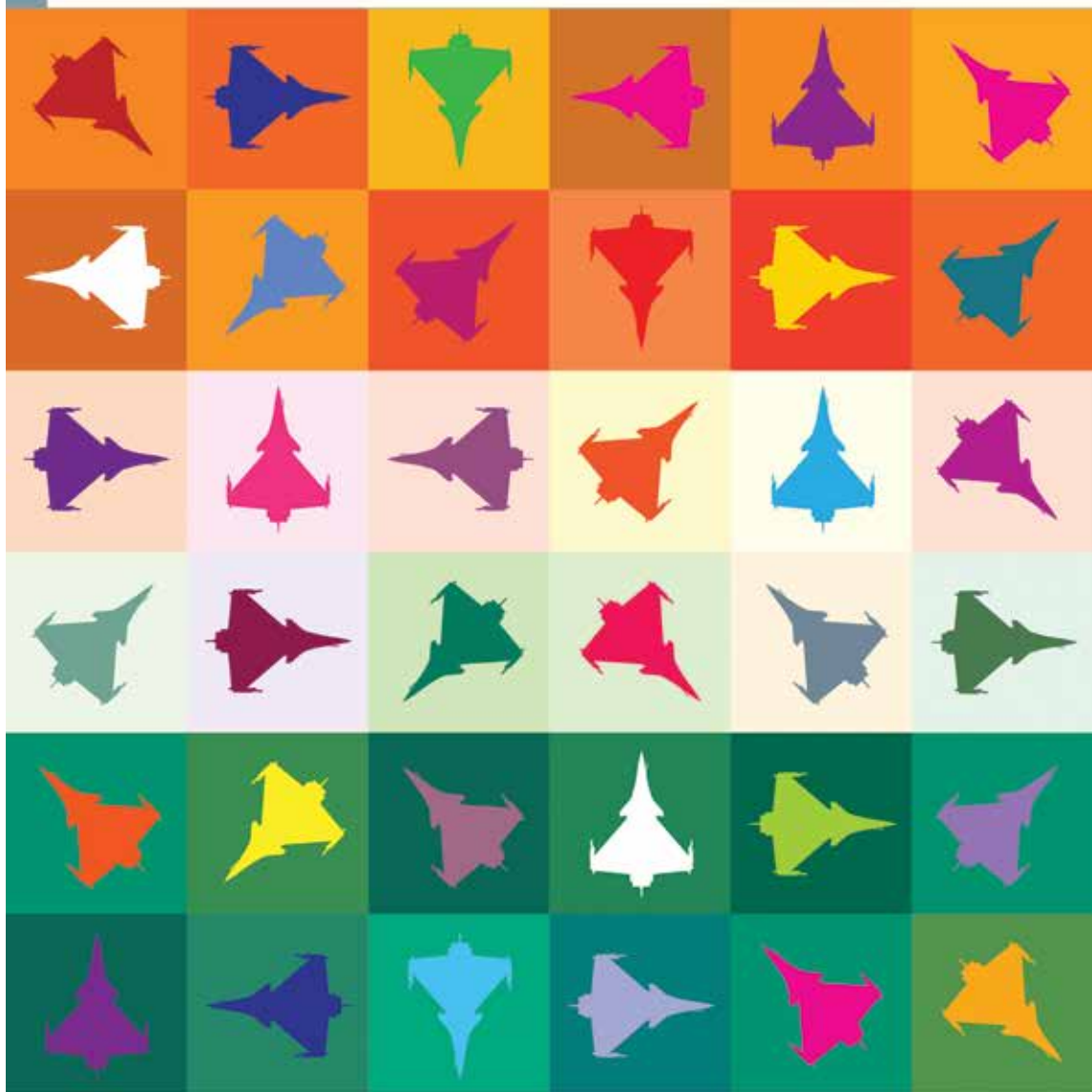


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IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The first three months of the year have been eventful and it is all too evident that in the coming months and, may be, even years, international relations will remain in a state of flux. There is palpable excitement in the air as to what will President Trump do next. BREXIT presents its own problems and the rise of China has been accepted as a *fait accompli*. A telling example of the latter is the statement of the Philippines President Duterte that he does not have the military power to challenge China's moves in the South China Sea, notwithstanding the unequivocal award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in favour of the Philippines. There are many issues demanding the attention of our readers but, perforce, we have to be selective in the articles we publish.

Unfortunately, our abiding interest in Pakistan will not flag. Our lead article by **Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain** attempts to formulate a strategy against the proxy war that Pakistan continues to wage against us in Jammu and Kashmir. The author knows the area well and his views are often compelling. He feels that Pakistan will never get over the ignominy of the defeat in 1971. We must recognise this and should formulate and adopt a long-term plan. The Parliament resolution of 1994 stating unequivocally that the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir is a part of India requires frequent mention in our deliberations on the subject in India and abroad.

With President Trump asserting that he intends to strengthen the US nuclear forces, the chances of a new arms reduction treaty coming into force are bleak. **Professor Arun Mohanty** argues that in the face of an increasing conventional threat against Russia, she is loath to enter into an unequal treaty. Russia sees the nuclear weapon as a deterrent whereas the US often sees it as a burden that is becoming increasingly

expensive to maintain. Russia has to be realistic and has to maintain a strong military capability that includes nuclear weapons. She also has to consider the link between offensive and defensive weapons and President Trump's penchant for a rapid change of strategy.

The next six articles are about different facets of the China story. **Air Vice Mshl Manmohan Bahadur** looks at China's aviation industry. What is the nature of the People's Liberation Army Air Force's (PLAAF's) modernisation? Is the J-20 a game changer? Undoubtedly, China is advancing rapidly but her capabilities still fall short of levels where she can pose a serious challenge to us. We have to ensure that the gulf in capabilities is maintained. Strategic analysts and China watchers will continue to view the rise of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) but unless they have an aircraft carrier with a catapult assisted take-off system on board, the Chinese capability beyond their immediate waters will be less than threatening.

Sana Hashmi takes head on the prospects of US-China relations in the Trump Administration. She suggests that with the near immediate withdrawal by the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership post President Trump's assumption of office, a sea-change could be in the offing. The mercurial nature of the president came to light when soon after the historic telephonic conversation with President Tsai Ing Wang of Taiwan that suggested a possible policy change, he soon thereafter stood by the earlier One-China policy. Yet he has referred to China as a currency manipulator and is against Chinese activities in the South China Sea. Increasing competition between China and the US is on the cards.

The abundance of oil in the West Asia region has naturally attracted China. **Anu Sharma** states that China could play a more assertive role in the region but has to cater to the Russian presence as well. China is apprehensive about the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) and its possible spillover into areas of her interest but has adroitly avoided playing an assertive role in the area, particularly as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) passes through Central Asia and onto West Asia.

On a different tack, **Temjenmeren Ao** looks at the likelihood of India-China energy cooperation and whether it could help in a

rapprochement of sorts. Undoubtedly, the relations are less than friendly, but both countries are energy hungry. There are suspicions on both sides and the Chinese approach towards our membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and not agreeing to the naming of Masood Azhar as a terrorist are viewed by us as anti-India. Our buttressing military capability in our Northeast is viewed less favourably by China. It makes eminent sense for both countries to work towards the common good but the atmospherics have to improve.

The imbroglio in the South China Sea is not easing and the subject continues to interest our readers. **Pooja Bhatt** assesses the impact of China's militarisation of the area. China continues to create habitations and place military hardware on the islands, showing no respect to the award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration that ruled against any such activities. Unfortunately, there is no unanimity amongst the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China can flex its military muscle to quite an extent. It appears that no solution is in sight but the story will continue to exercise our minds.

The 4,800-km-long Mekong river traverses six countries starting from China and ending in the South China Sea. **Puyam Rakesh Singh** shows how the river could be a unifying force amongst the six countries. As it happens, the river passes through the three countries that comprise the Golden Triangle – Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Drug trafficking and the associated ills plague the area and the troubles can travel to China as well. China has spent money to dredge the river and on making roads and railway lines, but the value of all such activities will bear fruit only when the security issues are resolved. China's money and growing influence are evident but she has to do more to win over the lower riparian states.

The problem that is Al Qaeda will just not go away. Hoping that somehow the problem will solve itself is wishful thinking. The ideology has to be combatted and that is no easy task. One reason why the Al Qaeda threat is so great is that it supports suicide terrorism. It is always instructive to revisit the origin of the menace. **Radhika Halder** analyses the genesis of Al Qaeda and gives us the current state of the organisation. In doing so, she also exposes some unpalatable truths. The article makes good reading and helps us understand the

present and future impact of the curse that is Al Qaeda. A concerted effort to combat the evil has to be essayed.

Throughout the last century, the Indian Ocean was viewed as a zone of peace. That is no longer true. In the foreseeable future, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) will be the arena for great power rivalries. The stakes for the US, China and India amongst others, are high. **Air Cmde RA Maslekar** looks at the conundrum and argues that India must play a more assertive role as we have the most to gain or to lose.

In the Book Review section, **Aersh Danish** reviews a book with an imposing title, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Colonial North India*. As the reviewer shows, the book is worth reading.

Happy reading.



WE NEED A 'THINK THROUGH' STRATEGY AGAINST PAKISTAN'S PROXY WAR IN J&K

SYED ATA HASNAIN

It is well known that Pakistan's game plan in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been working as per a strategy conceived by President Zia-ul-Haq in 1977. After a five-year hiatus due to being out of power, the Pakistan Army returned in 1977 to the hot seat and immediately got down to working out the strategy to seek retribution for the loss of face in 1971, and more the loss of half the nation. It was not something any self-respecting nation could easily live with. The Pakistan Army had created the mess in 1971 and Zia wished to regain the nation's respect for its army. His strategy was simple. It looked at Pakistan going nuclear to offset the conventional superiority of India; thereafter, it aimed to befriend a rich Islamic nation and then exploit India's various faultlines to cause internal instability in India, chief among which would be a proxy war in J&K to force its eventual secession from Indian control. The thread of radical Islam of the Arab strain was considered suitable to bring Pan-Islamism to the fore in executing this strategy while playing to the sentiments of the majority population in J&K.

Lt Gen **Syed Ata Hasnain** (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM and BAR, is a Visiting Fellow, Vivekanand International Foundation, New Delhi.

EXECUTION OF PAKISTAN'S J&K POLICY

Pakistan has not wavered from this strategy for the last 27 years and has displayed immense strategic patience in seeing its aim through. One of the reasons for this continuity has been the fact that it was an army-conceived and executed strategy, with little scope for civilian interference. In fact, there have been times when the political authorities have questioned the strategy which involves the creation of strategic assets in the form of 'friendly terrorists' who act as the frontline warriors to give strength and impetus to the separatist movement in J&K. They fear a serious blowback from this strategy once these terrorists become serious stakeholders in the conflict and apportion for themselves a role larger than the one conceived by the army.

Noticeably, Pakistan's tack has been consistency of approach towards its strategy for segments of three to four years, followed by a review and a change of tack. In 1989, it attempted to launch the proxy conflict with only local elements which came a cropper in 1991. By 1992, it had to rapidly move into harnessing the availability of the Islamic mercenaries who became unemployed after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In 1996, with India sensing an improvement in the situation and experimenting with elections, Pakistan once again revitalised the militancy with the creation of a larger Pakistani ethnic footprint; that is how the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) came to prominence. The 1999-2000 phase was characterised by three things: the Kargil episode, with a secondary effect planned for the Valley due to the vacation of north Kashmir; the creation and induction of Masood Azhar's Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM); and, lastly, the employment of *fedayeen* (suicide attackers) to force the Indian security forces onto the defensive. This phase of suicide attacks (quite apart from the suicide bombings) lasted till 2004-05. Thereafter, there was again a hiatus due to the Musharraf-Vajpayee and then Musharraf-Manmohan bonhomie which gave rise to serious back-channel diplomacy which lasted till 2008. It remains a moot point for debate whether this was a genuine change of heart on the part of Musharraf or a tactical ploy. Parvez Musharraf was reasonably relenting in his approach during this phase, including the bringing about of a unilateral ceasefire at the Line of Control (LoC) on November 26, 2003.

The year 2008 in many ways proved to be a landmark phase in the proxy conflict. Firstly, Musharraf appeared to have a change of heart after the Lal Masjid incident in Islamabad which gained him internal notoriety. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), sensing the movement in Kashmir floundering, to some extent, returned to the 1990 strategy of involving the public at large in the conflict. It instigated street violence, stone throwing and mass public turnout through a calendar of events which the separatists issued well in advance. The attempt was perhaps to convert it from a proxy militant/terrorist related campaign to a high energy people's movement. It was instigated by the reducing strength of terrorists in the hinterland as a result of the major success of the Indian Army's counter-infiltration efforts, one of the high marks of success of the Indian strategy (explained later). The second element of the Pakistani strategy (Phase 2008-10) was to use events as triggers and that too primarily in the summer. In 2008, it was the combined trigger of the Amarnath Shrine Board's innocuous attempt to create some temporary shelters on forest land and the death of Hurriyat leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz, at the hands of the J&K Police in the attempted march to Muzaffarabad on August 11, 2008. In 2009, attempts were constantly made to exploit the trigger of the alleged Shupiyan rape case which involved two young Kashmiri women who were allegedly raped near the riverside and their bodies thrown in the Rembiara river. The agitation in 2009 somehow could not match the energy and intensity of 2008 but its lessons probably cleared the way for the triggers of 2010. These were the killing of three innocents at Machil in April 2010 by an LoC deployed unit of the Indian Army, in an apparent attempt to secure honours and awards. This snowballed into an agitation in Srinagar in which a young bystander, 12-year-old Tufail Mattoo, was killed by a canister of teargas which hit him on the head. The wait and watch strategy paid dividends as apparent triggers occurred from mistakes by the Indian security forces; these were politically very adroitly exploited to bring turmoil to the streets for almost the entire time the state government was in Srinagar before the annual move to Jammu. The smartness of the Pakistani strategy and the willingness to play out a long game of wait and watch, displaying strategic patience and not going for the kill, remained on display through 2011-15. There were constraints which forced this

and a temporary setback did occur due to the competing priorities within Pakistan's security matrix. There was the entire challenge thrown up by the Tehreek-e-Taliban (Pakistan) (TTP) which had to be militarily addressed and continues to be addressed, even today. The situation in Afghanistan also drew the attention of Pakistan's strategists as the International Security Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) laid out its plans for dilution of troop strength. It was a strategic space Pakistan could ill afford to yield to anyone, least of all India. Perhaps Pakistan also realised that the improving situation in J&K was not something the Indian establishment could take to a finality, given the lack of a strategy, ability to build on achievements and the approaching elections in 2014. Pakistan's strategy through this period, after brief inaction in 2011-12, was to energise the LoC to prevent diversion of international attention towards any ideas that India was stabilising J&K. The series of instigated actions at the LoC, including the beheading incident, also aimed at getting greater control over the situation as the militancy veered towards greater local content in south Kashmir. The antecedents of the current strategy of generating flash mobs at encounter sites to prevent contacts with militants/terrorists developing into successful operations for the Indian security forces also commenced in 2015. Social media, the fact that the young terrorist leader Burhan Wani was a local, and the slippage of the controls of the agitational dynamics from the hands of the older generation made for a huge change. The impatient and more wired up generation needed different handling. It was inevitable that this strategy would ultimately lead to a bigger trigger which it did. The killing of Burhan Wani on July 8, 2016, was truly a landmark event in the 27-year-old movement and proxy conflict. It is probably at par with January 19, 1990, the day the forced flight of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley commenced. Burhan's death in an encounter may or may not have been planned by the ISI but its fallout was controlled and charted by the ISI to a great extent. 2016 became one of the most relevant years for Pakistan and its strategy resulted in an alienation of the local population which years of military civic action by the Indian Army through its signature Operation Sadbhavana could not prevent. That is where the situation rests today, awaiting a fresh strategic twist from Pakistan.

INDIA'S INITIATIVES AND POLICY

Inevitably, the initiative has been with Pakistan through most of the period 1989-2016. However, to get an idea about the degree of control India has exercised through this campaign, it would be important to similarly chart out way points when its initiatives have scored and achieved an upper hand. The fact that the terrorist strength in J&K has been substantially reduced is a pointer that the establishment in India has not always been wrong or always on the defensive.

In 1989-90, the point of conflict initiation, the situation completely disfavoured India in all dimensions—political, military, social and economic. The only response from the Indian side was the inevitable employment of military hard power; the options were really limited and the Valley was in such ferment that the perception was generated that it was slipping from India's hands. Right through to 1993, the hard fought military space was secured but it resulted in greater alienation. So the military success was in India's favour while the psychological success was with Pakistan.

In 1993 came Robin Raphael, the new US assistant secretary of state for South Asia as part of the Clinton Administration. As the wife of the late Arnold Raphael, former ambassador to Pakistan, who was killed along with Zia-ul-Haq in the August 1988 air crash, Robin was perceived as extremely pro-Pakistan in her attitude. Her attitude gave Pakistan a reasonable diplomatic advantage at the high table. However, in one of the lesser recognised actions by India, the psychological advantage was once again balanced with the Indian joint resolution of the two Houses of Parliament on February 22, 1994, which declared India's intent clearly. With consensus from all the political parties, the Parliament declared the entire territory of the former princely state of J&K as belonging to India and projected its clear intent to aspire for, and secure, this territory. 1994 was a year in which India secured the political and diplomatic advantage.

In 1996, even as Pakistan demonstrated its capability to alter the foreign mercenary presence to enhanced Pakistani presence through the LeT, India's counter was again in the political domain. Before that, the military success which was more responsive had resulted in very large scale elimination of the foreign mercenaries. The military initiatives of India from 1991 to 1996, which were highly successful,

included the raising of the Rashtriya Rifles (RR). Initially, 36 units, then came the sector Headquarters (HQ). Thereafter, the first two Force/Div HQ – Delta Force for the Doda sector and Victor Force for the Valley, were raised. The decision to go in for elections and install the Farooq Abdullah government was a political and psychological success. The first signs of fatigue in the populace were becoming evident around this time.

The 1999 Kargil initiative by Pakistan may have come a cropper in its larger strategic aims of forcing the vacation of Siachen or domination of the strategic artery leading to Ladakh. However, in the Valley, it had a side effect. The vacation of north Kashmir by the Indian Army's 8 Mountain Division to operate in Kargil left a yawning gap in the space of the Valley deployments, and command and control was adversely affected. Combining this with the *fedayeen*, launched during this phase, gave Pakistan an edge. Three initiatives came from the Indian side. First, was the raising of 27 additional units of the RR. Second, was the construction of the Rs 1,150 crore LoC fence along the 750-km front which effectively and progressively resulted in the strengthening of the counter-infiltration grid. Third, was the initiation of the healing touch policy of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed which gave India some domination of the psychological space. Before this, the psychological space had also been partially dented by the Indian establishment in 1997, immediately after the elections of 1996. A especially budgeted hearts and minds exercise – Operation Sadbhavana – was initiated alongside the issue of the Dos and Don'ts of the Supreme Court, given after a brief review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1990 (AFSPA 90). Even a special Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the guidelines of conducting people friendly operations was issued. However, in the absence of an effective strategic communication body, the effect of these clear initiatives could just not be gained by India. The Unified Command which should have given more strategic guidance on this was perhaps insufficiently exploited.

The next clear advantage that India gained was in 2008 when the reducing strength of the terrorists resulted in a better tourist season. This was shortlived as the triggers from the Amarnath Shrine Board case of acquisition of some land for temporary shelters hijacked the

situation. The political initiative of another successful Assembly election in end 2008 could not prevent the agitation going all the way till 2010. This was a time when clearly the Indian initiatives were insufficient, leading to a near paralysis in 2010 which was controlled through military hard power, resulting in greater alienation.

In 2011-12, an experiment called the Heart Doctrine launched by the Indian Army, with a direct engagement and outreach to the people, unnerved the Pakistani establishment. India's then military attache reported the discomfort of the ISI. This was in sync with the Indian government's initiative of setting up a team of interlocutors for direct interaction with the people. Both experiments would have been classified as successful if they had been taken to the next natural stage of exploitation for advantage. The Heart Doctrine floundered in the face of the inability to sustain the initiative and the interlocutor's report was consigned to the dustbin instead of being tabled in the Parliament. India effectively lost its own initiative at the altar of the then central government's inability to think through the situation which was drastically altering at the ground level.

From 2014 onwards, it was first the floods and then the Assembly elections; 2015 was consumed in the experiments with governance with the new political combination of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP). The first half of 2016 was taken up with the unfortunate demise of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and the bringing together of a replacement government. The initiative remained with Pakistan and on July 8, 2016, clearly passed on to it. That was the day Burhan Wani was killed.

We are now in 2017. The alienation is at a high level. The army has suffered some reverses and the flash mobs are creating problems in the smooth conduct of anti-terrorist operations. However, it is not as if India has not strategised enough in the past. The absence which has been felt is that of a long-term strategy and the inability to take a position of emerging advantage to a clear situation of strategic advantage. Through most of the campaign of the proxy war, India may have been reticent with initiatives but there have been some triggers initiated by India which have befuddled the Pakistanis. The advantage of such triggers was lost all too quickly. That is why 2017 demands the conceptualisation of a long-term strategy with some

way points identified so that the stakeholders are not left demotivated with events such as a temporary setback faced by the Indian Army in terms of terrorist kill ratios. There is much more to look at in terms of a J&K policy but a long-term strategy is perhaps the first on the current charter.

RUSSIAN DISCOURSE ON US NUCLEAR ARMS REDUCTION PROPOSAL

ARUN MOHANTY

The newly- elected United States President Donald Trump has, in a recent interview, floated the idea that Washington may reconsider the sanctions against Russia if the latter agrees to reduce its nuclear arms arsenal. The US wants to reach a deal with Moscow on a significant reduction of nuclear arms in exchange for a partial or full lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on Russia on the wake of Crimea's reincorporation into Russia in 2014.

"There are sanctions on Russia – let's see if we can make some good deals with Russia," President Trump was quoted as saying by the British newspaper, *The Times*, "For one thing, I think nuclear weapons should be way down and reduced very substantially, that is part of it. But Russia is hurt badly right now because of the sanctions, but I think something can happen that a lot of people are gonna to benefit."

Trump's statement leaves a lot of room for interpretation and speculation as well. If he is talking about a reciprocal reduction of nuclear arsenals, then this contradicts his earlier remarks that he made at the end of 2016. A month ago, Trump, saw an urgent need

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for his country “to significantly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability.”

Officials in Moscow have so far refrained from assessing Trump’s latest remarks. “Let’s be patient, let’s wait for Mr. Trump to come into office as president and then assess his initiatives,” said Dmitry Peskov, the Russian president’s press secretary. Peskov also said that at the moment no talks are being held between Russia and the US on the issue of arms reduction, adding that Moscow was not the initiator of the sanctions and, hence, does not have any intention to raise the issue in its interaction with foreign countries.¹

However, the new US president’s remarks have sparked a lot of debate among the members of the Russian strategic community. The chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, the Upper House of the Russian Parliament, Konstantin Kosachev reacting to Trump’s statement, said that lifting of the sanctions itself cannot be an objective for Russia, even a strategic objective, for which something could be sacrificed, that again in the sphere of nuclear security. The agreement on reduction of nuclear weapons should be mutually beneficial.²

The deputy chairman of the international affairs committee of the Duma, the Lower House of the Russian Parliament, Dmitry Novikov, in his response, said reduction of nuclear arms can happen on the basis of parity and by taking into consideration the mistakes of the 1990s when Russia had to go for unilateral disarmament while the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) expanded its zone of activity and responsibility.³

In December 2016, Donald Trump, on the eve of his swearing-in as the 45th President of the US had expressed the view that Washington should significantly strengthen and increase its nuclear arsenal, which stands in contradiction to his latest idea of reduction of nuclear weapons. At the same time, Trump’s official representative, Jewson Miller, explaining the President’s statement, said that what President Trump meant is the need for prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons.

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1. Dmitry Peskov, “Peskov Commented on Trump’s Nuclear Deal With Russia”, Lenta.ru, January 16, 2017. Available at https://lenta.ru/news/2017/01/16/nuclear_deal/. Accessed on January 18, 2017.
 2. Dimitry Rudhiyonov, “Nuclear Trap for Russia”, *Sebodnaya Pressa*, January 18, 2017, <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/164518/>. Accessed on January 21, 2017.
 3. Ibid.

The issue of Trump's attitude towards nuclear weapons was repeatedly raised during the US president's election campaign. His foreign policy adviser had said that he was interested in the question of why the US has not been using nuclear weapons. Trump did not rule out the possibility of using nuclear weapons against the Islamic State (IS).

The Russian expert from the International Affairs Council, Maxim Suchkov, in this connection, says that both Republicans and Democrats favour the idea of lifting the sanctions in exchange for reduction of nuclear arms with caution. They believe that an agreement with Russia on the issue is possible given the fact that Russia, more than the US, is dependent on tactical nuclear weapons. However, this proposal contradicts Trump's intention to further strengthen the nuclear arsenal of the US. According to Suchkov, it is in Russia's interest to participate in such negotiations. But he too draws attention to Trump's call for an arms race, which could be a modified version of Ronald Reagan's Star War programme of the 1980s. Presently, the US is less dependent on nuclear arms than Russia, which provides a wider negotiation space to Washington.⁴

According to Professor Mikhail Alexandrov from MGIMO, a leading Russian expert on nuclear arms, Trump so far does not have a detailed plan for lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on Russia in the aftermath of Crimea's reincorporation. But during his election campaign, he had claimed that he would lift the sanctions under some conditions, and reductions of the nuclear arsenals could be one of the them. Alexandrov is sure that Russia would not like to link the lifting of the sanctions with nuclear arms reduction. After all, the sanctions have been a blessing in disguise and brought more benefits than damage for Russia. It is only the pro-Western lobby which, for ideological considerations or personal business interests, is pleading for the lifting of the sanctions. There is no reason why Russia should go for a compromise on the issue. The above-mentioned pro-Western group has powerful influence on certain sections of the media and some circles of the policy-makers, who have blown the sanctions issue out of proportion. The West has imposed the sanctions, and if it wants to lift them, it should do so without advancing conditions.

4. Ibid.

Russia will have to think about whether to lift the counter-sanctions imposed on the West, as these steps protect the Russian market, defend the interests of Russian manufacturers, and facilitate the growth of the economy as whole.⁵

In any case, Trump's interview indicates that he is gradually moving away from just complementary statements to the formation of a realistic- pragmatic agenda, which is not bad for Russia. Moscow should be ready for tough negotiations, without any illusions of a honeymoon period.

Russian specialists do not rule out the signing of a disarmament agreement with the US. However, they argue that the issue of strategic offensive arms systems should be linked to anti-missile defence systems. Without linking the two issues, the negotiations for nuclear disarmament can hardly be successful, which Russia has been repeatedly stressing. Moreover, today, reduction of strategic nuclear weapons is possible only through the involvement of third countries. Russia cannot accept the fact that NATO is functioning as a single, unified organisation, and, at the same time, Britain and France would retain a lot of nuclear warheads. It means that Russia and the US will have an almost equal number of nuclear warheads, but Britain and France will have another 500 nuclear warheads in addition. This is disadvantageous to Russia, and means that Russia has to have an adequate number of middle – range missiles to compensate for this disparity.

Russian experts are of the opinion that this is a complicated issue and Russia should not be in a hurry to further reduce its nuclear weapons arsenal, as it has already been reduced to the minimum. The Strategic Offensive Arms Agreement-3 which is expiring, can be extended or a new agreement can be signed. But this can happen only if the US gives up its anti-missile system deployment in East Europe. If the US refuses to do so, Russia has to strengthen its strategic arsenal. This is a serious issue which can be resolved with the involvement of experts, not by simply lifting the sanctions in exchange for arms reduction.

Russian experts believe that the Russian nuclear arsenal functions as a minimum deterrent and cannot be further reduced , if Russia wants to retain the capacity to retaliate.

5. Ibid.

According to a *Sunday Times* report, Trump likes the idea of repeating another Republican President Ronald Reagan's experience of Reykjavik, where 30 years ago Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, after concluding, deal with his US counterpart, could not survive for five years. The Russian side has not reacted officially so far to Donald Trump's idea, as the US president has not made any official proposal up to now. However, the Russian experts' community, in its assessment of Trump's idea, is split in two groups. While one group argues that Russia should go for such negotiations on the issue of lifting of sanctions in exchange for nuclear arms reduction, others do not find any logic in it.

In spite of the reductions, the nuclear arsenals of both countries are still huge, and that is why it is difficult not to argue in favour of further reduction of nuclear weapons. However, there has to be agreement on the conditions on the basis of which these reductions can be made possible.

Russia is keen to retain its nuclear arsenal not because it is an aggressive military power, as the West wants to project it. The Western campaign to present Russia as an aggressive military power is simply baseless in the backdrop of the huge gap in the defence expenditure of Russia and the Western world. The Russian experts are not ready to welcome Trump's idea, as Russia cannot bargain with its security—rather advocating equal security for all the stakeholder countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his address to the Russian Security Council said, "The reason for pressure on Russia is understandable; we conduct independent domestic and foreign policy; we do not bargain our sovereignty, and this is not to the liking of everybody. However, we cannot behave otherwise."

According to Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the non-proliferation and arms control division of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia's strategic nuclear forces have been reduced by 85 percent, and tactical nuclear weapons arsenal by 75 percent, compared to the peak period of the Cold War . Presently, the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the US are almost at the level that they were at the end of the 1950s and 1960s.⁶

6. Yuri Rubtsov, "Russia Does not Bargain with its Security," *Fondsk.ru*. January 17, 2017 <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2017/01/17/rossia-svoej-bezopasnostju-netorguet-43394.html>. Accessed on January 19, 2017.

Russia cannot afford to lag behind other countries in the sphere of reduction of nuclear weapons. Except Russia and the US, there is no other country with nuclear weapons which participates in the nuclear arms control process. The old as well as the new members of the nuclear club are only strengthening their arsenals, apart from the fact that the club itself is expanding.

Can it be assumed that Russia has overtaken the US unproportionately in regard to the nuclear arsenal? This is not so. According to available data, by September 1, 2015, Russia had 526 delivery vehicles with 1,628 warheads on them, whereas the US had 762 delivery vehicles with 1,538 warheads. Hence, there is no reason why the US should seek a significant reduction of the Russian nuclear arsenal.

“Nevertheless, Trump’s proposal is to Russia’s advantage and, if it is officially offered, then we should agree to it,” said Maj Gen Vladimir Dvorkin (Retd), a senior fellow at the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

“But Trump is unpredictable; today he says one thing and tomorrow he says another,” said Gen Dvorkin. “We should wait for the new US Secretary of State to make an official proposal to Putin, or at least a telephone call to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.” Gen Dvorkin added that there is nothing new in the call to reduce nuclear arsenals, and that Barack Obama, since 2013, also had called for a reduction in the number of deployed nuclear warheads by a third. Under the 2010 Prague Agreement, Russia and the US set a ceiling of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads on all types of delivery vehicles. “Since 2013, Russia has resisted a new reduction by every means possible, by putting forward totally unfounded arguments, and saying that a reduction in the arsenals would impact the Russian nuclear deterrence even when our specialists made arguments to the contrary,” said Gen Dvorkin.⁷

The Americans propose reducing the number of deployed nuclear warheads to 1,000 and the number of all types of delivery vehicles to 500, but it’s important to understand that nuclear weapons mean different

7. Nikolai Litovkin, “Will Russia Cut its Nuclear Arsenal In Exchange For Lifting Sanctions?” *Russia Beyond The Headlines*, January 18, 2017. Available at, http://rbth.com/defence/2017/01/18/will-russia-cut-its-nuclear-arsenal-in-exchange-for-lifting-sanctions_683741. Accessed on January 22, 2017.

things to Russia and the US, according to the TASS military expert, Col Viktor Litovkin (Retd). For Moscow, it's a deterrent, but for Washington it's a burden on the battlefield whose servicing is very costly. In place of nuclear weapons, the Americans are developing and utilising cruise missiles with conventional warheads that are almost as powerful as some nuclear warheads. "In modern warfare, one does not need a weapon with an explosive capacity of 300 kilotons and a missile that deviates from its target by tens of kilometers," said Col Litovkin. "Unlike the systems of 50 years ago, today's weapons are high precision, and it is sufficient to use a conventional warhead of 100 kilotons that leaves no radioactivity and has no psychological impact on global public opinion." For talks on nuclear disarmament to succeed with Russia, it is necessary not just to abolish the sanctions but also to improve the geopolitical situation in Europe and the world, argues Col Litovkin.⁸

It will be problematic to hold talks with Moscow on reducing the number of nuclear warheads when new NATO brigades are arriving in the Baltic states, and a missile defence system is being deployed in Poland and Romania that could easily be transformed from a defensive system into an offensive one, Col Litovkin believes .

It should be noted here that the sanctions were imposed in the wake of Russia's reincorporation of Crimea into its territory, and Washington had insisted that the sanctions would continue, until and unless Moscow implements the Minsk Agreement completely. President Trump's new idea for lifting the sanctions in exchange for nuclear arsenal reduction is an indication of the fact that the Crimea issue and Minsk Agreement are no longer relevant for the US .

Russia, ruling out any bargain or bilateral concession on nuclear weapons reduction, proposes several conditions for strengthening strategic stability, realisation of which would be a victory for international security as a whole , and for each of the nuclear as well as non-nuclear countries individually.

Russia, in this connection, proposes the following conditions for strengthening global stability and equal security:

- Participation of all the nuclear countries, without any exception, in the disarmament process. So far, none of these countries has made any attempt to join the nuclear disarmament process ,

8. Ibid.

envisaged in the US-Russia Strategic Offensive Arms Agreement -3. This concerns first and foremost Britain , France and China.

- Establishment of a link between strategic offensive weapons and strategic defensive weapons (anti-missile defence system) in the Preamble of the Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction Treaty -3 (START-3), which remains so far ignored by the US (the US initiative to build an anti-missile defence system directly threatens the Russian potential of nuclear deterrence).
- The US refusal for further steps leading to a complete change in the situation in the sphere of strategic stability, which led to the suspension of the agreement with the US on the utilisation of plutonium in October last year. These steps included an increase in US military presence in East Europe under the pretext of the Ukrainian crisis, creation of six advanced stations of troops management in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Estonia, deployment of US troops on the territory of the Baltic states, and increment in the number of NATO military aircraft in Baltic airports.⁹

The US has to heed Moscow's concerns if it is interested in strengthening global security and strategic stability .In this connection, attention should be paid to Russia's latest military doctrine that includes the following military threats to its security:

- Strengthening of NATO forces, bringing its military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders, and the organisation's further expansion.
- Deployment of foreign contingents on the territory of Russia's neighbours.
- Building a strategic anti-missile defence system subverting global security , realisation of the concept of "global strike", the intention to deploy weapons in space.¹⁰

9. Yuri Rubtsov, "Russia Does Not Bargain With its Security," Fondsk.ru. January 17, 2017, <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2017/01/17/rossia-svoej-bezopasnostju-netorguet-43394.html> Accessed on January 18, 2017.

10. Yuri Rubtsov, "Russia Renewed its Military Doctrine and Perfects its Strategic Nuclear Force," Fondsk.ru, December 30, 2014, <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2014/12/30/rossia-obnovila-voennyu-doktrinu-i-sovershenstvuet-strategicheskie-jadernye-sily-31158.html>. Accessed on January 18, 2017.

Another controversial issue is the talk about complete nuclear disarmament. Countries like Austria, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa and Brazil, with which Russia maintains good relations demand complete nuclear disarmament. Kazakhstan is also one of the advocates of an expedited nuclear disarmament. Russia respects their position. It is clear that the non-nuclear weapon states would like the threat of nuclear war to be eliminated completely. Russia, while supporting the objective of building a world without nuclear weapons – generations of Russian leaders, including the present leadership, have stated this. The question is how to move towards that goal.

Russia believes that what the enthusiasts of an expedited nuclear disarmament are proposing is far detached from reality. Whether we like it or not, nuclear weapons play a very important deterrence role in the modern world. Russia draws attention to the fact that in the first half of the 20th century, there were two bloody World Wars. Since 1945, there have been many regional conflicts, but no World Wars. To a large extent, this is due to the presence of nuclear weapons, which make the states have a highly responsible attitude to their use. Everybody understands that there would be very dangerous consequences.

According to Russia's chief nuclear disarmament negotiator Mikhail Ulyanov,

Our partners say to this: We understand your position, but we will nonetheless insist on total nuclear disarmament, because we cannot do otherwise. Probably that is true – there is such public opinion in their countries. That does not cause any animosity on our side. We understand it. But we consider such an approach to be harmful, because it leads the discussion aside from what Germans call *realpolitik*.

The 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) witnessed yet another attempt to revert to the international agenda for including the old idea of immediate banning of nuclear weapons. The argument that nuclear disarmament talks have been stalled is baseless. Mikhail Ulyanov in this connection speaking at the 71st

session of the UNGA emphasised that in the course of 30 years, the nuclear arms race has not only been stopped but also been pushed back. According to Moscow, any new step in the sphere of nuclear arms disarmament, must comply with the disarmament process initiated in the 1960s. The method of a 'great leap' is not acceptable here. Banning of nuclear weapons can take place only in the final stage of building of a nuclear weapons-free world, and should be the result of execution of all agreements by all the states.

It is still early to talk about this. There is no agreement on many principled issues between members of the nuclear club and states which are on the verge of joining it. In the course of the last half a century, multilateral negotiations in the sphere of nuclear disarmament have been going on about the non-proliferation of nuclear arms. If the proposal for a nuclear arms ban were to be approved, it would deliver a blow to these negotiations. In case the ban is accepted, there is a threat of the emergence of two parallel legal regimes, with mutually excluding tenets about the status of nuclear weapons. The first one would sanction the existence of nuclear weapons of the five nuclear powers, while putting serious limitations on them and the states that join the agreement. The second regime declaring nuclear weapons illegal in the framework of the international agreement would be applicable within the narrow circle of the participants.

It is also not known whether all the participants of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) would sign the new agreement, and if that were to happen—abandoning the existing control mechanism—the international community, in its quest for more radical means of treatment, may facilitate the spreading of the 'disease' itself. In any case, the existence of two parallel legal regimes in the sphere of nuclear security would only be harmful.

The other fundamental agreement is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Though the agreement was opened for signing 20 years ago, it has not been implemented so far, since of the 44 states possessing nuclear technology, only 38 countries including Russia, Britain and France have ratified the agreement. The US, China, Israel, Iran, Egypt have not ratified it, and nuclear India and Pakistan refuse to sign the CTBT altogether.

The fate of the CTBT, in many ways, depends on the readiness of all members of the international community to move towards the declared goal of freeing the planet from nuclear weapons, declared President Putin on the occasion of the completion of 20 years of the opening of the CTBT for signing. In this connection, eight countries, whose ratification is mandatory for its implementation, bear special responsibility. The lack of the desire of these countries to be full-fledged members of the agreement evokes serious regret .

In this backdrop, enforcing of the idea of immediate banning of nuclear weapons seems to be a cover for the attempt at complete rejection of the control regime . According to Russia , banning of nuclear weapons would be possible only after all the agreements emanating from the existing international legal regime in the sphere of nuclear disarmament are observed. Another important condition is the readiness of all countries possessing or striving to possess nuclear weapons to participate in the process of disarmament, without any exception .

In the examples of the NPT and CTBT, the differences in the opinion of the interested parties may be seen. The fact remains that none of these states made any attempt to be part of the process of reduction of nuclear arsenals , stipulated in the US-Russia START-3 agreement.

In this context, Russia's chief nuclear negotiator Mikhail Ulyanov, speaking at the UNGA in October 2016, said that the initiative on banning nuclear weapons looks quite doubtful. In any case, Russia is not going to participate in these events that are detached from reality and contradict the preceding understanding and agreements. Other nuclear powers are likely to take a similar position. According to Russia , the priority at the moment is not banning of nuclear weapons, which would be exclusively a propaganda move .¹¹

In fact, Russia argues in favour of creating conditions for advancing nuclear disarmament. It is clear that no country, including Russia, will act to the detriment of its security. But Russia is aware of the growing international threats. First of all, the threats created

11. Andrei Zolotov, "For Russia, Nuclear Security is not the Same as Nuclear Disarmament", *Russia Direct*, December 13, 2016, <http://www.russia-direct.org/qa/russia-nuclear-security-not-same-nuclear-disarmament>. Accessed on January 18, 2017.

by the anti-ballistic missile system that is being built by the US, with Washington's refusal to agree on banning the deployment of weapons in outer space, and the absence of any progress at the talks on conventional weapons in Europe. Russia is concerned by the concept of Prompt Global Strike (PGS) with the use of precision-guided conventional weapons. There are many things that undermine strategic stability and make the world less secure. The Russian approach is to concentrate on these real problems and not on the artificial ones. If the real problems get solved, it will create conditions for moving forward. Nuclear disarmament doesn't exist in a vacuum. There is a complicated world around, in which a simple – or, one can even say, simplistic – approach doesn't work.

To sum up, Russia considers these efforts as naïve romanticism, which is not helpful to maintain security in today's world. And actually, the positions of Russia and the United States on the issue are very close to each other. For a long time, US experts tried to flirt with anti-nuclear radicals. Russia warned them that by doing so, they were only encouraging the growth of radicalism. Now the Americans apparently understand that they can no longer act in that way and at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in October 2016, both countries spoke on this matter in unison.

Russia is optimistic about the nuclear disarmament talks with the advent of a new Administration in the US. President Donald Trump's statements that he would like to establish cooperation with Russia in certain areas creates some grounds for that. But how this will actually happen, nobody knows. It is not only journalists who are asking what kind of policy the new Administration is going to pursue – the same questions are being asked on the margins of international conferences as well. And nobody, including American experts, has any clue about this. Russia would certainly wish for a change, because objectively it has a lot of coinciding interests in the field of disarmament and, especially, non-proliferation. Trump's statement that he would like to work with Russia on the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) creates optimism, including in this area.

Back in February of this year, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov proposed at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, an international convention to suppress acts of chemical and biological

terrorism. Today, the majority of the 66 states that take part in the CD are ready to support this initiative – within an agreed agenda. But this agenda has not been agreed upon for 20 years already. The Russian initiative was meant to help overcome this stupor, to introduce a fresh idea, because within the traditional set-up nothing worked.

Some influential countries, such as India and China, actively support Russia. Others are saying that they are ready to support Russia if a consensus is on the horizon. It is ultimately up to the US Administration, which has blocked this initiative till this day. The Russian attempts to understand the reasons behind it have not been successful. The Americans are citing arguments that are easy to dispel. They are saying that no new instruments are needed—what is already that there should be implemented. But it doesn't work that way – the existing instruments do not cover the whole range of this problem and the convention could help. So, Russia hopes that the new US Administration will have a fresh, pragmatic look at this issue. Russia is convinced that it will, in no way, be damaging to the US interests, but will play a positive role for the United States, Russia and the entire international community.

THE TRAJECTORY OF CHINA'S AVIATION INDUSTRY

MANMOHAN BAHADUR

China's aviation industry has been in the news for the fast developments that seem to be taking place in this sector. While its stealth fighters, the J-20 and J-31, have been in the forefront of media coverage, there have been other major developments in the transport aircraft and helicopter fields too. It is important to analyse them and arrive at a realistic assessment of the ground realities and their impact on the operational preparedness of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF). What would be the impact on the quality of opposition that the Indian Air Force (IAF) is likely to face in the coming years if the relations between the two countries come to a head? And, from a geopolitical perch, would the trajectory of the Chinese aviation industry impact the power equation in the region, especially that with the US? Though there has been an across the board advance in Chinese aviation projects, this piece examines only the latest *important* ones and their impact on these issues. The state of their development would first be examined after which the analysis would follow.

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FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

J-20

The J-20 stealth fighter has had a fast prototype testing cycle since it was first conceived. From January 2011, when the first prototype flew, the Low Rate of Initial Production (LRIP) commenced in 2016. The first squadron has been formed and presently four aircraft have been inducted.¹ Claimed (by the Chinese) to be better than the F-22 of the US Air Force (USAF),² there are some issues that need answers which, unfortunately, are difficult to obtain with certainty due the opacity of the Chinese system. The following are the main facets.

- **Radar Cross-Section:** The aircraft is big compared to the F-22. At 67 ft, it is five feet longer in length and with a wider wing span while the All Up Weight (AUW) is claimed to be similar; however, there are reports that conjecture the weight to be much higher.³ Though it has recessed engines, and a shaped air intake duct, the presence of canards and traditional engine exhausts detracts from its claimed stealth properties, in both the head-on and tail aspects. The aircraft has internal weapon bays helping in making it less observable to radars, but it can also carry external stores if required, in which case, its stealth would obviously be heavily compromised.
- **Emission Stealth:** Equipped with the Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, the J-20 also has an Electro-Optic/Infra-Red (EO/IR) sensor that would enable it in maintaining a non-radiating search mode. The aircraft is also reportedly equipped with the Electro-Optic Distributed Aperture System (EODAS) that gives it all round 360 degree

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1. Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "Four in a Row: China's Stealth Fighter Fleet Grows Again," *Popular Science*, July 13, 2016. <http://www.popsci.com/four-in-row-chinas-stealth-fighter-fleet-grows-again>. Accessed on March 1, 2017. There is one report that states that there may be seven LRIP J-20s available; see Andreas Rupprecht, "China's New J-20 'Mighty Dragon' Stealth Fighter Officially Unveiled and Ready to Enter Active Service," *The Aviationist*, November 1, 2016, <https://theaviationist.com/2016/11/01/chinas-new-j-20-mighty-dragon-stealth-fighter-officially-unveiled-and-ready-to-enter-active-service/>. Accessed on March 2, 2017.
 2. Western analysts do not think so and there are many reports to this effect. For example, see Rupprecht, *Ibid*.
 3. Nate Jarros, "Analysis: Chengdu J-20, The Chinese Raptor?" *Fightersweep.com*, September 24, 2016, <https://fightersweep.com/6230/analysis-chengdu-j-20-the-chinese-raptor/>. Accessed on February 22, 2017.

search and weapon tracking capability⁴ – this is a big plus, but the actual capability and quality of the system is anyone’s guess at present. Incidentally, the only other aircraft to sport this is the F-35, and considering the technology required to be mastered for a system of this nature, the EODAS on the J-20 may be an experimental item under test, as all reports are just estimations based on antennae blanking seen on photographs, with no official statement.⁵

- **Armament Capability:** It is quite surprising that the PLAAF has not released a single photograph of any armament being fired from a J-20. Though it does not imply that the weapon capability is suspect, it certainly does throw up doubts on the level to which armament testing has been done – and has been successful. Crucial to this assessment is the fact that only the Low Rate of Initial Production (LRIP) is underway in which, the world over, it is accepted that many facets would be under operational trial, and the capabilities/design still not frozen to a permanent production standard.
- **Public Exposure:** The public exposure of the J-20 has been extremely limited, and disappointing. In the Zhuhai Air Show in November 2016, there was no static display, and despite a sustained media build up, two J-20s just made a solitary pass over the airfield and returned to their launch base. While the reason could be to ‘guard’ some secrets and prevent adversaries from making detailed assessments, it would be more to guard the ‘weaknesses’ of the aircraft than its capabilities, since, if it were the latter, the aircraft would have been kept totally out of view, as was the case with the F-117 and the SR-71 in the initial stages of their live.

4. Mike Yeo and Chris Pocock, “More J-20 Stealth Fighters Built in China,” *AINonline*, July 19, 2016, <http://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/defense/2016-07-19/more-j-20-stealth-fighters-built-china>. Accessed on March 1, 2017.

5. “Yin Zhuo: J-20 Fighter’s Electronic Components Better than F-22’s”, *China Arms*, January 19, 2016, <http://www.china-arms.com/2016/01/yin-zhuo-j-20-fighters-electronic-components-better-than-f-22s/>. Accessed on February 24, 2017.

Analysis

There are analyses to the effect that, considering the large size of the J-20, its role (nothing has been officially stated) would be to make a fast ingress for Beyond Visual Range (BVR) engagements of high value targets like the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and flight refuellers, and exit the area quickly; the reason for this lies in its poor characteristics for close combat.⁶ Incidentally, the J-20 cannot carry the very long range Air-to-Air Missile (AAM) (claimed range 300+ km, and seen recently on a J-16), in its internal weapon bay due to the missile's excessive length.⁷ For sure, its survival in a dense air defence environment would depend on its stealth characteristics and Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities, both of which are unknown entities. With the four LRIP aircraft in a PLAAF squadron, China is trying to ramp up the production by reportedly establishing three manufacturing lines producing twelve aircraft per year.⁸ Thus, for the PLAAF to have an operationally viable number of J-20 squadrons, it would take four to five years from now, provided the claimed production rate is reached and maintained – a tall order considering the new technology being addressed. It is for a fact though that the J-20 is not being exported, at least for the present, so as to preserve its uniqueness for the PLAAF. This goes to show that the PLAAF has reasonable confidence in its abilities and considers it as the mainstay of its fighter fleet.

J-31 Stealth Fighter

The J-31 is a company funded project of the Shenyang Aircraft Corporation, with the PLAAF not having shown any interest in acquiring it.⁹ While the first prototype flew in October 2012, it was

6. Gordon Arthur, "Zhuhai 2016: Mysterious J-20 Sneaks in...and out," *Shepherd Media*, November 1, 2016, <https://www.shepherdmedia.com/news/defence-notes/zhuhai-2016-mysterious-j-20-sneaks-and-out/>. Accessed on February 25, 2017.
7. Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "China is Testing a New Long-Range, Air-to-Air Missile that Could Thwart U.S. Plans for Air Warfare," *Popular Science*, November 23, 2016, <http://www.popsci.com/china-new-long-range-air-to-air-missile>. Accessed on March 1, 2017.
8. "Russian Media: J-20 in the West took Full Advantage of the US Aircraft Carrier into the Desperate," *Huaxia.com*, January 9, 2017, <http://www.huaxia.com/thjq/jswz/2017/01/5147208.html>. Accessed on February 24, 2017. The online translation is obviously wrong but the translation of the main body of the article is very coherent.
9. "Shenyang J-31 Stealth Fighter, China," *Airforce-technology.com*, <http://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/shenyang-j-31-stealth-fighter/>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

exhibited in the 2014 Zhuhai Air Show and offered for export as a 'poor man's stealth aircraft.' Since then, only one more prototype has been flown and a comparison with the first shows many modifications having been done. Being called the FC-31, the second prototype took to the air in December 2016.¹⁰ It is supposed to have extensive changes in its airframe structure with a more forward located cockpit, a single piece canopy and a larger weapons bay. There are also reports that a carrier-based version is also under development.¹¹ If this be true, then it would require extensive re-design and strengthening of the undercarriage system to take the hard landing loads on a carrier. Like in the case of the J-20, no details are forthcoming about the envisaged roles and there are no photographs of weapon trials having been done.

Analysis

- A non-government supported but company funded aircraft, boasting of the latest technology is a surprise, considering that nothing moves in China without the central government's nod. In any country, export of arms would require the government's clearance; the J-31 being built just for exports implies that there is tacit government approval for the project. That China is willing to part with this technology implies that it is either not top of the line or that the export would be only to close allies – the only such close Chinese ally is Pakistan and one wonders whether this would happen despite the unsteadiness of Pakistan's national polity. Thus, there could be a question mark on the level of the J-31's stealth properties – it would be remembered that the US has not exported its frontline F-22, while the F-35 is only with close allies.
- If the reports of a carrier-based version of the J-31 are true, and this would take many years, China's adversaries would have to upgrade their naval air defence capabilities, which presently cater only for non-stealthy aircraft. Coupled with Catapult Assisted

10. "Second FC-31 takes to the Air," *Combat Aircraft*, December 23, 2016, <http://www.combataircraft.net/2016/12/23/second-fc-31-takes-to-the-air/>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

11. "J-31 Carrier-Based Deployment," *GlobalSecurity.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/j-31-carrier.htm>. Accessed on February 25, 2017.

Take-Off But Arrested Recovery (CATOBAR) operations that are reportedly being practised (see section on naval aviation), the third aircraft carrier of the PLA Navy (PLAN) would likely feature a stealth aircraft which could be a naval version of the J-31. It must be remembered that the J-31 is much smaller in size than the J-20 and can operate from carriers; in fact, it is quite possible that, considering the way events are unfolding on the FC-31, the Chinese could well have planned to progress a carrier-based stealth aircraft!

TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

Y-20

The Y-20, Very Heavy Transport Aircraft (VHETAC), was to have finished prototype testing in 2016. However, there has been no confirmation on whether the flight test phase has concluded. Capable of carrying around 50 odd tonnes payload with the D-30 KP2 Russian engines that power it, the Y-20 will enhance the PLAAF's airlift capability substantially. The indigenous WS-20 engine, which will ultimately power the Y-20, has been under flight testing for long;¹² in fact, there were reports that its tests too were scheduled to have ended in 2016. It would be interesting to keep track of the tests as the clearance of the WS-20 would add a big punch to the airlift capability of the PLAAF with the payload of the Y-20 going up to 66 tonnes. Be that as it may, the initial lot of Y-20s would be with Russian engines till the WS-20 production line comes of age after its flight clearance; one can expect the aircraft to be in squadron service in the coming year or two. Once the supply line gets established and the requirement of logistic airlift is addressed, the Y-20 would transit to becoming the base aircraft for AWACS and flight refuelling.¹³ The fact is that China

12. Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "China's Most Powerful Aircraft Engine Ever Takes to the Sky," *Popular Science*, February 20, 2016, <http://www.popsoci.com/chinas-new-more-powerful-aircraft-engine-ws-20-takes-sky>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

13. "How Much Air Tanker Does the PLA Need in the End?" *Cn1N.com*, January 28, 2017, <http://www.cn1n.com/mil/af/20170128/538128912.htm>. Accessed on February 28, 2017. It is pertinent to point out that, at present, the in-flight refuelling capability of the PLAAF is severely limited, with the H-6U tanker capable for giving fuel only to Chinese origin aircraft (like J-10) and IL-78 (only three in number) and Russian origin fighters like the Su-27 and its local derivatives.

is thinking long-term for even more enhanced airlift, as seen by its decision to purchase the An-225 production line.

An-225 Production Rights to China: China has signed a contract with Ukraine to help it restart production of the world's largest aircraft, the An-225;¹⁴ this has far-reaching strategic ramifications. As per an agreement between China Aerospace Industry Group Ltd and Antonov, China would get access to the design and technology of the aircraft. This is another case of China using its economic clout to jump-start to a different level of technology and cut short the time required to go up the tech ladder. After the Y-20, which is at the performance level of the US C-17 Globemaster, the aircraft higher in the payload ladder are the C-5 Galaxy of the US and the Russian An-124. The availability of technology for the An-225 aircraft would be a step ahead of even these two and would be a big gain for the Chinese aviation industry. At a later stage, with the An-225 manufacturing well established, China would be able to call the shots in this niche 250-tonne payload capability sector.¹⁵ In addition to carrying space shuttles that China may produce later, the An-225 could carry other military cargo like missile launchers and heavy artillery.¹⁶ In the civil field, a Chinese website says,¹⁷

The company (China Aerospace Industry Group Ltd) is planning to build six major international aviation logistics hubs in the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta, North Bay, Shandong Peninsula, northwest and north China, including logistics warehouses, airports, transport aircraft production base, production base of engine, spare parts and other materials production base, etc., to implement its global logistics business. It will connect four major regions such as ASEAN, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe through the six major logistics hubs.

14. Gareth Jennings, "China and Ukraine Agree to Restart An-225 Production," *IHS Jane's* 360, August 13, 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/63341/china-and-ukraine-agree-to-restart-an-225-production>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

15. Stephen Trimble, "An-225 Revival Proposed in New Antonov-China Pact," *Flight Global*, August 31, 2016, <https://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/an-225-revival-proposed-in-new-antonov-china-pact-428949/>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

16. Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "China will Resurrect the World's Largest Plane," *Popular Science*, September 7, 2016, <http://www.popsoci.com/china-will-resurrect-worlds-largest-plane>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

17. "Does China Want to Introduce An-225 to Solve these Two Problems First," *mil.news.sina.com*, September 20, 2010, <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/jssd/2016-09-01/doc-ixfvqctu5877217.shtml>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

In addition to the airlift capability that is generally discussed, the Chinese will also get access to the high powered engines of the An-225 thereby helping their indigenous industry. Thus, the acquisition of production rights of the An-225 has long-term implications for Chinese airlift capability, for both its civil and military sectors. This has to be read in conjunction with the heli-lift capability when it comes to an assessment of the overall inter and intra-theatre lift that the PLAAF can generate.

ROTARY WING DEVELOPMENT

The existing heli-lift capability of the PLA is centred around the Mi-series Russian helicopters, especially the Mi-17 variants. Besides a multitude of French and US manufactured rotary wing machines of varying capabilities, China also has the three-engined Z-8, an indigenous copy of the French Super Frelon. This has now been developed into the Z-18 (with new composite rotor blades, fuselage and engines) which claimed a world record in 2014 of climbing (not landing) as high as Mount Everest.¹⁸ But a more important product that is in the offing is a Joint Venture (JV) between Russian helicopters and Avicopter of China, set up to design and build an advanced heavy lift helicopter.¹⁹ The helicopter, AC-332, would have the capability to carry 60 troops²⁰ or 10 tonnes of internal payload and 15 tonnes external.²¹ What is of interest is that the design and production would happen in China to meet the demands of the Chinese market; what goes without saying is that there would be a large transfusion of technology from Russia, with the capital coming from China. A model of the machine was shown at the Zhuhai Air Show in November 2016.

18. "Z-18 Medium Transport Helicopter," *Military-today.com*, <http://www.military-today.com/helicopters/z18.htm>. Accessed on February 27, 2016.

19. John Grevatt, "China and Russia Finalise Joint Heavy Lift Helicopter Collaboration Project," *IHS Jane's 360*, June 27, 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/61774/china-and-russia-finalise-heavy-lift-helicopter-collaboration-project>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

20. "AVIcoter AC332(Advance HeavyLifter – AHL) Heavy-Lift /High Altitude Transport Helicopter," *MilitaryFactory.com*, September 11, 2016, http://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft_id=1481. Accessed on February 24, 2017.

21. Greg Waldron, "Russia, China in Formal Pact for Heavy-Lift Helicopter," *Flight Global*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/russia-china-in-formal-pact-for-heavy-lift-helicopt-426748/>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

Once this helicopter becomes operational, which would be at least five years from now, the capability of the PLA to tranship a large number of troops across the Tibetan plateau would be enormous. Due to the high altitude of the Tibetan plateau facing the Indian border, the load carrying capability reduces drastically; however, this would be ameliorated to a great extent with a combination of the high load carrying capability of the Y-20 transport aircraft and the AC-332 helicopter, with the An-225 pitching-in if required.

NAVAL AVIATION

Besides a limited number of shore-based aircraft, the aviation arm of the PLAN is centred around the J-15, the carrier-based version of the Russian Su-33, which itself is based on the Su-27 fighter. Since the sole PLAN aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning* has a ski jump, the J-15 is constrained by low endurance due to the restricted amount of fuel at take-off. The PLAN does not have organic flight refueller aircraft and would be depending on buddy refuelling or the PLAAF's H-6U flight refuellers, which have limited fuel transfer capability.²²

To overcome the limitations of a ski jump, China is testing the J-15 fighter with a catapult attachment for CATOBAR operations.²³ This would indicate that the third Chinese aircraft carrier may be equipped with a catapult launch system. Whether the catapult is steam operated or an electro-magnetic launch system is open to conjecture but some photos indicate that a ground facility for pilots' training with *both types of catapults* is under construction.²⁴ This would revolutionise the Chinese naval air arm operations as their carrier-based fighters would get extended range and endurance with a catapult launch (as compared to a ski jump like on their present carrier *Liaoning* and India's *INS Vikramaditya*). Whether a carrier-based version of the J-31 stealth fighter is developed for

22. "CCTV Capture of the Day: J-15's Buddy Centerline Refueling Training at South China Sea," *China Defense Blog*, January 4, 2017, <http://china-defense.blogspot.in/2017/01/cctv-capture-of-day-j-15s-buddy.html>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

23. "China Finishing First Domestic CV-17 Aircraft Carrier and Preparing Catapults for Next CV-18 Carrier," *nextBIGFUTURE*, December 27, 2016, <http://www.nextbigfuture.com/2016/12/china-finishing-first-domestic-cv-17.html>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

24. *Ibid.*

CATOBAR operations (as some reports suggest)²⁵ would become known in the next few years since Shenyang Aircraft Corporation would like to have a home user to build up its reputation for export.

IMPACT ON QUALITY OF OPPOSITION FOR INDIAN AIR FORCE

A full comparison of any two air forces cannot be done on the numbers and quality of air assets only since there are many other segments of air power that weigh-in: missile forces, quality of air defence assets, command and control systems, communications, human resource and ground defence, to name a few. However, a study of the 'capability environment' can give a 'fair sense' of the potency of the two forces. What follows is a comment on the PLAAF's capabilities that should interest IAF planners – it needs to be reiterated that only important Chinese aviation projects have been considered.

Present-day PLAAF strike power is based on its indigenous J-10A²⁶ and J-10B²⁷ (capable Gen III fighters) and Su-27MKK and its local derivatives comprising J-11 versions and J-16 variants; the bomber fleet comprises the modernised H-6 (new engines and avionics). The PLAAF's in-flight refuelling assets are extremely modest (see n.13) and constitute a capability gap that would take many years to fill. This is especially so since Ukraine has supplied three refurbished IL-78s while the contract with Russia for eight has not progressed.²⁸ The capability of AWACS is modest and the numbers are limited too. Importantly, the training profile of the aircrew is still in the process of transforming from the rigid Russian philosophy

25. "Shenyang (AVIC) J-31Gryfalcon Multirole Fourth Generation Aircraft," *Military Factory*, January 19, 2017, http://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft_id=1024. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

26. Carlo Kopp, "Chengdu J-10," *Air Power Australia*, January 27, 2014, <http://www.ausairpower.net/APA-Sinocanard.html>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

27. "China's J-10B Fighter Superior to Main Fighter of Neighbours," *Defense-aerospace.com*, January 20, 2015, http://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/release/3/160318/china-touts-%E2%80%9Csuperior%E2%80%9D-j_10b-fighter.html. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

28. Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "Finally, A Modern Chinese Aerial Tanker," *Popular Science*, April 2, 2014 <http://www.popsci.com/blog-network/eastern-arsenal/finally-modern-chinese-aerial>. Accessed on February 28, 2017.

of centralised ground control towards more autonomy to an airborne pilot. This is a serious limitation and is accepted as such by the PLAAF leadership; to overcome this, the PLAAF has conducted exercises, and is continuing to interact with air forces that have a Western orientation like those of Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia and Turkey.

The IAF, on the other hand, has the formidable Su-30 MKI, which is a machine superior to the PLAAF's Su-30 MKK; amongst the better features are thrust vectored engines, better airborne radar and armament. Rafale fighters, when they start entering the IAF's inventory in 2019, would give an added strike capability with their range, EW and weapon capability. Of special mention is the Meteor BVR missile whose range cannot be matched by any air combat weapon in the PLAAF's inventory.²⁹ Indian air defence assets have been modernised with indigenous and imported radars and the three Phalcon AWACS aircraft are leagues ahead of anything that the PLAAF possesses. Though the Integrated Air Command and Control System is well on its way to completion, achieving net-centricity is still work in progress for the IAF. One attribute that tilts the balance in the IAF's favour is the better training profile of IAF aircrew and their greater experience in air combat and weapon delivery, qualities that have been reinforced through in-house training and regular exercises with modern Western air forces (including Ex Red Flag in the US). Thus, the IAF is better placed at present. The tilt may, however, get equalised in the coming years as the PLAAF's aircrew gain in exposure and the J-20 stealth fighter, strategic long range stealth bomber (on the drawing board at present) and other modern assets become available in squadron service. There is a window of around a decade for the IAF to build up its inventory to meet the challenge of a resurgent PLAAF.

The PLAAF's golden standard that it is aiming for is the technical prowess of the USAF, which it is trying to first achieve, and then surpass. Thus, one is witness to technical espionage and liberal copycat projects being taken up by China's aviation industry; to

29. A Very Long Range AAM (VLRAAM) has been seen recently on a J-16 undergoing flight trials, but it is still in the test phase. The VLRAAM, however, cannot be carried by the J-20 due its excessive length. See Jeffrey Lin and PW Singer, "China is Testing a New Long-Range, Air-to-Air Missile that could Thwart US Plans for Air Warfare," *Popular Science*, November 23, 2016, www.popsoci.com/china-new-long-range-air-to-air-missile. Accessed on March 1, 2017.

be sure, indigenous capability also appears to be improving fast. Technical asymmetry, however, is heavily loaded in America's favour and it will be many decades before this equalisation can occur, if it ever does. However, even though the Chinese are catching up³⁰ they have a large distance to cover. A point that goes in the favour of US technology is that US weapons have evolved while being tested in combat, and intensively at that. China's weapons are still 'theoretical' in a way but does it warrant a war, with China as a belligerent, to prove their worth? This is an interesting question, the answer to which is difficult to fathom; however, an absence of such a criterion cannot form the basis of a less than favourable appreciation of developments in the Chinese aviation field. They are noteworthy and must be factored in by military planners.

30. Kris Osborne, "The Real Chinese Dragon: Exposing the Power of China's Deadly Air Force," *The National Interest*, May 9, 2016, nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-real-chinese-dragon-exposing-the-power-chinas-deadly-air-16108. Accessed on March 1, 2017.

PROSPECTS OF CHINA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS UNDER TRUMP'S ADMINISTRATION

SANA HASHMI

Relations between China and the United States (US) have always been a matter of great attention in international relations. The equation between China, which is a potential superpower, and the United States, the sole superpower, has long been one of the reasons for the swings in the geopolitical dynamics of the Asia-Pacific. In spite of their respective efforts at maintaining cordial relations, their relations are majorly dominated by the competition for power in Asia, or, for that matter, in the whole world.¹

Former US President Barack Obama has been, on several occasions, criticised for taking a soft stance towards China and neglecting the US' alliance relations in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, one of the many expectations from the current President Donald Trump is that he will be tougher on China. However, there still are several uncertainties vis-à-vis the Trump government's policy towards Asia, particularly China. Foreign policy, particularly as it relates to Asia, played a relatively minor role in Trump's presidential campaign and when the topic of US policy towards Asia did arise,

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1. Sana Hashmi, "Sino-US Rapprochement: New Trends", *Defence and Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no. 3, April-June 2013, p. 11.

Trump tended to use the opportunity to underscore the “America first” narrative.² In that context, it has been argued that Trump would be less interested in preserving the strategic balance and stability in Asia and more focussed on getting business out of these countries. In addition to that, the United States’ withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which involves 12 countries (seven are Asian and five are non-Asian countries), suggested that following the footsteps of Obama would not be a part of Trump’s agenda.

Having said that, Trump spent substantial time during his presidential campaign condemning China for several issues. China has been, and will continue to be, a threat to the preeminence of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region and President Trump cannot possibly sideline this. The US, even under Trump, will still be concerned about peace and stability in the region, the investment climate in China, Chinese investments in sensitive technological sectors and China’s “cyber security and broader technological espionage” in the United States.³ Even before assuming office, Trump indicated that he would adopt a tough approach while dealing with China. Tweaking the One-China policy, which is China’s core interest, is a case in point. Trump’s friendly behaviour towards Taiwan’s first woman President, Tsai Ing-Wang, did not go down well with China. In addition to this, he also labelled China as a “currency manipulator”.

President Trump’s Cabinet has also been wary of China’s moves. For instance, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared that the United States should “send China a clear signal” by denying it access to its artificial islands in the South China Sea. China’s expansionism in the region was “akin to Russia’s taking Crimea” from Ukraine.⁴ Nevertheless, the adversarial behaviour of Trump and his

2. Mira Rapp-Hooper, “Deciphering Trump’s Asia Policy: What America First Will Mean for Regional Order”, *Foreign Policy*, November 22, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2016-11-22/deciphering-trumps-asia-policy>. Accessed on December 31, 2016.

3. Sushil Aaron, “What will US President Donald Trump’s Asia Policy Look Like?” *Hindustan Times*, January 25, 2017, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/what-will-us-president-donald-trump-s-asia-policy-look-like/story-qfPbdCiy8bGKU48IA6wfvzJ.html>. Accessed on February 2, 2017.

4. Rex Tillerson quoted in David Brunnstrom and Matt Spetalnick, “Tillerson says China Should be Barred from South China Sea Islands”, *Reuters*, January 12, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-congress-tillerson-china-idUSKBN14V2KZ>. Accessed on January 23, 2017.

Administration was shortlived. On February 10, 2017, Trump assured Chinese President Xi Jinping, during a telephonic conversation, that the United States will not change its stance on the One-China policy. According to the White House, "The two leaders discussed numerous topics and President Trump agreed, at the request of President Xi, to honor our 'One-China' policy."⁵ This series of events suggests that there is a sense of ambiguity with respect to how Trump will be dealing with China. He has been giving mixed signals since the days of his presidential campaign. It would be useful to analyse China's position in the United States' economic as well as strategic calculus, with special reference to the One-China policy, competition in the Asia-Pacific region and the South China Sea conflict.

ONE-CHINA POLICY

The United States recognised China 30 years after its founding, when it shifted its recognition from Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China—ROC) to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on January 1, 1979. As a part of the three joint communiqués issued by both sides at the time of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, the US recognised the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, and declared it would withdraw diplomatic recognition from Taiwan.⁶ The US policy is not an endorsement of Beijing's position on Taiwan and, indeed, as part of the policy, Washington maintains a "robust unofficial" relationship with Taiwan, including continued arms sales to the island so that it can defend itself.⁷ However, since then, the US presidents have abided by the One-China policy and Trump has become the first US president to overtly question the policy. He annoyed China when, in December 2016, he attended a congratulatory call by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and referred to her as the president of Taiwan. It is not clear if the Trump transition team intended the conversation to signal a

5. "Readout of the President's Call with President Xi Jinping of China", White House, February 9, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/09/readout-presidents-call-president-xi-jinping-china>. Accessed on February 9, 2017.

6. Office of the Historian, Department of State, the United States of America, Milestone: 1977-1980 China Policy, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/china-policy>. Accessed on January 5, 2017.

7. "What is One-China Policy?", *BBC*, February 10, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-38285354>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

broader change in US policy towards Taiwan; regardless of whether it was deliberate or not, this phone call will fundamentally change China's perceptions of Trump's strategic intentions for the negative and with this kind of move, Trump is setting a foundation of renewed strategic competition for China-US relations.⁸

Taiwan remains one of China's core interests. Beijing operates under the One-China principle, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, which is subtly, but importantly, different from Washington's assertion of the One-China policy, which holds that there is only "One China", and that it is up to Beijing and Taipei to resolve the question of the legitimate government between them.⁹ However, the US is a key security guarantor to Taiwan and according to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, the US is under obligation to defend Taiwan in the event of war with China. This was a part of the "six assurances" that Taiwan sought from the US so as to conduct their unofficial relations:¹⁰

- The United States would not set a date for the termination of arms sales to Taiwan;
- The United States would not alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act;
- The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about US arms sales to Taiwan;
- The United States would not mediate between Taiwan and China;
- The United States would not alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China; and
- The United States would not formally recognise Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.

8. Evan Medeiros quoted in "China Lodges Formal Protest after Donald Trump's Taiwan Call", *Financial Times*, December 3, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/fd19907e-b8d4-11e6-961e-a1acd97f622d>. Accessed on February 5, 2017.

9. Douglas Bulloch, "Was Trump-Tsai Phone Call Part of Strategy to Influence One-China Policy?", *Forbes*, December 19, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/douglasbulloch/2016/12/19/how-the-trump-tsai-phone-call-changes-u-s-china-relations-and-one-china-policy/#4683dd51482f>. Accessed on January 23, 2017.

10. "The Six Assurances to Taiwan", *Taiwan Documents*, July 1982, <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm>. Accessed on January 26, 2017.

Trump's phone call with the Taiwanese president does not mean that he was extending overt support to Taiwan or breaching the three communiques signed between the US and China. It is very clear that Trump, through that call, did not want to challenge and change the US' stand on the One-China policy. In fact, he was using the much controversial policy to bargain over issues such as trade. However, it did not work as expected. Chinese President Xi Jinping refused to have any deliberations with Trump unless he publicly reaffirmed the US' commitment towards the One-China policy.¹¹ Eventually, the demand was met by the US president. In his first few weeks in office, Trump has proved to be a paper tiger with China, making himself look weak in the eyes of Chinese leaders, which, in turn, will embolden China's own assertive behaviour.¹² Such moves will only further erode the credibility of the US in the region and his ability to deal with China. It is in the best interest of both China and the US to maintain the status quo vis-a-vis Taiwan. Trump needs to channelise his energy into dealing with high priority issues such as nuclearisation of North Korea and ensuring peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$ 18.56 trillion in 2016, the US is the largest economy in the world, followed by China with a GDP of US\$ 11.39 trillion. Economic exchanges between the US and China increased dramatically since the onset of market reforms in the 1970s and were further accelerated with China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and from 1978 to the end of the 20th century, the value of trade between the two countries grew by more than two orders of magnitude, from US \$ 1 billion to almost US\$ 120 billion annually.¹³ In 2016, China's exports to the US totalled

11. Mark Landler and Michael Forsythe, "Trump Tells Xi Jinping US will Honour 'One China' Policy", February 9, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/world/asia/donald-trump-china-xi-jinping-letter.html?_r=0. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

12. Michael H. Fuchs, "Trump's China Policy is a Paper Tiger", *Foreign Policy*, February 22, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/22/trumps-china-policy-is-a-paper-tiger/>. Accessed on February 23, 2017.

13. US-China Security Review Commission, "The National Security Implications of the Economic Relationship Between the United States and China" (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, July 2002), pp. 38-39.

US\$ 462 billion, while Chinese imports stood at US 115 billion. The US trade deficit with China totalled US\$ 347 billion. China is not only the largest trading partner of the US, it is also the largest creditor for the US.

Despite their increasing economic interdependence, during his presidential campaign, Trump pledged to label China a currency manipulator and impose punitive tariffs on Chinese goods, proclaiming, "We already have a trade war".¹⁴ During the campaign, Trump consistently lashed out at China, making the case that the US did not know how to deal with China; bad trade deals were a prime focus for Trump, who claimed that the money drained out of the US had rebuilt China.¹⁵

Given that it owns US\$ 1.05 trillion worth of US treasuries, China can cripple the economy of the US by moving the maturities of these securities from 90 to 60 days or threaten to sell these assets at lower rates.¹⁶ Also, Trump has withdrawn from the TPP which he could have used to further integrate the US into the Asian economy. This will do more good than harm to Beijing. The US withdrawing from the TPP will allow Beijing to cooperate with the countries of the region effectively under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). While the US' position as an economic guarantor is receding, now more countries will be attracted to be a part of One Belt, One Road (OBOR). If Trump really wanted to get tough with China on trade, he would have pushed to improve the TPP to advance America's economic position in the region and give himself more leverage in trade talks with China.¹⁷

Seemingly, economic tensions will be on the rise between the two countries under the Trump Administration. However, such frictions would be temporary as both countries are immensely dependent on

14. Nick Corasaniti, Alexander Burns and Binyamin Appelbaum, "Donald Trump Vows to Rip Up Trade Deals and Confront China", *New York Times*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/us/politics/donald-trump-trade-speech.html>. Accessed on December 20, 2016.

15. Fuchs, n.12..

16. In conversation with Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli, professor, Chinese Studies, East Asia Centre, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, on March 5, 2013. Cited in Hashmi, n. 1.

17. Fuchs, n.12.

each other in the economic realm. To resolve issues of this nature, it is vital for both countries to give concessions to, and be sensitive towards, each other's economic interests.

US-CHINA COMPETITION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Given that the US is a Pacific power, pursuing a productive relationship with China is a critical element of its larger strategy for the Asia-Pacific.¹⁸ Compared to his predecessor Barack Obama, Trump will be less inclined towards maintaining a steady presence in the Asia-Pacific in the strategic sense. Obama had vital interests in Asia and the Pacific, and a good part of the US' foreign policy had been focussed on the rebalance to Asia — the president's commitment to expand America's engagement in this region, which had waned under the strain of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁹ Obama was much more involved in the Asia-Pacific than Trump will ever be. The reason being that he will be focussing more on getting business done with these countries than wasting a huge amount of money in the areas of conflict. He is not too keen on carrying on with the United States' military deployment in countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The signs of US' withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific had begun to show even during his presidential campaign. In May 2016, he called on Japan to drastically increase its financial contribution to maintain the American military facilities it hosts under a 1960 security treaty, and remarked, "Of course, they [Japan and South Korea] should pick up all the expense. Why are we paying for this?"²⁰

For most countries of the Asia-Pacific region, while the US is the primary security provider, China is emerging as a principal economic guarantor. It is in this context that countries such as Australia and South Korea are wary of US retrenchment from the region and fear being forced to choose between the US and China.²¹ This probable

18. Susan E. Rice, "Overview of the US-China Relationship: Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice", *US Congressional Paper*, September 2016.

19. *Ibid.*

20. "Trump Urges Japan to Pay More to Maintain US Military Bases", *Japan Times*, May 5, 2016, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/05/national/politics-diplomacy/trump-urges-japan-pay-maintain-u-s-military-bases/#.WLVDG_197IU. Accessed on January 29, 2017.

21. David Shambaugh et al, "Assessing US-Asia Relations in a Time of Transition", The National Bureau of Asian Research, p. 2.

withdrawal of the US under the Trump Administration will make the countries of the Asia-Pacific region realise that the US will not be diplomatically present when China again resorts to assertiveness in the issues of the South China and East China Seas. Most affected of all the countries will be the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states which are already divided over the South China Sea dispute. It is all the more difficult for the ASEAN states when countries such as Cambodia and Brunei are tilted towards China. If the US does not take appropriate actions on time and assure its partners and allies in the region of its support, it will be leaving a huge security vacuum in the region, which China would be happy to fill.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

One issue that would be a consistent irritant between China and the US will be China's assertive postures in the South China Sea. Increasing militarisation of the South China Sea by China has attracted uninvited attention and has, thereby, been disturbing the strategic balance of the region. Trump, despite his attempts of retrenchment from Asia, will be closely observing the developments in the South China Sea. The reason being, according to estimates by the Energy Information Agency, that the South China Sea holds at least 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas beneath it. In addition to this, at least 80 percent of global trade passes through the disputed sea. These are the main reasons why China and other countries have contesting claims. The US, under Barack Obama, had tried to maintain a steady presence in the South China Sea. It seems that the US' policy, on the South China Sea will remain unchanged under Trump. Tillerson's comments [mentioned earlier in the article] clearly indicate that President Trump and his Administration are willing to use military force if Chinese activities in the South China Sea continue and this comment is similar in tone to Steve Bannon's during a podcast in March 2016 when he stated, "We're going to war in the South China Sea in five to 10 years" (Bannon is now senior adviser to President

Trump).²² In response to Tillerson's comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying asked the United States to "respect the facts, speak and act cautiously to avoid harming the peace and stability of the South China Sea" and conveyed that "China's resolve to protect its sovereignty and maritime rights... will not change."²³

While the United States is not a direct party in the South China Sea dispute, its interest lies in ensuring freedom of navigation for safeguarding its US\$ 5 trillion worth goods that transit through the sea, and also addressing its allies' concerns in the region. What Trump might do in this context is to keep persuading China to be accomodative and address the concerns of the other parties involved.

CONCLUSION

China is likely to resist increased US' presence to establish its supremacy in the Asian region. Therefore, an important lesson for Trump would be that if he wants to maintain the status quo, it is important for him to engage with the countries of Asia. The US, under Trump, needs to be moderately assertive towards China while remaining friendly towards its allies such as Australia. A confrontational approach will lead both countries nowhere. In fact, it will only disturb the regional as well as global order. Friction between the US and China will not only affect these two countries but also impact other countries of the Asian region.

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of India.

22. Quoted in Michael Brady, "China vs. America in the South China Sea: What Should Trump Do?", *National Interest*, February 27, 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/china-vs-america-the-south-china-sea-what-should-donald-19598>. Accessed on February 27, 2017.

23. Cited in Aaron, n.3.

CHINA'S PRAGMATIC ALIGNMENT WITH WEST ASIA

ANU SHARMA

China's sphere of influence has been growing in the West Asian region since the Arab Spring and post the political upheaval related to Iran. With the current political scenario in the region, China is facing a changing situation as far as developing relations with many West Asian nations is concerned. Chinese President Xi Jinping's three-nation tour of West Asia earlier this year depicts the economic and strategic expansion that China has been visualising in the Persian Gulf region. This trip did not come as a surprise to many Chinese or West Asian experts and foreign policy-makers because of the increasing Chinese dependence on oil and energy resources from the region. In the past few years, China has left the US behind as the world's leading importer of oil and energy consumer, thereby making China's relations with the West Asian region more important, with global implications, as the region possesses the world's largest crude oil reserves. In the wake of these major developments, this paper attempts to look at the reasons and the implications that are crucial to understand the relevance of China's rise in the region and how its energy requirements are set to change its relations with the various stakeholders there. However, China feels threatened by the increasing Russian sphere of influence in the region as a result of the

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intensification of the geopolitical competition amongst the regional partners and the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. This makes it important for China to figure out ways to deal with the political instabilities, crises and rivalries in the region without getting too involved in regional politics. At the same time, China's need to safeguard and expand its economic presence in the region by way of initiating various infrastructure and construction projects in the region, has been enhanced.

West Asia comprises today's Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, etc. China's relations with West Asia date back to ancient times. Geographically, West Asia had been an important bridge linking Europe, Africa and Asia through the land and maritime Silk Route that linked China with West Asia in the olden times. The transfer of goods, raw materials and knowledge had been the hallmark of relations between the West Asian and East Asian regions. Jon B. Alterman, senior vice president, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and also director of its Middle East Programme, has argued that China's interest in West Asia did not begin with oil, but oil transformed it. In the modern times, both China and West Asia grappled with crumbling empires and European colonialism in West Asia that capitalised on the states' internal weaknesses.¹ This, in turn, led to the disruption of the trade route between China and West Asia. Both China and West Asia were too absorbed in their own respective turmoil to take much notice of the other during the earlier part of the 20th century. This continued in the post-World War II world, with China still being preoccupied with its great leap forward and the Cultural Revolution.² Though, after World War II, the links between China and West Asia have grown dramatically and can also be labelled as 'strategic' to a certain extent, related to the nature of partnerships that have been forged in the 21st century between the two. However, mutual benefit and cooperation has still been the main theme of the exchanges between China and West Asia. As compared to the other aspects of the China-West Asia relationship, oil became the most critical factor and this necessity

1. Jon B. Alterman, "China in the Middle East", Statement before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, June 6, 2013, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), pp. 1-11.

2. Ibid.

was fuelled due to China's rapid industrial growth in the last three decades.

President Xi Jinping established a very strong viewpoint against the Western intervention in West Asia by becoming the first major leader to visit Tehran since the sanctions were lifted in August 2015. The move is also imperative because China's increased engagement in the region will bring with it a number of implications for China, especially in the case of Beijing's balancing act between Shia (Iran) and Sunni (Arab states) countries in the Persian Gulf. It can be argued that the present political scenario with Iran can become an essential component in the Chinese plans of playing a more assertive role in West Asia. Increasing economic ties also tally with China's "peaceful development", a concept outlined in 2011 Chinese White Paper related to West Asia, whereby China seeks to "promote common development and prosperity for all the countries."³ It should be noted here that China played a very crucial role in the lifting of the sanctions on Iran by the P5+1 countries.

In West Asia, it has suited both the Chinese temperament and China's national interests to adopt isolationist principles rather than develop a strategy. This has enabled China to avoid involvement in the region's uniquely turbulent politics. China has also avoided direct challenges to established powers like the United States that make periodic efforts to influence the politico-military interactions there. In these circumstances, Beijing is happy to sell regional actors weapons or buy military and internal security technology from Israel but overall, it has remained unresponsive, and dictates its terms in the domestic politics of most of the Persian Gulf states. Recent years have witnessed a changed US agenda in West Asia which is independent of its traditional security partners in the region. But it can be argued in favour of China that it has not been willing to extend any implicit security guarantees to the West Asian nations to counter-balance their military dependence on the US, Russia, or any other great power.⁴

3. Cesar Castilla, "China's Evolving Middle East Role", March 18, 2016, <http://isdpeu/publication/chinas-evolving-middle-east-role/>. Accessed on May 23, 2016.

4. "China in the Middle East", June 2015, Georgetown Security Studies Review, published by the Centre for Security Studies, <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/GSSR-Asia-Conference.pdf>. Accessed on May 23, 2016.

Alterman, director, Middle East Programme, CSIS, cites four reasons as being responsible for China increasing its footprints in the region, making it an all the more elusive region for China. According to him, firstly, West Asia is an important region for China, and is, in a certain way, unavoidable due to China's ever-increasing need for energy, which lures China deeper into the region. Secondly, US presence in West Asia makes China feel vulnerable. China also feels threatened by the US military presence in the region. This, to a certain extent, had also influenced China's relations in the region. Thirdly, the swirling politics of the region also creates problems for Chinese policy-makers. Chinese analysts are wary of delving deeper into the region's internal developments, with the revolutionary movements in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, etc. and the failing authoritarian regimes in the region. This made China tread cautiously post 2001 in the region. China had successfully managed to keep away from being sucked into the US' War Against Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, and, at the same time, managed to win contracts for infrastructure building and energy cooperation with many nations in West Asia.⁵

CHINA, ENERGY SECURITY AND WEST ASIA

West Asia's black gold has been the driving force for the growth engines of various Asian countries for more than a decade now. However, this phase of the Asian economies being benefited by the energy resources of West Asia can be traced back to the 1960s when Japan emerged as the most dynamic economy of the day, thereby setting the pattern for the pan-Asian partnerships that developed later on. Still, China did not turn towards West Asia until the 1980s. China's relations with the Persian Gulf region had taken precedence due to a more market oriented government seeking markets for low cost weapons to support the domestic arms industry.⁶ Over the past 60 years, China-Arab cooperation had made historic leaps to the extent of making it a model for South-South cooperation that gained successfully from this mutually benefitting relationship.⁷ In

5. Alterman, n. 1, p. 3.

6. Ibid.

7. Lu Hui, ed., "Full Text of China's Arab Policy Paper-Xinhua", January 13, 2016, *Xinhua*, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2016-01/13c_135006619.htm. Accessed on May 23, 2016.

the 1950s, the newly founded People's Republic of China (PRC) made an important breakthrough in its diplomacy with the Arab world. The success of the Bandung Conference in 1955 and the promotion of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence enhanced mutual understanding between China and the Arab countries and witnessed the start of bilateral relations. China's firm support for Arab anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and national independence movements won widespread acclaim around the Arab world. During this period, China established diplomatic relations with Iraq, Morocco, Algeria and Sudan after Egypt, Syria and Yemen, which was the first climax of establishing diplomatic ties between the two sides.⁸

After the end of the Cold War, China's energy diplomacy has undergone tremendous changes as it has expanded to the global level. At that time, China's West Asia policy had been to enhance its energy security through relations with West Asia. However, China's involvement in West Asia has also changed from serving its energy security concerns to coping with the geopolitical complexity and regional power politics associated with the Persian Gulf.⁹ China had always been content in playing a moderate role in international politics, with insistence on non-interference in countries' domestic affairs, participation in international dialogues, and consistent opposition to the use of force.¹⁰ However, many have countered that China's emergence in West Asia cannot be termed as a sudden development because China had enjoyed favourable relations with Iran, including economic cooperation and sales of Chinese military technology to Iran during the US sanctions which were imposed post the Iran hostage crisis. China's deeper engagement in the region had not only enhanced its strategic interest but also underlined the dilemma of how to balance its ties with the oil producing states and the US.¹¹ It can be said that China's West Asia policy was designed

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8. Kuangyi Yao, "Development of Sino-Arab Relations and the Evolution of China's Middle East Policy in the New Era", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, http://www.mesi.shisu.edu.cn/_upload/article/21/13/a43659d149ad8d5f4a22da3c627f/f345383f-65fa-4a6c-b06d-0dc89de4b236.pdf. Accessed on June 4, 2016.
 9. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Yukiko Miyagi, eds., *The Emerging Middle East- East Asia Nexus* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 106-107.
 10. Alterman, n. 1.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

to reflect its energy needs; but lately, there have been indications from the Chinese side that they have started to formulate a more comprehensive strategy towards the region. Post-Cold War, both China and the Arab countries have followed the global trend of peace, development and cooperation, respected each other, treated each other as equals, and committed themselves to deepening the traditional friendship and bilateral relations.

The Arab countries have become China's biggest suppliers of crude oil and the 7th largest trading partner with China's proposed initiatives of the "One Belt, One Road (OBOR)" for establishing cooperation, with energy cooperation, as the core, and infrastructure construction and trade and investment facilitation as its major wings. China and West Asia have similar views on issues such as reform of the United Nations, climate change, cultural and educational exchanges facilitating people-to-people ties between China and West Asia, thereby, enhancing mutual understanding and friendship.¹² Cooperation in the political, trade and economic, scientific and technological, cultural and educational, military, health, sports, news and other fields had achieved fruitful results, thereby, enabling the establishment of the friendly and cooperative relationship oriented towards the 21st century.¹³

Details of this are found in China's Arab Policy Paper, which was released in January 2016 before Chinese President Xi Jinping embarked on his West Asian tour, visiting Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran, which can be described as the first step for the implementation of this policy paper.¹⁴ China's stakes in West Asia have been growing with the changing contours of diplomacy in the region.¹⁵ However,

12. n. 4.

13. Ibid.

14. Umut Ergunsu, "Why is China's Role in the Middle-East Growing?", *Hurriyet Daily News*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/why-is-chinas-role-in-the-middle-east-growing.aspx?pageID=449&nlID=95402&NewsCatID=396>. Accessed on May 24, 2016.

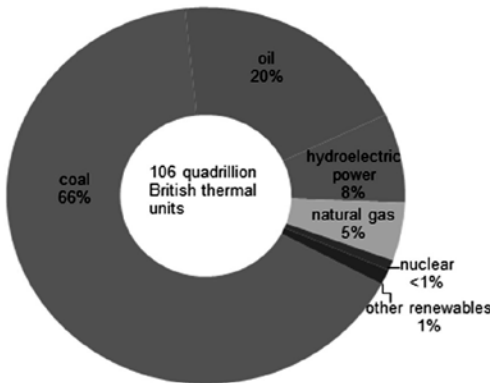
15. China sees energy cooperation as the major factor in its approach to the region, and that remains unchanged in the policy paper. According to China's "1+2+3" formula for China-Arab cooperation, energy cooperation will be the "core" of the relationship, with constructing infrastructure and facilitating trade and investment as the "wings" supporting that core. The "3" refers to "three breakthroughs"—a wish list for future cooperation in nuclear energy, new and clean energy, and aerospace (particularly satellites, but including "cooperation on manned spaceflight"). China's "Belt and Road" initiative will serve as the framework for all of the "1+2+3" cooperation, *The Diplomat*. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/revealed-chinas-blueprint-for-building-middle-east-relations/>. Accessed on May 26, 2016.

the paper does not cover specific policies related to specific countries of West Asia, thereby, giving a comprehensive vision of China’s regional relations with West Asia. One of the important aspects to analyse in the future will be the growth and development of China’s bilateral relations with many West Asian nations under the guidelines of this policy paper.

Extending the same argument, many Arab countries in the region have eagerly accepted China’s greater role in West Asia which stems from the insecurity related to US interventions in the region and the supremacy that the US had maintained in the region related to energy security.¹⁶ Some powers seem to feel that having a competitor to the US in the region would improve their bargaining position—like Iran and Saudi Arabia—which have had long and strategic ties with the US.¹⁷

As shown in Fig 1, in 2012, China accounted for half of the growth in oil consumption worldwide, importing more oil than the US—it is estimated that China will consume more oil than the US by 2029. China is the world’s second-largest consumer of oil and moved from second-largest net importer of oil to the largest in 2014.¹⁸

Fig. 1: Total Primary Energy Consumption in China by Fuel Type, 2012



Note: Total may not equal 100% due to independent rounding. Includes only commercial fuel sources and does not account for biomass used outside of power generation.
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

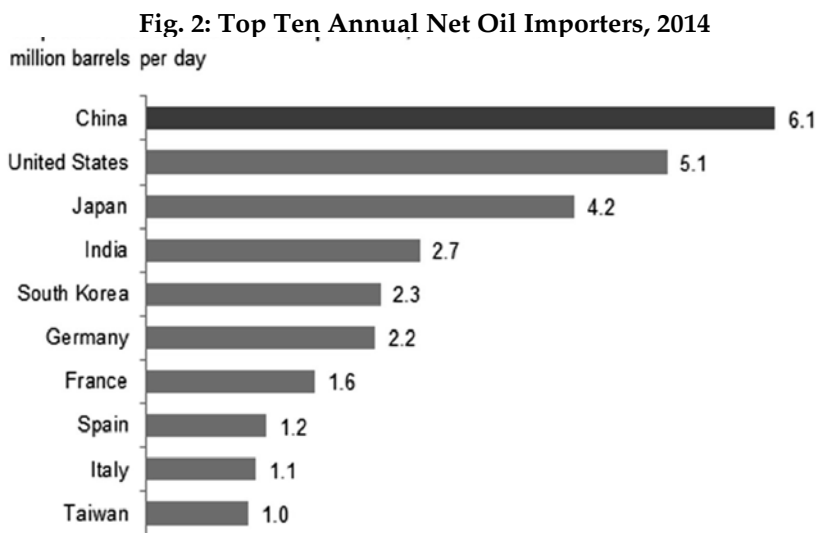
Source: <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=CH>. Accessed on May 25, 2016.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 115.

18. China Country Brief, US Energy Information Administration, May 15, 2015, <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=CH>. Accessed on May 25, 2016.

According to the *Oil & Gas Journal* (OGJ), released in January 2015, China holds 24.6 billion barrels of proved oil reserves, up by almost 0.3 billion barrels from the 2014 level and the highest in the Asia-Pacific region (excluding Russia). China's total petroleum and other production, the fourth-largest in the world, has risen about 50 percent over the past two decades and serves only its domestic market. However, the production growth had not kept pace with the demand growth during this period. In 2014, China produced nearly 4.6 million barrels per day (bbl/d) of petroleum and other liquids, of which 92 percent was crude oil and the remainder comprised non-refining liquids and refining gain. However, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecasts that China's oil production will increase to slightly higher than 4.6 million bbl/d by the end of 2016. In the medium and long terms, EIA predicts China's oil production will grow incrementally to 5.1 million bbl/d by 2020, 5.5 million bbl/d by 2030, and 5.7 million bbl/d by 2040, based on the *International Energy Outlook 2014* (IEO2014).¹⁹



Note: Estimates of total production less consumption. Does not account for stock build.
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Short-Term Energy Outlook, May 2015*

Source: <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=CH>. Accessed on May 25, 2016.

19. Ibid.

Fig 2 demonstrates that China has surpassed the US in 2014 in the net oil imports in the list of countries that had been importing oil from the West Asian region. Chinese oil consumption exceeded production by 6.3 million bbl/d, which indicates that the country had to import oil to fill the gap. China's economic boom has raised incomes and its global influence. But it also has spurred a demand for imported oil and gas, which the Communist leaders see as a strategic weakness. The US, with a population about one-third the size of China's, still consumes far more oil per person than China does.²⁰ Until the late 1990s, China supplied its oil needs from domestic sources, including the vast Daqing field in the northeastern part of China. But the economic boom outstripped its production capacity while the output from the already available sources was also on the decline. This forced China to rely heavily on imports, especially from Saudi Arabia and Iran. At the same time, US import demands have also weakened due to various technological advancements, such as hydraulic fracturing and other technologies, thereby, opening up new domestic sources of supply.²¹

ONE BELT, ONE ROAD (OBOR)

China's response to this changing growth dynamic is partly external and partly internal. On the external side, China has launched the expensive new initiatives such as the "One Belt, One Road" project in order to strengthen infrastructure on the westward land route from China through Central Asia.²² When the OBOR initiative was first introduced, it was considered a 'pie in the sky' due to its enormity. However, the idea has gained momentum in the last two years. Some Western observers have regarded this as China's equivalent of the Marshal Plan to counter US presence in West and Central Asia.²³ The OBOR is dubbed as China's leading foreign policy priority in the

20. "China is World's Biggest Net Oil Importer", *Al Jazeera*, October 10, 2013, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/10/10/china-becomes-worldsbiggestnetoilimporter.html>. Accessed on May 30, 2016.

21. *Ibid.*

22. David Dollar, "China's Rise as a Regional and Global Power: The AIIB, and the 'One Belt, One Road'", *Brookings Research Papers*, Summer 2015, www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/07/china-regional-global-power-dollar. Accessed on May 28, 2016.

23. Helen H. Wang, "Xi Jinping's Mideast Trip to Push 'One Belt One Road'," *Forbes*, January 30, 2016, www.forbes.com/sites/helenwang/2016/01/30/Xi-jinping's-mideast-trip-to-push-one-belt-one-road/#6d31e9864f27. Accessed on May 28, 2016.

coming years. The OBOR is referred to as the “belt” by the Chinese official media—as a planned network of overland road and rail routes, oil and natural gas pipelines and other infrastructural projects that will stretch from Xián in central China, through Central Asia and ultimately reach as far as Moscow, Rotterdam and Venice.

Fig. 3: Chinese Map Marking out the Important Routes and Cities Involved in the Belt-Road Initiative



Source: <https://thewire.in/12532/what-chinas-one-belt-and-one-road-strategy-means-for-india-asia-and-the-world/> Accessed on January 29, 2017.

With the economy and geopolitics being the drivers of this particular initiative, the infrastructure projects could provide China a stimulus to help cushion the effects of the deepening economic slowdown in the Chinese economy. The OBOR can be regarded as a development framework focussed on promoting cooperation and boosting trade, while also eliminating the barriers to trade and financial integration amongst the partner countries. The OBOR includes 16 countries in West Asia and Europe, 16 in West Asia and North Africa, 11 in Southeast Asia, 8 in South Asia and 11 from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) plus Mongolia and Russia, including a few regions of Central China.²⁴

24. Pearl Liu, “What are the Prospects for China’s One Belt, One Road Initiative?”, *ACCA Think Ahead*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.accaglobal.com/in/en/member/accounting-business/2016/04/insights/one-belt.html>. Accessed on May 29, 2016.

In the whole OBOR initiative, it is impossible to ignore the role that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will be playing in uniting the West Asian factions taking part in the initiative, while simultaneously supporting the development of the Silk Road. The AIIB will be providing the necessary funding and investment to turn this initiative into reality. It should be noted that Egypt has joined the AIIB as a founding member. Saudi Arabia, Iran, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait have also signed in as associate members.²⁵ One of the important aspects is that the membership of these nations in AIIB grants them an enhancement to the Chinese funds and investments for infrastructure development in their country as well as unites them under a common economic interest. However, when compared with Washington's West Asian policies, Chinese policies seems to have laid the foundation for more peaceful and prosperous relations.

As regards its strategic implications in the Persian Gulf region, the analysts have compared the OBOR project with the chequered politics and policies of the US as well as its regional allies. This has certainly revived the debate on whether China is augmenting its own 'counter pivot' policy towards West Asia in an attempt to challenge the US influence in West Asia. However, it is also countered that Chinese President Xi Jinping will stick to China's policy of non-alignment in the Persian Gulf region while the Chinese contribution towards the economic development of the West Asian region will definitely be enhanced as a result of the OBOR. Many have also analysed that this could turn out to be the best bet for regional stability in the region. Chinese leaders, however, have maintained the posture that the US-led interventions in the Persian Gulf region are the root cause of the existing and the further instability in the region.²⁶ It is also true that with the development of the OBOR, China may not be able to distance itself from the regional instability in West Asia, as it has in the past. With the OBOR, China hopes to link its economy with Central Asia,

25. David Lai and Noah Lingwall, "China: A Solution in the Middle East?", *The Diplomat*, June 18, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/china-a-solution-in-the-middle-east/>. Accessed on May 29, 2016.

26. Alexander Neill, "Xi Makes Economic Inroads in Middle East", *IISS*, January 22, 2016, <https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2016-9143/january-671d/xi-visit-to-middle-east-0a48>. Accessed on May 28, 2016.

West Asia and Africa along the lines of the ancient Silk Route where Egypt and Iran were the central pieces of the Chinese policy. This venture, if fully successful, promises to bring billions of dollars in Chinese development funds to these countries and further integrate them into China's trading orbit.²⁷ Experts are contending that there is a lot at stake for China in West Asia and the recent trip of President Xi Jinping to three major powers in the region was more like a 'cash for resources' trip.

CHINA, TERRORISM AND WEST ASIA

As discussed earlier, since the end of the Cold War, Chinese foreign policy in West Asia has been primarily driven by a search for energy security and a desire to increase its overseas markets and investment opportunities. The core of the Chinese policy is to maintain a stable and peaceful international environment that facilitates continued domestic reform and development. Consequently, China's West Asia policy seeks to promote its economic and energy relations. It also advocates dealing with conflicts and threats through cooperation, negotiation and conflict management rather than conflict resolution.²⁸ The Chinese problem of terrorism is related to one group—the East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)—which seeks to create a separate country (East Turkestan) out of Xinjiang province. China's issue with terrorism is not easy to comprehend considering its uncertain extent of linkages between ethnic Uighur militants and terrorist groups including Al Qaeda and Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). The Uighurs, an ethnically Turkic people who founded the first Turkic state, today comprise roughly six million of China's 20 million-strong Muslims. They have challenged Beijing through a low-level separatist insurgency for decades. In 2006, anti-Chinese Uighur militants formed the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP), which largely consists of members from Afghanistan and Pakistan and

27. Eric Olander, Cobus van Staden and Lina Benabdallah, "China's Risky Gamble to Become a Major Player in the Middle East and North Africa", February 11, 2016, <https://www.chinafile.com/library/china-africa-project/chinas-risky-gamble-become-major-player-middle-east-and-north-africa>. Accessed on May 25, 2016.

28. Mordechai Chaziza, "China's Middle East Policy: The ISIS Factor", *Middle East Policy Council*, Spring 2016, vol XXIII, no. 1, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/chinas-middle-east-policy-isis-factor?print>. Accessed on May 25, 2016.

operates alongside Jabhat al-Nusra as an affiliate of Al Qaeda. The TIP, as a presumed splinter group of the ETIM, seeks to form both an independent state of East Turkestan stretching across central Asia and a caliphate.²⁹ Beijing sees this advent of the Islamic State (IS) and the growth of Islamic extremism in West Asia as a dangerous opportunity for growth in the Uighur separatist insurgency, both domestically and along China's periphery. There are also claims that Uighurs have undergone training in West Asia and then returned to China as *jihadists*, making it difficult for China to act against this issue of insurgency.³⁰ China has high economic stakes and interest in the region which are susceptible not only to the terrorist attacks but also growing instability at home as well as in the region.

An important question posed by many experts is: why is the emergence of the ISIS a threat to China? Dingding Chen, professor of International Relations at Jinan University, Guangzhou, China, highlights three points in this context. Firstly, the ISIS has openly declared its territorial ambition toward China's Xinjiang province, which is increasingly restless because of the tensions between the local Uighurs and the Han people. Secondly, the spread of the ISIS could threaten China's oil investments in the West Asian region. Thirdly, the ISIS' growth and expansion near the Chinese border areas could encourage domestic terrorist groups within China that could lead to more terrorist attacks against the Chinese government. Thus, it will be in China's interests to actively engage in containing the rise and spread of ISIS.³¹ He further suggests that in order to achieve this goal, China must gradually abandon its long-held non-intervention policy and enhance international cooperation with other key players such as the US through deeper intelligence sharing. By strengthening international cooperation, China could, in the long run, eliminate the negative influence of the ISIS on China's restive

29. Lauren Dickey, "Counterterrorism or Repression? China Takes on Uighur Militants", *War on the Rocks*, April 19, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/counterterrorism-or-repression-china-takes-on-uighur-militants/>. Accessed on May 26, 2016.

30. Ibid.

31. Dingding Chen, "Dealing with the ISIS Challenge: What China Might do and its Implications for China's Anti-Terrorism Policy", China Policy Institute Paper, no. 1, 2015, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/policy-papers/cpi-policy-paper-2015-no-1-chen.pdf>. Accessed on May 26, 2016.

Xinjiang region in particular and on other regions within China.³² In order to counter this threat of terrorism, China has become part of various international conventions against terrorism, including the 2001 "Shanghai Convention", 2004. China promoted the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) for the establishment of regional anti-terror institutions. It also participated in the "2007-09 Cooperation Programme of Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism", "Programmes Agreement of Joint Anti-Terrorism Actions within the Territory of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Member States", and the "Agreement of Identifying and Cutting off Infiltrating Channels of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism within the Territory of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Member States." In June 2006, China hosted the fifth anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Shanghai. In addition, China has participated in several bilateral and multilateral joint military exercises against terrorism in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; China has also actively participated in international anti-terrorism exchanges and cooperation in the framework of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Asia-Europe Meeting.³³ This highlights the fact that China has increased the pace of its crusade against terrorism.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the ever evolving relationship of China with the West Asian region will have its implications on China's foreign affairs. For China, West Asia is complicated and conflictual, thereby, generating the need for tremendous scrutiny. US presence in the region, to a certain extent, could be the reason that China still feels the vulnerability, thereby, making it necessary to shift its focus in the region. However, the decision of the US Administration regarding the scaling down of the US involvement in the region has created a power vacuum in the area which was once considered to be the American sphere of influence, thereby enabling China to step in to fill

32. Ibid.

33. Zhu Weilie, "Middle East Terrorism, Global Governance and China's Anti-Terror Policy", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2011, pp. 1-16.

this vacuum. In order to balance the Shia-Sunni divide, China needs to tread very cautiously, particularly on issues related to Iran and Saudi Arabia. As Dr. Cesar Castilla, an Asia-Pacific and West Asian specialist focussing on Iran's foreign policy, points out, potentially being seen to favour of, or antagonistic to, one side, could undermine Chinese ambitions with other Sunni or alternatively Shia countries.³⁴ Many analysts have understood Beijing's reluctance to get involved in the region, however, also highlighting that the ever growing energy consumption patterns make it difficult for China to avoid West Asia. In the issues of terrorism and threat to China's stakes in West Asia, China's participation in the fight against terrorism has increased at the global level.

It is clear that Chinese economic security is becoming more and more dependent on the West Asian region, clearly showing that it is possible to take the dynamic approach in response to Chinese energy security. It is necessary for China to realise that West Asia is too important a region to be ignored and left to others and, therefore, neglecting this region can only be at China's peril. China continues to project a strategy of balanced engagement across the region, the recent visits by the Chinese leadership indicate that China's relations with the Arab states and Iran are improving at a very fast pace. China and West Asia are interacting much more closely and China has "an image of a responsible, positive and fair-minded actor in the West Asian affairs."³⁵ Despite the recent power shifts in the region, China's relations with West Asia have stepped into a new stage. The two can forge mutual support which can turn favourable for China—economically, strategically and politically—as well as produce special and important influence in the entire Asia-Pacific region.

34. n. 15.

35. Gao Zugui, "The New Development of China-Middle East Relations Since the Arab Upheaval", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2014, pp. 63-80.

INDIA-CHINA ENERGY COOPERATION: A POSSIBILITY FOR RAPPROCHEMENT

TEMJENMEREN AO

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meeting on November 30, 2016, in Vienna, reached a deal amongst all its fourteen member countries to curtail oil production for the first time since 2008. This has enhanced the possibility of a rise in the price of oil in the immediate future. Thus, the shared energy security interest between India and China – which is imperative for their continued economic growth – could provide the necessary glue towards enhancing bilateral cooperation in this area, the outstanding pinpricks between the two nations notwithstanding. The aim of this paper is to lay out the points of interest between the two major Asian giants. It attempts to address some of the major issues in the relations that the two continue to grapple with. The study also discusses the need for energy security, given the rising uncertainties which could provide the necessary glue towards strengthening cooperation and engagement between the two nations.

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DEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP IN 2017 AND BEYOND

India-China relations can be defined as engagement in the midst of great suspicion; and this is the nature of the relationship which continues till date. The 21st century has witnessed not only the rise of China but also the rise of India. The rise of these two Asian giants almost simultaneously has, no doubt, added to the already existing level of hidden animosity and unleashed an unannounced strategic competition between the two, thereby making it a major underlying theme of the relationship at the onset of the new century. President Pranab Mukherjee, during his visit to China in May 2016, described the ties between India and China as the “defining partnership of the 21st century”. He stated that the two nations agree that the two major powers must have greater strategic communication and should work together in an uncertain global situation where economic recovery was fragile; geopolitical risks were growing; and the menace of terrorism (was) proving to be a threat to the whole world.¹

The year 2016 witnessed a series of negative diplomatic manoeuvres which redefined the already complicated India-China relations. This has left the bilateral ties between the two Asian giants in a very precarious position at the end of 2016. India’s efforts to sell an advanced BrahMos cruise missile system to Vietnam – and with at least fifteen more markets in its sight – has caused a certain amount of unease in Beijing not only for the defence transfers but also because it feels threatened by the fact that India could be a future competitor in the very lucrative defence market. Thus, China sees India as a challenger to its export market in the Southeast Asian region, especially now that India has been formally inducted into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016. The Indian Ministry of Defence has ordered BrahMos Aerospace to increase production in order to meet potential orders for the supersonic BrahMos missile from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. The sale of this supersonic cruise missile would be legal under the MTCR since the missile, with a range of 292 km, falls within the permissible range limit of 300 km set by the MTCR.²

1. Elizabeth Roche, “India, China Relations Defining Partnership of the 21st Century: Pranab Mukherjee”, *Live Mint*, May 28, 2016, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/cw3Wnb3m89REKta4YPQ4QJ/Pranab-Mukherjee-calls-India-China-relations-the-defining.html>. Accessed on January 27, 2016.
2. Sanjeev Miglani, “India Plans Expanded Missile Export Drive, with China on its Mind”, *Reuters*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-missiles-idUSKCN0YU2SQ>. Accessed on January 30, 2017.

The start of the New Year has already set in motion a very confrontational situation, with news on the India-Vietnam transfers of the BrahMos medium range cruise missiles. Industry sources stating that Argentina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Chile, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates are some of the other countries which have also expressed interest in acquiring the missile capability (to be fired from their warships and land-based mobile launchers)³ has only exacerbated the situation further. This, no doubt, would erode China's defence market share and be a major irritant to Beijing as it seeks to be the largest defence supplier – at least in the Asian region. Further, India has also begun to enhance its defensive and offensive capabilities – especially in its eastern sector – by undertaking various measures such as upgrading the existing, as well as laying out new, Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, and enhancing the deployment of more combat squadrons in its eastern sector. These defensive measures undertaken by India are mainly as a reaction to China's growing military assertiveness in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Indian Ocean – in pursuit of its economic outreach through its belt and road initiative. Further, with the ongoing military reforms which it initiated at the start of 2016, China has been looked upon as a grave threat and questions have begun to emerge on whether one can now expect the growth of a more militarised China under President Xi Jinping.

Three major issues in 2016 pushed the relations between India and China on the downward trajectory; the first was India's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which China seems to be stalling. China sees India as its geostrategic challenger in the region and India's growing relations with the United States are being perceived as a threat in Beijing. China has been trying to involve Pakistan in multilateral dialogues on regional cooperation and security in relation to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and Central Asia in an attempt to minimise its international isolation.⁴

3. Rahul Bedi and Jon Grevatt, "India Plans Expanded Export of BrahMos Cruise Missiles", *HIS Jane's 360*, June 14, 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/61334/india-plans-expanded-export-of-brahmos-cruise-missiles>. Accessed on January 30, 2017.
4. "Why is China 'Protecting' the Pakistan-Based Jaish-e-Mohammad Militant Group?", *Deutsche Welle*, February 8, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/why-is-china-protecting-the-pakistan-based-jaish-e-mohammad-militant-group/a-3697418>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

Thus, China feels that India's incorporation into the elite group of NSG member states could further isolate Pakistan globally and would also poorly reflect on Beijing as it is widely seen that Islamabad is a close ally of China.

Another issue that created a major rift in the bilateral relations was China blocking India's attempts at the United Nations to get Pakistan-based militant, Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) chief Maulana Masood Azhar, declared a terrorist, by stating that there remains lack of proof, despite the well-known fact that he was responsible for masterminding the attack at the Pathankot Indian Air Force Station in January 2016. And more recently, on February 7, 2017, China vetoed a proposal by the USA at the UN Security Council to designate Masood Azhar, a global terrorist, despite the backing it received from the UK and France.⁵ And this was in the aftermath of the head of the Xinjiang government stating in January 2017, that security along the China-Pakistan border would be further tightened in order to prevent terrorists from entering or leaving the region illegally. This move can be seen as China signalling its displeasure with Pakistan over its inability to stop terrorists from sneaking into the region of Xinjiang. The Xinjiang Communist Party leaders have expressed fears of militants getting training in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and returning to the province to carry out terror attacks.⁶

Siegfried O. Wolf, a researcher at the University of Heidelberg's South Asia Institute and the director of research at the Brussels-based South Asia Democratic Forum, has stated that in view of its own concern on the rise of insurgency in its Xinjiang region, China shared India's concern on terrorism. China sees the move to term the JeM chief a terrorist as a counter-productive measure, since it could lead the anti-India militant groups in Pakistan rising against the Pakistani state. This could cause a major blow

5. "China Blocks US Move to Designate Jaish Chief Masood Azhar a Terrorist at UN", *Dawn*, February 8, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1313303/china-blocks-us-move-to-designate-jaish-chief-masood-azhar-a-terrorist-at-un>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

6. Saibal Dasgupta, "China to Seal Border with Pakistan to Curb Terror", *The Times of India*, January 11, 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/china-to-seal-border-with-pakistan-to-curb-terror/articleshow/56468455.cms>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

to China's multi-billion dollar investment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.⁷ Thus, China would continue to use its veto powers at the UN Security Council in favour of Pakistan in order to protect its own interest in the region, while, at the same time, limiting the infiltration of elements prone to Islamic separatism or extremism.

The CPEC project that is underway is another unsettling and emerging issue that could also incite some degree of conflict between the two nations, as the establishment of this economic corridor could threaten India's security interest in the region. India views this initiative as an attempt by Beijing to increase its sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. Recent reports indicate that Pakistan may have successfully test-fired its submarine-launched cruise missile, the Babur III. Once this is fired from a submarine and operationalised, it would help Pakistan realise the third leg of its nuclear triad.⁸ In view of this development, many analysts have termed the Gwadar seaport – which is being established on the pretext of facilitating trade under the CPEC – as a likely base in the future for Pakistan and China to dock their nuclear capable submarines. This could become a major security challenge for India and, thus, could impact China-India relations. It must be realised that apart from the new challenges to the relations, the ongoing and unresolved border issue between India and China continues to undermine the relations, with China still not keen on settling the boundary issue with India. China is unwilling to give up its claims on the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and this continues to cause friction between the two nations and impacts the overall growth on the diplomatic front. Thus, we see that 2017 continues to present challenges towards the overall growth in the relations. However, there also seems to be a number of shared interests which could create opportunities for a rapprochement in the relations which have recently been on a downward trajectory.

7. n. 4.

8. "Babur 3: Salient Features of Pakistan's Nuclear Capable Submarine Cruise Missile", *The Indian Express*, January 10, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/babur-3-salient-features-of-pakistans-nuclear-capable-submarine-cruise-missile-4466855/>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

INDIA-CHINA ENERGY SECURITY

One major area of common interest between the two nations is the need for securing their respective energy needs. The coming years are likely to witness a rise in energy prices, now that OPEC has decided to curtail the level of production amongst its member states to about 32.5 million barrels per day.⁹ Furthermore, the OPEC countries, along with the non-OPEC oil producing nations, during their ministerial meeting held in Vienna on December 10, 2016, made a deal for the first time since 2001 in which it was decided to curtail crude oil output.¹⁰ This move by the OPEC and non-OPEC oil producing nations would necessitate engagement amongst import dependent, energy hungry nations. According to the World Energy Outlook 2007, global energy requirements could be 50 percent higher in 2030 than they are today, with China and India together accounting for as much as 45 percent of that increase.¹¹ The 2016 World Energy Outlook has also shown a 30 percent rise in global energy demand by 2040, and despite a fall in the demand by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries on account of a decline in their economic growth, the geography of global energy consumption continues to shift towards industrialising, urbanising economies, e.g. India, Southeast Asia and China as well as parts of Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. China and India have a shared goal in securing energy supplies from the growing sources, including shale gas being produced in the US, and new oil and gas fields in Africa and South America. The two countries, according to the World Energy Outlook 2016, have also seen the largest expansion of solar photovoltaics (PVs), thus, implying their immense need for energy towards fuelling their economic growth.¹²

9. Sam Meredith, "OPEC Reaches Agreement to Cut Oil Production to 32.5 Million Barrels a Day: Oil Ministers", *CNBC*, November 30, 2016, <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/11/30/opec-reportedly-reaches-agreement-to-cut-oil-production.html>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.
10. Vladimir Soldatkin, Rania El Gamal and Alex Lawler, "OPEC, Non-OPEC Agree First Global Oil Pact Since 2001", *Reuters*, December 10, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-opec-meeting-idUSKBN13Z0J8>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.
11. Harsh V. Pant, *Contemporary Debates in Indian Foreign and Security Policy: India Negotiates its Rise in the International System* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2008), p. 151.
12. "World Energy Outlook 2016", International Energy Agency, 2016, <https://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/WorldEnergyOutlook2016ExecutiveSummaryEnglish.pdf>. Accessed on January 31, 2017.

Until 1993, China was not concerned much about energy security as it was an exporter of energy resources. However, the rapid economic modernisation and growth that witnessed a spike in demand in the 1990s along with a stagnant domestic supply, saw China transforming from a net exporter to a net importer of energy resources. As a latecomer to international energy markets, China found that most of the good oil and gas assets in stable and respectable countries were unavailable because they were already owned by national companies in the producer countries or by Western multinational oil companies. Furthermore, China's physical distance, and the presence of Western oil companies in every resource rich region, along with its late entry into the Gulf region as well as other oil rich regions, made it difficult for China to gain secured possession over oil and gas fields. Therefore, China was forced to turn to countries where the US and other Western countries' sanctions forbid US and Western countries' companies to establish their business; for instance, Myanmar and countries in Africa.¹³

China's position is that while it has been moving from being an oil surplus to an oil deficit economy – given its increasing demand – it has been trying to develop an external oil strategy that has much in common with the Japanese model. In 1998, the China National Petroleum Corporation was restructured into a group of joint companies, all with shares listed in Hong Kong and New York. Part of the remit of these companies was to become active participants on the world energy scene. Chinese entities such as PetroChina, SINOPEC Corp, and CNOOC Ltd have all made initiatives towards oil exploration and development at various global energy hotspots. Chinese companies now operate in some 30 countries and are in the process of developing an 'own oil' policy as they find themselves competing against India that also has a similar policy. However, if countries such as China and India seek to achieve the status on the global oil scene that compares with that of the major oil companies, they need a long-term commitment to both buy and sell

13. Namrata Panwar, Working Draft for BISA Conference 2009, "India and China Competing Over Myanmar Energy Resources", December 2009, https://www.bisa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_bisa%26task%3Ddownload_paper%26no_html%3D1%26passed_paper_id%3D125+%26cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=in. Accessed on February 7, 2017.

oil and gas. Major foreign energy companies seeking to enhance their global standing have three possible options open to them if they wish to share overseas oil development. The choices are: first, to negotiate for exploration and development rights in given regions or designated mining lots; the second possibility is to enter production-sharing agreements with foreign countries; or, third, to pay the operating fees (in oil) for exploration and development services to state oil companies. With regards to the first choice, few developing countries have new mining lots for tender presently. Thus, the only way into this type of activity is to seek to participate in, or buy, outright lots already granted to other firms. Today, this basically means they have to negotiate for such agreements with mostly American firms that own development interests around the globe.¹⁴

India, on the other hand, is also faced with a massive energy deficit due to its meagre domestic energy production which is inadequate to meet the rising domestic demand on account of its economic boom. Thus, securing reliable and long-term sources for its energy supply is a vital strategic priority. However, unlike China, India's import of its energy came from West Asian countries that were under no legal sanctions imposed by the West. Thus, India had to comply with the rules of the market and rely on a flawed and biased market mechanism which makes it volatile to price fluctuations. India depends heavily on sea routes to get oil from West Asia and Africa, with 65-70 percent of its total energy coming from the Gulf region. This situation is largely on account of India's adversarial relations with Pakistan which has prevented India from using its territory for extracting energy from West Asia through the land route. In order to overcome this logistic impediment and the overdependence on one region, India is trying to diversify its imports from all possible oil producing countries, including Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Russia.¹⁵

14. Tatsu Kambara and Christopher Howe, *China and the Global Energy Crisis: Development and Prospects for China's Oil and Natural Gas* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2007), pp. 121-122.

15. Panwar, n. 13.

ENERGY SECURITY COOPERATION: A POINT OF INTEREST

There is no doubt that energy insecurity would have a consequential impact on the economies of both the nations and it is in this background that today we find both India and China trying to shape their respective energy policies, which, in turn, are also being impacted by their growing stature globally – in terms of their political as well as economic prominence. India views China as a major competitor in its quest towards securing its energy needs. Some argue that this growing demand as well as the rising insecurity could well impact either of the two nations' external posturing. Some argue that China, in pursuit of its energy security, could adopt policies that could be destabilising e.g. China's energy exploration ties with Bangladesh for the development of natural gas fields, as well as its ongoing oil and natural gas engagement with Myanmar after it reversed its decades-old policy of isolating the Burmese junta. This is becoming a matter of strategic concern for India and could cause some friction in its ties with Bangladesh which seeks cooperation between the two on the issue of energy, amongst other things. With Myanmar also, India is today finding it difficult to counter the growing Chinese influence, with China selling everything from weapons to foodgrains to Myanmar. This is evident from the preferential treatment that the Chinese firm received in being awarded the blocks and gas in Myanmar, despite the fact that New Delhi not only assured investment in developing the Sittwe port, along with a \$ 20 million credit for the renovation of the Thanlyin refinery.¹⁶

Contrary to this, there are also those that argue that China, due to its needs for securing its energy demand, could ensure a more pragmatic policy, overhauling its present aggressive forms of engagement. In case China does adopt this posturing, it could further integrate itself more into the global system as a more benign and responsible player. According to Wang Tao, as different as their economic and political systems are, the two largest emerging nations have much more to learn from each other's successes, and much more to gain together in securing their shared critical sea lanes and energy

16. Pant, n.11, pp. 159-160.

supplies.¹⁷ China has consistently outbid India in the competition for energy sources in the world market and had the upper hand. The nations in particular that receive Chinese investments are attracted to the fact that Chinese money generally comes with none of the good governance requirements, human rights conditions and environmental quality regulations that characterise the US and other Western government investments. However, in order to stabilise the price of oil, there is a need for both countries to agree on joint bidding. If India and China want to abstain from any future conflict, they need to work on a collaborative framework which not only takes into consideration their energy concerns but reduces any suspicion and misunderstanding coming in their way. The leaders in both countries must understand that the gains from seizing the strategic opportunity that is available are far more important than the possible gains from strategic competition. Conflict between the two nations, in order to attain short-term gains, should be avoided as it could hurt both countries' long-term agendas to safeguard their energy needs.¹⁸

Till date, India and China have signed a number of agreements in the oil and gas sector. Some of these collaborations include India's Oil and Natural Gas Commission Limited (ONGC) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) which signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2012 to cooperate in oil and gas extraction as well as their refinement. ONGC and CNPC are partnering with Malaysia's Petronas in a joint venture in the Greater Nile Oil Project of Sudan. There is also a joint venture between GAIL India Ltd and China Gas, which will pursue opportunities in CNG, CBM, LNG and Exploration and Production Projects. These collaborations would have mutual benefits as both nations can pool in their knowledge and expertise to attain maximum benefits. For instance, India can provide its experienced professionals for deep drilling while China can provide drillers, welders and field technicians in large numbers.¹⁹ During the 4th India-China Strategic

17. Wang Tao, "Shared Energy Interests an Opportunity for Sino-Indian Cooperation", *The Diplomat*, May 23, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/shared-energy-interests-an-opportunity-for-sino-indian-cooperation/>. Accessed on January 11, 2017.

18. Panwar, n. 13.

19. Sanjay Kaul, "Collaboration Between India and China in the Oil and Gas Sector", *India-China Collaboration*, September 19, 2014, <https://sanjaykauleit.wordpress.com/category/india-china-collaboration/>. Accessed on January 8, 2017.

Economic Dialogue on October 7, 2016, both parties agreed on the need to cooperate on sourcing energy from international markets, construction of a high-speed railway and development of coastal manufacturing zones. The two sides also called for a joint strategy to meet the rising energy demand through appropriate policy measures and efforts in the international energy markets.²⁰

This necessity for securing their energy needs is one such possibility that could propel a retrospective on their current state of bilateral relations and unleash a flight of engagement between the two nations. No doubt, there are going to be tendencies of increasing competition between India and China over energy resources – as is becoming apparently visible today – and may well intensify in the years to come. However, given the possibility of diminishing oil discoveries and reserves globally at a time when both nations are in the midst of an economic surge and their demands are high, they have made energy the focal point of their diplomatic overtures to states far and wide. More significantly, faced with a market in which politics has an equal, if not greater influence on price, as fast growing economies, the two nations have decided to coordinate their efforts to secure energy resources overseas.

In essence, China and India plan to work together to secure energy resources without unnecessarily bidding up the prices of those resources, thereby agreeing to a consumers' cartel representing 2.3 billion potential consumers. Together, their combined markets and purchasing power offers an extremely attractive partner to energy-producing states, especially the ones that face Western pressure over their human rights records or the nature of their political institutions. Thus, cooperation between China and India on energy issues is the only way ahead if both states want to gain economies of scale and negotiation muscle. In many ways, both states face similar constraints in achieving energy security and a coordinated approach would provide mutual benefit.²¹

20. "India, China Agree to Adopt New Theme of Closer Cooperation", *The Times of India*, October 14, 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-China-agree-to-adopt-new-theme-of-closer-cooperation/articleshow/54837217.cms>. Accessed on January 8, 2017.

21. Pant, n. 11, pp. 159-160.

CONCLUSION

As the bilateral issues tend to get more complicated – given the ever evolving economic and security dilemmas faced by both India and China – it is evident that individual nations have to always consider options that best suit their long-term strategic aspirations. However, it is also imperative for nations to engage where common points of interest exist. The uncertainty that both nations could face on energy security due to the monopolistic action of the oil cartels which seek to undermine normal pricing by artificially controlling supply is one such instance. India and China together having the largest share in the demand for energy globally, could play an important role in not only influencing global prices but also by collaborating in energy resource outreach which would help in ensuring a stable flow of energy resources to fulfil their respective energy needs. Thus, cooperation in the field of energy security is one such arena that could create interdependencies between the two nations. This interdependency could possibly help in creating a platform to address issues relating to the unresolved territorial dispute, the concerns raised by India on terrorism from Pakistan and the security concerns emerging out of the ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor initiative.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF BEIJING'S MILITARISATION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ON ASEAN RELATIONS

POOJA BHATT

INTRODUCTION

The maritime and territorial claims made by China in the South China Sea have become more complex in the light of recent developments. China, backing its claims with its "historical fishing and trading rights" in the region, proceeded with land reclamation and infrastructure development on several of the islands. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) verdict on July 12, 2016, denounced China's "historic rights" on the nine-dash line, but Beijing went ahead with its construction activities on the islands of the region in an unrestrained manner. It has militarised a few of the disputed islands with the installation of missiles, development of runways and other military equipment. Despite the verdict going in favour of the Philippines, the president of the country (Philippines), in an unprecedented move, displayed bonhomie towards Beijing by announcing that he had decided to break away from the US, and sought to iron out his differences with China on the South China

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Sea dispute through bilateral talks. China reciprocated by allowing Filipino fishermen to fish near the Scarborough Shoal waters.

However, other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are not happy with Beijing's actions and are seeking help from other countries to strengthen their military footprints. These developments are expected to have implications on the ASEAN states' relations with each other and the possible pulling of these states towards extra-regional powers. India, being an ASEAN observer state and a maritime state with substantial interests in the maritime geopolitics of the region, needs to keep a keen watch on these issues for its strategic concerns. This paper aims to assess the situation in South China Sea that has become complex with the developments in 2016 .

THE SOUTH CHINA DISPUTE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

One of the most controversial maritime boundaries in the contemporary geostrategic realm is the Nine-Dash Line (NDL) in the South China Sea. Previously known as the ten-dash and eleven-dash line, it refers to the demarcation line used by the governments of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Republic of China (ROC) to claim the waters, islands and resources within the region based on their "historical rights". China has been carrying out dredging and developing certain infrastructure on these islands such as runways, port facilities, and military buildings (for housing radars). The growing narrative on the South China Sea reads the activities in the region as China's "aggressive posture" and creating a security dilemma within the region.

Apart from China, other neighbouring countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines also have competing claims in the region. The NDL does not conform to the maritime laws and, hence, cannot be considered as a maritime boundary of China. Beijing, on the other hand, has made historical claims dating back to 2,000 years to bolster its claim on the region. The territorial claims, the installations, and the Chinese conduct in the nine-dash line have security implications. A shift in the security dynamics has been witnessed among the countries in the region and also by major powers like the US in the South China Sea. As the South China Sea is an important Sea Lane of

Communication (SLOC), countries such as the US, Australia, Japan and India and the ASEAN countries are stressing upon freedom of navigation and the open seas policy.

BEIJING'S MISSILE DEPLOYMENT AND OTHER MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Beijing has been strengthening its military presence in the South China Sea in the past few years. As reported by *Fox News*¹ in February 2016, the Chinese military has deployed an advanced Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system on one of its contested islands in the South China Sea, according to civilian satellite imagery. The imagery from ImageSat International (ISI) indicated two batteries of eight SAM launchers as well as a radar system on Woody Island (part of the Paracel Island chain in the South China Sea).² Currently, Woody Island is claimed by three countries: China, Taiwan and Vietnam. However, China has occupied Woody Island for the past 50 years.

More recently, in December 2016, new missile systems such as the long range missile HQ-9 and some short range missiles (SAMs) were reported by the US media at Hainan Island. The short range SAM comprises a combined close-in missile system with a range of 10 miles, which also contains anti-aircraft guns. The longer-range HQ-9 system has a range of 125 miles, and is roughly based on the Russian S-300 system. Depending on the type of missile used, it could extend the range up to 250 miles and target not only aircraft, but ballistic missiles as well.

China has constructed over 3,000 acres of land atop reefs in the South China Sea in the past few years. The images available³ showed the construction on China's man-made islands at Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief Reefs. The islands have three runways and China periodically flies its bombers and fighter jets over the disputed region. The satellite photos show China making progress on at least

1. Lucas Tomlinson, Yonat Friling, "Exclusive: China Sends Surface-to-Air Missiles to Contested Island in Provocative Move", *Fox News World*, February 16, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/02/16/exclusive-china-sends-surface-to-air-missiles-to-contested-island-in-provocative-move.html>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.
2. Ibid.
3. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, <https://amti.csis.org/>. Accessed on February 8, 2017.

two dozen hardened concrete hangars in order to park Chinese bombers and fighter jets as well as in-flight refuelling planes, greatly expanding the reach of the Chinese military.

Recently, in January 2017, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) confirmed that the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier passed through the Taiwan Strait.⁴ This marked the first official statement that the PLA provided of the *Liaoning's* activities in the South China Sea. *Liaoning*, named after a Chinese province, was adapted from a Soviet-era vessel Beijing purchased from Ukraine in 1998. China is making progress with its second aircraft carrier, currently named as 001A, which is being made indigenously.

Chinese official statements claim that these installations are for defensive purposes and are aimed at improving its national defence capabilities.⁵ However, these activities are militarising the South China Sea and now have been extended to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) too. The Chinese government has been investing heavily in infrastructure development in the IOR by building ports in Djibouti, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, apart from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that passes near Indian territories. There are reports of sightings of Chinese submarines in the IOR and also sales of submarines to Bangladesh and Pakistan. Indian authorities and the other major stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region have been watching these activities with a lot of caution. The South China Sea forms a major SLOC between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The current Chinese activities thereby affect the commercial and strategic interests of several countries, including Australia, Japan and also the US.

BEIJING-MANILA BONHOMIE: ADDING TO THE DISORDER

Amidst the South China Sea dispute among China and four ASEAN countries, there have been fresh (surprise) developments in the Philippines-Chinese bilateral relations. Manila was the advantaged party of the PCA verdict on the South China Sea in 2016. There were

4. "PLA Confirms Aircraft Carrier Liaoning Passed Through Taiwan Straits on Thursday", *Global Times*, January 12, 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1028435.shtml>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.
5. Katie Hunt, Jim Sciutto and Tim Hume, "China Said to Deploy Missiles on South China Sea Island", *CNN News*, February 18, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/16/asia/china-missiles-south-china-sea/>. Accessed on February 8, 2017.

expectations of souring of relations between the two states after this dispute. The history of bilateral relations between these countries exhibits warmth as they have had several bilateral agreements since 1975.⁶ In May 2000, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, the two countries signed a joint statement defining the framework of bilateral relations in the 21st century.

In October 2001, then Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo made a state visit to China. During the visit, President Arroyo held bilateral talks with top Chinese leaders. Since 2001, the focus of the bilateral agreement shifted to issues with significance for maritime security, trade and cultural exchanges⁷. Chinese Filipinos form the largest non-indigenous ethnic group in the Philippines.

It was during the time of the PCA verdict in June 2016 that the new Philippines President, Rodrigo Duterte, assumed office. His election campaign had focussed on the war on drugs, economic growth and an independent foreign policy. Known for his temperament and use of colourful and unparliamentary language, he distanced himself from the US and opted for rapprochement with China. On his first three-day visit to China, President Duterte signed several investment and financing agreements worth \$24 billion, of which \$15 billion comprised investment projects and \$9 billion credit facilities.⁸

This move of the Philippines towards China added to the pandemonium among its ASEAN neighbours and other observer states such as Japan, India and the US. The Philippines had been

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6. The agreements include: Joint Trade Agreement (1975); Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement (1978); Postal Agreement (1978); Air Services Agreement (1979); Visiting Forces Agreement (1999); Cultural Agreement (1979); Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (1992); Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation (1999); Tax Agreement (1999); and Treaty on Mutual Judicial Assistance on Criminal Matters (2000).
 7. Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Crackdown on Transnational Crimes (2001), Treaty on Extradition (2001), Pact on Cooperation Against Illicit Traffic and Abuse of Narcotic Drugs (2001), Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Cooperation (2002), Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Cooperation (2005), Pact on Cooperation in Youth Affairs (2005), Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Cooperation (2007), Memorandum of Understanding on Education Cooperation (2007), Pact on Protection of Cultural Heritage (2007), Pact on Sanitary Cooperation (2008), etc.
 8. Alexis Romero and Richmond Mercurio, "Philippines, China Sign \$24-B Deals", *PhilStar Global*, October 22, 2016, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/10/22/1636102/philippines-china-sign-24-b-deals>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

a major non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) ally of the US and recipient of its military as well as financial aid. Nearly 400,000 Americans visit the Philippines each year and US Agency for Development (USAID) programmes support the 'Philippines' war on poverty as well as the government's reform agenda in critical areas, including anti-money laundering, rule of law, tax collection, and trade and investment. However, in 2016, President Duterte announced maintaining better diplomatic ties with the two geopolitical arch-rivals—US and China.⁹

Manila signed several bilateral Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Japan aiming to strengthen its maritime capabilities through human resource development, capacity-building assistance and provision of patrol vessels and other equipment for the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) during President Duterte's visit to Japan in October 2016. With regard to the South China Sea arbitral award, the two leaders acknowledged the importance of a rules-based approach to the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the UN Charter and other relevant international conventions. Notably, China and Japan do not share warm strategic relations.

THE QUIESCENT CODE OF CONDUCT ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Much before the contestation in the South China Sea became a global issue, the ASEAN countries were involved in remedying the overlapping maritime claims with China. In 1995, China occupied Mischief Reef, one of the Spratly Islands located 250 km (or 135 nautical miles—nm) from the Philippines. The Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea or DoC¹⁰ was signed between the ASEAN countries and China in 2002, agreeing for the following areas: respect for freedom and overflight in the South China Sea as provided by the universally

9. Jim Duarte, "Duterte Says he Won't Sever Ties with US", *PhilStar Global*, October 22, 2016, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/10/22/1636233/duterte-says-he-wont-sever-ties-us>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.

10. Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, 2002, <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/rp/pdf/2002%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Conduct%20of%20Parties%20in%20the%20South%20China%20Sea-pdf.pdf>. Accessed on February 10, 2017.

recognised international law and UNCLOS, restriction on construction on occupied and unoccupied islands, notifying and exchanging relevant information about impending military exercises; and cooperative marine activities in the South China Sea. The document text expressed an aspiration to “enhance favourable conditions for a peaceful and durable solution of differences and disputes among the countries concerned”. The DoC provides a non-binding political statement between the signing parties and a foundation to the Code of Conduct (or CoC) on the South China Sea.

ASEAN and the Chinese counterparts released a joint statement in 2016 on the CoC but the progress has been slow owing to differing objectives and interests of the parties relating to the South China Sea. It is worth noting that out of the ten ASEAN member states, only four – namely Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Vietnam – are involved in overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea with China, whereas Indonesia has been playing the role of a mediator in the dispute. The other five – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand – have shown little interest in the dispute as they don’t have any territorial disputes with Beijing.

The year 2017 has been important in shaping the future of the CoC. It was the Philippines that had introduced the draft for the CoC in 2012. The document will ensure that ASEAN members and China follow legal and diplomatic processes in settling territorial disputes. The Philippines, being the chair for the 50th anniversary 2017 ASEAN Conference, would try its best to get the CoC signed by the parties. The military activities carried out by Beijing in the South China Sea have been an impediment to the signing as well as implementation of the CoC, in both letter and spirit. Nevertheless, in view of certain other developments in the global scenario, it is expected to make China’s choices in the South China Sea more difficult. The new US Administration under President Trump has released several statements¹¹ showing its increasing interests in the South and East

11. Brad Lendon, “Mattis: US Will Defend Japanese Islands Claimed by China”, *CNN News*, February 4, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/03/asia/us-defense-secretary-mattis-japan-visit/>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.
“Trump White House Vows to Stop China Taking South China Sea Islands”, *CNBC News*, January, 23, 2017, <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/01/23/trump-white-house-vows-to-stop-china-taking-south-china-sea-islands.html>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.

China Seas. These statements exhibit the uncompromising position of the US government in the region. The US conducted several Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises in the South China Sea that have been challenging China's claims in the region. In October 2016, a US warship, *USS Decatur* (DDG-73), conducted operations near Chinese holdings near Triton¹² and Woody Islands in the Paracel Island chain off the coast of Vietnam in the South China Sea. Prior to this, US warships conducted similar exercises near the Spratlys.¹³ At the same time, there have been no reports of Chinese island building and similar exercises for sovereignty claims since the July 12, 2016, verdict, apart from the aircraft carrier *Liaoning's* exercises and capturing of an underwater drone of the US Navy by Chinese naval forces in the vicinity of Subic Bay, 20nm from Philippines.

The changing geopolitical scenario in the context of the US' renewed interests in the South and East China Seas region, and Washington's diplomatic and economic backing to Vietnam, will present a dilemma for Beijing on the signing of the CoC. The signing of the CoC would force China to adhere to the clauses, including restricting its military exercises and giving prior information to the other parties regarding the impending exercises in the region. On the other hand, if Beijing officials continue to delay the CoC, it might compel other parties to seek extra-regional support within the region.

MILITARY EXPENDITURE OF THE ASEAN COUNTRIES

The geopolitical flux in the South China Sea has furthered another important development: the increasing defence expenditure of the Southeast Asian countries.¹⁴ According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reports, Asia and Southeast Asia have seen an increase in defence budgets over the years. Vietnam has increased

12. Sam LaGrone, "China Upset Over 'Unprofessional' US South China Sea Freedom of Navigation Operation", *USNI News*, January 31, 2016. URL: <https://news.usni.org/2016/01/31/china-upset-over-unprofessional-u-s-south-china-sea-freedom-of-navigation-operation>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.

13. Sam LeGrone, "US Destroyer Passes Near Chinese Artificial Island in South China Sea Freedom of Navigation Operation", *USNI News*, May 10, 2016, <https://news.usni.org/2016/05/10/u-s-destroyer-passes-near-chinese-artificial-island-in-south-china-sea-freedom-of-navigation-operation>. Accessed on February 7, 2017.

14. There has also been an increase in the defence budgets of the major powers. For example, the US leads the pack, shelling out \$596 billion in 2015, according to SIPRI. China is in second place with roughly \$215 billion spending in 2015.

its military expenditure from \$1 billion to \$4.4 billion in 2015, which accounts for 8 percent of its total Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The country's defence spending is expected to increase further to \$5 billion in 2017, and \$6.2 billion by 2020.¹⁵ Vietnam has used the purchases to modernise its capabilities – especially its surface and submarine fleets. It has also boosted coastal defences with the purchase of anti-ship batteries and missiles. The air force primarily operates Russian-made aircraft. Overall, 80 percent of the defence purchases are from Russia. The European nations, India and Israel have started to move into Vietnam's defence deals. India had provided a \$500 million loan to Vietnam¹⁶ for defence purchases in 2016 and is also discussing the sale of the Brahmos and indigenously developed Akash missiles¹⁷ – furthering the defence cooperation between the two countries.

Similarly, the Philippines' defence budget has been increased in recent times. In fact, there was a hike of 25 percent in the 2015 budget to purchase navy frigates, surveillance planes, radars and patrol craft.¹⁸ The Philippines government of President Benigno Aquino III pushed a national budget for 2016 that included a record 25 billion pesos (\$552 million) earmarked for the country's ongoing military modernisation effort.¹⁹ In September 2016, the new President Duterte asked Congress for a 15 percent year-on-year increase in the country's defence budget, taking it to 130.6 billion pesos (\$2.9 billion).

The Duterte Administration continued the plans, and funding amounts under the Armed Forces Modernisation Act that was initiated

15. Sophia Yan, "Vietnam's Defense Spending is \$5 Billion and Rising Fast", *CNN Money*, May 23, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/05/23/news/vietnam-military-spending/>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

16. "India Extends \$500 Million to Vietnam to Bolster Defence Ties", *Indian Express*, September 3, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-extends-500-million-to-vietnam-to-bolster-defence-ties/>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

17. "India, Vietnam Hold Talks on Sale of Akash, Brahmos Missiles" *The Economic Times*, February 3, 2017, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-vietnam-hold-talks-on-sale-of-akash-brahmos-missiles/articleshow/56959972.cms>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

18. "Philippines Proposes Record \$552-million Defense Budget", *Deutsche Welle News*, July 21, 2015, <http://www.dPhilippines.com/en/philippines-proposes-record-552-million-defense-budget/a-18597020>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

19. Jon Grevatt, "Philippines Proposes 15% Increase in 2017 Defence spending", *IHS Jane's*, August 16, 2016, <http://www.janes.com/article/62997/philippines-proposes-15-increase-in-2017-defence-spending>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

in 2013. Under the plan, military modernisation has been divided into three phases: the first from 2013 till 2017; the second from 2018 to 2023; and the third from 2024 to 2028 – with 83 billion pesos allocated for the first phase. Several countries, including China, Russia, South Korea and Japan, are seeking to supply military equipment to the Philippines. Other defence heavyweights present include Lockheed Martin and Textron, both of the US, as well as Thales of France, Saab of Sweden, and the defence arm of the European aerospace giant, Airbus.²⁰ Markedly, the Philippines has a defence pact with the US since 1951²¹ but there is no clarity on its continuation after President Duterte's 'separation with the US remarks in 2016.

The Brunei Legislative Council has announced that Brunei's defence budget will grow nearly 5 percent in 2016-17. The total defence budget amounts to BN\$564.7 million (US\$408 million), or approximately 2.5 percent of its GDP. Brunei has a small military of just 5,800 personnel, but it also has a small population. Brunei's per capita defence spending is the second highest in ASEAN, behind Singapore. It is almost ten times Malaysia's per capita military spending. The list of priority purchases for Brunei's military includes airlift, maritime patrol aircraft, maritime radars, fast patrol boats and ground-based air defence.²²

In November 2016, Malaysia agreed to purchase four littoral mission ships from China²³—the decision to buy from Beijing instead of the US, South Korea and others is said to be purely an economic one. Even Singapore, that enjoys warm diplomatic relations with both the US and China, had increased its defence budgets under

20. Trefor Moss, "Philippines Military Goes on Shopping Spree", *The Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2014, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/philippines-military-goes-on-shopping-spree-drawing-worlds-arms-dealers-1405595103>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

21. "Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America, August 30, 1951", *Official Gazette*, <http://www.gov.ph/1951/08/30/mutual-defense-treaty-between-the-republic-of-the-philippines-and-the-united-states-of-america-august-30-1951/>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

22. Gordon Arthur, "Brunei Defense Budget Rises", *Shephard Media*, March 15, 2016, <https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/defence-notes/bruneis-defence-budget-rises/>. Accessed on February 13, 2017.

23. Chris Blake and Shamim Adam, "Malaysia to Purchase Four Navy Ships From China in Landmark Deal", *Bloomberg*, November 2, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-11-02/malaysia-to-purchase-four-navy-ships-from-china-in-landmark-deal>. Accessed on February 16, 2017.

a deepening crisis in the South and East China Seas.²⁴ The defence budget again increased in 2016 and the Singapore defence minister mentioned the lack of strategic depth to its boundaries as a reason for its increase in military spending.²⁵

IMPLICATIONS OF ASEAN SECURITY PARADIGM AND INDIA'S ROLE

Since 2009, the world has seen increased Chinese activities in the South China Sea in terms of land reclamation as well as infrastructure pertaining to military usage. However, the 2016 PCA verdict brought about a shift in the Chinese actions from infrastructure development to sovereignty assertion through 'area and access denial' to foreign ships and aircraft near its claimed landforms through missile deployments and carrying out exercises using its aircraft carrier and aircraft. China also resorted to threatening the fishermen of other neighbouring countries in the South China Sea. The dispute in the South China Sea can be seen to have multifaceted implications. There has been warming of China's relations with a few of its ASEAN neighbours at the bilateral level. Even though the signing of the Code of Conduct seems to get stretched more into the future, China is trying to woo each of its neighbours with economic and military aid. Nonetheless, the dispute in the South China Sea is not limited to the region. It has brought several extra-regional states into the region in various forms. Some of these states are signing military deals with different ASEAN member-states while others are claiming freedom of navigation and open seas as the basis of their interests in the region. On the other hand, there has been a close watch on China's movements after the new US government renewed interest in the region. The expanding defence budgets of the ASEAN countries, under the pretext of South China Sea dispute, are transforming the region into a highly militarised one.

24. Ali Mustafa, "Singapore: Small State, Big Weapons Buyer", *Al Jazeera*, March 29, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/singapore-small-state-big-arms-purchases-2014320922191312.html>. Accessed on February 16, 2017.

25. John Fraher and Rosalind Mathieson, "Arms Spending Spree in Southeast Asia Has Singapore Worried", *Bloomberg*, March 24, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-24/arms-spending-spree-in-southeast-asia-has-singapore-worried>. Accessed on February 16, 2016.

The absence of any security framework between ASEAN member states and China due to the absence of an unequivocal consensus on the Code of Conduct is adding to the pressure. Beijing's current appeasement policy is clearer when it is on a bilateral basis with each of the ASEAN states in the matter of the South China Sea, but a transparent and workable multilateral framework is still doubtful.

India's relationship with ASEAN has been the foundation of its foreign policy since the 1991 Look East policy. India has shared historical-cultural ties with the ASEAN countries since centuries and it has warm bilateral ties with each of these countries. In 2017, India and ASEAN are celebrating 25 years of Dialogue Partnership. The relationship has evolved from economic to strategic partnerships. India has been attending the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) since 1996. The Plan of Action (POA) to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2016-2020) that was adopted by the leaders of ASEAN and India in 2015 comprises three broad areas, namely political and security cooperation; economic cooperation; and socio-cultural cooperation.²⁶

India has its commercial interests in the South China Sea — in terms of SLOCs and oil exploration projects that ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL)²⁷ and Vietnam are carrying out in collaboration off the coast of Vietnam.²⁸ In June 2016, Beijing had asked both countries to stop the exploration work in the disputed area claimed by both China and Vietnam. Despite the threats, India and Vietnam continued their energy diplomacy and signed new deals later in 2016.²⁹ Energy security is one the underlining themes for the current Indian leadership.

India sees its role as a 'net security provider' in the region and shares its territorial as well as maritime boundaries with some of the ASEAN states. South China Sea connects Indian Ocean and

26. *ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations* published as on February 2017. URL: <http://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Overview-ASEAN-India-as-of-February-2017r4CL.pdf>

27. OVL is the overseas arm of India's state-owned explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corp. Ltd. Vietnam accounted for nearly a quarter of OVL's total hydrocarbon output of 5.5 million tonnes (mt) of oil and 3.3 billion cu. m (BCM) of gas in 2014-15

28. India has seven oils blocks for exploration in the Vietnam coast.

29. "South China Sea Tensions will not Deter Offshore Pursuits: OVL", *Livemint*, July 18, 2016. Accessed on February 16, 2017. URL: <http://www.livemint.com/Industry/PZ1G9xbKFWbL8aWxWhYJnK/South-China-Sea-tensions-will-not-deter-offshore-pursuits-O.html>

Pacific Ocean waters, forming an important SLOC. The security dynamics in the South China Sea are bound to impact India's security architecture. It is in India's interest to have a stable and secure ASEAN neighbourhood and New Delhi needs to engage itself in the security dialogue proactively and support the formation of a cooperative regional security framework. India can leverage its bilateral relations and commonalities in managing the threat perceptions in the South China Sea and also in fostering and forwarding the security framework. India is also emphasising along with its ASEAN nations for an early conclusion on the CoC in the South China Sea. New Delhi favours safeguarding freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the Indo-Pacific and South China Sea region. The developments in the South China Sea in terms of China's militarisation of the islands and the waters will continue to be under scrutiny and shape the alliances in the region in the foreseeable future.

OPERATION MEKONG: CHINA DEALS WITH BARRIERS TO EMBRACE THE MEKONG RIVER

PUYAM RAKESH SINGH

The Mekong river (the Chinese section of the river is known as the Lancang river) rises on the Qinghai-Tibet plateau in China and flows through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam before falling into the South China Sea. The waterway, with a total length of 4,800 km, links the six neighbouring countries providing the foundation of institution building and economic cooperation among these countries. China has been working towards strengthening cooperation with the Southeast Asian nations to facilitate the opening up of Yunnan province, a landlocked province sharing borders with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. Under the 'bridgehead strategy' (*qiaotoubao*), China is promoting Yunnan as a hub of business to facilitate trade and economic relations with the neighbouring South and Southeast Asian countries. Thus, from China's perspective, the Mekong river is an important waterway.

In spite of the potential, the river passes through the Golden Triangle region which comprises parts of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. The Golden Triangle region is the hotbed of opium plantation, synthetic drugs manufacturing and other trans-national crimes. In general,

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Yunnan province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China are badly affected by drug trafficking, illegal immigration, trans-national organised armed groups, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS. In order to control these issues, China has signed many agreements with the neighbouring countries. The nature of the problems and the complexity involved demand a comprehensive approach. Moreover, the seriousness of the issue has amplified with the opening of borders for trade and economic cooperation including the commercial navigation on the Mekong river. This study is an attempt to analyse how and why China is working towards new mechanisms to address such crucial issues in its neighbourhood.

SECURING THE MEKONG RIVER NAVIGATION

Over the past many years, China and the five other Mekong river countries have worked together to improve navigation and ensure security along the river. After conducting a joint investigation on waterway transportation on the Mekong river in 1993, China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand officially signed an agreement on commercial navigation on the river in April 2000. As part of China's "Western Development Campaign", China has developed river ports on the Lancang-Mekong river to promote international river transportation. In April 2001, China hosted a special forum on economic development and cooperation for the Lancang-Mekong river region.

China has invested in dredging the Mekong riverbed to improve navigation through cooperation with Laos and Myanmar.¹ There are efforts to facilitate China's access to sea ports in Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia as various networks of roads and railways are being planned and implemented. However, such connectivity projects face many natural and political barriers in addition to the non-traditional security threats posed by armed drug traffickers. Interestingly, during Chinese Minister of Public Security Jia Chunwang's visit to Myanmar in January 2001, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on narcotic drugs control. Jia met with the commander of the Triangle Regional Command of Myanmar which controls the Myanmar portion of the Golden Triangle region. The

1. "China to Help Myanmar, Laos Dredge Mekong River," *Xinhua News Agency*, June 29, 2011, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/15428.htm>. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

security lapse along the river became clear in the wake of the murder of 13 Chinese sailors near Chiang Saen port in Thailand (in 2011). Located in the infamous Golden Triangle region, the short stretch of the Mekong river passing through Myanmar, Laos and Thailand is vulnerable to armed attacks.

THE MEKONG RIVER KILLINGS

On October 5, 2011, 13 Chinese sailors were murdered in an incident that took place near Chiang Saen (Fig 1) in Thailand. In the past too, similar incidents have affected the security of Chinese nationals and their economic interests along the river. However, unlike the previous incidents, the killings on October 5, 2011, sent a strong signal to Beijing. In fact, such hindrances have affected the implementation of many connectivity projects in the region. Therefore, Beijing unleashed its political and diplomatic influence to secure the river and enhance cooperation with the Mekong river states to control the non-traditional threats.

In the wake of the incident, a joint statement of the ministerial meeting on cooperation in patrol and law enforcement along the Mekong river was issued by China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Following the meeting, a joint patrol mechanism was set up and the four nations' first joint patrol in the river began on December 10, 2011.² Following the trend, on December 20, 2016, they launched the 53rd round of joint patrols.³ During this period, they have launched joint operations, strengthened intelligence sharing, and enhanced judicial cooperation to facilitate repatriation of fugitives. In this context, Naw Kham, a Myanmar national who masterminded the October 5 killings, was arrested on April 25, 2012, in Laos, and was extradited to China on May 10, 2012.⁴ Subsequently, following the trials in the Yunnan provincial court, China executed the main culprits in March 2013.⁵

2. "Joint Patrol Along Mekong River sets new Model of Regional Cooperation," *Sina English*, December 14, 2011, <http://english.sina.com/china/p/2011/1213/422756.html>. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

3. "New Joint Patrol Launched on Mekong River," *Global Times*, December 20, 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1024677.shtml>. Accessed on December 26, 2016.

4. Patrick Boehler, "Naw Kham Sentenced to Death but may Appeal," *The Irrawaddy*, November 6, 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/naw-kham-sentenced-to-death-but-may-appeal.html>. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

5. "Mekong River Murderers Executed by Lethal Injection," *People's Daily*, March 1, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90883/8149807.html>. Accessed on October 13, 2016.

Fig 1: Map of the Mekong River Patrol Route

Source: China Daily (USA), River Patrol Route, December 17, 2013, <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/attachement/jpg/site1/20131217/00221917e13e1419dd0517.jpg> Accessed on March 3, 2017.

Following the October 5, 2011 incident, four Chinese cargo ships and one patrol boat belonging to Myanmar were attacked with rockets on the Mekong river on January 4, 2012.⁶ The incident took place near Wan Pong port in the Myanmarese section of the river. Again, ten days later, another Chinese commercial vessel named *Shengtai-11* came under attack on its way back to Guanlei port from Thailand.⁷ To contain further attacks, China has established a special armed forces corps to conduct joint patrols between Guanlei port in Xishuangbanna prefecture in Yunnan province and Chiang Saen port in Thailand.

In order to control the drugs menace, law enforcement officials from the six countries convened a conference in Beijing in September 2014.⁸ Moreover, the joint statement issued during the visit of Chinese

6. "Chinese, Burmese Ships Attacked on Mekong River," *InKunming*, January 6, 2012, http://en.kunming.cn/index/content/2012-01/06/content_2802615.htm. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

7. "Chinese Vessel Attacked on Mekong River," *China Daily*, January 15, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-01/15/content_14449083.htm. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

8. "China, Mekong Subregion Nations to Work Against Drugs," *Xinhua*, September 24, 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/world/2014-09/24/content_33608031.htm. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

Premier Li Keqiang in November 2014 underscored the importance of collaboration in combating trans-national crimes and conducting the Mekong river basin law enforcement and security cooperation.⁹ Again, on October 24, 2015, a joint declaration following the Ministerial Meeting on Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation along the Mekong river proposed a regional law enforcement and security cooperation centre to enhance cooperation in the field of narcotics, terrorism, cyber crime and security along the river. In addition, the parties agreed to fight against human trafficking, illegal immigration, and launch joint operations against the fugitives and secure their repatriation.

LANCANG-MEKONG COOPERATION MECHANISM

With the Lancang-Mekong river as the foundation, China is working towards enhancing sub-regional cooperation through a new institution called the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) framework. It is important to understand the significance of the new sub-regional mechanism which includes the five Southeast Asian members of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The centrality of the relationship between Japan and China when it comes to regionalism in Asia is reaffirmed.¹⁰ With the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Silk Road Fund, China would be in a better position to enhance its political, economic, security and strategic interests in the sub-region. The GMS cooperation mechanism, with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and with Japan as the major player, is likely to experience the influence of China over the coming years.

China has been an important player in the GMS cooperation since 1992, as Yunnan province participated in the sub-regional cooperation. Later on, to enhance cooperation with the neighbouring countries, in December 2004, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous

9. "China, Myanmar Agree to Deepen Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation," *Xinhuanet*, November 15, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/15/c_133790813.htm. Accessed on October 14, 2016.

10. Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, "Introduction to Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order", in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, eds., *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 4.

Region was formally incorporated into the GMS cooperation. Again, China joined the Mekong River Commission in 1996 as a dialogue partner. However, ever since it put forward the 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) Initiative in 2013, China has been working towards upgrading the GMS cooperation with great intensity.

Speaking at the opening session of the GMS Summit on December 20, 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang underscored the strategic importance of the five countries on the Indo-China peninsula, namely Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. To put it in his words: "For China, the five countries are indeed very close neighbors among all the close neighbors China has in ASEAN."¹¹ Conveying China's wish for building a new framework, Li stated: "China will work with the five countries to build a new framework of deeper cooperation, which will lead us to a new stage of comprehensive development partnership for the greater Mekong sub-region."¹²

In 2015, China has deepened cooperation with the Mekong river countries. The first senior officials' meeting of the Lancang-Mekong River Dialogue and Cooperation was held in Beijing in April 2015. It was followed by the first LMC foreign ministers' meeting held in November 2015 in Yunnan province of China which marked the beginning of the LMC process. The framework has three key areas which include political and security issues, economic affairs and sustainable development, and social affairs and people-to-people exchanges.¹³ In October that year, the parties reached an understanding on holding regular ministerial meetings on law enforcement and security cooperation along the Mekong river and an annual meeting of the senior officials to strengthen cooperation.¹⁴

Interestingly, China has taken note of the strategic importance of the five Mekong river states. In his speech at the first LMC leaders'

11. Remarks by H.E. Li Keqiang, premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China at the Opening Session of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Summit, December 20, 2014, http://english.gov.cn/premier/speeches/2014/12/21/content_281475027468672.htm. Accessed on January 9, 2017.

12. Ibid.

13. Song Miou, ed., "China, Mekong Countries Launch Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework," *Xinhuanet*, November 13, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/13/c_134810678.htm. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

14. "Joint Declaration Issued to Enhance Mekong River Security", *People's Daily*, October 25, 2015, <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/1025/c90883-8966613.html>. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

meeting held in March 2016, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stated: "China and the five Mekong river countries are as closely linked as lips and teeth."¹⁵ The same phrase has been in use to describe the relationship between Beijing and Pyongyang as North Korea serves as a buffer state to enhance the security of China's northeast.¹⁶ A Chinese proverb says: "If the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold (*chun wang chi han*)."¹⁷ It signifies a relationship of interdependence which China wants to promote for securing its strategic interests in the neighbourhood.

In fact, the comprehensive development partnership model advocated by China in December 2014 includes the three key areas, namely, political and security issues, economic affairs and sustainable development, and social affairs and people-to-people exchanges. The new framework will facilitate China's efforts to deal with many non-traditional security threats as well as political issues. With the hope of strengthening cooperation in law enforcement, a ministerial meeting was held in Beijing on December 27, 2016, marking the fifth anniversary of the launching of the Mekong river law enforcement and security cooperation in the aftermath of the October 5 killing of Chinese sailors in 2011.¹⁷

Moreover, during the 5th China-Myanmar Ministerial Meeting on the Rule of Law and Security Cooperation, rule of law along the Mekong river was also on the agenda.¹⁸ Again, China and Cambodia agreed to work jointly under the LMC mechanism.¹⁹ As various trans-national security threats straddle China's periphery, the OBOR initiative has created the necessary ground for strengthening cooperation in law

15. Address by H.E. Li Keqiang at the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting, March 24, 2016, <http://www.chinesemission-vienna.at/eng/zgbd/t1350433.htm>. Accessed on October 6, 2016.

16. Rodger Baker, "China and North Korea: A Tangled Partnership," *Geopolitical Weekly*, April 16, 2013, <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/china-and-north-korea-tangled-partnership>. Accessed on January 5, 2017.

17. "Mekong Countries to Strengthen Law Enforcement Cooperation," *People's Daily*, December 28, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1228/c90000-9160002.html>. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

18. "China, Myanmar Vow to Strengthen Law Enforcement, Security Cooperation," *People's Daily*, September 28, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0928/c90000-9121219.html>. Accessed on October 5, 2016.

19. "China, Cambodia to Forge Ahead with Cooperation, Ties," *People's Daily*, October 14, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1014/c90883-9126802.html>. Accessed on October 14, 2016.

enforcement.²⁰ Moreover, a joint statement on judicial cooperation and the crackdown on cross-border crimes was issued. In the face of increasing threats, judicial cooperation and establishment of a centre to facilitate intelligence sharing, case investigation and joint training programmes were propounded.²¹ In fact, China's policy towards the Mekong river states has gained significance in the wake of the October 5 killing and the announcement of the OBOR initiative.²²

Meanwhile, the significance of the LMC is underscored by China's White Paper on the policies on Asia-Pacific security cooperation issued in January 2017. It also mentions that regional integration and sub-regional cooperation are progressing.²³ In case the formation of the ASEAN is the response of the Southeast nations to the major powers' rivalry, China's interests in advancing the cause of the LMC framework will be cautiously accommodated by the Mekong river states too.²⁴ Yet, China has suggested that the small and medium-sized countries should not "take sides among big countries" to help build partnerships instead of making alliances.²⁵ The mechanism is an effort for China to build "a community of shared future" for the Lancang-Mekong river states based on the principle of synchronising economic and security cooperation.²⁶ The need for enhancing political, security and social aspects of cooperation is one of the key factors driving the establishment of the LMC to improve mutual political trust and security cooperation.²⁷ The formation of the Centre for Comprehensive Law Enforcement and

20. "China, ASEAN Issue Declaration on Security Cooperation," http://english.gov.cn/news/international_exchanges/2015/10/24/content_281475219030294.htm. Accessed on October 6, 2016.

21. Zhang Yan, "China Joins Five Countries in Mission to Prevent Mekong River Trafficking," *China Daily*, October 24, 2015, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-10/24/content_22274639.htm. Accessed on October 13, 2016.

22. "Lancang-Mekong FM Meeting Maps out Direction of Further Cooperation," *People's Daily*, December 24, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1224/c90000-9158749.html>. Accessed on December 26, 2016.

23. "China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation", January 2017, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1429771.shtml. Accessed on February 9, 2017.

24. Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective," in Fawcett and Hurrell, eds., n. 10, p. 37-73.

25. n.23

26. Ibid.

27. Lu Guangsheng, "China Seeks to Improve Mekong Sub-Regional Cooperation: Causes and Policies", February 2016, Policy Report of S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), retrieved from https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PR160225_China-Seeks-to-Improve-Mekong.pdf. Accessed on February 9, 2017.

Security Cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong Sub-Region also indicates China's geopolitical interest to generate support and legitimacy for its policies in the sub-region, including connectivity strategy.

CHINA'S 'ONE BELT, ONE ROAD' INITIATIVE

Meanwhile, China has signed agreements or is discussing cooperation documents with Mekong river countries on connectivity under the framework of the OBOR Initiative. Some of the major projects include the China-Myanmar land-water transportation facility, the China-Lao PDR railway and the China-Thailand railway. In addition to the planned economic corridors under the GMS framework, the LMC mechanism will certainly boost the infrastructure development for connectivity. The strategy is clearly stated in the "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", issued by the China National Development and Reform Commission in March 2015. While the connectivity projects will facilitate the expansion of Chinese economic and strategic influence in the five Mekong river states, the proposed centre for comprehensive law enforcement and security cooperation will help curb security threats.²⁸

Moreover, navigation on the Mekong river would gain a further boost following the meeting of the 14th Joint Committee on Coordination of Commercial Navigation on the Lancang-Mekong in January 2016. The meeting deliberated on securing the upper reaches of the river to facilitate the international waterway development plan.²⁹ The second phase of dredging the Mekong river to accommodate larger vessels will also remove some of the natural barriers to navigation. In addition, at the first Lancang-Mekong Cooperation leaders' meeting held in March 2016, China promised loans of \$1.54 billion and credit lines of up to \$10 billion to support infrastructure development in countries along the Mekong river.³⁰

28. Address by H.E. Li Keqiang at the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting, March 24, 2016, <http://www.chinesemission-vienna.at/eng/zgbd/t1350433.htm>. Accessed on October 6, 2016.

29. "Myanmar Hosts Secure Mekong Navigation Meeting," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, January 22, 2016, <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/myanmar-hosts-secure-mekong-navigation-meeting/>. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

30. "China Focus: Leaders of Lancang-Mekong Countries Convene, China plans Loans for Infrastructure," *Xinhuanet*, March 23, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/23/c_135216798.htm. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

China has advocated connectivity building on the Indo-China peninsula for economic integration among the Mekong river countries. A comprehensive connectivity that constitutes highways, railways, shipping routes and customs clearance would support integration of the Southeast Asian markets into the Chinese market. Meanwhile, the first LMC leaders' meeting noted the importance of building synergy between the OBOR initiative and LMC activities and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.³¹ In December 2016, the visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi exchanged views on the LMC cooperation under the framework of the OBOR initiative.³² The key projects such as the China-Laos railway, China-Thailand railway, China-Myanmar land and water transportation corridors and Mekong river navigation will play key roles in the integration of China with the Southeast Asian countries.³³

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

The creation of the LMC could lead to overlapping of activities with the GMS. However, there are concerns about competition for influence between the two in Southeast Asia. With assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the GMS came into existence in 1992. Both Japan and the US are dominant players at the ADB. At the end of 2014, Japan and the US had shares of 15.7 percent and 15.6 percent respectively. But China holds just 6.5 percent of the total share. At present, the AIIB initiated by China has not found takers in Japan and the US. Interestingly, China has a share of 30.34 percent at AIIB.³⁴ Against this background, "a degree of rivalry" between the two banks is not absent.³⁵ Besides, China is stated to be working to

31. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Sanya Declaration of the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Leaders' Meeting, March 23, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1350039.shtml. Accessed on October 15, 2016.

32. "FM Says China Will Firmly Stand Together With Thailand," *People's Daily*, December 24, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1224/c90000-9158750.html>. Accessed on December 26, 2016.

33. n. 30.

34. "China to Hold Just Over 30% of AIIB," *Reuters*, June 29, 2015, <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/06/29/china-to-hold-just-over-30-of-aiib.html>. Accessed on January 9, 2017.

35. Chietigj Bajpae, "Japan and China: The Geo-Economic Dimension," *The Diplomat*, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/japan-and-china-the-geo-economic-dimension/>. Accessed on January 9, 2017.

“expand its influence at the expense of America and Japan” with the support of the bank.³⁶ Undoubtedly, Japan and China have contested for influence in Southeast Asia.³⁷

Against this background, to enhance political trust among China and the five Mekong river states, China agreed to release water from Jinghong Hydropower Station to alleviate the drought situation in lower riparian Mekong river countries. However, the damming of the Mekong river in China continues to be a sensitive issue among these Southeast Asian countries.³⁸ These offers are meant to enhance connectivity and alleviate the security problems to maintain stability in China’s periphery. In the context of China’s OBOR Initiative, Beijing will “channel more resources” into the Mekong sub-region.³⁹ For many Southeast Asian states, India is a “potentially invaluable balancer for China.”⁴⁰ Under the ‘Act East’ policy, New Delhi has been strengthening relations with the Southeast Asian states. India’s cooperation with the five Mekong river countries namely, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) plays a significant role in balancing the Chinese influence in the sub-region. Therefore, China’s forays in the Southeast Asian countries through institution building and rule setting would impact India’s ‘Act East’ policy.

CONCLUSION

China is working towards strengthening cooperation with the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries to enhance its economic and strategic interests. Through the LMC mechanism, China looks

36. “Why China is Creating a New ‘World Bank’ for Asia,” *The Economist*, November 11, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-6>. Accessed January 9, 2017.

37. Michael Mazza, “China and Japan’s Battle for Influence in Southeast Asia,” *The National Interest*, October 5, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-japans-battle-influence-southeast-asia-14006>. Accessed on January 9, 2017.

38. Shannon Tiezzi, “Facing Mekong Drought, China to Release Water from Yunnan Dam,” *The Diplomat*, March 16, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/facing-mekong-drought-china-to-release-water-from-yunnan-dam/>. Accessed on December 28, 2016.

39. Lu Guangsheng, “China Seeks to Improve Mekong Sub-regional Cooperation: Causes and Policies,” *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Policy Report*, February 2016, available at https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PR160225_China-Seeks-to-Improve-Mekong.pdf. Accessed on January 11, 2017.

40. Jonah Blank et al., “Look East, Cross Black Waters: India’s Interest in Southeast Asia,” RAND Corporation Research Report (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015), p. 143.

to secure its interests along the southwestern borders in Yunnan province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region by strengthening security cooperation with the five Mekong river countries. In addition, peace and stability in its neighbourhood would facilitate execution of the Chinese-funded development projects including some key connectivity projects in Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Furthermore, it would help strengthen the China-ASEAN partnership in future. Also, China's increasing economic and political clout might aim at softening the 'China threat' perception in some constituencies. Nevertheless, China continues to fight for a safe passage through the Golden Triangle region and the neighbouring Mekong states have their concerns about the rising Chinese influence. Exploitation of natural resources, migration of Chinese population and social and environmental impacts of the China-backed projects in the region will remain the major challenges to China's strategy. Lastly, China's efforts to build new institutions and setting rules in the sub-region are part and parcel of the strategic competition in East Asia.

AL QAEDA: ASSESSING THE “PHENOMENON”

RADHIKA HALDER

The Afghanistan-Pakistan region, since the beginning of the new millennium has been the epicentre of the “Global War on Terror”. The region is also referred to as the “hub of terrorism” and rightly so. While terrorist organisations today seem to be more trans-national in nature, spread widely across various regions of the world, regional issues often provide the foundation of such organisations and play a major role in their germination. Afghanistan is definitely one such region. With the Soviet invasion in 1979, Afghanistan invited a number of serious problems for itself, and provided fodder for one of the world’s most lethal terrorist organisations—Al Qaeda. This organisation defined the global *jihadi* movement, posing the biggest threat to the world’s superpower, the United States of America and the world at large. It remains one of the deadliest terror organisations of the world, responsible for carrying out what was dubbed “the most spectacular terrorist act in history” as well as “an act of mass casualty super-terrorism”.¹ Al Qaeda is more of a phenomenon that began from an ideology taking roots in the minds of its sympathisers. It has managed to penetrate the minds of people with the help of

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1. Jerold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from IRA to Al-Qaeda*, (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ch. 13, p. 197.

a fundamentalist religious ideology, and demonstrate the lethal implications that misinterpretation of religion has. Further, it showed the world how effectively communication technology and propaganda warfare can transcend territorial boundaries.

Al Qaeda's evolution from a structured terrorist organisation into an ideology-based movement presents a complex counter-terrorism challenge. The group created a disaggregated entity that is more difficult to predict and preempt. While its physical presence was diversely spread across the world, its ideological presence had no boundaries whatsoever and connected its sympathisers in a stronger manner than seen before. While terrorist attacks may be fundamental to the existence of a group, it is psychological beliefs and morale that are required to sustain such organisations in the long run. Al Qaeda did exactly that. Further, Al Qaeda is known to have been responsible for 95 percent of the world's suicide bombings.² Thus, the willingness to kill and die – a critical feature dominating the mindset of its members – is something that has been instilled in their minds through an ideology that has been manifested throughout the world. Al Qaeda was not only a terrorist organisation, but an ideological movement, with a worldview and a vision.

It is the ideological nature of Al Qaeda, which has additionally influenced the formation of other terror organisations such as the Taliban, and the latest threat, the Islamic State (IS). Al Qaeda demonstrated to terror organisations that if people are made to believe in a cause which justifies violence or anything at all, they willfully do the needful. Unfortunately, religion was used by Al Qaeda to make such a justification, even making violence acceptable and normal. This was precisely how Al Qaeda supporters and fighters were always ready to give up their lives or sacrifice themselves for the "holy" or "sacred" cause. This attitude was exploited by the group, and many others even today in order to carry out their propaganda and purpose. It is in this context that a study of Al Qaeda becomes imperative in order to understand the Islamist terror outfits wreaking havoc throughout the world today.

2. Robert Spencer, "Al Qaeda Behind 95% of World's Suicide Bombings", *Jihad Watch*, January 15, 2014. Available at <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/01/al-qaeda-behind-95-of-worlds-suicide-bombings>. Accessed on February 20, 2017.

ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in its attempt to shore up the newly-established pro-Soviet regime in Kabul, was also looking to further its interest in the Gulf oil. The government evoked a lot of resentment among the locals, forcing an invasion by the Soviets to protect the Afghan government. With strong Cold War sentiments prevailing, the United States of America, with a view to prevent the strategic depth to the Soviets, pumped in money and weapons to local resistance movements in Afghanistan, with the aim of fighting the Soviets. Strong anti-Soviet sentiments were aroused, cutting across all cross-sections of Afghan society, as they were determined to fight the 'foreigners' occupying their land. Besides, America's interest lay in containing Communism, its primary agenda at the time. The Afghans were fighting on nationalist and ethnocentric lines and along with the involvement of neighbouring Pakistan and Gen Zia-ul-Haq, the entire movement gained a religious identity as well.

At this point, it would be crucial to mention key critical actors who played a major role in the Afghan arena. Afghanistan witnessed massive migration during the Soviet invasion and migrants came from nearby lands to contribute towards the cause of the Afghan struggle. Two key individuals who travelled to Afghanistan for the same reasons were Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam. Bin Laden came from a wealthy family, though his mother had been ostracised from the family, leading to discrimination throughout his childhood. He attended university in Jeddah and eventually went on to become the leader of the terrorist organisation, Al Qaeda. Abdullah Azzam, a radical Islamist professor, played a crucial role in influencing the political ideology of Osama bin Laden, the creator of Al Qaeda. Their first interaction was at King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, where Azzam was a radical Islamist professor and Bin Laden had been working towards a business degree. While Azzam went on to join the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, he met Ayman al-Zawahiri, a founding father of the Islamic Jihad of Egypt, who later would become Bin Laden's deputy.³

During the Soviet invasion, Azzam was brought to Afghanistan by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan to contribute to the

3. Post, n. 1. pp. 194 – 196.

'Afghan *Jihad*'. His work, and interpretation of ongoing events in Islamic terms, along with the support of his student and companion, Osama bin Laden, led them to create the Maktab Al Khidamat (MAK), with Azzam as its leader, to assist large numbers of foreign fighters arriving in Afghanistan to wage a war, by providing them with food and other amenities.⁴ Azzam was instrumental in assigning the task that was required of Bin Laden in the Afghan War. He succeeded in generating a strong belief among Muslims in the region that they had to fight the Holy War or *jihad* against the Godless Soviet invaders, in order to defend the Muslim state of Afghanistan. Thus, the MAK, a front organisation that funnelled funds, arms and fighters from the outside world into the Afghan War, was set up in Peshawar, Pakistan. It acted as an international recruitment network, advertising all over the Arab world for young Muslims to fight the Afghan *jihad*. The US and European countries turned a blind eye to the activities of the MAK, and Pakistan was allowed full liberty to support it which eventually led to the recruitment of over 10,000 fighters or *mujahideen* for the Afghan *jihad*.⁵ This is where a few deadly terrorists rose, including Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, who would go on to become the leader of the Al Qaeda faction in Iraq (AQI), which eventually became the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014.

Thus the pairing of Azzam and Bin Laden, facilitated by Pakistan's ISI under the close direction and supervision of Gen Zia-ul-Haq, and funded by both American and Saudi money for different reasons, all formed the core factors that enabled the conflict in Afghanistan to escalate. Azzam was a renowned and learned scholar, while Bin Laden was a young man with access to funds owing to his reputed and wealthy family background, as well as his close links with donors in the Middle East.

Osama bin Laden's involvement in this Afghanistan *jihad* led to various experiences and interactions that were transformational for him as a leader. He generously contributed to the *mujahideen* movement, using his own funds, and through his rhetoric, would

4. Sebastian Gorka, "1979: Annus Horribilis – Modern Jihad Goes Global" (Book excerpt: *Defeating Jihad: The Winnable War*), *The Washington Free Beacon*, 2016. Available at <http://freebeacon.com/culture/1979-annus-horribilis-modern-jihad-goes-global/> Accessed on February 15, 2017.

5. 5,000 from Saudi Arabia; 3,000 from Algeria; and 2,000 from Egypt.

inspire followers, who eventually came to adulate him. Eventually, with the departure of the Soviets from Afghanistan. Osama and his associates could successfully leverage the situation to their benefit by convincing their followers that such a victory would not have been possible had God not been on their side. With this triumph, Bin Laden and his followers were keen on pursuing *jihād* on a global scale, thus, seeking the help of all local Muslim resistance movements, including in Algeria, Angola, Bosnia, Chechnya, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. By defeating a superpower, the *mujahideen* felt it appropriate to assume the role of protector of the Islamic world as a whole, defending it from all the challenges of modernisation and globalisation. This was also because the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan came to be perceived by most in the Arab world, as an invasion on the Islamic community, regardless of nationality, thus, inadvertently laying the groundwork for a broader form of pan-Islamist ideology. However, Azzam was of the opinion that all efforts must be focussed on building Afghanistan into a model Islamic state. This developed tensions between him and Bin Laden, leading to an eventual split in 1988, and soon after that, Azzam died in a mysterious car bomb explosion. Thus, Bin Laden inherited the organisation, becoming the undisputed leader of the movement.

Bin Laden had close ties with the royal family of Saudi Arabia. However, on learning that the United States had a military base on Saudi soil owing to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the 1990s, Bin Laden immediately lost faith in the royal family. He believed that the Saudi government had been sold out by the “infidel Americans”. This made Bin Laden rise against the Saudi king, denouncing him as an infidel, which led to him being placed under house arrest, from where he escaped and fled to Sudan. It was in Sudan that he carried out several anti-Saudi and anti-US plans and operations. Thus, his enemy was no longer the erstwhile superpower, the Soviet Union, but the current superpower, the United States of America.

Operating in hiding against all infidels, Bin Laden finally issued a 30-page-long *fatwa* titled “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places” which spoke of expelling the American military from the Arabian soil. The document spoke of a Zionist-Crusader alliance, that is, the United States of America along

with Israel, which has been meting out injustice against Muslims the world over, at the cost of their blood. The document uses instances of oppression and malpractices against Muslims in countries such as Palestine and Iraq, as well as Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Phillipines, Somalia, Chechnya and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶ Thus, Bin Laden managed to justify defensive *jihad* which is also the fourth form of *jihad*, in this *fatwa*. The fourth form of *jihad* is also known as *jihad* of the sword as it obliges Muslims to resort to the sword against those who have taken up arms against them. Thus, what Bin Laden wanted to do was to remind all Muslims of the atrocities that their community had suffered at the hands of the Zionist and Crusader states and thereby urge them to take up the responsibility to fight and become *jihadis* themselves.

Subsequently, another ghastly and appalling declaration was made, known as the “Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders” wherein the definition of the enemy had dynamically changed. This *fatwa* declared each and every American – civilian and military – as the enemy, to be killed wherever found. The enemy was no longer a particular establishment or state, but all individuals seen to be supporting anti-Muslim US policies.⁷ The US presence in Saudi Arabia, the Israeli-Palestine War, and the growing US influence on various Middle East regimes were all considered challenges by Al Qaeda and their objective, thus, clearly was anti-West or anti-US with the basic underlying theme of securing the sanctity of the Islamic world and the land of Muslims at any cost. In the process, they also planned to target governments in the Middle East which they felt had the propensity to fall prey to Western influence.

While these *fatwas* were issued by Osama bin Laden and his aides, the message in each was clear: “This was Allah’s message and not ours”. Thus, the emphasis was on projecting the fact that it is God on behalf of whom Bin Laden speaks, and with authority. Perhaps

6. The full script of the *fatwa*, translated in English with explanations, compiled by CENGAGE. Available at http://college.cengage.com/history/primary_sources/world/two_holy_mosques.htm. Accessed on February 17, 2017.

7. The full script of the *fatwa*, translated in English, with explanations, compiled by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS). Available at <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>. Accessed on February 18, 2017.

this is why the *fatwas* appealed to certain pockets of the society. In the meantime, Bin Laden's vision was reinforced by his triumphs against the ultimate enemy, the US. These were in the form of the various successful terrorist attacks and missions the organisation managed to carry out throughout the world, killing many, and gaining global attention. An element of success and glory overshadowed all the global operations of Al Qaeda, thus, driving home its popularity and increasing the number of its diehard supporters. As Martha Crenshaw rightly claims, the execution of successful operations helps build morale within a group and demonstrates to potential converts that the organisation is operationally dynamic.⁸

IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA

The movement of "global *jihadism*" as Jeffrey Lewis, a prominent scholar on terrorism puts it, continues to gain momentum. According to Lewis, this is a movement wherein the global *jihadi* designates a member of an extremely small minority of Sunni Muslims that uses violence to promote a religious agenda dedicated to combating the influence of the Western political and economic structure in the Muslim world. The idea originated much prior to Al Qaeda's existence, in the 1950s and 1960s, with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, especially based on the ideological preaching of Sayyed Qutb. He was a key intellectual figure in the Muslim Brotherhood and had a major influence on Al Qaeda's core based in Egypt. He provided the theoretical underpinnings for "violent Muslim resistance to regimes that claim to be Muslim, but whose implementation of Islamic precepts is judged to be imperfect".⁹ Even Abdullah Azzam was known to have been exposed to, and absorbed, the ideology of Qutb, while pursuing his doctorate in Cairo. It is key influencers such as these which are extremely crucial for one's understanding of the ideology that Al Qaeda stood for, led by Bin Laden's messianic vision.

8. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, July 1981, pp. 379 – 399. Available at <http://courses.kvasaheim.com/hist319a/docs/Crenshaw%201981.PDF>. Accessed on February 15, 2017.

9. Robert Irwin, "Is This the Man Who Inspired Bin Laden?", *The Guardian* (London), November 1, 2008. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/01/afghanistan.terrorism3>. Accessed on February 12, 2017.

It would certainly not be an exaggeration to say that ideology was the sole driver of Al Qaeda. As can be seen from the way the organisation grew, people's faith in a particular cause drew them closer to acting upon it. Scholars such as Azzam understood the importance of ideologies in battle and further even realised that people will not fight for territory or treasure alone—they have to believe in the righteousness of the cause. This is how he led Bin Laden to justify the ultimate goal of *jihad*, providing not only a rationale but an incumbent obligation on Muslims all over the world to join the battle for Allah against infidels. He not only tried to prove through his scholarly work that Muslims have been humiliated and cornered at the hands of impure Western regimes but also managed to urge action for the defence of the same. These features are evident in the vision that Bin Laden envisaged for Al Qaeda, through his *fatwas* and the activities he carried out.

Moreover, Al Qaeda's ideology, right from its inception, has been increasingly internationalist, contextualising local conflicts as part of a broader global struggle. The ideology has been referred to by many terms, however, it has been widely agreed that Al Qaeda follows *salafi-jihadism*, which is an approach to *jihadism* coupled with an adherence to *salafism*.

Jihadism is driven by the idea of *jihad* or religiously sanctioned warfare, incumbent upon all Muslims as part of their individual obligation, imitating the Muslim tradition from the pre-modern era. According to *jihadism*, the leaders of the modern Muslim world are illegitimate and do not command the authority to ordain justified violence. Thus, due to the absence of such an authority, *jihadism* urges every able-bodied Muslims to take up the mantle of *jihad*.¹⁰

Further, *salafism* is the idea that the most authentic and true Islam is found in the example of the early, righteous generations of Muslims, known as the *salaf*, who were closest in both time and proximity to the Prophet Muhammad.¹¹ They believe in the sanctity of the text and are known for trying to imitate the particular habits of the first Muslims.

10. Rashid Dar, Shadi Hamid, "Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism: A Primer", Brookings Institution, July 15, 2016. Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/> Accessed on February 16, 2017.

11. Ibid.

Salafi-jihadism, therefore, as Gilles Kepel puts it, can be described as respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form, accompanied with an absolute commitment to *jihad*.¹²

Thus, the followers of Al Qaeda were proponents of *salafi-jihadism* and the themes used by the terror organisation would resonate with millions of people across the Muslim world, who had anyway been seeking coherent, unified explanations for the sufferings in different areas of conflict, as well as a way of personal and political transformation.¹³ It is this very connection that Al Qaeda managed to establish with a large cross-section of the Muslim community that enabled its spread across territorial borders, making it a global movement. Most of the credit for this also goes to the manner in which its campaign was propagated.

Al Qaeda was one of the first terrorist organisations to have established such a wide reach using the electronic media, or the internet. This electronic presence of the group served as an enabler of recruitment, penetrating deeply into Muslim communities around the world. Further, the electronic media was also used in order to praise certain terrorist attacks and further warn of greater violence and destruction likely to occur in the near future. The group has used this medium remarkably in the realm of planning, mobilisation, communication, fund-raising and, of course, recruitment. Moreover, the group has used videos ranging from those wherein Bin Laden is found to be voicing his message to even recording footage of terrorist attacks. These were then either broadcast on the group's own media channels or even the international media. Al Qaeda also maintained several propaganda and training manuals which performed the dual role of instructing terrorists and spreading the worldview of the terror outfit, along with the justification of violence. Thus, it would be best to understand Al Qaeda's propaganda mechanism in Gabriel Weimann's words, "Al Qaeda combines multimedia propaganda and advance communication technologies to create a very sophisticated form of psychological warfare".¹⁴

12. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

13. Angel Rabasa et al, *Beyond Al Qaeda Part 1: The Global Jihadist Movement* (CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), ch. 2, p. 12.

14. Gabriel Weimann, "How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet", United States Institute of Peace, Special Report No. 116, March 2004. Available at <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr116.pdf>. Accessed on February 19, 2017.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

According to a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report, Al Qaeda's financial requirements before the September 11, 2001, attacks amounted to US \$30 million annually.¹⁵ Al Qaeda as an organisation did not exist in one particular region, as Osama bin Laden and his close aides, forming the top core of Al Qaeda, shifted their sanctuary from time to time, depending on circumstances. In addition, the group consisted of veteran combatants who had received training in Afghanistan, but operated in dozens of countries around the world. While the above formed the critical core of Al Qaeda, there were also large numbers of fresh radicalised militants across the world who would then receive training and direction from the veterans, joining the *jihadi* enterprise.¹⁶ Given the wide expanse of the global presence of the organisation, there was a need for well laid out and effective means of communication and travel within the organisation. All of this naturally required substantial financial support to sustain the organisation's living costs as well as training and development for its various activities.

The largest financial contribution that the organisation received was from its core of fund-raisers tasked to solicit money in the form of donations. These donors were mostly in the Gulf area, specifically Saudi Arabia. While some of these donors would be aware of their funds' final destination, some of them were not. Al Qaeda had managed to infiltrate employees in Islamic charities to divert this money to serve its purpose.¹⁷ Further, Al Qaeda also used charitable organisations to disseminate, and teach, the most radical forms of Islamic fundamentalism. It also indulged in the use of fictitious companies and offshore fiduciary companies to shield the identity of individuals or entities taking part in terrorist financing. These were companies, funds, entities or businesses that were registered in an

15. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004), *Monograph on Terrorist Financing*, Staff Report to the Commission. Washington, DC, p. 19. Available at http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/911_TerrFin_Ch2.pdf. Accessed on February 24, 2017.

16. Juan Miguel del Cid Gómez, "A Financial Profile of the Terrorism of Al Qaeda and its Affiliates", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2010. Available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/113/html>. Accessed on February 20, 2017.

17. *Ibid.*

extra-territorial financial centre. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) also obtained money from ransom paid for kidnapping.¹⁸ The group further used the cyber networks and maintained websites that openly solicited money and resources, posing as legitimate charities and organisations. Thus, it engaged in online fraud, identity theft and other internet crimes in order to use those funds for its activities. Opening up offices in countries like Pakistan where the government's crackdown on Islamic fundamentalism was low, allowed these charities to operate.¹⁹

SUICIDE TERRORISM: AL QAEDA'S PREFERRED WEAPON

While Al Qaeda owes its mass support to ideology, the cult of martyrdom has been found to be at its heart. Fighters or *jihadis* joining Al Qaeda have showed an inherent willingness to sacrifice their lives for Islam. The prospect of a glorious afterlife post death also promised individual self-fulfillment to prospective members of the community.²⁰ While "martyrdom" operations have been known to be a subset of terror outfits, Al Qaeda and its affiliates contained within their core ideology, the spirit of martyrdom and its glorification. *Jihad*, in their terms, was seen as the path of struggle for Islam in which death was inevitable at an eventual stage. This is what brought young Muslims together, forming camaraderie and togetherness in the pursuit of the "holy path".

It is suspected that the employment of suicide bombing by Palestinian Islamists has played a role in influencing groups such as Al Qaeda and Hezbollah. The simultaneous attacks on US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania demonstrated the suicide bombing capabilities of Al Qaeda. This generated a US response with a cruise missile strike directed against militant training camps in Afghanistan, and further raised the stature of Bin Laden in the eyes of the Taliban. The USS *Cole* attack in Yemen, in 2000, portrayed Bin Laden's symbolic leadership of the *jihadi* movement.

18. Rachel Ehrenfeld, "Drug Trafficking, Kidnapping Fund al Qaeda", *CNN*, May 4, 2011. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/05/03/ehrenfeld.al.qaeda.funding/>. Accessed on February 20, 2017.

19 Weimann, n. 14, ch. 4. pp. 57-59.

20. Jeffrey William Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*, (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2012), Part III, ch. 7, p. 197.

This was, of course, portrayed to the entire world in the September 11 New York attacks in 2001.²¹

On September 11, 2001, a series of four coordinated attacks took the city of New York by storm, indicating a "declaration of war"²² on the United States of America. The attacks which led to the collapse of the World Trade Centre and Twin Towers, shook all Americans and spectators across the globe, changing their perceptions of terrorism and becoming the worst suicide bombing in human history. The 9/11 attacks were meant to not only signal to the world what Al Qaeda was capable of, but further to attract militants seeking empowerment. As Martha Crenshaw states, "Efficacy is the primary standard by which terrorism is compared with other methods of achieving political goals"²³. In a sense, this is what the 9/11 attacks did for Al Qaeda, thereby legitimising the *jihadi* movement.

With the demolition of Al Qaeda's central command in Afghanistan after the US' "War on Terror" in late 2001, veterans of its Afghan network began to return to Saudi Arabia. Further, Israel's actions and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, along with the Saudi security forces' efforts to crush the militants, only increased hostilities in the Arabian peninsula. The attacks of Al Qaeda on the Arabian peninsula were organised and executed locally, but the influence of Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda hierarchy regrouping in Pakistan was undeniable.²⁴ Most of the fighters were citizens of Saudi Arabia, had experience fighting on behalf of Al Qaeda elsewhere, and still considered themselves to be part of Bin Laden's movement.²⁵ Eventually, the AQAP reestablished itself in Yemen, after a significant number of militants were captured.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

22. In the words of the US President at the time, George W Bush. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa13> Accessed on February 20, 2017.

23. Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice", in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 1998). Available at <https://rampages.us/colombomj/wp-content/uploads/sites/2867/2014/10/Martha-Crenshaw-the-logic-of-terrorism.pdf>. Accessed on February 20, 2017.

24. Post, n. 1, p. 206.

25. Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia", *Middle East Policy*, 13, no.4, 2006, pp. 39-60; Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 9.

Al Qaeda's presence in Iraq was dominated by Abu Musab al Zarqawi, a Jordanian who travelled to Afghanistan to participate in the struggle against Afghanistan. His formal allegiance to Al Qaeda once again transformed his coalition into Al Qaeda's Iraq-based franchise (AQI) in 2004. Zarqawi was a hardline Sunni, who felt the need to carry out attacks against the Shia community of Muslims, much to Bin Laden's disagreement. Therefore, the *jihadis* in Iraq escalated sectarian tensions, leading to a civil war between Iraq's Sunnis and Shias, using suicide bombing. As more and more Muslims were targeted as a result of the suicide attacks carried out by AQI under Zarqawi, the image of the global *jihad* deteriorated internationally. This faction of Al Qaeda eventually comprised the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in 2014, formally splitting up with Al Qaeda.

CONCLUSION

After the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 in a US operation, Ayman al Zawahiri became the leader of Al Qaeda. However, his personality and aura could not match those of his predecessor. This is perhaps the reason why Al Qaeda has not conducted any terrorist attack thereafter. Another reason may be the US crackdown on Al Qaeda and its stringent counter-terror measures that have proved to be effective. Most of the *jihadis* who felt frustrated with Al Qaeda and were inclined towards Zarqawi's strand of *jihad* have joined the Islamic State (IS) today. It is a known fact, however, that the sleeper cells of Al Qaeda are still very much present.

Al Qaeda is the biggest proof of the fact that when violence is justified through an ideology, counter-violence can never be the ultimate solution. Al Qaeda is a classic example of an organisation wherein suicide attacks comprised not only strategic moves but something that terrorists aspired to participate in. It could be established only because of the deeply rooted religious ideology of the community that it appealed to. Further, the ideology was not solely based on a particular thought or idea but was systematically justified using old texts and scriptures, creating a step-by-step justification of the rampant use of violence, making it seem all the more legitimate and convincing enough for entire communities to fall prey to. This

was only enhanced further by the successful events carried out by the group, further strengthening its claim and worldview. What made Al Qaeda unique in the time it originated was its global approach, transcending territorial borders, local conflicts and other political struggles, merging all into one global *jihadi* movement. Al Qaeda may not actively exist today, however, the ideology that it has germinated in the minds of its sympathisers around the world shall not be diminished easily.

INDIA'S ROLE IN THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL SCENARIO IN THE IOR

RA MASLEKAR

The Indian Ocean had for long suffered relative neglect in comparison to the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans in world geopolitics. Today, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) represents the most politically troubled and potentially combustible area of the world where conflicts have seen an inexorable rise in the intensity of violence associated with them. On the other hand, this region is rich in natural resources which may be exploited for development. The changing geopolitical environment in the IOR is due to the strategic reassessments based on many factors. The rise of China and India, both economically and militarily, being an important factor. Other major world powers too have a major stake in this region for energy security, and the fight against terrorism. India with its geostrategic location in the centre and at the head of the Indian Ocean (IO), has an important role to play in this region and will have to assert itself in the overall power equation.

This paper highlights the centrality of the IOR in the 21st century international power play. India's geostrategic vision, its security concerns, and capability as also its willingness to influence geopolitical developments in this region have been the main objectives of this study.

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Robert Kaplan, in his much acclaimed work “Monsoon-the Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power”, states,

The Greater Indian Ocean region stretching eastward from the Horn of Africa all the way to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, will be the centre of global conflicts, because most international business supply will be conducted through this route. Most important of all, it is in this region the interests and influence of India, China and the United States are beginning to overlap and intersect. It is here the 21st century's global power dynamics will be revealed.....¹.

The statement undoubtedly leads to a pertinent question: what is the nature of the current IOR strategies of these powers and what will be their geostrategic implications?

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is often stated by the exponents of international relations that the Indian Ocean had for long suffered a relative neglect in comparison to the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans in world geopolitics. This may have been so in recent times but history tells us a different story. We credit Vasco da Gama's arrival in May 1498 on the shores of Kozikode for discovering the sea route from Europe to India and this historical happening brought the European domination in the Indian Ocean Region.² However, these waters had witnessed flourishing trade between the littorals since the time of the Indus Valley civilisation. The dock at Lothal in the present day Gujarat supports this claim.³ Across the Arabian Sea, the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum was involved in the Indian Ocean trade network before the first millennium.⁴ During the 10th century (1030) AD, the Chola Empire of South India had spread its influence to the Malay peninsula and its navy had subjugated the

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1. Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York:Random House, 2010). pp. 1-18.
 2. Amba Prasad, “Discovery of Sea Route to India”, *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 38, issue 3-4, July 1982, pp. 344-356.
 3. Jane R McIntosh, *The Ancient Indus Valley* (Santa Barbara, California : ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2008), pp. 168-172.
 4. George Hatke, *Aksum and Nubia* (New York : New York University Press, 2013), pp. 26-28.

Sri Vijaya Empire.⁵ In the period from 1405 to 1433 AD, Chinese Adm Zheng He had commanded seven naval expeditions to as far as the Red Sea, East Africa and Persian Gulf, and had visited South India.⁶ In short, the Indian Ocean was well traversed throughout history for trade and influence.

The 20th century saw the strategic import of the Indian Ocean being well perceived in all the geopolitical theories. The Indian Ocean littoral zone was credited with immense strategic significance in Halford Mackinder's "Heartland Theory"⁷ and likewise it was projected in Nicholas Spykman's "Rimland Theory"⁸ as being capable of exercising control over the Eurasian heartland. Post World War II saw Great Britain withdraw from east of Suez, leaving a power vacuum in the Indian Ocean which was fiercely contested between the US and the USSR. The US had established a major naval base at Diego Garcia, about 1,200 km south from India.⁹ The Soviet Union too deployed its naval assets in the Indian Ocean, having a number of countries under its influence, although it was not able to acquire any permanent base. The Cold War saw the Indian Ocean Region afflicted in terms of border disputes, tensions and mistrust. Unsuccessful attempts were made by the developing countries of the region to declare it a zone of peace, which was even supported by UN Resolution 2832 of December 16, 1971.¹⁰ However, the geographical determinism had made the Indian Ocean an arena of conflict and contest not only between the littoral states but also between extra-regional powers. Today, the IOR represents the most politically troubled and potentially combustible area of the world where

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5. Hermann Kulke, "The Naval Expeditions of the Cholas in the Context of Asian History," in Hermann Kulke, K.Kesavapany, Vijay Sakhuja, eds., *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa* (Singapore : Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), p. 1.
 6. Michael Yamashita, *Zeng He: Tracing the Epic Voyages of China's Greatest Explorer* (Vercelli, Italy: White Star Publishers, 2006), p. 12.
 7. H.J. Mackinder. "The Geographical Pivot of History", *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1904.
 8. Harm de Blij, *Why Geography Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 128.
 9. Vytautas B. Bandjunis. *Diego Garcia: Creation of Indian Ocean Base* (Lincoln, NE, US: Writer's Showcase, 2001), p. 2.
 10. United Nations General Assembly, 26th Session, 2022 Plenary Meeting Report, December 16, 1971. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/26/ares26.htm> Accessed on August 2, 2016

conflicts have seen an inexorable rise in the intensity of violence associated with them. The increase in non-conventional security challenges such as piracy, human and drug trafficking and maritime terrorism, as well as insurgencies have made the situation in many littorals quite precarious.

THE IOR: EVALUATING THE COMPLEXITIES

The IOR is also one of the most complex regions in the world in human terms. Home to around 40 percent of the world's population, spread over three dozen littoral countries and several strategically important islands, it is unique for its religious, racial and cultural diversity. The level of political stability, the quality of governance, demographic pressures, ethnic and sectarian tensions, and the pace of economic growth vary wide and apart, creating a different mix of opportunity and risk in each state.¹¹ Islam, one of the major religions in this region, has, in recent times seen growing sectarian violence between the Sunnis and Shias, supported respectively by Saudi Arabia and Iran in their race for political dominance of the Islamic world. The Islamic State (IS) and other religious terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda have become a scourge to human life in a number of IOR states.¹²

The changing geopolitical environment in the IOR is a result of the strategic reassessments and associated changes in perceptions due to the outcome of the interaction of the following important factors :

- The ever increasing economic and military capabilities of two major nations in Asia, that is China and India. The Indian Navy has steadily expanded its maritime offensive capability by indigenous development and construction of major warships, including a nuclear submarine and procurement of long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft. The Chinese Navy too, has increased its blue water capability manifold as also its capacity

11. Anthony H. Cordesman and Abdullah Toukan, "The Indian Ocean Region: A Strategic Net Assessment," *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, July 28, 2014. http://csis.org/files/publication/140725_Indian_Ocean_Region.pdf. p.3. Accessed on August 7, 2016.

12. Anu Unny, "The Indian Ocean Region and Changing Security Dynamics", in Suresh R., ed., *Maritime Security of India: The Coastal Security Challenges and Policy Options* (Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2014), pp. 52-62.

to dominate a large maritime area by operationalising its first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*.¹³

- The increased competition for resources in the Indian Ocean Region especially in the African and West Asian regions, and, recently, the mid oceanic seabeds.
- The necessity for the ageing Northern economies and the rapidly growing Southern economies to meet their energy security requirements.
- The regional and global growth in terrorism and piracy. Since 2006, there has been a steep rise in piracy activity along the east coast of Africa, particularly Somalia, and steadily expanding to the mid-Indian Ocean Region, adversely affecting international maritime trade, including that of energy resources.
- The need to collectively augment maritime and environmental security in the region. Scholars of strategic studies are now also talking about the gradual emergence of a “new regionalism” based on economic interactions overcoming the ideological divides of the Cold War era.

After an attempt to bring out the scenario as it obtains in the IOR, it would be useful to first elucidate how the US and China consider their stakes in this region before analysing the possible steps that India could take in order to further its national interests.

THE UNITED STATES

Historically, the US has treated this ocean as a transit zone between two areas of much greater strategic interest: East Asia and the Middle East. However, this is now changing and the United States is inclined to regard it instead as a volatile powerhouse, increasingly contested among regional and global powers. This shift since the early 1990s was largely triggered by the rise of terrorist activities linked to religious fundamentalism, piracy, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region. The US strategy of pivot to Asia, considering East Asia as the economic centre of gravity, deems it necessary for it to integrate the IOR into the broader US

13. Anil Kumar Singh, “INS *Vikramaditya* and India’s Naval Security”, *Indian Defence Review*, vol 29, no. 3, July – September 2014.

security framework in the vast Indo-Pacific region. Washington's IOR strategy may follow two approaches: first, an enhanced military presence that presents a credible force posture to deal with possible conflict contingencies; and, second, encouraging mutually reinforcing alliances, strategic partnerships, and access-granting relationships that will allow operational and planning flexibility for US forces, and create a community of interests. In the near future, it will strive to maintain its position of strategic preeminence. It may be noted that after World War II, the maximum number of military interventions by the US have been in the Indian Ocean Region. It exhibited its intent in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue by teaming up with other powers. It will also look to work as closely and cooperatively as possible with key regional partners such as Australia, India and Indonesia. It would be interesting to see how the US motivates India to partner its efforts without infringing on the Indian quest for strategic autonomy. Equally, the United States will most probably aim to keep relations with China on an even keel as a conflict between the two powers would benefit neither, although the statements by the newly elected president of the United States indicate a different and coercive approach. The abrasive events of the South China Sea are unlikely to spread over to the IOR even though China has been allotted exploratory rights for seabed mining in the Indian Ocean, and its naval forays in this region are on the rise. Cooperation is the greatest confidence building measure of all, and already, it is seen in the Gulf of Aden and in Afghanistan. As a source of much of the United States' energy imports and the home of partners that are themselves mindful of the implications of a rising China, the US will continue to be engaged in the Indian Ocean Region.¹⁴

CHINA

Taking the case of the People's Republic of China (PRC), it is opined that the country's strategic focus till now continues to be biased towards the South China Sea and the Pacific, and less on the Indian Ocean Region. It would, however, be incorrect to suggest that the

14. Peter Dombrowski and Andrew C. Winner, eds., *The Indian Ocean and US Grand Strategy: Ensuring Access and Promoting Security* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), pp. 145-149.

world ignores the gradually unfolding changes in the perceptions of the Chinese leadership on the IOR's strategic importance; they are indeed pointers to the future. As for now, Beijing's principal interest seems to lie in the need to protect the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) along the Indian Ocean, vital for the country's energy imports. However, official-level articulations on China's IOR views are gradually gaining intensity. The commander of the East China Sea Fleet, in December 2012, during a visit to Sri Lanka, had stressed on the "freedom and safety of the navigation in the Indian Ocean" and declared that the Chinese Navy will actively maintain peace and stability of the Indian Ocean through carrying out "maritime security cooperation" with the navies of the littoral countries. China proposes to ensure a "harmonious sea" through capacity building and international cooperation such as port and infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Kenya, and other places. The 'Going Global' strategy has led to the lease of the first ever overseas base at Djibouti.¹⁵ The emergent need to get access to strategic natural resources and protect critical sea lanes transporting energy supplies have made China turn its security policies into action, with major focus being given to the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN's) modernisation. The Chinese naval activities in the IOR include anti-piracy patrols, ship-to-ship replenishment, search and rescue, and damage control drills. It is reported that submarines and an amphibious landing ship too have exercised in the IOR.¹⁶ More significantly apart from the usual Malacca route, the PLAN has also operated through the Lombok Strait, opening up a new route from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. The Chinese new Silk Road initiative got a boost in February 2016 when the first cargo train from China to Iran completed its 6,462 -mile journey in just 14 days, instead of the 45 days needed for the sea voyage.¹⁷ China has pledged

15. Katrina Manson, "China Military to Set up First Overseas Base in Horn of Africa", *Financial Times*, March 31, 2016.

16. P.K.Ghosh, "Chinese Warships in the Indian Ocean : Are They a Real Threat?", Commentary – Observer Research Foundation, May 24, 2016, <http://www.orfonline.org/research/chinese-warships-in-the-indian-ocean-are-they-a-real-threat/>. Accessed on August 3, 2016.

17. Catherine Putz, "First Direct Train from China Arrives in Iran", *The Diplomat*, February 16, 2016. <http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/first-direct-train-from-china-arrives-in-iran/>. Accessed on August 8, 2016.

to invest US \$46 billion to develop the Gwadar port and Kashghar economic corridor.¹⁸ India's immediate concern is that the necessary infrastructure development by the Chinese for this economic corridor infringes upon India's national integrity since it involves areas of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Further, Chinese naval presence in Gwadar gives it an enhanced ability to monitor Indian naval and maritime movements through the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. This has major implications for the Indian Navy.

GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN THE IOR: A BRIEF ASSESSMENT

The geopolitical situation in the IOR is not only very turbulent but also fraught with extreme violence. Many nations are struggling to cope with internal disturbances mostly perpetrated by fundamentalist radical elements. External support by inimical influences has also contributed to the deteriorating situation. The Shia-Sunni ideological divide has seen conflicts erupting at regular intervals in the region, the opposing forces being supported by Iran and Saudi Arabia respectively. Iran's regional ambitions are being complemented by its military modernisation programme for which China is giving a helping hand. Russia too, is assisting Iran in enhancing its defence capacities. It has also commenced joint military exercises with Pakistan. It is apparent that China and Russia both have embarked on intensifying their relationships with the IOR littorals. The US cannot allow its hold on international affairs to be eroded by the Chinese and Russian attempts. Hence, it is not likely to reduce its involvement in the Indian Ocean Region at any time in the future. Also, its military engagements will be intensified against non-state actors and states supporting terrorism.

INDIAN GEOPOLITICAL THOUGHTS ON THE IOR

India is the second largest country of the IOR after Australia. Writing in the 1940s, K M Pannikar had argued that "while to other countries the Indian Ocean is only one of the important oceanic areas, to India it is a vital sea. Her lifelines are concentrated in that area, her freedom

18. S.Akbar Zaidi, "The New Game Changer in Pakistan", *The Hindu*, May 28, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/chinapakistan-economic-corridor-the-new-game-changer-in-pakistan/article8656498.ece>. Accessed on August 5, 2016.

is dependent on the freedom of that water surface".¹⁹ One of the great freedom fighters, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, stepping on the shores of Andamans while being interned at the Cellular Jail in 1911, had envisioned these islands as sentinels of mainland security. He had written in his autobiography *My Transportation for Life* about the need to develop the Andamans as India's forward naval base in order to dominate the maritime area around, and guard any naval incursion on the mainland from the east.²⁰ Nehru, too, expressed similar sentiments when he stated that India's independence and survival depended on India's control of the Indian Ocean based on its geographical position in the Indian Ocean. Nehru was also of the firm belief that India is the pivot of Western, Southern and Southeast Asia and enjoys a strategic centrality of vital geostrategic and economic dimensions. However, the Indian polity was compelled to have a continental mindset due to its difficult land border disputes. India's ideological inclination towards propagation of a peaceful world order, and the principles of Panchsheel and non-alignment led it to taking an obdurate stance on supporting the idea of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. India even demanded that all the major powers withdraw their military presence from the Indian Ocean. In the 1960s, when the US wanted to replace Britain's influence in the IOR as it shifted its military presence west of Suez, India opposed the move and rejected the "theory of a power vacuum".²¹ India was dismayed at many of the littorals who, although they were members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), were dependent on either the US or the Soviet Union for developmental and military aid, and had little commitment to the notion of collective security and the idea of a zone of peace. The Indian strategic thought was influenced by the cultural mindset and, therefore, considered it as India's destiny to be in charge of the Indian Ocean. The coercive manoeuvre by the US to bring the USS *Enterprise* task force closer to the Bay of Bengal was a rude reminder to India about the state of its military

19. Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and Strategy-Rethinking India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi : Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2009), p. 248.

20. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *My Transportation for Life* (Pune : Unknown Original Publisher, 1927), <http://www.savarkarsmarak.com/activityimages/MyTransportationtoLife.pdf>. p. 62. Accessed on August 9, 2016.

21. Kamal Kumar, *Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace: Problems and Prospects* (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2000), pp. 247-248.

capabilities to secure its interests in the Indian Ocean. The end of the Cold War, India's economic liberalisation and enhanced need for imported energy resources brought a few changes in Indian policy-making. India became enthused with the idea of regional groupings for enhancing economic and maritime cooperation with the Indian Ocean littorals. It seems at the first instance that getting countries disparate in every possible respect together under a cooperative umbrella for enhancing mutual development would be impossible. However, substantial efforts have been made to get actionable regional cooperation through various initiatives. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) are typical examples wherein India is an active member. The rim countries are rich in strategic and precious minerals, marine and energy resources, but many lack the technical expertise and financial strength to exploit these resources and invest the returns for development and progress. Hence, the main objectives of these groupings are to create a secure and enabling environment for rapid economic development by generating employment, and improving transportation and communication infrastructure. Capacity building will be inherent in such initiatives. It would be to India's benefit if such groupings are strengthened further through mutual cooperation and understanding without undue manipulations by either of the big powers.²²

INDIA'S ROLE IN THE IOR

For quite some time, the Indian leadership was very comfortable in the legacy of Nehruvian idealism and continued to focus on non-alignment. The Indian leadership felt uncomfortable with the term 'power projection' and had no desire of being viewed as a hegemon. India preferred to term its military actions in Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka not as power projection but military assistance. India's economic rise in the 21st century led to building its military capacities which it utilised very often in responding to Humanitarian

22. Srikanth Kondapalli. "New Dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region and Indian Role," in R. Sidda Goud and Manisha Mookherjee, eds., *China in Indian Ocean Region* (Mumbai: Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2015), p. 8.

Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and security missions in the IOR. While the Indian Navy patrolled the Mozambique channel to provide offshore security during an international event organised at Maputo,²³ the Indian Air Force and Army carried out relief and rescue operations in many countries and participated in UN peacekeeping missions. However, India did not join any multinational effort led by any of the big powers. Even its anti-piracy missions were conducted alone albeit in coordination with other navies. The Indian foreign policy and attitude have slowly started changing towards the Indian Ocean Region. As a rising naval power, India is taking a much broader view of its responsibility than the mere pursuit of its narrowly defined national interests. Today, as a maritime power with an extended security perimeter, India is now emphasising on “freedom to use the seas”. Finally, the current government has discarded India’s longstanding reluctance to cooperate with other major powers in the Indian Ocean. While insisting that the Indian Ocean states hold the primary responsibility of peace, stability and prosperity in those waters, Prime Minister Modi indirectly referenced the role that the US plays in the region through dialogue, exercises, economic partnerships and capacity building efforts. As is the penchant of Prime Minister Modi, he has given a deep meaning to the term ‘*sagar*’ or ocean as “Security and Growth for All in the Region”.²⁴ This government appears to have made a decisive break from the ambivalence of past governments and is willing to expand cooperation in a climate of trust and transparency. It professes respect and sensitivity to others’ interests. India stresses on a flexible approach to cooperative structures which would preserve its autonomy. India’s overriding concern has been, and will continue to be, to prevent any polarisation of the IOR. The new focus on the IOR entails that India equip itself adequately to take on the responsibilities as a regional power. Supplementing its diplomatic and political initiatives, India needs to shape its growing military capability for envisaged threats emanating from, and in, the IOR. These forces should be able (should

23. David Brewster, *India’s Ocean: Story of India’s Bid for Regional Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 93.

24. Editorial Article, “Mr Modi’s Ocean View”, *The Hindu*, May 17, 2015. [http://www.thehindu.com / opinion /editorial/mr-modis-ocean-view/article7000182.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/mr-modis-ocean-view/article7000182.ece). Accessed on August 7, 2016.

the need arise) to prevent militaries, especially the air forces and navies of hostile nations, to have freedom of operation in the Indian Ocean, and operate in distant waters with impunity to safeguard Indian maritime and economic interests. If need be, project power over the mainland of hostile nations, and have all round surveillance, interception and interdiction capability over key choke points, on vital islands, around the littorals, and along key sea routes.

Rising capacities and focussed political vision will allow the country to undertake many roles that are befitting its stature and aspirations in the near future. But India will have to contend with extra-regional powers influencing the littorals with their military, technological and economic might. Also, some littoral countries will invariably oppose India's growing influence and will try to build alliances with the big powers. India has its own advantages in terms of being part of the region – has stable and deeply entrenched democratic values of governance, armed forces that are highly trained and experienced in operations, and a fairly good industrial base, with a positively growing economy. India should strive to strengthen the regional associations and make efforts to expand the membership of the littorals. Within the region, there are states that have irresolvable differences based on historical, religious and ideological reasons; for instance, Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia that today are engaged in a conflict in Yemen, and all the three countries have developed a stable relationship with India.²⁵ This is going to be a very difficult exercise requiring all the politico-diplomatic and military acumen from the country's leadership. A focus on military diplomacy would first entail expanding its military footprint in Indian missions in the IOR. At present, not all missions have the office of the defence attache.²⁶ Enhanced defence cooperation with countries of the IOR in terms of training and export of defence hardware would lead to capacity building for better security and stability. Defence training

25. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Yemen War: India's Trapeze Act with Iran and Saudi Arabia", *The Economic Times* (New Delhi), April 21, 2015. <http://blogs.economictimes.indiatimes.com/et-commentary/yemen-war-indias-trapeze-act-with-iran-saudi-arabia/>. Accessed on August 8, 2016.

26. Rajat Pandit, "India to Crank up Military Diplomacy by Posting More Officers Abroad", *The Times of India* (New Delhi), November 16, 2013. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-to-crank-up-military-diplomacy-by-posting-more-officers-abroad/articleshow/25845708.cms>. Accessed on August 9, 2016.

would indirectly also pass on the ethos of the Indian armed forces to accept political primacy and the democratic way of governance. Leveraging information technology for capacity building has been the focus and the Pan-African e-network is a good example. Many African countries which are part of the IOR have joined the network.²⁷ Such a network could be offered to other nations of the region. The trilateral security arrangement among India, Sri Lanka and Maldives could be projected as an example of collective security and expanded to include other nations.²⁸ Building facilities to provide early warning information about natural phenomena such as cyclones, tsunamis and earthquakes will benefit the local population, and enable planning and preparation for relief and rescue. India could become a vocational training hub for encouraging employment generation in the poor countries of the region. Encouraging and facilitating the Indian private entrepreneurship to further expand its base in the developing nations of the region is likely to yield rich dividends for India. One advantage that India has in this region is its diaspora. This is an advantage that needs to be nurtured to help build deeper relationships. Whatever role India adopts, it would need to be projected as being mutually beneficial, and not as hegemonic, with a donor-recipient relationship. It need not attempt to outmanoeuvre any other power in an attempt to gain influence but rather to build long-term relationships based on its inherent strengths which will create space for independent manoeuvring by India in the IOR.

CONCLUSION

The 21st century is referred to as the century of the 'Asian Awakening' and at the core of Asia is the IOR. The centrality of the IOR between the powerful economies of the West and the Far East, linking the world with the oil-rich West Asia, is accountable for this stature. Occupying a strategic position to facilitate a tremendous amount of trade within this expanse, flow of energy, large reserves of raw materials and a

27. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India Report, January 2013. https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Pan_African_e_docx_for_xp.pdf. Accessed August 9, 2016.

28. M. Samatha, "India, Sri Lanka and Maldives Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation: Political and Economic Constraints in Implementation", *Policy Brief, Indian Council of World Affairs*, July 8, 2015, <http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/PB/2014/IndiaSriLankaMaldivesPB08072015.pdf>. Accessed on August 9, 2016.

huge consumer market, the IOR, thus, holds immense strategic value. The economic boom in the developing nations along its arc has turned the IOR into an economically vibrant area. However, the geopolitical environment in some of the African and Asian nations, coupled with the security challenges in the region, including piracy, human and drug trafficking, rise of radical and fundamental Islamic groups, and being the centre of global terrorism in the Af-Pak region are looming threats for the entire world. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the destiny of the IOR is intertwined with the huge challenge to manage these threats. The growing interests of nations and increasing power projection in the IOR to safeguard national interests has led to the IOR becoming a chessboard of strategic rivalry. India, with its geostrategic location in the centre and at the head of Indian Ocean, has an important role to play and must assert itself in the overall power equation.

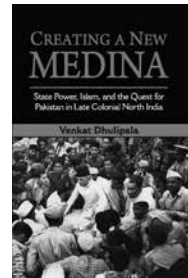
BOOK REVIEW

**Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and
the Quest for Pakistan in Colonial North India**

Author: Venkat Dhulipala

Publisher: Cambridge University Press

Rs. 995



AERSH DANISH

Revisionist ideas that challenge comfortably accepted notions have always attracted attention. This is what Venkat Dhulipala has done in his book, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Colonial North India*.

Scholars in social sciences are often swayed by what the French philosopher Henri Bergson called the illusion of retrospective determination. Simply put, it refers to the belief that if something happened, it somehow had to happen, and that it is the job of a scholar to simply explain the occurrence as it happened. In the case of Pakistan, the contemporary academic discourse only works to explain the political turmoil in Pakistan, making normative a view that the nation could not be anything else, but what it is.

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When we look into the contemporary state of affairs, Pakistan presents itself as a socially and politically agitated nation, and when scholars have attempted to study the roots of this behaviour, the dominant understanding is that Pakistan is a state born out of ideological absent-mindedness and was a product of the power struggles of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. The noted political scholar Christophe Jaffrelot describes Pakistan as “nationalism without a nation.” In other words, the development of Pakistan came about from the fact that Jinnah and the Muslim League that were instrumental in the creation of Pakistan, knew that they did not want to be part of a Hindu-majority India. This distinction formed the sole basis for a new national identity, making the Pakistani identity rooted deeply in religion, lacking a strong political context.

The other preeminent discourse on Pakistani nationalism is espoused by the renowned historiographer Ayesha Jalal in her much cited seminal thesis on Pakistani identity and history. She dissects the politics of Jinnah and his projected leadership of Indian Muslims. She looks into how Jinnah’s quest to ensure an equal standing for the Muslims created a major rift between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, and Jinnah’s demand for a separate state of Pakistan as a “bargaining counter” to claim great share of power in the centre. This hypothesis is further supplemented by the arguments of the distinguished political scientist Paul Richard Brass when he says that Pakistan was created to funnel the power ambitions of Jinnah. Further, Jalal has persuasively argued that Jinnah’s ideas of Pakistan were not sufficiently realised because of his sudden death, which led to the creation of a confused identity that oscillated between the ideas of a modern democracy and a theocratic *ummah*.

All these reasons are frequently cited to explain the political disharmony in Pakistan. The creation of Pakistan lacked the deep understanding of political, social and juridical foundations that is essential to create a stable society, and the case is so because of the aforementioned reasons. These standing opinions are strongly challenged by Venkat Dhulipala in his book.

Dr Dhulipala, who is an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, propounds the hypothesis that the idea of the state of Pakistan was a result not of a solitary

thought but of composite thinking. Through the book, he argues that the idea of Pakistani nationalism is rooted not just in religious identity but also incorporates clear ideas for political, social, cultural, and juridical foundations that are essential for a new state. In this seminal work, that took over eleven years of archival research, he has developed the most comprehensive critique of Jalal's theory on Pakistan being an "insufficiently imagined" state. While arguments bolstering the connection between religion and politics have also been made in Farzana Shaikh's book, *Community and Consensus in Islam*, Dhulipala's book traces the debates of the creation of Pakistan to the 1930s.

The voluminous work is rich in its scholarly disposition, with constant and effective referencing to a vast amount of primary data gathered from archives in the United Kingdom, India, and Pakistan. The title is a reference to the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Medina has enjoyed a pivotal position not just in the religious life of the Muslim community, but also has a significant influence in the politics and jurisprudence of the Muslim community. In many ways, Medina (along with Mecca) is the seat of socio-political power, quite akin (although not analogous) to the position that the Vatican enjoys in the Catholic community. Dhulipala argues that Pakistan was created with the idea of becoming the new Medina for the Islamic *ummah*. The idea of a separate state of Pakistan was not just a demand rooted in laconic nationalism bolstered on religious identity, but a pan-Islamic one that would transcend political boundaries. Pakistan was to be the modern Muslim state – a beacon for the Muslim community – shaped on the visions of liberal ideas, scientific temper and democratic politics. This, Dhulipala argues, was not just a result of Jinnah's solitary idealism. The book brings out archival evidence of how the religious leadership of the *ulema* was critical in mobilising support towards this goal. The book debunks the notion that the Deoband school of Islam was uniformly opposed to the two-nation theory. Dhulipala clarifies that the idea of *muttahida qaumiyat* (composite nationalism) was favoured by a section of the *ulema* led by Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani who opposed the Partition strongly. There were also Deobandis led by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, who were convinced that the Muslim

League was the sole representative of Indian Muslims and rallied for the demand for Pakistan.

The book further brings about the nuances of the debates within the Indian Muslim community. A study of the debates, as exposed in the book, establishes that the Muslims in India were not just thinking on the lines of religious differentiation and division. The idea was not to have a Muslim state where Muslims would be safe from a majority Hindu oppression, but to have a Muslim state with a developed and informed understanding of a socio-political system.

The book's greatest contribution perhaps is bringing out BR Ambedkar's views on Partition. In what can be termed as an incisive (and rather cold) forensic analysis of Ambedkar's thoughts, Dhulipala exposes how, in his view, the political leader saw Partition as the most pragmatic approach to ensure social and political stability. In an entire chapter dedicated to Ambedkar, the author reflects on the inferences, which are drawn devoid of any religious sentiments.

The book has been written with a keen eye for detail even when it is indulging in mammoth descriptions, and is a valuable contribution towards a new understanding of the complex dynamics of Pakistan. There are numerous references to witty, and some previously unknown anecdotes, with a personal favourite being the mention of the official archival record of a séance that was organised by the Government of Pakistan seven years after partition to call the spirit of Jinnah to seek his help in formulating policies. For a scholar of international relations, the book effectively dissuades the arguments on the lines of what Pakistan could have been had Jinnah survived, or that the Muslims created Pakistan because of a forced reconciliation. It brings about the complexity of the thought of what Pakistan should have been – an otherwise unforeseen amalgamation of a modern, democratic Muslim state – a state that replaces territorial identity with religious identity to create a complex national identity, while getting caught up in religious ideals that oppose this very formulation. This religio-political identity bolsters arguments by scholars of international relations that Pakistan's strategic culture can be best studied by looking at the state as a "homeland state", something similar to the creation of the modern Jewish state of Israel.

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