

Seminar Report

REGIONAL DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH ASIA

Seminar Coordinator: Col Sameer Sharan Kartikeya, SM



Centre for Land Warfare Studies

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi-110010

Phone: 011-25691308; Fax: 011-25692347

email: landwarfare@gmail.com; website: www.claws.in

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with contemporary issues of national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

© 2017, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi

All rights reserved

The views expressed in this report are sole responsibility of the speaker(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of India, or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army) or Centre for Land Warfare Studies.

The content may be reproduced by giving due credit to the speaker(s) and the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi.

Printed in India by

Bloomsbury Publishing India Pvt. Ltd.

DDA Complex LSC, Building No. 4, 2nd Floor

Pocket 6 & 7, Sector – C

Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070

www.bloomsbury.com

CONTENTS

Bio-Profiles Speakers	1
Executive Summary	3
Regional Diplomacy: Future and Challenges	5
Chinese Strategic Investments in South Asia and Challenges	5
China Pakistan Nexus and its Impact on India and the Region	10
Chinese Maritime Forays in the Indian Ocean Region and India's Response	13
The Evolving Regional Security Architecture in East Asia	15
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	16
India and West Asia: Challenges of Extremism and Diaspora	20
Economic Integration in the Regional Context	22
Common Security Threats and Prospects of Military Integration in the Region	26
How to Take the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Forward in spite of Regressive Pakistan Factor	29
Concept Note	32



BIO-PROFILE: SPEAKERS

Lt Gen Rameshwar Roy, UYSM, AVSM, YSM (Retd.)



Lieutenant General Rameshwar Roy, is a highly decorated soldier. The General Officer was the Director General of Assam Rifles (Ministry of Home Affairs), Chief of staff in Southern Command and DGSD at IHQ of MoD (Army). Presently he is holding Chair of Excellence on India-China Matrix in Changing Global Order at CLAWS.

Dr. Monika Chansoria



Dr. Monika Chansoria is a Senior Fellow at CLAWS where she heads the China-study programme. She has been awarded many academic fellowships, including at the Cooperative Monitoring Center (Sandia National Laboratories, USA), Japanese Global Chair of Excellence Fellowship (Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan) and the MSH Senior Fellowship as Visiting Professor and Associate Director of Studies (Paris).

Vice Admiral Anup Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd.)



Vice Admiral Anup Singh is a former C-in-C of the Eastern Naval Command. He is visiting faculty at the National Defence College (NDC) and the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), New Delhi.

Ambassador Biren Nanda



Ambassador Biren Nanda served in the Indian Foreign Service from 1978 to 2015 and is a distinguished former career diplomat with extensive experience of working in East Asia. He is a Senior Fellow at the Delhi Policy Group.

2 REGIONAL DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH ASIA

Dr. WAIEL S.H Awad



Dr. Awad is a South Asia based Journalist. As conflict zone reporter, he has covered Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Afghanistan, West Asia and Gulf wars. He is recipient of the 5th Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Award 2014 for the best journalist from overseas.

Ms. Nirupama Soundararajan



Nirupama Soundararajan is Senior Fellow and Head of Research at Pahle India Foundation. She currently works extensively on financial sector policy research and on defence economics, which includes defence production, exports and economic decision making in defence.

Lt Gen Philip Campose, PVSM, AVSM **, VSM, (Retd)



Lieutenant General Philip Campose served as Vice Chief of the Indian Army before retiring in Aug 2014. Presently, the General Officer is a Distinguished Fellow at CLAWS and heading Chair of Excellence for 2016 to do a project on India's National Security Strategy.

Ambassador TCA Raghavan



Ambassador TCA Raghavan from the Indian Foreign Service is former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan. He was Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs dealing with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asia as a continent is vast as well as diverse in terrain, demography, ethnicity, culture and civilisation, and can be divided into sub-regions such as South Asia, East Asia, South-East Asia, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), West Asia, and Central Asia. The centrality of India in the regional context is evident.

China over the last decade has made important strategic forays into the entire neighbourhood of India. The China-Pakistan relationship has traditional symbiosis of hedging India. For China, Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India. On the contrary, for Pakistan, China continues to remain a high value guarantor of security.

China's investment in the region includes the *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor* (CPEC) in Pakistan, supply of weapons worth almost US\$ 1 billion to the Sri Lankan armed forces in 2005, construction of a modern facility port at Hambantota, an International Airport at Mattala in 2006, and other projects leading to huge national debt of US\$ 8 billion to China. Its investment in Maldives has 70 per cent of the total external debts of the island nation owed to China. Bangladesh has been promised US\$ 38.05 billion over various projects and China has recently pledged US\$ 8.3 billion investment to Nepal and has emerged as Afghanistan's single largest foreign investor. It is also the biggest investor in Myanmar. There has also been a planned Chinese maritime expansion in the IOR.

China's foray in South Asia from the perspective of small nations is to balance India. India faces growing complexities and pressure and needs to ensure continuing and survivable deterrence at varying levels. It needs to be more proactive in immediate neighbourhood with countries like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and greater cooperation is required in projects of mutual benefits, even if some of those do not appear to be financially viable. In such instances strategic interests need to override economic prudence.

4 REGIONAL DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH ASIA

To counter China on multiple fronts India need to trade with more countries outside the region to complement its strengths. India has to engage with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) who are strengthening their individual military capabilities and are augmenting their bilateral defense cooperation with regional partners against the backdrop of South China Sea dispute. India needs to strengthen defense cooperation with ASEAN in the form of cooperation between armed forces, maintenance and supply of equipment, assistance for training, and defense capability building.

West Asia is home to India's largest Diaspora and gets maximum reimbursement from its nationals working in the region. The region today is also the centre of gravity for the global unrest. India is seen in a positive light as it has kept equidistance from regional conflicts for a long time. India has a major stake in the region and can play a more proactive role by providing impetus to trade, commerce, and defense cooperation.

There are many common security threats in the region, both traditional such as military threats, intra-state conflict, sub-conventional threats, radicalism, sectarianism, cyber attacks, piracy and non-traditional security threats such as illegal immigration, natural disasters, demographic threats, health, unemployment, poverty, etc.

A collective mechanism can be drawn for response to both traditional and non-traditional threats. Pakistan is the biggest perpetrator of terrorism in the region and the world and therefore any regional security structure on terrorism in South Asia will have to exclude Pakistan. In South Asia, India can achieve only bilateral or trilateral cooperation, for example India-Sri Lanka-Maldives, etc.

Contested strategic and economic interests appear to be great stumbling block towards strengthening the *South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation* (SAARC). It is against this backdrop coupled with rise of China, India has to readjust and realign its diplomatic engagement with South Asian neighbours, West and East Asia to remain strategically relevant in Asia and the world.

REGIONAL DIPLOMACY: FUTURE AND CHALLENGES

Chinese Strategic Investments in South Asia and Challenges

Lieutenant General Rameshwar Roy



South Asia has remained in the shadow of the India-Pakistan and Sino-Indian relations. This has affected regional cooperation, be it at the bilateral or multilateral level, by means of groupings such as the *South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation* (SAARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and even Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). When seen through the larger perspective, China's strategic investments in South Asia has been part of its very well thought out plan of Anti-Access and Area Denial strategies and technologies (A2AD). A2/AD, as it is commonly referred to, is an integrated and well-coordinated process of effectively combining political, economic and informational tools with potent and credible military capabilities over a protracted period of time against the adversary to deny any defined or identified area of interest, be it on land, sea, or air.

In the maritime realm, it is the familiar 'String of Pearls' strategies, starting with psychological isolation of India to now its physical isolation, by means of proactive political and diplomatic outreach in South Asia. The grand vision of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) project extending to the IOR and unfolding itself from Gwadar to Myanmar, are just few examples. Chinese investments in South Asia, has to be holistically considered in areas including economics, political outreach, and military capabilities.

Pakistan has indeed come out as a frontline state of China almost on the lines of North Korea. The US\$ 4 billion announced investment for CPEC, culminating into developments of the Gwadar and Karachi

Ports is definitely going to impact, strain, and imbalance the security matrix in South Asia. China has made inroads in the political and military domain of Pakistan.

China had already established a hold during the later stages of Sri Lankan war against the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE), through the supply of weapons worth almost US\$ 1 billion to the Sri Lankan armed forces in 2005. It won favour by securing the projects for construction of a modern facility port at Hambantota and an ultra-modern International Airport at Mattala in 2006. Tragically, these projects were initially offered to India, but not accepted by New Delhi due to questionable commercial viability. However, China grabbed it, not for its commercial viability, but immense strategic value. Today, Sri Lanka has a huge national debt of US\$ 64 billion including US\$ 8 billion to China alone, and, is in no position to pay for the project. Sri Lanka has apparently bartered 80 per cent holdings in Hambantota and Mattala to the state controlled China Merchants Port Holdings on a 99 years lease as part of a debt equity swap. Huge public protests have appeared due to displacement of people. Locals are also apprehensive that this may lead to Chinese colonisation in the future. This is not an isolated case of protests against Chinese projects. In Bangladesh, one person died in February 2017 protesting against a Chinese-backed power plant. There are tensions in Laos and Thailand against rail projects as well. Notwithstanding all this, China and Sri Lanka have pledged to further push forward their strategic cooperative partnership.

Maldives has gained considerable strategic significance in Chinese plans, particularly in view of its constitutional amendment to say that nations can buy land if their total volume of investment exceeds US\$ 1 billion. A Chinese firm has already acquired the 'Feydhoo Finolhu' Island for US\$ 4 million for developing a resort near the capital city of Male. Maldivian economic zone cannot support commercialisation at a large-scale; so, it could well be linked to the highly secretive US base in Diego Garcia, which is the closest in terms of geographical proximity. Clearly, the present Maldivian government's pro-Chinese tilt is uncomfortably discernible and so is their religious fundamentalism. It is noteworthy that the Maldivian

government owes 70 per cent of its external debt to China alone. Yet, the silver lining has been that India-Maldives have signed a defence cooperation pact in April 2016, combating terrorism and radicalisation remains at its core.

Bangladesh has been promised US\$ 38.05 billion over various projects by China, the largest ever assistance to by any single country. China is also the largest trading partner of Bangladesh, while Dhaka is Beijing's third-largest trading partner in South Asia. China also has set its eyes on natural gas, with the Chevron gas fields now under sale on tender basis. These gas fields may not actually be in southern Bangladesh, but, in the north-eastern India, part bordering Meghalaya, lower Assam, and Tripura. In June 2016, Dhaka gave its consent to a Chinese proposal for construction of a transnational highway, connecting the Indian state of West Bengal and south-western Chinese city of Kunming via Myanmar and Bangladesh. Although this project has not yet taken off but its strategic implications are self-evident. Bangladesh's Armed Forces today are predominantly equipped with Chinese military hardware. Bangladesh is on the larger game plan of China to encircle India, together with Pakistan and Myanmar. India needs to watch out for China's involvement in the development in Bangladesh and the economic compulsions of the nation to agree to terms and conditions that may be offered.

China has recently pledged US\$ 8.3 billion investment to Nepal, which is equivalent of nearly 40 per cent of Nepal's entire gross domestic product (GDP). This staggering commitment dwarfed India's offer of US\$ 317 million. Beijing's major focus in Nepal is infrastructure development and construction of power plants, the West Seti Dam, Pokhara Airport, and Upper Trishuli Hydropower project, etc. Nepal, in turn is expected to extend cooperation for China's OBOR (please write in Full for the first time) projects. There will be enhanced defence cooperation which will include low-level military training exercises and continuing negotiations on project feasibility of a transnational (Tibet to Nepal) railway project and power lines. Given China's strategic purpose and large manpower presence in the Himalayan Kingdom, it has surely surpassed Indian dominance.

In Bhutan, surely but steadily a consensus seems to be now emerging among rival political parties that they need to maintain a balanced relationship with India and China. The *Global Times* published from Beijing recently stated, ‘New Delhi is one of the crucial reasons why China and Bhutan, which is controlled by India economically and diplomatically, have not yet established diplomatic relations.’ Summing up the discomfort of India it further mentioned that, ‘If such tendencies in India continue, China will have to fight back, because its core interests will have been violated. This is not what we hope for, but the ball is in India’s court.’

China has emerged as Afghanistan’s single largest foreign investor today. Although in the last 8 years, it had just provided a grant of US\$ 200 million, it has been considerably stepped up recently. Chinese companies have, in a joint bid, won a contract worth US\$



3.5 billion to develop the largest copper field in the world – which is estimated to contain copper deposits worth US\$ 88 billion. China would also be eyeing for oil and gas reserves

that are awaiting exploitation in Afghanistan. The government in Kabul is looking forward to China playing a decisive role in conflict resolution. China is willing to play that role partially, to further exploit the natural resources and benefit from Afghanistan’s economic reconstruction. Beijing has already committed US\$ 100 million for the OBOR investment in Afghanistan.

Although, Myanmar technically is not a member of the SAARC, its strategic location and proximity to the South Asian sub-continent remains indispensable. Today, China is the biggest investor of foreign direct investment (FDI), and accounts for one-third of the total FDI investments in Myanmar. Chinese investments are mainly focused in sectors like hydropower, oil as well as gas, and mining. In recent years, investments have been proliferated into arenas such as infrastructure like economic zones, road, railways, and port facilities. The striking

feature has been that most of these developments are by the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in China. The China-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline of A1 and A3 Blocks constructed from Kyaukpyu deep seaport to the Yunnan Province via Ruili has been operational since 2015. The Sino-Myanmarese military cooperation which started with the negotiation of purchase of arms including jet fighters, armoured vehicles, and naval vessels has gone much deeper. China is emerging as the closest strategic partner of Myanmar. Myanmar is now looking to balance out China by enhancing economic cooperation with India and other regional players.

It is obvious that China is concerned about India's efforts to secure its neighbourhood and keep it within its realm of influence. Its ambitious designs to achieve its interests mainly extend to securing SLOCs and the Belt and Road linkages and facilities. India has objected to issues such as the construction of the CPEC through the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan. China has invested a lot of time, energy, and money and its sensitivity to this is likely to increase progressively. That is the reason why it is trying to send aggressive messages and enhancing the psychological squeeze on India. The incumbent Chinese Defence Minister General Chang Wanquan visited Sri Lanka and Nepal, even as state owned media issued veiled warnings to India. The cold war between India and China with respect to fighting over greater influence in the South Asian region is likely to intensify. India cannot be pressurised or cornered regarding its partnerships with other countries which are based on mutual and shared strategic interests. It is a typical example of China trying to 'Box-In' India from land as also coastal openings. The military wisdom to counter this is, when surrounded; hit the adversary from outside the area of encirclement. Therefore, India consequently, is right in reaching out to nations including the US, Japan, Vietnam, Australia, and other stakeholders in Asia.

India also needs to be more proactive in immediate neighbourhood with countries like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar and greater cooperation in projects of mutual benefits, even if some of those do not appear to be financial viable. Nepal and Bhutan being land locked nations must be placed in a very special category of

relationship. Some of the policy initiatives taken in recent times have been in the right direction but it needs to be followed more vigorously.

China Pakistan Nexus and its Impact on India and the Region

Dr. Monika Chansoria



The China-Pakistan relationship has traditional symbiosis of hedging India. For China, Pakistan is a low cost secondary deterrent to India. On the contrary, for Pakistan, China continues to remain a high value guarantor of security. The nuclear and missile collaboration between the two nations has been an important area of cooperation, including clandestine transfer of dual use technology and the design for a nuclear plant. Military hardware transfers continue to go on as well. Until, 2011, the US and China exported around equal quantities of arms to Pakistan. Today, China is the world's third largest arms exporter, largely based on demands from Pakistan. It supplies 63 per cent of Pakistan's armaments and Pakistan consumes 35 per cent of China's supplies, becoming its largest buyer.

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an area where all this military cooperation could be put to use in the future. In the CPEC, 90 per cent of the economic investment is in the form of loans that Pakistan is getting from China. However, the amount they have received in 2017 is just 19 per cent of the estimate. It has been termed as the flagship project of China's US\$ 1 trillion OBOR initiative. The focus would be on laying modern infrastructure. The CPEC route starts in Kashgar, and goes right through the Karakoram Highway which is of critical strategic significance to India. It would not merely be an economic corridor, as projected. The investments in the corridor would force China to protect it, even militarily if necessary. India faces growing complexities and pressure and needs to ensure continuing and survivable deterrence at varying levels including the operational level.

India's land borders with China are under the *People's Liberation Army* (PLA) unified, Western theatre command after the 2015 defence reforms while the Indian border is spread across four commands. There are critical gaps in the ability of the Indian military to mobilise swiftly. In a two front situation, limited or otherwise, the coordination of operations is going to be critical. India has recently witnessed two major joint events between the Pakistan Army and the Chinese PLA—(1) declared joint patrol along the border right through the stretch between Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Xinjiang, and (2) Pakistan has raised a special security division (the SSD) to sanitise the CPEC. This force has its headquarters at Gilgit-Baltistan. It is 12,000 person strong and there are roughly 13,000 Chinese engineers and workers in the region. This translates to a ratio of roughly 1:1. In the Pakistan Day Military Parade, PLA's Honour Guards were invited to march alongside the Pakistan Army. They flashed the Nasr system as well as Shaheen-III along with slogans such as 'United We Rise'. It was quite symbolic about the extent of the relationship between the two countries.

As far as power projection from the Indian Ocean goes, it signals a strong strategic intent by the PLA Navy. Both nuclear and conventional submarines have been conducting area familiarisation for a long time with the larger objective of demonstrating capability. The question is whether the PLA Navy will become a permanent feature in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) for India to address. The expanding maritime footprint through naval bases is of great concern. The contract for purchase of eight modified type-41 submarines has been confirmed by Pakistan's Ministry of Defence. This is China's biggest defence export deal till date. This is significant from an Indian standpoint because the construction of the S-20 at the Karachi yard indicates inclusion of the air dependent propulsion module add on and Pakistan is already assembling and maintaining AIPs on the existing Augusta class submarines. The nuclear submarine docking at the Karachi port buttresses China's Indian Ocean strategy. Pakistan has reportedly been given access to military grade Chinese BeiDou satellite navigation network. If it were to be true, it could be critical to the overall nuclear deterrent and strategic assets. The S-20 would

then become a platform to launch nuclear tipped land attack cruise missiles and provide Pakistan with a partial second strike capability, vis-à-vis, India to rival our submarine launched nuclear ballistic missiles.

In conclusion, the larger geopolitical and geostrategic fallout of all these developments is that the China Pakistan nuclear commerce remains politically and strategically driven despite projections to the contrary. Beijing is the key player in conventional deterrence situations in South Asia. It will not remain virtually neutral anymore,



both diplomatically and militarily given its stakes inside Pakistan in the event of a regional conflict. The depth of engagement by Beijing in South Asia has political and strategic aims at work. It attempts to keep India confined regionally, centred through

the Pakistan angle. The presence of the PoK serves China's strategic, political, and diplomatic objectives. It provides quasi diplomatic support to Pakistan's stated position of the Kashmir issue. In fact, the land borders of South Asia and surrounding waters will continue to witness increasing Chinese capability. With the shrinking support of Washington, Rawalpindi's reliance on Beijing will only deepen. This whirlwind of strategic outreach and expanding influence in South Asia is compelling and inescapable. The traditional strategic symbiosis is not just historical; it continues to have contemporary as well as futuristic connotations. The relationship is becoming more and more military and security oriented and Pakistan continues to serve as the nerve of China's designs in South Asia when it is envisioning a larger role for itself in a Sino-centric Asia.

Chinese Maritime Forays in the Indian Ocean Region and India's Response

Vice Admiral Anup Singh



The first sightings of Chinese naval vessels in the Bay of Bengal and subsequently, the Arabian Sea were conspicuously seen only since the mid-1980s. In the mid-1980s, they were seen to be going to Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Apart from Sri Lanka, the three others were being visited in pursuit of defence cooperation. An odd visit to the East African Coast was also witnessed since the Chinese have been fishing in their exclusive economic zone (EEZ), both legally and illegally since the 1970s. In the middle of the last decade, Chinese surveillance ships were noticed in the Indian Ocean for the first time. An example was the Yuan-I class, a direct copy of the Soviet space surveillance and tracking ships. The real purpose of these ships was to create a chain of floating earth tracking satellite stations. They were also utilised for experimental flights by Chinese rockets and ballistic missiles. The aggressive transformation which has taken place over the last two decades must be noted.

Despite the relative economic slowdown, China still has adequate funds to pursue its modernisation goals formulated in the wake of the Third Taiwan Strait incident and is not going to back down. The formalised forays into the Indian Ocean were triggered by the Anti-Piracy Task Force. Two embarrassing attempts to hijack vessels flying the Chinese flag were made in 2008 and in one instance the Chinese merchant ship had to take the assistance of an Indian warship stationed in the region. China decided to send a tanker and two frigates, which have been in station ever since. Initially seen a burden on the exchequer, this has turned out to be incredibly beneficial. First, the Chinese Navy learnt how to operate at large distances; second, they started testing newer platforms in far sea operations; and third, they learnt the practice of maritime diplomacy. The Landing Platform/ Dock LPD capable of carrying a battalion plus deployed by China

for an Anti-Piracy mission alerted the world to its real intentions. It was meant to be an exercise to test its sea legs. It brought in a lot of discipline amongst the troops.

Their first strategic foray into the Indian Ocean was made using the Shan class SSN in December 2013. The main purpose of any strategic platform, particularly an SSN is to collect intelligence or to acclimatize itself with the waters. China came very close to territorial waters of another state and sent a message to the world. While there is freedom of seas, the Chinese manner of doing maneuvers is intriguing. In September 2014 and November 2014, a Chinese submarine docked in Colombo for over 3 weeks at the newly constructed Colombo container facility. The Chinese claimed this was to protect the sea lanes of communication against pirates but this was obviously an attempt to test the waters with a conventional submarine. The first Chinese overseas military base has been under construction in Djibouti. The Pakistan Army is planning to construct a base within the Gwadar port. While this is not a Chinese base, the heavy financial outlay for the construction of Gwadar coupled with military cooperation between the two nations have strategic implications. This gives them a wide combined coverage in the Indian Ocean.

The Chinese have paid US\$ 4 billion for an island in the Maldives for a 40-year lease but they have effectively sold away their



sovereignty. China is into a game of leasing or buying islands and the next step is likely to expand these artificially. This would be the next version of the string of pearls. China has also started engaging in maritime diplomacy, with

the Chinese ships visiting multiple ports enroute piracy missions. They also engage with the substantial Chinese diaspora spread across the world. Mission Harmony, the foray of a Chinese hospital ship into various locations over the Pacific Ocean as well as the Indian

Ocean has been discharging medical facilities to less advantaged countries, deepening friendship.

India's response involves sending Poseidon Eight India (P8I) in groups of two or more to the Andaman and Nicobar islands for reconnaissance. These islands are 800 mile away from the mainland, but they should be treated as a strategic asset due to their critical geographic location. They also expand the reach of our military substantially, allowing us to keep an eye on the Malacca and the Lombok straits. The presence of India's armed forces on these islands gives it a huge strategic leverage. Marking and counter-marking by friends and rivals is what keeps the balance of power in a naval scenario.

Prime Minister Modi went to Mauritius 2 years ago and commissioned the indigenously made ship Barracuda for the Mauritius coast guard. He outlined five points for India's Strategic Vision. No progress has been made on any of these. It needs to be pursued to bring home strength through cooperation. We need to nurture our *own diamonds instead of pearls*—Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka. India is not in the business of creating dependencies like China, as it does not not has hegemonic designs. India gives a lot of assistance through Navy and Coast Guard and this needs to be strengthened further. India needs to provide impetus to two special strategic partnerships – the United States and Japan. This will not only help India modernise further but also help assist the less advantaged littoral states around the Indian Ocean with far better strategic dividends.

The Evolving Regional Security Architecture in East Asia

Ambassador Biren Nanda



The major security challenges facing South Asia include first, the rise of China and the geo-strategic shift it is bringing about in East Asia; second, there is increasing contestation between the United States rebalancing strategy and the growing maritime and territorial

interests of China; third, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are facing an increasingly difficult and coercive security environment, which includes direct challenges to their territorial integrity, such as in the South China Sea and fourth, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are increasingly threatened by the proliferation and testing activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

After the Global Financial Crisis (2007-08), the United States dominance of world affairs was an immediate casualty and China began to test the limits of American strategic presence in Asia. and also began to act aggressively with her neighbours over territorial disputes in the East Asia. The expanding strategic gap with China and its aggressive behaviour pose multiple long-term security challenges for India and Japan.

China's new active diplomacy has manifested itself in a number of ways. First, it has seized the relative decline of the United States power as a period of great opportunity. Second, it has become increasingly assertive on the world stage in particular on its so called 'core' interests. Third, China has played the lead in creating new financial institutions like the BRICS Bank and the AIIB as an alternative to the institutions that are part of the Bretton Woods System. Fourth, China has promoted its strategic agenda along its periphery through the one belt one road (OBOR) and Maritime Silk Road Projects.

The regional security architecture in East Asia comprises of the Regional Frameworks centred around the ASEAN, the US Bilateral Alliance system, the United States' strategic cooperation with non-allied countries, the growing bilateral defense relations between middle powers and the special relations that continue to exist between the former communist bloc countries.

ASEAN played well above its collective weight in East Asia but has failed to tackle a number of regional crises including the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, East Timor's secession from Indonesia, the annual forest fire haze, the 1997 Cambodian coup that overturned an ASEAN endorsed election, the failure to accelerate the pace of

democratisation in Myanmar, and the failure to arrive at a consensus in dealing with China on the South China Sea issue. The record has not been very bright.

The ASEAN Regional Forum has achieved some success in Confidence Building Measures, anti-terrorist collaboration and HADR, but made little progress in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The ARF like the ASEAN takes decisions on the basis of consensus and this combined with the size of its membership has inhibited outcomes on hard security issues. Clearly there is a case for the reform of ASEAN centric security institutions to make them more outcome oriented in the future.

The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting ADMM and its Indo-Pacific extension, ADMM Plus have made headway in practical security cooperation in HADR, military medicine, counterterrorism, and maritime security through cooperative security exercises. However, the reported decision by the ADMM Plus in Malaysia in 2015 to scrap a planned joint statement reference to the South China Sea issue fostered the impression that the ADMM Plus could go the way of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The most critical challenge for ADMM Plus is that while it has religiously kept to the (Non Traditional Security) NTS remit, it continues to face centrifugal forces pushing for an expansion to hard security issues. Where does one draw the line between maritime security and South China Sea disputes?



The ASEAN centric security architecture has been stymied by the impasse between the United States and China. ASEAN cohesion has collapsed under relentless Chinese pressure. The growing dependence of the South East Asian countries on China has diminished their capacity to stand up to China. Consensus based decision-making in ASEAN has failed to deal with hard security issues. Countries

in the region are strengthening their individual military capabilities and are augmenting their bilateral defense cooperation with regional partners.

Both small and middle powers in East Asia have the expectation of the United States support for strengthening their defense capabilities and to help in upholding a rule based order and maintaining a stable balance of power in the region. The United States rebalancing strategy has taken the form of an increased naval footprint and assistance for capacity building. In response to the ongoing power flux, the United States has strengthened defense and strategic cooperation with allies like Japan as well non-allied partner countries like India. Countries in the region are strengthening their individual military capabilities and are augmenting their bilateral defense cooperation with regional partners. India has strengthened defense cooperation with ASEAN countries. This has taken the form of cooperation between navies, maintenance and supply of equipment, assistance for training, etc. India has attached great importance to HADR cooperation and was the first responder after the tsunami.

There is an intensification of the Russia China diplomatic, military and economic relationship. China nominally recognises ASEAN's centrality and the ASEAN centric Regional Security Architecture, but includes the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Six Party Talks, the Xiangshan Dialogue, and other forums in its conception of the New Security Architecture. It advocates that Asia should be left to Asians. Its major objectives are to dilute the United States influence over the strategic discourse in the region, to advocate partnerships with China as an alternative to alliances and to reverse the reputational damage to China on account of its creeping aggression and muscle flexing in the South China Sea.

India is developing pragmatic, interest-based partnerships that advance a favourable balance of power and ensure India's rise. In practical terms, India has addressed its security dilemmas by moving closer to the United States and by strengthening security partnerships with key regional powers, especially Japan.

Today, the United States is India's key partner across various domains. The India-US Joint Strategic Vision for the Indian Ocean and the Asia Pacific now has a roadmap for implementation.

The DPRK is likely to trigger the first national security crisis of the Trump Administration. The United States will reach out to China for help in restraining the DPRK and bringing it to the negotiating table. China is likely to oblige but ask for its pound of flesh which means that confronting China on its territorial assertions in the South China Sea is likely to take a back seat. It will take a few months for the Trump Administration to realise that China is unable or unwilling to restrain the DPRK from provocative actions. In the medium term, should the DPRK continue in its brinkmanship Japan may revisit its position on nuclear deterrence. The United States economy will gain from tax and regulatory reform as well as investments in infrastructure. The strengthening of America's military will add considerably to the United States military help in Asia and Europe. It could pressure China on trade and currency issues, but this will disrupt the Chinese economic model and impose some costs on the United States Industry as well. Thus, the United States is more likely to confront China's creeping aggression in Asia and China may have to back down from its current assertive behaviour.

Regional stability has hitherto been built on the role of the United States as the pre-eminent power in the Asia Pacific. Presently, there is increasing contestation between the United States rebalancing strategy and the growing maritime and territorial interests of China. This contended scenario is likely to continue for the next decade. Small and middle powers in the region will therefore have to engage in power balancing to protect themselves against any potential adverse consequences of China's rise.

It is possible to discern four strategic trends for the future of East Asia. First, power asymmetry and economic interdependence between China and East Asia will continue to grow. Second, China and the United States will be the major powers in maritime South-East Asia and the United States will likely limit Chinese efforts at coercion, unilateral assertion, and dominance in the region. Third, China will likely modify its behaviour and play the role of a constructive partner

in upholding the rules based order in the region. Fourth, the United States allies in East Asia will continue to look at America as the principal security guarantor.

India and West Asia: Challenges of Extremism and Diaspora

Dr Waiel SH Awad



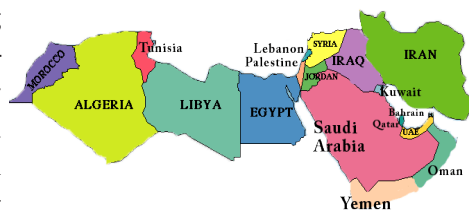
The term ‘West Asia’ is widely used in India; a non-colonial terminology first used by the late Jawaharlal Nehru. The colonial term ‘Middle East’ is used for the same region including Egypt. The term ‘Arab world’ is preferable as it gives the bigger picture, which includes North African states, the Gulf, Persia, and the rest of the Arab world. While there is no clear definition of terrorism, it can be understood as an act of violence that has a reach beyond the immediate victims. In the Arab world, terrorism can have many root causes like political reasons, social injustice, revenge, sectarianism, ideology of Takfiri or Wahabi groups, and economic reasons. Arab Spring spread to the Gulf and North African states in 2011 because of injustice, lack of freedom, and the aspirations of the people for democracy. However, it was not an indigenous movement and was hijacked by the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical elements. In 2010, there was a 30 million workforce in the Arab world; in 2014, there were 100 million forces to reckon with which were not utilised in the re-building of the nations. The distrust in the government’s has led to the present situation and has been fully utilised by shadow governments and their forces. The colonial powers divided the region into nineteen states during the last century. In the present American era, the United States wants to see the region divided into economic zones and ethnic tribes. The project started in Afghanistan has been successful and such shadow wars are still being played.

The problems of the Arab world began when oil was discovered in the region. The root of the current problem can be traced back to when the British brought Al Saud to the helm of power in the

Arabian peninsula. A country was named after a tribe—Saudi Arabia, for the first time in history. Wahhabism as a doctrine in Islam was imposed on them. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States were an asset for the United States, but have now become a liability. Even when the threat of USSR and communism has dissipated, their spread of Islamisation continues. Any Muslim community that is unable to integrate with the society they live in has been infiltrated with their money, their doctrine of hatred, and have become a terrorism hub. The discovery of oil and gas reserves a decade ago has been a bane for the Mediterranean region. In Syria, there is a conflict as everyone wants a piece of oil money irrespective of whether President Assad is in power or not.

Global terrorism industry is created in places where there is a state-vacuum. The United States did so in Iraq in 2003 by dismantling the political, military, and security apparatus. There is a false impression that it's a Shia-Sunni conflict. As a result, everyone gathers around Saudi Arabia, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who had supported the American intervention. The ISIS is a part of Al Qaeda. It recruits the youth, especially from among the missionaries. The United States has been a beneficiary of the Syrian war. The militant groups' purchase 80 per cent of the weapons from America, 10 per cent are from Eastern Europe, and 10 per cent are from Israel, France, and the United Kingdom. It's a big market and they are flourishing. Everyone is participating in the war. Even if ISIS is decimated, radicalism and fundamentalism will not finish as the ideology of hatred will live on. With the American administration, the experience has been 'business as usual'—be it Iraq, Libya, and now Syria. Trump administration has continued with the same policies. Unilateral attacks are against international norms when there are international bodies to arbitrate.

Wahhabism is expanding under different banners—ISIS, Al Qaeda, LT, Lashkar e-Jhangari, Al Shabab and Boko Haram. The strategy in the Middle East is to take it



back to the Middle Age. Suicidal attackers are imported to attack locally. Local lone wolf attackers are relied upon for attacks on Western countries. Technology is used to spread fear and terror as well as to recruit people. In such a backdrop, countries will have to coordinate better to fight terrorism.

India is seen in a positive light due to its historic relationship with the Arab world. It has kept equidistance from regional conflicts for a long time. Indian diaspora in the Arab World sends back the highest remittance. In India the Shia-Sunni divide is not that pronounced because India hasn't involved itself in any military intervention in the Middle East. India has a major stake in the region and is being pushed to play a more proactive role.

Economic Integration in the Regional Context

Ms Nirupama Soundararajan



It is often said that the Third World War, if it happens, would be an economic war rather than a military war. It could be over oil, water, or some other natural resource. In this context, the economic wherewithal of a country becomes increasingly important. The first connection between economic wherewithal of a country and military capability is the basic question of money available to spend on military requirements, i.e. the military budget. There has been a lot of criticism in India that military spending is not as high as it should be. Whether its 1.6 per cent excluding pensions, or 2.1 per cent including them, it is however below the desirable 3 per cent. To move from 2 per cent to 3 per cent we need to make the money available. In India, given our priorities as a democracy, there is demand on the same money for health, education, and other developmental requirements. The debate often is whether the money is put to better use in military expenditure or development requirements as there are conflicting demands for the money. In order to not compromise on the expenditure on the social sector or the military requirements, one has to expand the kitty. The

expansion of fund will come through economic development, which is what China has done. China has followed the United States in its military capability development. They both adopted the path of aggressive economic development, outward movement, invest outward through foreign direct investment (FDI), and attract inward FDI to built technological capability domestically and, therefore, putting everything into development. The subtle difference between the United States and China is that in America there was a trickle down of the benefits to the people and their welfare improved; in China that is not the case. The social and economic disparity within the economy in China is quite huge. It is not always visible to the naked eye but there is a lot of disparity. The Chinese economy sooner or later will implode because of the levels of the economy. The question then is: does India want to adopt the Chinese model? It does not seem like a good idea as India needs economic resilience from within rather than be dependent on outside in order to buffer itself from the aftermath of any kind of war which ravages the economy and leaves the nation weakened. For the nation to regroup and be able to rebuild, it needs a certain amount of resilience internally. Hence, trade becomes extremely important.

In international relations, there are three theories about the connection between economic integration and military conflict. These are not mutually exclusive. First, if there is economic integration, the chances of a military conflict reduce. Second, economic integration between countries leads to cohesiveness in terms of approach and a realignment of priorities. Third, economic ties are used to signal or express satisfaction or disgruntlement. For example, economic sanctions communicate dislike. The reason India survived the United States sanctions post Pokhran I is because economic relations were not restricted to just one country or its allies. One has to look at the framework for India to build economic ties and therefore economic integration and trade. In the context of the Indian national security concerns, with China being what it is within the Asian region, the Indian trade has been restricted to either West Asia or North-East Asia. India needs to diversify. There is increase in trade with ASEAN, but there is also a need to look at South Asia and South-East Asia,

because these are the conflict regions for China. Japan becomes an automatic choice. Russia is a fence sitter because a large chunk of their revenue comes from arms manufacturing, so their alignment will depend a lot on the economic prudence. India should increase defence purchases from Russia.

China is making its currency attractive. The Yuan has become a highly traded currency in the international market. The number of international transactions in Yuan has also seen a rise. It has been inducted into the International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing rights, breaking the barrier for Asian countries as the Bretton Woods system has always been considered biased against Asia. India will have to counter a rising China on multiple fronts. Economically and financially, India has to come to terms with where China stands today. However, growth must be based on indigenous capabilities. India cannot blindly follow the Chinese model. This is especially important in light of differing political regimes, China is a communist dictatorship with no opposition whereas India is a vibrant democracy with a healthy private sector.

China and the United States have intense economic linkages which may lead to mutual destruction in case of a military conflict. Therefore, China has started moving out of dollar economy and has started investing towards a basket of currencies. This was also a systematic step to internationalise their currency. India need to look at this aspect similarly to internationalise the rupee. India may also work towards improving the international standing of rupee for which various financial instruments are available. China issues Dim Sum bonds which are bonds that are traded in international markets but in the Chinese currency. Similarly, India has recently started a trend called Masala bonds. This means it is increasing the demand of its currency overseas which helps bolster the exchange rate. It also brings in investment into the country.

India should trade with more countries outside the region which can complement its strengths. China has established itself in the Indian sub-continent so it is no longer an ideal market for India to break into. China's strong military relationships with these

countries also work against potential engagement with India. For instance, Taiwan is aiming to create an identity independent of China. It is eyeing international trade for this purpose and would make an ideal trading partner for India. Economic development is becoming a way of securing a nation's position in the world. It is no longer just about military capabilities. It doesn't matter anymore whether a nation has the largest army, the most advanced army, or the best technology. While they are important, position in the world is no longer determined only on its military capability. It is more and more being determined by economic capability. It is easier to crush a country economically than through military capability. Cost of war has increased and will continue to rise. Pakistan is a perfect example of a place where military spending has come at the cost of the social sector and the country's economy hasn't grown. The reason India is more concerned about China than Pakistan is because India's economy can withstand a war with the latter but not the former. That is why it is important to build economic ties with other countries that can step in and support. The United States might not intervene and sit on the fence in case of an India-China conflict. This makes it important to look at South Asia and South-East Asia. In this regard, defense exports open up a very good channel. Due to the South China Sea dispute there is a demand. India is looked at as a big brother that can help build capability. In this context, by building on regional integration India can minimise the role of China in Asia to a large extent.

India should play a greater role in the global decision-making, i.e. economically, militarily, and in terms of security. At present, no one cares about what India has to say over what China has to say. To change that, India has to overcome inertness and become more proactive.



Common Security Threats and Prospects of Military Integration in the Region

Lieutenant General Philip Campose



Military integration in the Asian region remains a distant possibility. The Asian region consisting of the sub-regions of South Asia, East Asia, South-East Asia, Indian Ocean Region, West Asia, and Central Asia is not integrated as a continent due to distinctive sub-regional texture. Security concerns

are dealt with at the sub-regional level. China dominates Asia from the geographical point of view. Economically it has spread to all corners of Asia; places that are closer and of more security concern have been engaged with intensely; the other parts not so much at this point of time. India is seen as the natural rival to China for a number of historical reasons. India and China fought a war in 1962, which was catastrophic for India, over an issue that has still not been resolved. Today, as in 1961, the Dalai Lama and the issue of Tibet remain a cause of concern between the two countries. History has remained constant. To see China as a whole India will have to bring external powers into the picture. The United States is a dominant factor in the region by virtue of being the sole superpower as also the Pacific factor. The United States is aligning itself with India in case of a confrontation with China. This extra-regional factor is important. The United States sees India as a 'net security provider' in the Indo-Pacific region. Whether India is prepared for it or should get involved in it is something the security planners will have to decide.

India's strategic perspective in Asia has to be considered. With neighbours in South Asia India's relations are both good and bad, with the China factor lurking just around the corner. India has energy security issues as far as Central and West Asia is concerned. India also has Diaspora issues in West Asia and the United Nations commitments in Africa. India has the Act East Policy. There is a perception in India

that it is an emerging power, should be a regional power by 2030, and should be aspiring to be a major power by 2050.

There are many common security threats in the region. In terms of traditional security, the region has military threats (invasion, occupation, seizure of territory, destruction of assets, border violations),



intra-state conflict (civil wars), sub-conventional threats (terrorism, militancy, insurgency, violent extremism), radicalism, sectarianism (caste/communal/racial attacks), cyber attacks, piracy, drug trafficking, and counterfeit currency. As far as the non-traditional security threats are concerned, there are attacks against the economy and financial systems, transnational crime, illegal immigration, natural disasters, pandemics, environmental degradation, demographic threats, informational threats, energy security and threats to human security, like food, water, health, unemployment, and poverty.

While prospects of military integration in the Asian region remain unlikely, there are threats that lend themselves to regional mitigation measures. There are possibilities of responses to cases of military threats on the request of a nation or civil wars on request of legitimate national governments. Terrorism, radicalism, extremism, and cyber threats are some areas in which collective action in some form can take place. There are various models of collective security mechanisms, both at the regional and international levels. The United Nations is the universally accepted collective security mechanism. Then there are a host of other defense and security organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Warsaw Pact, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), *Organisation of African Unity* (OAU), Eco Community of West African States (ECOWAS), South American Security Council, Collective Security

Treaty Organisation (CSTO), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the United States, India, Japan, and Australia), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), East Asian Summit (EAS)-16 countries East, South-East, and South Asia), and Islamic Military Alliance (41 countries Sunni anti-terrorism coalition). Given the plethora of defense and security organisations that already exist, the possibility of starting a new one does not exist.

At the level of South Asia, India's initiatives are inhibited by Pakistan. Pakistan is the biggest perpetrator of terrorism in the region and the world. The possibility of Indo-Pak counter terrorism cooperation is negligible. Any collective security mechanism in South Asia will have to exclude Pakistan, which might not be acceptable to some countries. Then there is the China factor which tacitly supports Pakistan. If India was to try and get all the countries together there is a big possibility that China will intervene diplomatically on behalf of Pakistan. In South Asia, India can achieve only bilateral or trilateral cooperation, for example India-Sri Lanka-Maldives.

Many attempts, Asian Security Organization have failed. The Soviet Union unsuccessfully attempted this in 1969. The Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization CSTO has also largely not worked so far. It doesn't work in Asia because the countries of the Asian region retain diverse interests and sub-regional priorities. They have insufficient trust to bond together. Any collective security mechanism in Asia today runs the risk of being perceived as a pro or anti-China coalition. Because of this most states are not likely to join. Countries are more comfortable with bilateral and ad-hoc mechanisms (temporary security arrangements) rather than permanent formations. Thus, states are not likely to join such a coalition unless China blatantly attacks one of them and the United States feels compelled enough to form a coalition. This remains a possibility because of the developments in South China Sea. At the moment all the smaller countries are playing it safe. In the short-term countries like the Philippines are willing to give China space, but they recognise the dangers in the long-term as China continues to build-up reefs and islands. If China does attack a country in South

or East China Sea, then the fear of China may result in a grouping of countries with America in the lead. Counter terrorism cooperation is the best possibility.

India has a strong military and security mechanism which provide it the potential to become a ‘net security provider’, or at least take the lead in promoting security cooperation among countries in the IOR. Hard support must be provided to countries in the region when required/requested. India must take a lead in building cooperation in economic and socio-cultural fields to build a cooperative, consensual, and supportive approach.

How to Take the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Forward in spite of Regressive Pakistan Factor

Ambassador TCA Raghvan



China-Pakistan relationship is not a new one; it has been there since the late 1950s. Given India's relations with China and Pakistan, their close relationship is a natural alliance. The China-Pakistan relationship has remained warm and consultative during major crises with India—be it 1962 war with China or 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan. China's first veto in the United Nation was on behalf of Pakistan against the membership of Bangladesh. The relationship also changed a great deal in the 1980s and 1990s, with the military aspect being complemented with economic cooperation in the last decade. The rise of China has taken place at the same time when Pakistan has been in the grips of endemic crisis. The rise of China and the decline of Pakistan has cemented this relationship. When calculating the significance of Chinese investments in Pakistan of US\$ 64 billion we must keep in mind that the United States invested approximately the same amount between 2002 and 2014 with nothing to show for it. The cementing of the China-Pakistan axis is taking place alongside the parallel process of decline of an important player in the region.

China's forays into South Asia and its receptivity is understandable from the perspective of small players who would want to bring in outside players to balance India. This reality cannot be changed. This principal motivation is a useful point to consider for India when crafting policy as to not overreact. India has to be conscious of the security and strategic implications as there are no real instruments to deal with this except good relations. The talk of being the 'net security provider' has the opposite impact and is counter-productive. The first step towards building relations would be talk of being a comfort provider and a friend in need.

To move forward on SAARC India should revisit the impact of the Pakistan factor on it. When India disaggregates Pakistan factor it



is confronted with a host of issues like Kashmir dispute, water, trade, Sir Creek, etc. India's relations with other South Asian countries like Bangladesh and Nepal has similar issues. Water is a point of contention with many of India's neighbours.

The SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAFTA) is a good place to assess the progress of regional integration in South Asia. While Indian exports to each of the SAARC countries have increased, including Pakistan, there wasn't a corresponding increase in their exports to India. Pakistan held-up progress because of imbalance of trade, despite putting in technical restrictions that were in violation of the spirit of the Agreement. This gave a reason to Pakistan to deny India the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status. There were similar issues with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. While trade with SAARC is not a big deal for India, for India's neighbours it makes huge difference in their economy. By not giving it sufficient importance India has stymied progress of regional integration. India should focus on trade in the region with a more positive outlook.

India has taken initiatives on the trade front but the fact of the matter is that complementarities don't exist. Rather than

complementarities, between India-Bangladesh or India-Sri Lanka, there is competition. This is a stumbling block for trade within SAARC. Poor border infrastructure is yet another roadblock. India's border infrastructure for trade with Nepal and Myanmar is at least 50 years behind. It is nowhere near what security interests require which makes it difficult to make trade smooth and time worthy. As a result neither security nor economic interests are being addressed. Trade is doable even when other issues are trickier on the SAARC agenda. By making progress on this front momentum can be created for a SAARC minus Pakistan.

Taken as a whole, SAARC stands out in its contribution to peacekeeping. Roughly one-third of all peacekeeping troops come from the SAARC region. Other than disaster management, military cooperation can take place in the United Nations peacekeeping without ruffling too many feathers.

India underestimates the impact on water related issues on its relations with Nepal and Bangladesh. This is a sensitive issue for everyone, not just Pakistan. SAARC can make progress on water sharing issues.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative BBIN when compared with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) reveals the differing assessments on China. The way India looks at China from the east is different from when India looks at it from the West. 1979 transformed states on West-Iranian revolution, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and execution of Zulfikar Bhutto. In 1979, India's eastern neighbourhood was also transformed by China-Vietnam war. While South-East Asia made progress, West Asia did not. India's approach to these regions was shaped by developments within them. Its time India took 360 degree view in its geo-political outlook and take the mantle of leadership of South Asia by engaging with each of its neighbour on the core issue and by providing impetus on common areas of cooperation such as technology, space, security, disaster management, and peace keeping training.

CONCEPT NOTE

Colonel Sameer Sharan Kartikeya, SM



The twenty-first century is projected to be an Asian century, which implies the geopolitics, economics, security construct, and culture of Asia will be central to the future global order. The world is experiencing a major shift in the global balance of power. In Asia, China and India are the two potential powers. While China has its vast landmass dominating South China and East China Sea, India has access to the warm waters of Indian Ocean which also has in its sphere the most important Sea Lane of Communication (SLOC) covering Hormuz Strait in the west and Malacca Strait in the east. India by virtue of its geography, history, culture, and economic prowess is at the core of South Asia which has the potential to be the geo-strategic fulcrum in the Asian narrative.

South Asia itself is an entity full of disparities, paradoxes, and contradictions. The lack of progress in regional integration under the aegis of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is widely lamented. The dominance of strategic pessimism in the subcontinent may suggest that the situation is unlikely to change in any significant manner in future too. The SAARC has remained in existence for over 31 years; yet South Asia is considered as the least integrated of the global regions; this is despite the stipulation in its Charter that 'bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded' from its deliberations, thus making it possible to put the contentious issues on the back burner and focus on areas of possible cooperation.

India has always toiled to have best of relations with the neighbours as a stated nuance of its foreign policy. India is a natural leader in the region given its size, geo-strategic and geo-political stronghold. This is also the bane of the nation as the nations surrounding it are from similar ethnic stock and landmass but lagging in every aspect of development. A greater disparity between India and its neighbours will tend to create regional friction and India has to shoulder the

responsibility to take the region forward without appearing hegemonic. That's the challenge that India has been facing ever since it took the pole position in the region and it would continue to face the same challenge as it continues to grow. While framing the foreign policy, core values of any government of the day is driven by domestic development, governance, economic stability, global economics, technological disruption, and geo-political instability. Has there been a shift in India's Foreign Policy? Or is there a continuity of India's Foreign Policy with greater impetus and the current Prime Minister Modi's personal energy? Many experts in international diplomacy believe that the style and optics of India's Foreign Policy has changed as it has acquired faster pace with ruthless pragmatism.

Multilateralism is the buzz word especially after election of Donald Trump and his stated policy of reducing American footprints across the globe. While India had a contextual relevance in the erstwhile American Pivot to Asia, the likely vacuum would draw other major players like China and Russia into the region as already being witnessed in Afghanistan and Syria. It is against this backdrop that India has to proactively pursue its international relations maintaining fine balance between immediate neighbours as well as nation states across the globe.

Even 31 years after its inception, SAARC is found wanting both in terms of forming and of forging any sense of a regional identity. Contested strategic and economic interests appear to be great stumbling block towards a common regional platform to take root. South Asian countries engage readily often with powerful states in the international system, yet when it comes to regional engagement, their bilateral relations have remained strained, and are characterised by mistrust and suspicion thus making regional cooperation hostage to bilateral politics.

It is a considered fact that South Asia in the global intermix will do better if seen through the prism of Southern Asia to include near abroad regions of South-East Asia and West Asia for there exist a dynamic diplomatic progression between inter- and intra-regional parleys. Russia is making inroads in West Asia with greater vigour as

America lays strategic restraint on itself to focus more on domestic issues. West Asia is home to more than 6 million Indians. Any turmoil in West Asia has major commercial, economic, and strategic impact on India.

China factor is another area of study which cannot be ignored. Chinese do believe that Asian century is in fact Chinese century and India though not a close second has to manoeuvre its way to stay regionally and globally geo-strategically relevant. Chinese have very carefully made strategic investments in all of the South Asian nations and their foray into the Indian Ocean Region has to be mitigated through a counter narrative. A regressive Pakistan and China-Pakistan nexus is yet another stumbling block to the growth of South Asia and there lays the challenge. How to take SAARC forward in spite of a regressive Pakistan?

South Asia covers close to 3.5 per cent of the world's space, 22 per cent of the world's population and yet has integrated economy of less than 3 per cent. There exist immense possibilities of economic cooperation in the region and India has no choice but to lead the way. South Asia as a region have to brace itself against a range of security threats to include radicalisation, terrorism, increasing footprints of Islamic State, and cyber crimes. South Asian Peace Keepers have done tremendous work under the United Nations Umbrella. Is there a prospect of military integration in the Region? The question leads to an altogether different approach to regional cooperation.

To quote Prime Minister Modi's inaugural speech at the Raisina Dialogue held in Delhi in January 2017: I am aware that India's transformation is not separated from its external context. Our economic growth; the welfare of our farmers; the employment opportunities for our youth; our access to capital, technology, markets and resources; And, security of our nation all of them are deeply impacted by developments in the world. But, the reverse is also true. The world needs India's sustained rise, as much as India needs the world. Our desire to change our country has an indivisible link with the external world. It is, therefore, only natural that India's choices at home and our international priorities form part of a seamless continuum firmly anchored in India's transformational goals.