAE recognises **the long-term challenges** faced in the **Strait of Hormuz** that turned **its focus toward** the Red Sea

has a heavy presence for UAE on both sides, west in Eritrea and Somaliland, and east in Yemen. The Eritrean base has been vital for the Emirati role in the war in Yemen as it has been used to train thousands of troops to join the war and to launch airstrikes. But its ambitions are hindered by the rifts with the Somali government and Djibouti, especially the later that can cost UAE the great geopolitical

advantage of the Djiboutian Doraleh Port.

Red Sea Primacy

At this point it can be seen that the growing competitiveness is balancing the powers in the Red Sea and maintaining its security. Especially that, not like the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea has less American and international presence. This can be considered one of the

reasons that attracts the regional actors, or international powers. For instance, China which now has a military base in Djibouti and shows interests in the neighbouring Eritrea. It also provides a diplomatic solution for states that do not wish to take sides of any regional rivalry, like Japan, which chose to be in the Red Sea rather than the Persian Gulf to not jeopardise its relations with either the US, Saudi Arabia or Iran. However, this has pushed Saudi Arabia to consider non-military options like the 'Red Sea Pact' that can bring different parties under its leadership on matters like security, trade, and diplomacy, while safeguarding its '2030 vision' that relies heavily on projects in the Red Sea. 



Turkish Armed Forces conduct a military drill near the Turkish-Iraqi border.

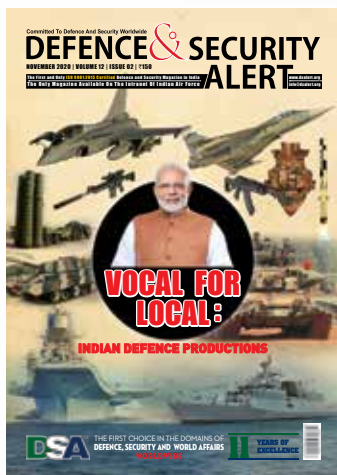


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IT'S TIME TO **STRIKE BACK**



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