

Seminar Report

EMERGING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION

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Seminar co-ordinator: Amrita Jash



Centre for Land Warfare Studies

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

Phone: +91.11.25691308 Fax: +91.11.25692347

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

CLAWS Army No. 33098

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The new international security environment is defined by a renewed great power competition which seeks to challenge the US-led international order that has been in place since World War II.
- The international order is witnessing a power transition as witnessed in the rise of China and the gradual decline of the United States.
- US policy focus has shifted from being Asia-centric to that of becoming enlarged towards Indo-Pacific region. In view of this, India is perceived as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region against the China challenge.
- In this scenario, the competition and cooperation among actors is defined by their capabilities for high-end warfare, maintaining technological superiority in conventional as well as nuclear weapons, and nuclear deterrence capabilities.
- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the QUAD (India, the United States, Japan and Australia) acts as a strategic security measure in the Indo-Pacific that aims to check and balance China's growing assertiveness.
- The QUAD is a new type of US hedge strategy, wherein India is centrally pitched to counter China in the region.
- India's interest in the Indo-Pacific lies in expanding its strategic outlook against immediate threats from Pakistan and long-term threats from China.
- Terrorism today operates in close international linkages at a global level and with the world witnessing a new era of terrorism; this calls for greater cooperation among nations, specifically among liberal democracies.
- Both, the United States and India, can work together in countering terrorist activities within the Indo-Pacific security architecture.

INTRODUCTION

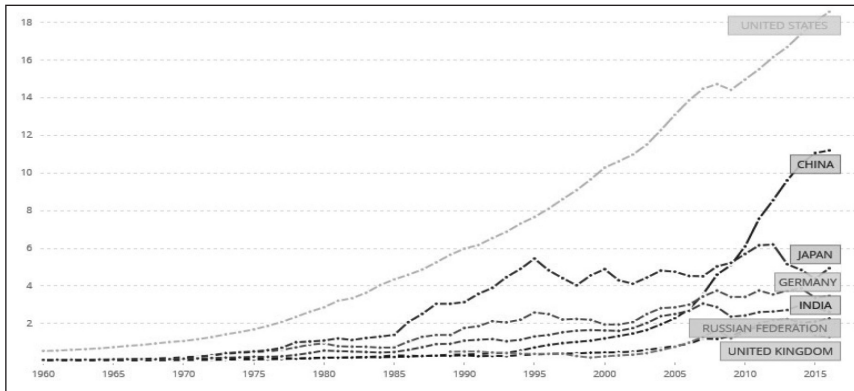
A seminar on “Emerging International Security Environment in Indo-Pacific” was conducted by Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) in association with Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College on November 29, 2017.

The seminar had five speakers and a chairperson, wherein the theme of ‘Indo-Pacific’ was addressed under three central perspectives: India, China and US perspective.

The report lays out the themes/subjects of the seminar, as listed below.

A. China – Role and Approach in the International Order with Special Emphasis on Indo-Pacific

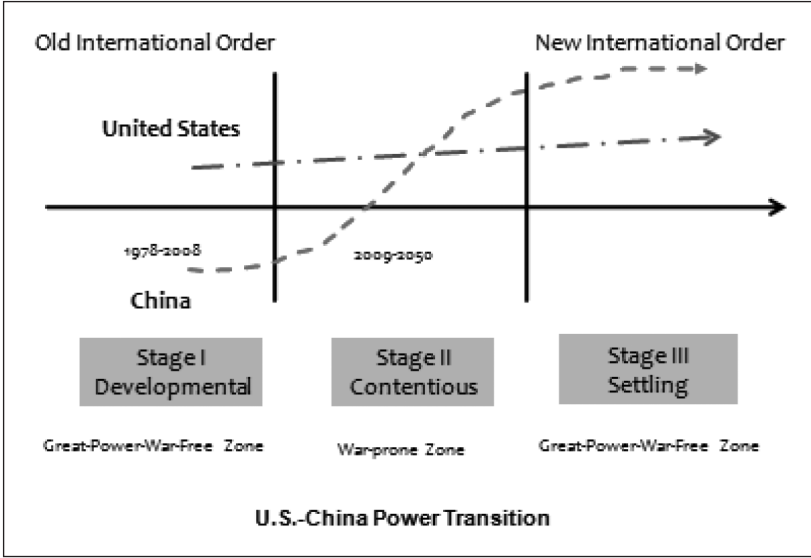
China’s rise has triggered a power competition between China and the United States, wherein China’s role is that of a challenger to the US-led international order. What is noteworthy is that China acts as the only exception given the other great powers are not challengers as well as exhibit no interest in changing the existing international liberal order.



For instance, India is an emerging power but has no interest in changing the existing order. Similarly, Japan and Germany, both being strong powers, are less likely to change the *status quo*. However, Russia, being an erstwhile superpower, stands weak to challenge the US-led order and thereby the only exception is China which acts as a

significant challenger in changing the existing international order with respect to the United States.

The power transition between China and the United States can be explained from the following diagrammatic representation.



As the above diagram suggests, power transition is currently in the second stage, wherein new shifts are to take place given the changes in the existing balance of power. Here, the key factor that is fuelling the shift is China's growing assertive behaviour. With China's changing role in the international order, in the second stage, the crucial point is that of an intersection in the process of transition. With significant implications involved, this intersection then becomes the deciding factor that leads to the third stage, wherein the rising power becomes, in this case, China, which becomes the new power. At this stage of power transition, the behaviour, objective and strategy of the two countries can be explained in the following way.

	United States	China
Behaviour	Overanxious	Overconfident
Objective	Rules-based order	UN order but not US-led liberal order
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy for government • Free market for economy • Alliance for security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New model for major country relations • Five principles of mutual co-existence • Community of common destiny

What China is trying to do is trying to be equal by becoming more powerful; however, China fails to conform to the rules as it finds it difficult to fit in the existing rules-based order. As a result, China has risen well in economic terms but not politically or in security areas. Given this non-conformity, US interest lies in influencing China to follow the rules. In this regard, the United States can either shape the rise of China if it wants or vice versa, resulting into significant implications.

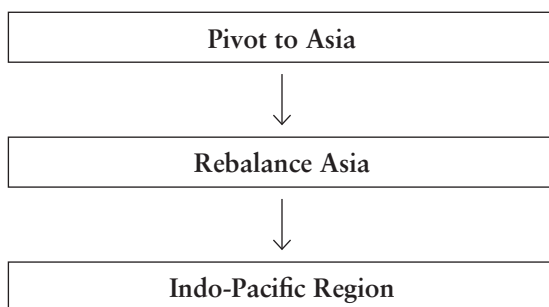
B. US Perspective on India in the Indo-Asia Pacific

US-India relations have a relatively short history, wherein in 1954, the United States made Pakistan a treaty ally, while India leaned towards Soviet Union and most importantly, India became party to the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). However, the major setback came with US President Richard Nixon's support for Pakistan during the 1971 war, resulting a significant low in US-India relations.

With time, US-India relations have evolved to become stronger. Most importantly, under the new leadership of US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, both countries are advocating to look forward to more commonalities than differences. This is mainly evident in terms of boosting economic ties, combating terrorism and greater strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

What makes it so is the significant shift in US perspective towards Asia-Pacific in large and Asia in particular, wherein US policy focus has

shifted from being Asia-centric to that of becoming enlarged towards Indo-Pacific region. The shifts are as follows:



The US expansion of the strategic scope to that of Indo-Pacific makes it more veritable for a greater cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. With such a construct, India's role is further elevated in US perception. What makes it so is that India is the only country that can influence China.

C. Global Security Architecture with Focus on India and China

The recent shifts in the international security environment have become a key factor of debate centred on the aspects such as: grand strategy and geopolitics; US and NATO military capabilities in Europe; capabilities for countering so-called hybrid warfare and grey-zone tactics employed by countries such as Russia and China; capabilities for conducting so-called high-end warfare (i.e., large-scale, high-intensity, technologically sophisticated warfare) against countries such as China and Russia; US attempt to maintain technological superiority in conventional weapons; nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence; speed of weapon system development and deployment as a measure of merit in defence acquisition policy; and minimising reliance on US military systems on components and materials from Russia and China.

Given these factors, the new current international security environment is defined by a renewed great power competition with China and Russia and challenges by these two countries and others to the US-led international order that has been in place since World War II. This new security environment is not defined as that of bipolar

or unipolar, rather characterised in terms of: renewed ideological competition, such as 21st forms of authoritarianism in Russia and China; new forms of aggressive and assertive military muscle flexing by Russia and China; regional security challenges from Iran and North Korea, and threat of terror by transnational terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

What propelled the shift to a new security environment are the two key markers: first, Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea in March 2014, which represented the first forcible seizure and annexation of one country's territory by another country in Europe since World War II, and second, China's economic growth and military modernisation over the last several years, combined with its actions in the East and South China Seas, which has been gradual and cumulative in nature.

In this scenario, the competition and cooperation among actors are defined by their capabilities for high-end warfare, maintaining technological superiority in conventional as well as nuclear weapons, and nuclear deterrence capabilities.

D. National Security in the Indo-Pacific: An Indian Perspective

India's strategic outlook is driven by its threefold national aim: economic development and prosperity; maintain a conducive environment for India's growth and development, and aspire to become a regional power by 2030 and a global power by 2050. Given these objectives, India has a three-tiered strategic perspective, which can be classified as:

Focus Areas	Regions
Area of influence	Immediate neighbourhood (South Asia)
Area of extended influence	Extended neighbourhood (Indian Ocean region, West Asia, Central Asia, East/South East Asia, East Africa)
Area of interest	Rest of the world (entails security and economic cooperation, trade, sourcing critical needs, building partnerships, diaspora interests, UN peacekeeping, etc.)

However, India's threat perspective involves three set of factors: external threats (China, Pakistan and global and regional threats); internal threats (separatism, secessionism, left-wing extremism and possibility of exploitation of socio-economic fault lines) and non-traditional security threats (issues related to human security, energy and environment).

In this context, India's extended neighbourhood falls in the ambit of the Indo-Pacific region, wherein India's interest lies in expanding its strategic outlook against immediate threats from Pakistan and long-term threats from China. India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or QUAD (along with the United States, Japan and Australia) acts as a good security measure in the Indo-Pacific that checks both China's assertiveness as well as Pakistan's terrorism. What makes QUAD significant are its objectives that stand for:

Rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific
Respect for international law freedom of navigation/overflights
Coordination of efforts to address threats posed by terrorism, piracy, proliferation, WMD
Build connectivity

This fourfold perspective makes China view QUAD as a direct threat to its regional position, while for India, QUAD is a new type of US hedge strategy against China, wherein India is centrally pitched to counter China in the region. However, in India, there are different perceptions on India's joining of the QUAD, wherein one side sees it as a 'bad' idea and the others argue it to be 'good'.

In an overall assessment, it remains an indisputable fact that India is a key player in the Indo-Pacific regional security architecture and to that of QUAD, wherein although at present India lacks the resources to counter-balance China in the region, but India will continue to engage China rather than confront politically and economically, and simultaneously build its own economic and military strength to check China's assertiveness.

E. India in the Global Arena of Counter-terrorism Operations

Terrorism has become the most potent threat to international peace and security. What makes it more destructive is that weapons of terror have increased and so has the technology. However, the idea of ‘global terror’ only came into being in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attack on the United States. Currently, the four deadliest terrorist organisations operating are: ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and Taliban.

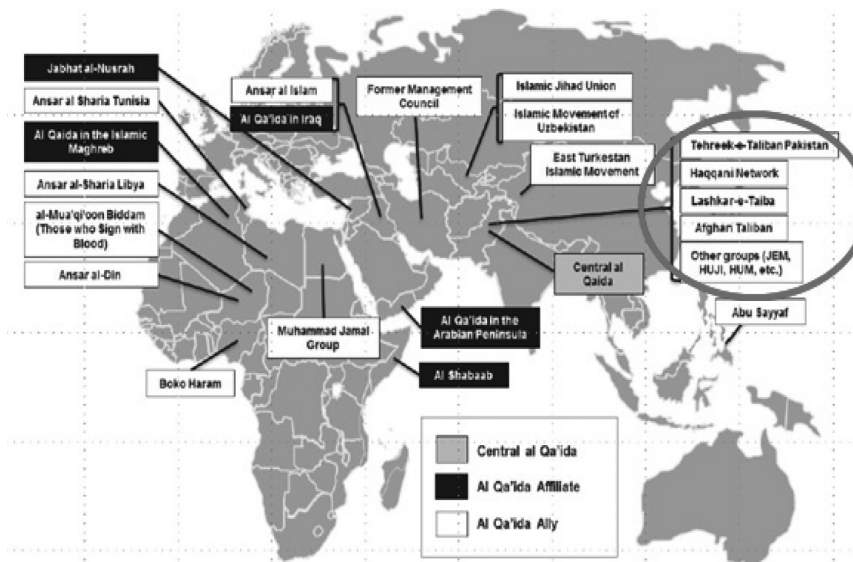
Until 9/11, terrorism was only relegated to that of India calling it as “India’s terrorism” which came into being with India’s independence in 1947. This very understanding delinked India from the ambit of global terror. Terrorism has become an actual low-cost war.

There is a cyclic pattern in the way terror attacks are played out. What makes India vulnerable is that it lies at the crossroads of global crescent and global triangle-narcotic drugs, trafficking, organised crime, and all are subjected to cyber terrorism.

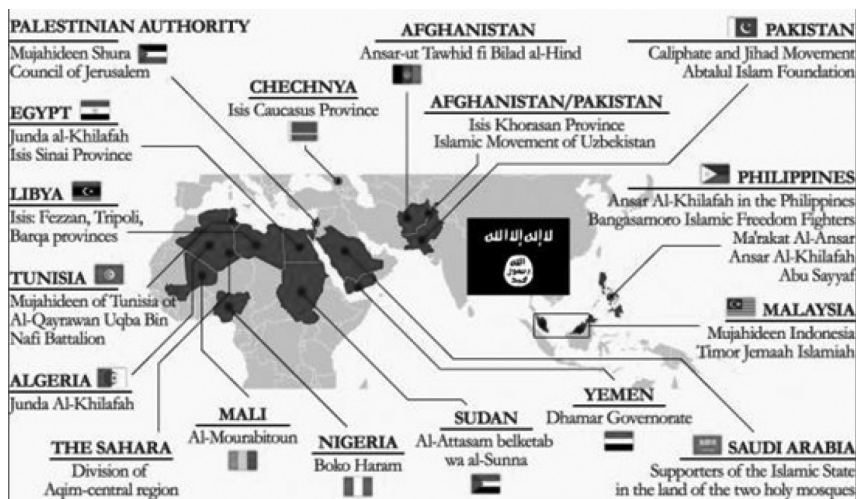
Ten countries in 2016 and 2017 that got most affected by terrorism are: Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, India, Turkey and Libya (in the order to intensity). Besides, massive terror attacks (such as London and Brussels) were carried out worldwide, all related to Islamic radicalisation. In 2016, the global death toll due to terror attacks was estimated to be 26,673, and the epicentres were Iraq, Syria and Nigeria. However, the economic losses due to terrorism alone counted to 84 billion USD in 2016. This reflects the grave implications of global terror, which will only increase if not fade.

Over the years, terrorist organisations have grown both in number as well as strength, of which the primary nerve centre of global terror is the Al-Qaeda, which has widespread its scope by its affiliates operating in South East Asia, Islamic Maghreb, Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, South Asia and Al Shabab.

Al-Qaeda, Affiliates and Allied Groups

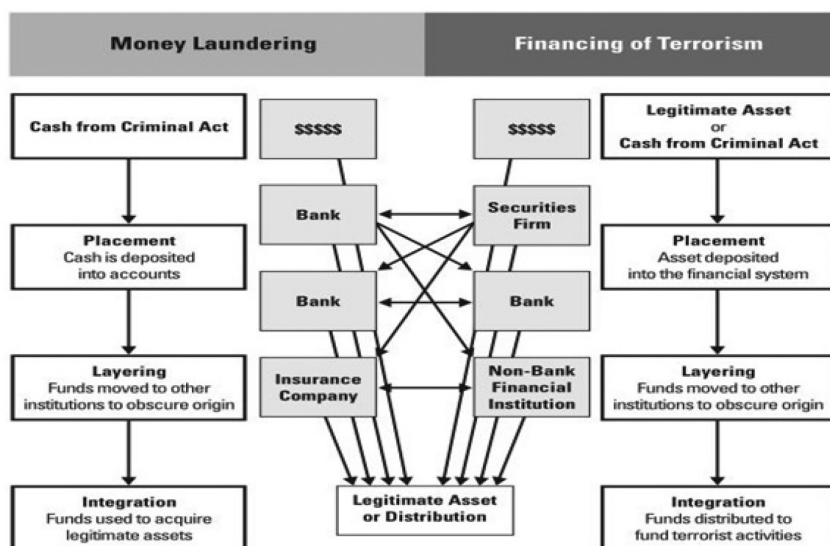


In current times, the ISIS has become the most imminent threat of global terror. Over 40 terrorist groups operating worldwide claim allegiance to ISIS, as outlined in the following diagrammatic representation.



In this perspective, supply chain of weapons is another critical aspect that significantly contributes to global terrorism. This forms the core of the illegal small arms trade, which are mainly manufactured legitimately by 30 countries worldwide, with China taking the lead. The dark net is primarily involved in this illegal arms trade deal. One of the biggest markets of illegal arms is Darra Adam Khel in Pakistan a grave concern for India.

What further adds to the spread of global terror is the cycle of terror financing. This systemic process operates in the following way.



The terror funding of the key terrorist organisations are:

Sl. No.	Terrorist Organisation	Annual Turnover (USD)	Place
1	ISIS	2 bn	Iraq and Syria
2	Hamas	1 bn	West Bank and Gaza Strip
3	Hezbollah	500 mn	Lebanon
4	Taliban	400 mn	Afghanistan and Pakistan

Sl. No.	Terrorist Organisation	Annual Turnover (USD)	Place
5	Al-Qaeda	150 mn	Afghanistan and franchises
6	Lashkar-e-Taiba	100 mn	Pakistan and India
7	Al Shabab	70 mn	Somalia and the Horn of Africa
8	Boko Haram	25 mn	Nigeria

In addition, given the current trend of modern warfare, global terror too has adapted its ways of operation, of which one of the key factors that is contributing to the spread of terror is the use of ‘internet’ by terrorist organisations, wherein terrorist groups are using it in various ways such as: to wage a psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda use, data mining, fundraising, recruitment and training, networking, sharing information and for planning and coordination.

Given the nexus of global terror, terrorism today operates in close international linkages at a global level. As the world is witnessing a new era of terrorism, this very condition calls for greater cooperation among nations, specifically among liberal democracies. This makes counter-terrorism a common binding factor between nations, and most importantly, India and the United States to cooperate in the Indo-Pacific security architecture.

CONCEPT NOTE

The international order is in a state of transition as the global balance of power is witnessing an incremental and strategic shift in the existing *status quo*. The relative declining status of US dominance is being balanced by new forces such as the rise of China, the economic and strategic emergence of India as well as the growing importance of Indian Ocean.

These changes have resulted into the emergence of the Indo-Pacific region which is witnessing a shift from an old partially hegemonic order led by the United States to that of an emerging multipolar order shaped by balance of power impulses, wherein the region is moving towards a new regional order, causing new security alignments and re-alignments among countries. This calls for a greater risk of an emerging strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region, thus making the region the centre of gravity of 21st century global power play.

Indo-Pacific has become the new way to look at maritime Asia, where the geographical extension covers the eastern coast of Africa, through the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean, wherein the competitive and convergent strategic and security interests of actors such as Australia, China, India, Japan and the United States are predominantly played out. In essence, this region has come to be defined in part by the expanding interests and reach of India, China and Japan combined with the continued strategic role and presence of the United States in both the Pacific and the Indian Ocean.

Geopolitically, the increasing importance of Indo-Pacific is evident in the strategic outlooks in terms of China's "Belt and Road Initiative", India's "Act East Policy", the United States' "Rebalance/Pivot to Asia" and Japan's idea of "Confluence of the Two Seas". However, in security and strategic context, contentions over issues mainly related to the South China Sea, East China Sea, Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, India-China boundary dispute and terrorism plague the Indo-Pacific region.

However, the primary factors that offset the regional balance of power are the tendencies of an expansionist China, a nuclear belligerent North Korea and a revisionist Pakistan that fuel terrorism into the region. These security and strategic issues have raised serious concerns over the stability of the existing international order.

With the dawn of the 21st century, the axis of great power politics has shifted to Asia, and most importantly, the strategic focus has shifted from the Pacific-Atlantic to that of Pacific-Indian Ocean. Under such realistic settings, it becomes imperative to discuss the pressing concerns given the emerging security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. The pertinent queries that need significant deliberation are:

- What is the context, content and scope of the emerging international order under the Indo-Pacific regional and security architecture?
- Does the emerging international security environment call for new strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region?