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THE TERRORIST LIFECYCLE: A CASE STUDY OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN AFGHANISTAN

AMINA KHAN* AND AWAIS ALI SYED**

Abstract

After nearly two decades since the US invasion of Afghanistan, the country continues to wrestle with a plethora of problems. Political instability, deteriorating security, poor governance, unsuccessful peace talks with the Taliban, and the presence of 21 terrorist groups including the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) continue to haunt Afghanistan's potential for a prosperous future. The official emergence of the ISKP in Afghanistan in 2015 brought with it a set of new challenges for the already war-torn country and complicated the path to peace as they came along with a violent ideology of a global jihad against the Afghan state, the Afghan Taliban, and the population of Afghanistan. The paper aims to critically analyse the ISKP's rise since its emergence under the theoretical framework of the terrorist lifecycle under four main categories: emergence, rise, downfall, and demise. The paper argues that despite suffering heavy losses and fighting a war on many fronts, the ISKP has learned to not just survive but thrive in certain aspects in Afghanistan. This has meant that despite several issues the group still continues to oscillate between the emergence and rise phase in the terrorist lifecycle and has yet to enter into the downfall or demise phase.

Keywords: *Afghanistan, IS, Taliban, violence, peace, regional stability.*

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دہشتگردی کا دائرہ حیات: افغانستان میں داعش کے معاملے کا

مطالعہ

آمنہ خان اور اویس علی سید

خلاصہ:-

امریکی مداخلت کے تقریباً دو دہائیوں کے بعد سے اب تک افغانستان مسلسل مسائل کے غلبہ سے چھٹکارا پانے کے لیے زور آزمائی کر رہا ہے۔ سیاسی کشمکش، سلامتی کی بگڑتی ہوئی صورتحال، ناکام طرز حکومت، طالبان کے ساتھ مذاکرات میں ناکامی اور ۲۱ دہشت گرد گروہوں کی موجودگی جن میں ISKP یعنی داعش صوبہ خراسان بھی شامل ہے افغانستان کے درخشاں مستقبل کی راہ میں حائل ہیں۔ جنگ سے تباہ حال ملک میں داعش صوبہ خراسان کا ۲۰۱۵ء میں ظہور افغانستان کے لیے مزید مشکلات اور امن کے راستے میں مزید پیچیدگیوں کا سبب بنا کیونکہ یہ گروہ اپنے ساتھ افغان حکومت، افغان طالبان اور افغان عوام کے خلاف ایک عالمی جہاد کا پر تشدد نظریہ لے کر آیا یہ مضمون داعش خراسان کے وجود میں آنے اور پروان چڑھنے کا دہشت گردی کے دائرہ حیات کے نظریاتی خاکے کے تحت اس کے آشکار ہونے، پروان چڑھنے، زوال پزیر ہونے اور اختتام کا تنقیدی تجزیہ پیش کرتا ہے۔ یہ مضمون دعویٰ کرتا ہے کہ کئی محاذوں پر لڑی جانے والی جنگ کے بھاری نقصانات کے باوجود ISKP نہ صرف یہ قائم بلکہ چند خاص حوالوں سے پروان چڑھی ہے۔ اس سے ثابت ہوتا ہے کہ یہ گروہ اپنے آشکار ہونے سے لیکر پروان چڑھنے تک کے عمل میں معلق ہے اور دہشت گردی کی راہ پر چلنے کے بعد زوال اور خاتمے کے دہانے پر ہے۔

Introduction

After nearly two decades since the US invasion of Afghanistan and over 93,000 civilian casualties, the country continues to wrestle with a plethora of problems.¹ Political instability, deteriorating security, poor governance, unsuccessful peace talks with the Taliban, and the presence of 21 terrorist groups including the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) continue to haunt Afghanistan's potential for a prosperous future.² The official emergence of the ISKP in Afghanistan in 2015 brought with it a set of new challenges for the already war-torn country and complicated the path to peace as they came along with a violent ideology of a global jihad against the Afghan state, the Afghan Taliban, and the population of Afghanistan.³

By drawing on the works of Sara De Silva, Khuram Iqbal,⁴ Martha Crenshaw,⁵ Dipak K. Gupta,⁶ and Leonard Weinberg,⁷ the paper aims to critically analyse the ISKP's rise since its emergence under the theoretical framework of the terrorist lifecycle under four main categories: emergence, rise, downfall, and demise. The paper argues that despite suffering heavy losses and fighting a war on many fronts, the ISKP has learned to not just survive but thrive in certain aspects in Afghanistan, as in 2018 alone the ISKP was to blame for 87 per cent of civilian deaths in Afghanistan due to terrorism.⁸ This has meant that despite several issues the group still continues to oscillate between the emergence and rise phase in the terrorist lifecycle and has yet to enter into the downfall or demise phase.

The study also aims to highlight that if not countered effectively, the ISKP poses a great threat to the future stability of the Afghan state and the prospects for a sustainable peace solution as the ISKP has emerged as one of the biggest threats to Afghanistan and its political stakeholders such as the Taliban.

Emergence

As the name suggests, the first phase of the 'terrorist lifecycle' is the emergence phase, which, at its core, is the inception of the group and their campaign. During this developmental phase, the group tries to develop its own identity, garner acceptance from the area, preach its ideology and agenda, and bolsters its rank via a recruitment and training campaign.⁹

In the case of the ISKP, its unofficial emergence in Afghanistan can be first seen in 2014 when the Afghan media started reporting on signs of the ISKP in Afghanistan.¹⁰ The ISKP began by circling videos as well as leaflets in both Pashto and Dari propagating its agenda in Kabul¹¹ in an obvious attempt to reach the larger Afghan public. This was quickly followed by the emergence of long live IS (Zindabad Daesh) slogans at the Kabul University.¹² It is clear that the ISKP used a vast array of methods and tactics in the last few years to establish its ideology and presence in the region to develop its own unique identity within Afghanistan.

Despite the obvious signs of the ISKP's presence, officials in Kabul rejected the notion of their spread into Afghanistan. Rather, they downplayed the group's threat as fringe elements within the Taliban. However, in January 2015, the ISKP made their presence official as their spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, proclaimed the Islamic State's (IS) expansion outside of its traditional strongholds in Iraq and Syria with the establishment of the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), a historic region including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia.¹³ This marked the first chapter out of the IS's larger caliphate in the Arab world under a strict ideology of Salafi Takfirism.¹⁴

Assessing the urgent need to counter the ISKP with its official emergence, the Afghan government officially acknowledged their presence as well. On 21 March 2015, while speaking to reporters in Kabul, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani described the ISKP as a "man-eating" group "that swallows its competitors" and officially recognised

the presence and threat of the IS in Afghanistan.¹⁵ He further stated that in Afghanistan, “the ISKP does not mean a physical presence of people from Syria or Iraq; rather it shows the network effect.”¹⁶ Furthermore, on 25 March 2017, while addressing a joint meeting of the US Congress, President Ghani reiterated the ‘terrible threat’ posed by the IS to Afghanistan, stating that the group was “already sending advanced guards to the southern and western parts of the country to test Afghanistan vulnerabilities.”¹⁷

The group placed the leadership of the ISKP in the hands of Hafiz Saeed Khan—ex-Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Emir in Orakzai agency—as governor of the ISKP,¹⁸ and Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadim (ex-deputy head of the Taliban Military Commission and Corps Commander of Kabul and Herat) as the deputy of the ISKP,¹⁹ which gave a certain insight into the group’s leadership composition. Apart from Hafiz Saeed Khan, several other influential ex-TTP commanders also joined the ranks of the ISKP,²⁰ these included Mufti Hassan (ex-TTP Peshawar chief) Khalid Mansoor (ex-TTP chief in Hangu), Shahidullah Shahid (ex-TTP spokesman), Fateh Gul Zaman (ex-TTP Khyber Agency chief), and Daulat Khan (ex-Kurram Agency chief).²¹

The ISKP’s composition is largely ex-militants from a multitude of militant groups in and around Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East. An estimation stemming from a sample size of 72 influential ISKP members suggests that the group’s composition is 27 per cent ex-Taliban members, 26 per cent ex-TTP members, 4 per cent ex-Al Qaeda members, 11 per cent members from other organisations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and 33 per cent not previously affiliated with any militant group.²² One striking similarity within these varying groups of militants is the fact that 93 per cent of this sample size was madrassah-educated mullahs who had strong ties with the *ulema* in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.²³ These mullahs would speak in favour of the ISKP and their ideology in their assigned areas and would even be paid by the ISKP for supporting their Salafi

values. The presence of these mullahs is very important because they signify how, despite having such diverse membership of militants, the ISKP managed to unite all its members under its flag. Through its global ideology and religious legitimacy through the preaching of these mullahs, the ISKP was able to unite all its fighters with a common call to fight against the US.²⁴

The issue of the strength of the ISKP is a contentious one, as it is something that has always been debated upon by different sources. In 2015, the group's strength was believed to have stood at 1,000 fighters²⁵ and, in 2016, it was estimated that it had between 7,000–8,500 fighters.²⁶ Even the intelligence agencies of different countries are not in agreement. According to General John Nicholson, former commander of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan, in 2017, the group stood between 1,000 to 1,500 fighters.²⁷ However, a UN report estimates that the group has more than 2,500 fighters in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan.²⁸

Despite having a diverse internal composition and reaching out to different militant groups for support for a multitude of reasons that will be extensively covered in the 'rise' section of this paper, the ISKP not only failed to garner official support from other groups such as the Taliban but also became embroiled in an open conflict with the group.

Rise

The next phase in the terrorist lifecycle is the rise phase, which witnesses an increase in the group's operational capabilities. In this phase, the group's quest for attaining legitimacy, spurring public support, recruitment, and capacity and capability in terms of violence and funding become increasingly apparent. It is important to note here that, despite being distinct phases, there is a fair amount of overlap between the emergence and rise phase as many factors are similar.

The ISKP began their campaign unofficially in 2014 with a limited agency,²⁹ however, by the end of 2015, it had showcased its ability to threaten the peace and security in Afghanistan by regularly carrying out lethal attacks and widespread kidnappings.³⁰ This period and trend reflect the 'rise' of the group. In the two-year period between 2015 and 2017, the group was responsible for more than 60 attacks.³¹ In 2017, it killed more than 2,000 civilians,³² accounting for 22 per cent of civilian deaths.³³ In 2018, it was responsible for 681 deaths and overall 20 per cent³⁴ of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan.³⁵ Hence, in just a few years, the ISKP experienced a quick rise in their relevance as a terrorist organisation in Afghanistan.

In an effort to concretely establish themselves, the ISKP sought to forge alliances and galvanise support from other militant organisations in Afghanistan. However, more often than not, due to conflicting interests and an unwillingness for power-sharing, these relationships tended to be hostile and resulted in a vicious competition for influence and power. This tussle for legitimacy and influence was clearly witnessed between the ISKP and the Afghan Taliban.

Initially, when the ISKP decided to expand its influence to Afghanistan, it tried to do so by reaching out to the Afghan Taliban, with whom they apparently shared a temporary yet peaceful relationship.³⁶ However, the ISKP failed to win the allegiance of the Taliban as a whole due to differences in ideology, power-sharing, religious beliefs, internal composition, local legitimacy, and control over resources.

The ideology of the ISKP, much like the ISIS, has always been a global jihad to establish a global caliphate, which did not sync with the Taliban's age-old agenda of pushing foreign invaders out of Afghanistan and not interfering with the affairs of outside countries. Whereas some Taliban members were attracted to the ISKP's hard-line focus on violent jihad, several more moderate Taliban members were

appalled by the ISKP's violent agenda and felt that the Taliban could not side with such a group. Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, a Taliban member who defected to the ISKP in 2014, left the ISKP soon after, stating that the ISKP was "ignorant for conducting acts of unjustifiable violence against Afghan civilians"³⁷ highlighting the fact that the Taliban feel that they are opposed to the ISKP on core issues of ideology and agenda.

Moreover, when the group's spokesman Abu Muhammad al Adnani, announced the ISKP chapter in January 2015, many groups such as the IMU declared allegiance to the IS and as an extension their chapter in Khorasan, the ISKP.³⁸ The Taliban also had the option to pledge their allegiance to the ISKP. However, the Taliban openly expressed their opposition to the IS and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as such a pledge would mean an acceptance of the ISKP's goals and ideology, which, according to the Taliban, would "distract" them from their "campaign against President Ghani's internationally-backed government and to drive foreign troops from the country."³⁹ In fact, in June 2015, they wrote a letter to Baghdadi warning him against creating a parallel jihadist front,⁴⁰ stating that "there is space for only one flag and one leadership - the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under Mullah Omar Akhund."⁴¹ The fact that the Taliban felt that an affiliation with the ISKP would 'distract' them from their main goal, further highlights that the Taliban felt that they were ideologically opposed to the ISKP and had no interest in power-sharing or pledging allegiance as they felt the ISKP had no place in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Taliban differ with the ISKP on religious beliefs as well. Whereas the Taliban have followed the Deobandi school of thought under the guidance of Mullah Muhammad Omar since 1994 and have generally avoided violence against Shia populations,⁴² the ISKP follows a more rigid form of Salafi Takfirism, which actively denounces any form of Sufism and regards the Shia Muslims as non-believers.⁴³ This religious tension between the Taliban and the ISKP

surfaced quickly as, in 2015, the central spokesman for the IS, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, specifically mentioned opponents in Khorasan as committing “religious crimes” and called upon the ISKP fighters to “have no mercy or compassion” for those who did not “repent.”⁴⁴ Taliban clerics also responded on religious grounds by issuing fatwas against IS's legitimacy and ideology and justified fighting against them on religious grounds.⁴⁵ In fact, even those Taliban fighters that joined the ISKP had little inclination to the IS ideology of Salafi Takfirism but were rather attracted to higher wages and a global fight against the US.

There is also a contrast in the internal composition of the ISKP and the Taliban, which made the Taliban feel that the ISKP's case was disingenuous. The Taliban are an indigenous group with roots in the country whose emergence can be traced to 1990, following the departure of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. The group is solely Afghan, as it continues to be largely made up of ethnic Pashtuns along with certain members from the Uzbek and Tajik community.⁴⁶ In contrast, the ISKP is an amalgamation of different nationalities, including Arabs, Africans, Pakistanis, Afghans, Uzbeks, Central Asians, and European fighters.⁴⁷ This means that the Taliban not only enjoy more local legitimacy but also feel they have stronger legitimacy attached to their cause in Afghanistan as they are represented mainly by Afghans, whereas the ISKP is an amalgamation of foreigners.⁴⁸ This has resulted in the ISKP failing to achieve ‘sufficient political legitimacy’ and local support in certain areas that the Taliban do.⁴⁹

Another major but underestimated cause behind the strife between the Taliban and the ISKP has been the clash over Afghanistan's vast resources. Previously, the Taliban had a monopoly over the trade of opium, marble, talc, and lapis lazuli. With the emergence of the ISKP, however, who needed to fund their own activities via similar methods, the battle for control over these and other resources intensified. Since its emergence, the ISKP has been

busy to explore ways to support its activities, including being involved in kidnappings for ransom, enforcing taxation, and exploiting Afghanistan's vast mineral resources.⁵⁰ It has been able to generate considerable funds and increase recruitment through the illegal extraction of minerals, such as talc and chromite⁵¹ as well as gemstones, particularly marble and lapis lazuli. This led to the Taliban beginning to lose its monopoly over these resources. This was witnessed in Nangarhar in 2017⁵² when thousands of people were displaced due to the ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the ISKP over these resources.⁵³ The ISKP also allegedly received significant funding from outside sources, such as the Arab countries, which helped fill the gaps in funding for the group. According to an NDS report, "There are many donors from Arab countries who are helping Daesh"⁵⁴ and the ISKP's own finance commission claims that they have offices for fund collection from private donors in countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the UAE and that "the government of Qatar started supporting IS in 2013."⁵⁵ Although it is hard to concretely prove these government links with the ISKP and the word of the ISKP's finance committee only holds so much weight, the location of the ISKP's fund collection offices should be a fairly accurate measure of where their funding comes from, be it private or by a state.

Conflicts in ideology, theology, legitimacy, composition, and resource control have fuelled a strong rift between the ISKP and the Taliban. While it is true that the Taliban have hosted and at times established alliances with other militant outfits such as Al-Qaeda, this was not the case with the ISKP. Al-Qaeda was given refuge by the Taliban due to their acceptance and recognition of Mullah Omar's authority. The ISKP, however, questioned the authority of the Taliban and positioned themselves as a challenge to the Taliban's political and social authority. This meant that the ISKP and the Taliban were on a collision course since the ISKP's emergence in Afghanistan.

Although the ISKP has only been able to establish a limited yet persistent presence in Kunduz, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Faryab, Ghor, and Sar-e-Pul, they have posed a strong challenge for the Taliban in Farah, Helmand Jowzjan, and Kunar.⁵⁶ Despite the fact that the Taliban have historically had strong internal cohesion and have enjoyed stronger local support, the presence of the ISKP has led to divisions within the Taliban. When the ISKP failed to gain allegiance from the Taliban, it successfully took advantage of the weakness of the Taliban that stemmed from their differences over leadership, the appointment of Mullah Mansoor, the peace process, and the monopoly over area and taxation.⁵⁷ They began their campaign by challenging the legitimacy of the Taliban and labelling them as “filthy nationalists”⁵⁸ and lapdogs of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).⁵⁹ The ISKP also began reaching out to individual members of the Taliban and it appeared that their efforts were successful in making several Taliban members defect to the ISKP. This included several important Taliban commanders, such as Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadim, Qari Hekmat, Sheikh Muhsin, Qari Haroon, Abu Abdullah, Al-Qahir Khorasani, and Sheikh Abu Yazid.⁶⁰

Perhaps the biggest reason for the sharp rise of the ISKP and their success in causing strife within the Taliban has been the superior finances the group has as compared to the Taliban.⁶¹ This superior funding not only allows them to be financially stronger than the Taliban to fund their activities but also allows them to recruit more members as they are a more lucrative group to join. Many ISKP members, who were ex-Taliban members, reported having much better salaries and benefits in the ISKP compared to the Taliban, which made them want to stay with the ISKP as they felt more valued and financially secure. One ISKP member summed it up as “Daesh has better financial conditions than the Taliban, we have good uniforms, we have good money to eat and we get our salaries on time. When we were with the Taliban, they told us to get food from the villagers, and

asked us to fund ourselves by collecting Zakat, etc.”⁶² Many elders in Nangarhar attributed the act of leaving the Taliban for the more lucrative ISKP to the most “venal” and “mercenary minded” members of the Taliban.⁶³ Considering the superior conditions, however, it is not surprising that the ISKP has been able to gain so much support.

Although the ISKP’s quest for a global caliphate through an ideology of global jihad distanced it from many members or supporters of the Taliban, it also made it a very attractive group for extremists in areas such as China, the Central Asian Republics, and Afghanistan who were waiting for a terrorist group with a global agenda rather than one confined to Afghanistan.⁶⁴ Many jihadists in China and the Central Asian Republics had grown ‘impatient’ with waiting for a group like Al-Qaeda to come to their region and help launch jihad, so they were attracted to the ISKP as it promised a global jihad that would extend to their region. This jihadist frustration has been a major driving force in spreading the ideology and increasing the recruitment of the ISKP.⁶⁵

Furthermore, at a cursory glance, it seems as if the ISKP has primarily drawn its recruitment from disenfranchised ex-militants: fighters from groups like the Taliban and the TTP who were already in the fold of terrorism but changed sides for one reason or another. However, a deeper look into the ISKP reveals that the group’s global ideology is also drawing extremists who have not been previously affiliated with any group. According to interviews carried out between 2014 and 2016 among the 72 known ISKP cadres and leaders, 33 per cent of the militants in ISKP had no previous affiliation with any terrorist organisation.⁶⁶ This 33 per cent is also higher than the percentage of former TTP and Taliban members in the organisation. This statistic proves that not only does the ISKP have an ideology appealing to hard-line factions in terrorist groups but to people who previously had no affiliations with any group. These new fighters had the option of joining the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, the TTP, or any other

faction, but they chose not to in previous years and are now being attracted to the ISKP.⁶⁷ Thus signalling the fact that the ISKP's global agenda harkens to more than just ex-militants looking for global jihad.

As for the ISKP, following the confines of the terrorist lifecycle and in its desire to gain authority, it attempted to exert its power over the Taliban, intensifying their attacks against the group, particularly in Nangarhar.⁶⁸ From 2015 to 2016, the ISKP and the Taliban were engaged in fierce fighting in different parts of the country. Although the ISKP lost its then emir Hafiz Sayeed Khan in July 2016,⁶⁹ followed by the killing of Abdul Hasib in April 2017,⁷⁰ the ISKP was still able to challenge the Taliban in their traditional strongholds. One such example is the battle over Tora Bora in June 2017,⁷¹ in which the ISKP nearly captured the area, highlighting its ability to expand if given the space to operate. Although the year 2017 proved to be costly for the group in terms of loss of leadership as well as more than 1,600 fighters, the group continued to operate.

The strife between the ISKP and the Taliban over influence, resources and territory has led to a violent confrontation between both sides. Despite suffering heavy losses, however,⁷² the ISKP continues to operate in the rise phase. They have undergone this rise in ruthless and merciless ways against the Taliban as well as those sympathetic to the Taliban. In some of the footage released by the ISKP, some captured Taliban fighters and sympathisers were shown being beheaded while others were forced to walk on landmines for other Taliban fighters to see, in a clear attempt to demonstrate their ruthlessness and instil fear.⁷³ This rivalry has escalated to the point that the US has acknowledged the Taliban as a potential tool in the fight against the ISKP. General Nicholson, a US general in Afghanistan, said he "welcomed" the Taliban's fight against the ISKP as they "need[ed] to be destroyed."⁷⁴ Further highlighting that the ISKP has enjoyed such a sharp rise, the US is considering every conceivable measure to fight against them. Moreover, echoing the same sentiment as General

Nicholson, Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan, in an interview with RT stated that if the Taliban reconciled with the government and joined the fight against the ISKP, the Afghan government and the Taliban would "eliminate [the Islamic State] on Afghan soil."⁷⁵

Downfall

The third phase is the 'downfall' phase that follows a downward trajectory in the overall capability and capacity (political and military) of a group in terms of its agenda, influence, presence, and threat potential. These factors further lead to a fall in public support, conscription, and territorial hold, ultimately leading to downfall.⁷⁶ This downfall can begin owing to a multitude of factors such as a decrease in funding, low recruitment, leadership fragmentation, and increased counter-terrorism efforts against the group. The group may also shift from terrorism to activities that are not terroristic in their nature.⁷⁷

At the moment, it is clear that the ISKP has not entered the downfall phase. Rather than exhibiting many of the factors that characterise the downfall phase, the ISKP has continued the frequency and lethality of their attacks despite suffering from characteristics such as leadership rifts, fighting with local militant groups, and increased counter-terrorism efforts against them by regional actors.

In fact, the ISKP has been responsible for most of the violence the country has seen in the last few years. According to UNAMA, in 2018, it was responsible for 87 per cent of civilian deaths.⁷⁸ In particular, it has been targeting the Shia ethnic minority in Afghanistan, which is estimated to be between 9 and 15 per cent of the total population. In 2018 alone, it took responsibility for more than a dozen attacks on the Shia community.⁷⁹

Even though the ISKP has yet to enter the downfall phase, this paper analyses several factors that could help expedite the process of

the ISKP progressing through the stages of the terrorist lifecycle and finally send them into the downfall phase. The ISKP has been engaged in fighting with the Taliban since 2014-2015. Since April 2017,⁸⁰ however, it has been engulfed in a two-front battle against the Afghan/US forces and the Taliban. Despite this two-front battle against two allies of circumstance, the US-Kabul forces and the Taliban, the ISKP has continued to operate and demonstrate the fighting capacity of the group. This is primarily because the outfit has been able to exploit the conflict between Kabul and the Taliban, which has provided it with plenty of room to operate. An example to illustrate this was the momentous ceasefire between Kabul and the Taliban in June 2017 in which hostilities from both sides came to a halt for three days. However, this historic truce was disrupted by an ISKP attack that killed more than 30 people.⁸¹ In the days to follow, it conducted a series of attacks, most notably in Nangarhar⁸² and on the Sikh community.⁸³

While the Taliban and the ISKP fight in various realms for resources, potential recruits, and control over areas, the US-Kabul coalition fights them in counter-terrorism offences. However, the US/Afghan security forces are also fighting the Taliban at the same time and there is no combined or coordinated effort by both sides to mutually take on the ISKP and the group has been able to take advantage of this lack of mutual cooperation to exponentially grow in the space created by the struggle between the Taliban and US-Kabul forces. The key to effectively combating and curtailing the ISKP is, first and foremost, a sustainable peace agreement between the Taliban and Kabul. Such a deal would not only mean that the ISKP would be denied the spaces it currently occupies amidst the fighting between the Taliban the US/Afghan security forces but also that both groups would be united in the fight against the ISKP. In the event of a peace agreement, as per their demand, the Taliban would be a political entity in Afghanistan and would not wish to have their political writ

challenged by the ISKP. General Nicholson spoke about this prospect when the three-day ceasefire was first announced. He said that if the Taliban would honour the ceasefire and cease fighting, “many of the surveillance assets that we have overhead can be reoriented to ISIS-K.”⁸⁴ This means that the US recognises that despite their individual fight against the ISKP in Afghanistan, their resources are spread thin because of fighting the Taliban. Should a peace deal be reached between the US and the Taliban, the US and Afghan security forces, as well as the Taliban, could collectively fight the ISKP, making the downfall of the ISKP eminent.

Many regional stakeholders have also recognised that peace in Afghanistan is the only way to achieve peace in the region and that if they wish to have a say in the political future of Afghanistan, they must get involved in the peace process and not let the US unilaterally take the helm. As such, there have been efforts by many regional stakeholders such as Pakistan, Russia, China, and Iran to host dialogues and talks with senior Afghan politicians and the Taliban in an attempt to expedite the peace process. The recent years have been particularly special in this regard, as Russia held the Moscow peace dialogue, China hosted a Taliban delegation with senior Taliban leadership, and Pakistan held the Lahore process to exemplify their commitment to peace in Afghanistan.⁸⁵ Qatar also hosted the intra-Afghan Doha Peace Conference, which was the first time Taliban members met and talked with senior Kabul leadership, albeit only in a personal capacity.⁸⁶ All this highlights that regional stakeholders are getting more actively involved in the peace process, which can be very helpful in bringing the Taliban and Kabul together and, in turn, crucial to helping stop the ISKP’s advances.

Regional stakeholders’ increased involvement in Afghanistan is primarily there to end the conflict with the Taliban. They are, however, also quite wary of the growing threat of the ISKP and the need to tackle it head-on. In July 2018, a meeting between the intelligence

chiefs from Pakistan, Russia, China, and Iran was held in Pakistan to discuss how best to carry out counter-terrorism operations against the ISKP in Afghanistan. All sides agreed on the need for an integrated approach to countering the ISKP, which highlights the fact that regional stakeholders are also very worried about the ISKP and are actively involved in countering it.⁸⁷ This is further exemplified by the fact that, in 2017, Russian intelligence openly admitted to sharing intelligence with the Taliban regarding the ISKP to help the Taliban counter the ISKP.⁸⁸ The fact that Russia would share its intelligence with the Taliban shows how significant a threat do regional stakeholders consider the ISKP. It also signifies that if they would increase their efforts in a united push against the ISKP, it could help catalyse the ISKP's transition into the downfall phase.

There are also a few internal issues within the ISKP that could help catalyse the ISKP's transition into the downfall phase. The ISKP seems to be highly vague and ambiguous about its agenda in Afghanistan and its agenda as a whole. It is not entirely clear what the group necessarily means by a global jihad and its attempts to establish it seem more sporadic and impulsive than planned. This is exemplified by the group's decision to open an office in India.⁸⁹ The ISKP has claimed to have expanded to Pakistan and is now opening an office in India. However, there does not seem to be any real plan about how they will strongly establish themselves in India or why they wanted to go there in the first place. Furthermore, the ISKP has also not addressed the fact that its main branch in Iraq has been declared defeated which significantly curtails their funding and the legitimacy of their global agenda. This raises many question marks as to why the ISKP has failed to say much about the fact that the IS was declared defeated and how that affects their own jihad.

This internal confusion is reflected in the group's inability to have selected a new leader since the death of Abu Saeed, their last leader, in 2017, and the group's infighting in the appointment of

previous leaders.⁹⁰ There have been reports about growing divisions and rivalry within the group, particularly between the Pakistani and Central Asian fighters,⁹¹ especially after the death of Hafiz Saeed Khan in 2016, when Hasibullah Logari, an Afghan from Logar and a close friend of al-Baghdadi's special envoy to Khorasan, was appointed as a temporary leader of the group.⁹² Since Logari was an Afghan, his appointment caused rifts and raised discontentment within the senior Pakistani membership of the ISKP as they were afraid that the Afghans in the ISKP would now gain more prominence. It was only once they were assured that Logari was a temporary leader until a new one was selected that the discontentment subsided. The issue of leadership surfaced again, however, when Logari was killed in a US raid in 2017 and a new leader Aslam Faruqi was appointed. Faruqi was a former LeT member and many ISKP members believed that his appointment was due to his links with the Pakistani ISI in return for safe havens in Pakistan. As a result of his links with the Pakistani ISI, many members opposed his appointment and in the summer of 2017, the ISKP actually split into two factions, one led by Faruqi and the other led by a man named Moawiya, an ex-IMU leader.⁹³ Since this rift, both factions have been operating independently and despite the ISKP's attempts to reconcile the two factions, the group remains fragmented. It appears that the group is struggling to elect a new leader due to internal fragmentations and the fact that due to the diversity of nationalities within the ISKP, many groups such as fighters from the Central Asian Republics disagree on who should be the new Emir.⁹⁴ The fact that the ISKP is still relatively strong despite these internal tears further proves the point that at the present moment, ISKP is between the rise and emergence phase. In future, however, the ISKP's failure to patch its internal tears and agree on leadership could mean that the group is going to start lacking direction and focus. Such a disorganised ISKP would not only tear itself apart but would become an easier target for

the Taliban and the Afghan coalition forces, which could send the ISKP into the downfall phase.

The ISKP continues to be a major hurdle in the path to peace in Afghanistan. The activities of the ISKP have shown that no entity has more to gain from the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan than the ISKP and the longer the Afghan conflict persists, the more space it will provide the ISKP with to flourish. Therefore, all efforts need to be channelled towards ridding the country of this group.

Demise

The final phase within the framework of a terrorist lifecycle is demise, in which the activities of a group freeze and cease to exist. This demise of a group can be onset through a multitude of factors such as the killing of its leader, mass incarceration of its members, freezing of funding, and military defeat from rivals from the government or other militant groups.⁹⁵

Keeping the above factors in mind, within the parameters of the terrorist lifecycle, it can be asserted that since the ISKP does not fall within the downfall phase, by extension it also does not fall within the domain of the demise phase. This is because it has not reached the essential pre-requisites for downfall and demise, namely, a complete halt of its activities. Although the ISKP has lost four of its Emirs and hundreds of fighters, including those that have surrendered and reconciled with the Afghan government,⁹⁶ it continues to operate with a high degree of morale and no visible reduction in its activities and violence. This is evident from the scale of the terror it has unleashed on all other stakeholders in Afghanistan, as well as other activities such as kidnappings and extortion.

More so, although the ISKP has been facing the impact of military campaigns from Afghan, US forces as well as the Taliban, it has managed to hold its position, albeit limited, clearly demonstrating that it is a potent force that does not intend on curbing its activities by

taking advantage of the spaces allowed to it. Another factor that further highlights the terrorist outfit's ability to resist disintegration and continue with its place in the emergence and rise phases are that it has continued to uphold its presence and activities despite the significant impact of the fall of the IS in Mosul on it.⁹⁷ After the fall of the ISKP's parent organisation IS in Iraq and Syria, the ISKP not only started suffering from the leadership rifts it already had in the past but also hundreds of IMU members started defecting back to Al-Qaeda.⁹⁸ This left the ISKP with a weakened foothold in Uzbekistan as about thirty-five members even escaped IS-Central.⁹⁹ The group, however, has yet to show strong signs of weakening and has demonstrated its ability to survive and operate independently of its parent organisation.

Conclusion

This paper sought to show that since its inception in Afghanistan, the ISKP has enjoyed a sharp rise in the emergence and rise phase of the terrorist lifecycle. Not only have they managed to spread widespread terror and destabilised the region but they have also done so despite suffering from internal rifts, the loss of their parent organisation, inferior legitimacy to the Taliban in certain aspects, division into two distinct groups and an increased military global and local effort against them. These factors show that the ISKP has not yet entered the downfall or the demise phase but continues to waver between the emergence and rise phases.

At this point, peace in Afghanistan is starting to become contingent on defeating the ISKP. Denying the vacuum and space afforded to the ISKP because of decades of conflict in Afghanistan is key to forcing the ISKP in the downfall phase and, by extension, the demise phase. Until there is some form of a sustainable peace deal in Afghanistan between the government and the Taliban, it appears that the ISKP will continue its presence in the emergence and rise phase.

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EXAMINING INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE AND MARITIME DOCTRINAL GROWTH: THE INDO-PACIFIC IN PERSPECTIVE

UMM-E-HABIBA* AND MUHAMMAD AZAM KHAN**

Abstract

During much of the Cold War, New Delhi's strategic perceptions remained overwhelmingly land-centric. Maritime thinking and significance of naval power took a secondary spot in the Indian strategic and security perception. A surge in the country's economy and post-9/11 developments rapidly transformed the country's strategic culture. New Delhi placed a renewed focus on naval modernisation, while maritime thinking (strategy and doctrinal growth), as well as blue water naval ambitions, became pronounced. Indian Navy's role changed from mere coastal defence to power projection, at least in documents. This study analyses the burgeoning shift in Indian Navy's ambitions and maritime doctrinal growth in the backdrop of a new geographical construct, i.e., 'the Indo-Pacific'. It argues that although the force envisions itself as a key enabler of maritime power projection, there is a critical mismatch between the stated objectives and demonstrated maritime military potential. This is evident from several major accidents over the past few years and post-Pulwama standoff, which practically validated the void in Indian Navy's stated doctrinal philosophy and real combat potential.

Key Words: Indo-Pacific, maritime doctrine, naval forces, sea

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power, strategic culture.

بھارت کے تزویراتی افکار اور سمندری نظریہ کے نمو کا انڈو پیسفک

کے نقطہ نظر سے جائزہ

ام جیبیہ اور محمد اعظم خان

خلاصہ:-

سرد جنگ کے دوران، نئی دہلی کا تزویراتی ادراک زمینی سطح پر مرکوز رہا۔ سمندر کے بارے میں سوچ اور بحری قوت کو بھارت کے جنگی رویے اور سلامتی کے نظریے میں ثانوی اہمیت دی گئی۔ ملکی معیشت کی تیز رفتار ترقی اور بعد از گیارہ ستمبر (9/11) کی پیشرفت نے بھارت کی تزویراتی افکار کی صورتحال کو تیزی سے تبدیل کر دیا۔ نئی دہلی نے بحریہ کو جدید بنانے پر زیادہ توجہ دی، جبکہ سمندروں کے حوالے سے تزویراتی اور نظریاتی نمو اور ایک نیلے پانیوں کی بحریہ کی تشکیل کی خواہش نمایاں ہو گئی۔ بھارت کی بحریہ نے ساحلوں کے دفاع کے بارے میں اپنے کردار پر نظر ثانی کی اور کم از کم دستاویزات کی سطح تک بحری قوت کے پھیلاؤ کے نئے خاکے ترتیب دیئے۔ یہ مضمون بھارت کے بحری عزائم اور نظریاتی نمو میں ابھرتی ہوئی تبدیلی کا انڈو پیسفک کی نئی جغرافیائی ایجاد کے تناظر میں تجزیہ کرتا ہے۔ یہ اس امر کو زیر بحث لاتا ہے کہ اگرچہ فوجی طاقت بحری قوت کے پھیلاؤ کی موجب ہے بھارت کے بیان کردہ اہداف اور اس کی بحری قوت میں مماثلت نہیں ہے۔ گزشتہ چند سالوں میں پیش آنیوالے کئی بڑے حادثات اور پلوامہ کے بعد کی محاذ آرائی نے بھارتی بحریہ کے نظریاتی فلسفے اور اس کی جنگی صلاحیت میں فرق کی عملی طور پر توثیق کر دی۔

A Leaf from the Past

Two incidents, one just before and the other immediately after independence, shaped the future of the Indian Navy (IN) for years. First was a mutiny that broke out on a Royal Indian Navy ship based in Bombay in February 1946. It quickly spread to Karachi and Calcutta. Over fifty ships and many shore establishments were involved. The mutiny was planned by Indian sailors inspired by the trials of three Indian Army officials who had defected to the Japanese side. Consequently, any plans to advance the navy had to be halted, unless loyalty of its sailors could be ensured.¹ Later, due to the Kashmir war in October 1947, the Indian Air Force (IAF) was thrust into a vital role. Short of equipment, the IAF started receiving more attention than the IN.² As a result, the IN's role gradually became inconsequential.

In the years, the India-Pakistan encounters reinforced the fact that the IN was not 'ready' to participate in a war that originated 'somewhere deep inland'.³ In 1965, India's lone aircraft carrier and dominant part of its fleet remained blocked in Bombay harbour as Pakistan Navy (PN) pounded the coastal city of Dwarka on the country's western seaboard. And in 1971, despite overwhelming superiority in military forces, the Indian carrier was restricted to eastern peripheries in the Bay of Bengal until the sinking of the PN submarine Ghazi.⁴ The burden of history, a colonial legacy, and with major wars fought on land, India's strategic planning remained subordinate to land-centric territorial security.

This, however, was in stark contrast to the views expressed by K.M. Panikkar, "India's foremost geopolitical thinker."⁵ His famous treatise, *India and the Indian Ocean* published in 1945, linked global history and politics to the Indian Ocean. The author contended that the British supremacy in India and adjoining regions was only because the "Indian Ocean was a British Lake."⁶ In the words of Panikkar:

From fourth century BC until the discovery of sea route by the Portuguese, Hindu India was a sea power with colonies around the Indian Ocean. As long as India maintained her sea power, she was not conquered by any European power. India was invaded by land; but the invaders by land were absorbed by India, whereas those who invaded by sea remained alien. The struggles between the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the French for the mastery of trade in Asia were also for the control of the Indian Ocean. — For her own defence and for the peace of Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Near East, India with her strategic position, economic resources and vast population should develop her naval power in order to maintain her supremacy in the Indian Ocean.⁷

Yet the good counsel of the sage that Panikkar was could not find much acceptance in the strategic culture of New Delhi.

Gandhi and Nehru Years

India's tardiness to invest in the navy had, however, much to do with the country's foreign policy under Gandhi and Nehru. According to one leading academic, it was the Indian national epic *Mahabharata* that inspired Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* or terminating violence non-violently.⁸ Gandhi's influence over Nehru ensured that *Satyagraha*, the chief determinant of Indian diplomacy of 'non-violence', shaped the nation's post-colonial diplomacy.⁹ However, this is not to suggest that Nehru had no big dreams for his nascent country. Far from that, he was prompt in affirming that "India [was] likely to dominate politically and economically the Indian Ocean region."¹⁰ This proclamation signified an Indian version of the *Monroe doctrine*.¹¹ But for lack of resources and reasons cited in the foregoing, investments in the IN could have been higher than what transpired. In the formative years, the IN was left to struggle for space in the

strategic community as well as apportionment in defence budget viz-á-viz its role.

The pacifism, however, saw a change in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. Improving armed forces became a top priority. The Indian government stipulated a growth of fifty-four principal warships¹² for the IN.¹³ PN's unchallenged ascendancy in the North Arabian Sea (NAS) during the 1965 war provided another rude awakening. In subsequent years, some rethinking on the wartime role of the navy apparently took place within the wider Indian strategic community. This is evident in the post-war inductions like the Russian Osa class missile boats, which demonstrated combat power in the NAS against Pakistan¹⁴ during the war of 1971.¹⁵ The capital-intensive ship of the IN, the aircraft carrier, nonetheless, could not play any meaningful role in providing what is called 'sea control'.

The war in 1971, the liberalisation of the Indian economy (1990 onwards), and resultant economic growth,¹⁶ besides the Kargil conflict of 1999, provided the real impetus. It triggered renewed interest in maritime military matters in India. With ever-increasing and expansively spread maritime interests in the Indian Ocean, including the all-important energy sea lines running to and from the Gulf and large diasporas overseas, the realisation for fielding a strong navy sank deeper in Indian national security psyche.

Historically, with procurements from Russia and gradually expanding indigenous warship construction industry, the 1970s witnessed a steady growth in Indian naval development. By the 1980s, the IN was in a relatively better position among littoral navies of the Indian Ocean. It had fairly improved its naval air and submarine potential.¹⁷ The rapid militarisation of the Indian Ocean and the presence of superior navies in the subsequent decades precipitated a shift in the IN's doctrinal focus from coastal defence to power projection.¹⁸ Although the goal was too ambitious to be met in the

short term, it underscored the IN's intent to play a notable role in defence of the "nation's maritime interests."¹⁹

A Conclusive Shift

The decisive shift came in the post-9/11 era. There was a sudden gush of maritime military (naval) forces in the Indian Ocean, particularly the western quadrant. These forces, mostly from extra-regional countries, were soon afterwards, joined by navies from regional littorals. In months and years that followed, the Indian Ocean witnessed the execution of maritime military operations like, "*Operation Enduring Freedom*" (October 2001), "*Operation Iraqi Freedom*" (March 2002), as well as "*Operation Atlanta*" (December 2008), the last meant to counter Somali piracy.²⁰

Shortly after the launch of *Operation Enduring Freedom* in October 2001, its maritime component, the Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan (CMCP) was launched by the US. In 2004, PN also joined CMCP. This resulted in filling up critical strategic space in the western Indian Ocean²¹ by Pakistan. This, otherwise, could have been taken up by the IN. Alongside such developments was China's perpetual and steep economic rise and Beijing's significant yet hushed investments in the PLA Navy. The mounting interest of China in the Indian Ocean along with its steady buildup of maritime military muscle in the Pacific Ocean was enough to unnerve not only New Delhi but the US as well.

The Fruits of Pivot

In 2012, the Obama administration declared a new US defence policy, commonly known as the 'Asia pivot' or 'rebalance'. With the shift in global politics and economic centre of gravity from "Euro-Atlantic to Indo-Pacific,"²² the US decided to relocate sixty per cent of its naval assets and marine forces from the Atlantic to the Pacific Command by 2020.²³ Defence cooperation with India was declared the

lynchpin in this pivot strategy.²⁴ This cooperation has since seen an astounding surge.

As the “thrust of ‘pivot’ (sic) has been on the maritime balance of power,” both the “Pacific and the Indian Oceans” have assumed significant attention in the latest US strategy.²⁵ A maritime cartographic construct, the Indo-Pacific,²⁶ is the new buzzword in global capitals. It is found on the pages of strategy documents of all major and regional powers, including *Australian Defence White Paper* (2013 and the latest 2016), *US Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea Power Revised* (CS21R), as well as the latest *Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (IMSS) (2015). The term is firmly reflected in the US National Security Strategy document²⁷ of 2017 as well.

Deciphering the Indo-Pacific

The geographical ‘spatial construct’ of the Indo-Pacific holds diverse meanings and nuances for different maritime powers. US, Australia, India, and China all view it differently. Two things are nonetheless settled. Indian and Pacific oceans have morphed into a single strategic component.²⁸ Developments in one will affect the other and vice versa, or so it is deemed. The term blends the established cartographic delimitations of the Indian Ocean with the geographic understanding of the Asia-Pacific region.²⁹ The maritime continuum links sea lines of communication from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.³⁰

In Australian understanding, the Indo-Pacific sphere is conceptualised as a global and collective strategic system that imposes political, economic, and security considerations across the region. A predominantly maritime environment, the Indo-Pacific arc is deemed to be a unified strategic system by virtue of the ceaseless presence of the sea.³¹ Indian mainstream viewpoint holds the Indo-Pacific as a useful way to balance China’s growing power and concurrently, as a blueprint to establish an “inclusive security

architecture."³² China, on the other hand, envisions the Indo-Pacific as constituting two separate regions with their own respective features and functions, though both are increasingly important to Beijing.³³ The predominant Chinese thinking is that "the vast Indo-Pacific framework not only dilutes Beijing's regional influence and puts maritime activities under singular focus but is driven by some countries' desire to counterbalance China."³⁴

Be that as it may, in the evolving international geopolitical discourse, the Indo-Pacific stands transformed into a strategic framework. The sea expanse is taken to extend from the west coast of the US to the western Indian Ocean along the east coast of Africa.³⁵ It is today the focus of principal global economic and military activity. The maritime continuum abundantly demonstrates cooperation as well as confrontation, the two going on side by side, at least for now.

Indo-Pacific is a region where the 'core interests' of Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the US, and others criss-cross. It renders the Indian Ocean strategically vital for the maintenance of an economic and military balance of power in the western Pacific.³⁶ Energy and trade shipments of several regional littorals and countries beyond endlessly travelling on the maritime highways of the Indian Ocean.³⁷ About 120,000 ships pass through the Indian Ocean annually and nearly 70,000 of these transit the Strait of Malacca³⁸ onwards to Pacific. According to 2017 statistics, "18.5 million barrels of oil transited the Strait of Hormuz" while 16 million barrels moved through the Malacca Strait on a daily basis.³⁹

Sea Power and the State

For a state, the "utilization of the sea for political purposes is an incentive for seeking prosperity and preservation of the integrity of the sovereign."⁴⁰ This can certainly stem from such significant dilemmas as the dependence on functioning maritime trade and its protection. A state can execute its maritime might purposely to

“consolidate power and seek to embellish” it on a majestic scale.⁴¹ “Sea power (two words) is understood as a functional application of power at, from, above or across the sea. A seapower (one word) is a maritime-minded institution (a nation-state) with a given number of prerequisites to exercise sea power successfully toward larger objectives”. In other words, “*seapower* is something that particular countries or *sea powers* have.”⁴²

The Greek philosopher Thucydides (c.460-c.395BC) emphasised that “neither *sea power* nor *seapower* could be improvised, but had to be masterfully crafted and continuously developed to serve the varying needs of a state in different stages of peace, crisis, and war.”⁴³ The “classic application”⁴⁴ of sea power is a military one. Hence the term has more military nuance than commercial or industrial.⁴⁵

Sea power: The Application

The use of military might is usually for either one, or a combination, of the following three political objectives: “deterrence, coercion, or defence.” States employ military power against an adversary “to prevent that adversary from doing something (deter it), to force that adversary to change behaviour (coerce or compel it), or to protect itself against some harmful action that the adversary threatens or has taken (defend itself).”⁴⁶

Sea power has wide-ranging application in peace, crisis, and war. Exuded through naval platforms and other maritime military instruments, sea power is counted as a robust arm of foreign policy⁴⁷ (maritime diplomacy) as well as power projection.⁴⁸ Navies undertake power projection operations for a variety of reasons, i.e., to create a political, economic, or military effect ashore. They may also be designed to create a military effect at sea, through operations ashore.⁴⁹ Until the 1970s, the primary purpose of sea power was to achieve “command of the seas” or the all-embracing “control of relevant

maritime areas" (including sea lines) in order to advance policy objectives. The term is anachronistic. It has since been replaced with what is known as, "sea control," a more realistic and "achievable control" exercised in "limited areas" for limited periods of time.⁵⁰

Naval Forces Versus Ground and Air Forces

As an "instrument of diplomacy" and power projection, naval forces are distinct in three aspects as compared to ground and air arms of military forces. First, navies ensure 'flexibility' and 'poise', hence, they can be "sent to almost all" areas in the maritime domain; remain deployed, engaged, and then can be withdrawn quickly if required.⁵¹ Second, navies provide 'visibility'. Given their oceanic reach and presence, they can "readily convey threats, provide reassurance, or earn prestige in ways hard to duplicate by ground and air forces." Lastly, naval forces ensure 'universality'. For, the sea serves as an "international medium" which enables "naval vessels to reach distant countries independently of nearby bases."⁵²

Contextualising Strategic Culture

Strategic culture can be defined as, a "nation's distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of military force." It is said to be "developed gradually over time through unique historical processes."⁵³ The term was coined in 1977 by Jack Lewis Snyder, a professor of International Relations at the Columbia University, US. Snyder posited that strategic culture is, "the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation, and which they share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy."⁵⁴ The inclusion of 'nuclear' factor was an integral part of Snyder's definition. This is however disputed by other scholars.

According to Ken Booth, a British theorist, "a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols,

achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment with respect to the threat or use of force make the strategic culture."⁵⁵ As a relatively new concept introduced in International Relations, strategic culture can be summed up as viewing of strategy, war, or national security through the "lens of culture."⁵⁶ Some theorists also suggest it as "the cultural understanding of war."⁵⁷

What Drives Indian Strategic Culture?

Nation-states seldom manage to fuse maritime and terrestrial components, developing a holistic view of their strategic geography. A maritime society tends to slight the terrestrial features of its geographic neighbourhood. Absent maritime consciousness,⁵⁸ conversely, a continental society's mental map remains incomplete, in effect containing 'blank' areas in place of the seas.⁵⁹ Although it's not entirely⁶⁰ clear⁶¹ to what extent, but India's strategic culture is understood to be guided by the famous treatise *Arthashastra*, a comprehensive guide on statecraft. Besides subjects like law, agriculture, use of spies etc., the exposition deals extensively with diplomacy and war (including military tactics).⁶² Written in Sanskrit by Kautilya⁶³ (350-275BC), the chief advisor to Emperor Chandragupta, *Arthashastra* urges expansion of a king's empire using punishing and ruthless measures. His well-recognised theory of inter-state relations, *Mandala*⁶⁴ seeks the enlargement of 'empire' by way of concentric rings or 'circles' comprising friends and foes with the central point being the King and his State.⁶⁵ Kautilya's "empire" has however meant different things to different Indian minds.

Making Sense of Arthashastra and the Indian Ocean

According to *Arthashastra*, power is the 'dominant reality'. It is 'multidimensional', and its 'factors interdependent'. The purpose of strategy, according to the exposition, is to "conquer all other states and to overcome such equilibrium as existed on the road to victory."⁶⁶ In Kautilya's view, "contiguous polities existed in a state of latent

hostility." "Whatever professions of amity he might make, any ruler whose power grew significantly would eventually find that it was in his interest to subvert his neighbour's realm,"⁶⁷ proclaims the theorist. Kautilya concludes "that the ruthless logic of competition allowed no deviation."⁶⁸ Kautilya is a political realist and gives the effect of being amoral.⁶⁹ This led Max Weber, an eminent 20th century political theorist, to conclude that "*Arthashastra* exemplified truly radical Machiavellianism—compared to it, Machiavelli's *The Prince* is harmless."⁷⁰ Regardless, if not earlier, with PM Modi from RSS⁷¹ now in the driving seat in New Delhi, strategic espousal of Kautilya's philosophy by India is no longer an illusion. Nathuram Godse, who assassinated Gandhi, on 30 January 1948, was a member of the RSS.⁷² But even if some doubt existed, the terror attack at Pulwama in Indian occupied Kashmir on 14 February 2019 and events in its wake patently settled the matter.

That said, it is far from clear whether and how the Kautilyan worldview applies to the oceans. Naval combat goes unmentioned in *Arthashastra*.⁷³ Yet K.M. Panikkar, who remains a fixture in Indian strategic discourses, quotes Kautilya on the extent of the 'empire'. "It should span the earth." Panikkar maintains that for Kautilya "the earth is the subcontinent, not the entire globe."⁷⁴ "Universal empire is confined to the Indian landmass, remaining within the frontiers set by the Indian Ocean and the northern mountain ranges."⁷⁵ "On what should happen beyond those frontiers, *Arthashastra* is silent."⁷⁶ Panikkar's writings nonetheless offer a useful benchmark for examining the "Indian maritime strategic culture."⁷⁷

Panikkar contends that the seaward frontiers of the subcontinent never presented an existential threat until the Portuguese seafarer Vasco da Gama anchored at Cochin in 1498. This, he says, "ushered in a clearly marked epoch of history in the Indian Ocean region."⁷⁸ It "may truly be said that India never lost her

independence till she lost the command of the sea in the first decade of the sixteenth century,"⁷⁹ holds Panikkar.

Rakesh Chopra, a retired admiral of the IN, advises Indian governments thus: "New Delhi should expand its gaze out to the fourth concentric Kautilyan ring," namely to "India's strategic frontiers that extend from the Suez Canal in the west to the South China Sea and beyond in the east."⁸⁰ Amongst the challenges before Indian governments, says Chopra, is to consummate the shift towards a more coercive blue water maritime strategy with the overall objective of creating an effective deterrence for defending India.⁸¹ Naval power, then, is part of any effort to extend India's defence perimeter.⁸²

Little wonder, the Indian strategic community increasingly deems the Indian Ocean to be "India's Ocean."⁸³ Such aspirations combine "several strands of Indian maritime strategic thinking."⁸⁴ Some strategists contend that "India must establish a defence perimeter in the Indian Ocean to preclude the possibility of extra-regional intervention; others draw a connection between India's maritime ambitions and its aspirations to become a great power."⁸⁵ Influential Indian strategists such as K. Subrahmanyam have argued that "leadership of the Indian Ocean" is an integral component of India's "manifest destiny."⁸⁶ All in all, extending maritime gaze concurrent with a projection of sea power, deep on either side of the country's seaboard, now seems an Indian obsession.

Maritime Doctrinal Growth

In 2004, the IN published its first apex document, "*Indian Maritime Doctrine*" (INBR 8) (IMD). An updated version was later released in 2009. The revised document was an extension of the previous edition with some subtle variations. The IMD mainly focused on "synergy" and "intelligence-sharing." It was launched in the wake of the Mumbai attacks.⁸⁷ The IN was then recently entrusted the responsibility for coastal security. In between the two editions of IMD,

the IN also published a consort document in 2007 titled, *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (IMMS).

The Indian maritime doctrine highlights fundamental principles, concepts, practices and procedures which govern the employment, development and modernisation of India's maritime military (naval) power. The focus is on the application of naval power across the conflict spectrum. The doctrine elucidates "the concepts, characteristics and context for employment of combat power at and from the sea."⁸⁸ As if attempting to convince readers (*public, government services and other Indian armed forces*), in its 'foreword', IMD states: "...India cannot be complacent about the emerging security environment and related security challenges, particularly in the IOR and in our extended neighbourhood"⁸⁹ (read western Pacific). "The Indian Navy has a key role to play in meeting the maritime component of these challenges, which have been increasing in both scale and scope in recent years,"⁹⁰ it adds.

IMD provides a handy sweep on "India's maritime interests including 7516 km long coastline, Island territories, seaborne trade, sea resources, and above all, the Persian Gulf and Africa centric energy supply resources."⁹¹ It underscores why India needs to control certain maritime chokepoints, vital islands and trade routes in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, as well as in the Bay of Bengal.⁹² The document, furthermore, highlights the IN's vision of areas of legitimate interest. These include, "the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca."⁹³ Naval (maritime) diplomacy is labelled as the IN's primary peacetime task and the navy envisioned as "three-dimensional blue water naval force" able to counter distant maritime threats.⁹⁴

The 2007 IMMS, meanwhile, aims at "providing greater clarity and understanding on various facets of maritime military power."⁹⁵ A pioneering document, IMMS was purported to be read in conjunction with the IMD and the "*Joint Doctrine-Indian Armed Forces*"⁹⁶ to provide what it says, "a comprehensive understanding of (maritime) strategic

thought process.⁹⁷ Three clear objectives are defined in the strategy document: “a design for relating ends to means, a significant tool in maritime planning” and towards “preparation for conflict.”⁹⁸ In a first, it declares that the ends are obvious: “*deterrence (conventional and strategic)*” and “*should deterrence fail, war-fighting and conflict termination on terms favourable*” to India.⁹⁹ It goes on to define a “three-dimensional, versatile, blue-water Navy,” as clear means to achieve ends.¹⁰⁰ The second stated objective is to be a “foundation for planning and conduct of operations.”¹⁰¹ In the third objective, ‘preparation for conflict’, it cites peacetime operations, lessons learnt from exercises and wargames as crucial contributions towards deterrence and helpful in improving the “tenets of the strategy.”¹⁰²

Summing Up- IMD and IMMS

Together, the two publications articulate the IN’s strategic outlook and define parameters of employment and “evolution as combat force.”¹⁰³ IMMS essentially expounds the types of peacetime and wartime roles¹⁰⁴ expected of the IN.¹⁰⁵ IMD, on the other hand, alludes to missions and operational tasks that flow from these roles.¹⁰⁶ The 2007 IMMS, though providing a rationale for and insights to the IN’s modernisation,¹⁰⁷ focuses more on the state’s approach to moving from a current oceanic policy stance to a futuristic “aspired” position of a “blue water Navy.”¹⁰⁸ It is more on which the IN possibly set sights on than matter-of-fact status. The road to achieving the status of a blue water navy was and is still firmly far-off than what is generally perceived or projected. There are several reasons. These embrace technical, operational, weapon, and sensors-centric as well as foreign suppliers and platform-related issues. Factor in the questionable professional skills and the possibility of the IN achieving a blue water status in a short timeframe simply gets ruled out.

Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS)

The IN's latest document, *'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy'* was released in October 2015. The document comes in the wake of new developments and "aims to highlight India's contemporary maritime security considerations."¹⁰⁹ It is a follow-up edition of IMMS of 2007. The 'foreword' justifies the need for the revised document. "There seems little doubt that the 21st century will be the *'Century of the Seas'* (sic) for India and that the seas will remain a key enabler in her global resurgence," says Admiral R. K Dhowan, former Chief of the Naval Staff.¹¹⁰

Justification on the need for a review of preceding documents, (*IMD and IMMS*) is given as resting in "three significant developments" in the global and regional geostrategic environment.¹¹¹ The first spells more or less what is widely and internationally acknowledged, "shift in worldview from *Euro-Atlantic* to *Indo-Pacific*" triggering, in the words of the new document, "significant political, economic and social changes" in Indian Ocean region. The second it says is "a considerable change in India's security-cum threat calculus."¹¹² Lastly, it is the "national outlook towards the seas and the maritime domain, and a clearer recognition of maritime security being a vital element of national progress and international engagement."¹¹³

There could not have been a better explanation of the navy's relevance for India and its final adoption in the country's strategic culture. The document is spread in eight chapters and is preceded by 'Vision' and 'Guiding Principles'. Two key aspects are recognised as the driving source behind the 'revised strategy', "the rise in sources, types and intensity of threats" and "India's national interests" that demand the "seas to remain secure."¹¹⁴ Besides coastal areas, maritime zones of the country, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea are identified as "Primary Areas of Interest."¹¹⁵ The Persian Gulf is listed as the source of the majority of the country's oil supplies. The document covers 'sea routes to the Pacific Ocean, South and East China Seas,

Western Pacific Ocean and other regions including the west coast of Africa as "Secondary Areas of Interest."¹¹⁶ The threat of maritime terrorism (in non-traditional dimension)¹¹⁷ seems to weigh heavily on Indian Naval minds and appears at several places including "Foreword." The section entitled "Traditional Threats and Sources" is less than convincing.¹¹⁸

Interestingly, the document also confers upon the IN the title of a "net security provider" in the maritime neighbourhood.¹¹⁹ What precisely is the extent of this "maritime neighbourhood" is not clear. But the encouragement to assume this mantle comes from two sources cited in the 'notes' section of the document. The first is a 2011 address by the then Indian Defence Minister, A. K. Antony and the second, a May 2013 statement PM Manmohan Singh.¹²⁰ "The Indian Navy may be mandated to be a net security provider to Island nations in the IOR," says the first. The next goes further. It places India as, "well positioned to become a net provider of security in the immediate region and beyond."¹²¹ Whether such a claim holds ground in the current geopolitical environment with conflicting interests of other powerful stakeholders in the Indian Ocean remains to be seen. And this is not to mention the present accident-plagued¹²² state¹²³ of the IN and questionable claims of its operational readiness.¹²⁴ But in this self-conferred title, a major shift in thinking is as evident as a yearning for unqualified dominance in Indian if not Indo-Pacific.

Where it stands

An Indian naval plan paper publicised in 1948, proclaimed a ten-year strategic plan to develop a sixty-nine ship navy, structured around a "balanced fleet of two light aircraft carriers, three cruisers and twelve destroyers."¹²⁵ No plan to induct submarines was however in the pipeline. The most important investment by the IN was the development of its "in-house capacity for ship design and construction."¹²⁶ Twenty-five years after independence, the IN

commissioned the indigenously built "INS *Nilgiri*, a modification of the British *Leander* class."¹²⁷

According to *The World Defence Almanac, 2018*, the IN has some 55,000 personnel inclusive of 5,900 Naval Air and 1,000 Marines. It has, moreover, some 40,000 civil employees and 15,300 strong Coast Guard. With Headquarters in New Delhi, the IN has three Naval Commands, i.e., Western (HQ Mumbai), Southern (HQ Kochi) and Eastern (HQ Visakhapatnam). The Far Eastern Command (also known as Andaman and Nicobar Command) in Port Blair is a "unified inter-service" command.¹²⁸

the IN constitutes about '4.3 per cent' of the Indian military forces. Its budget increased "more than two-fold over the last decade from 161 billion to INR 405 billion," with its annual growth rate hovering "around 15-18 per cent."¹²⁹ As compared to the 1990s and pre-1990s decades, the IN figures much more "prominently in geostrategic planning of India." It used to be the eighth largest but has since grown to become the fifth largest world Navy.¹³⁰ Since 1991, the navy furthermore focused on modernisation rather than adding ships.¹³¹ More recently, the IN's first locally constructed nuclear submarine *Arihant* completed its first deterrent patrol.¹³²

Courtesy the US, the IN has added some powerful cutting edge platforms in its inventory.¹³³ In operational context too, the US Navy has been a real source of expanding the IN's interoperability and maritime operations skills. This came by way of regular conduct of bilateral and other large-scale exercises involving what is called the "quad of the great maritime democracies."¹³⁴ Major combatants like aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines¹³⁵ frequently participate in these manoeuvres.

There are 140 warships and 220 aircraft in the IN's current inventory while "32 ships and submarines" are under construction in various local shipyards.¹³⁶ Recently, New Delhi also approved the construction of another "56 warships and six submarines" as part of its

ten-year plan.¹³⁷ The IN is working on a plan to have a 200-ship fleet by 2027.¹³⁸ The 2012-27 Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (MCP) is committed to *fielding* three carrier battle groups (CBGs), “one for each sea board, with a third in reserve, to fulfil India’s maritime power projection aspirations.”¹³⁹ According to IMD, “CBGs comprise the most substantial instruments for projecting hard power, as they possess “ordnance delivery capability of a high order” capable of prevailing over the enemy’s operational “centre of gravity by degrading his decisive points.”¹⁴⁰

The Unresolved Debate: Sea Control or Sea denial?

The IN’s doctrinal thought process aims at enforcing sea control. As a powerful instrument of power projection, aircraft carriers are accordingly at the core of such a thought process. The IN currently fields a single 46,000 tonne refurbished Kiev-class carrier, INS *Vikramaditya*. The carrier was formally operationalised in May 2014 after long delays and exorbitant cost overruns. The carrier can carry up to twenty-four MiG 29 K attack fighters in addition to ASW and AEW helicopters.¹⁴¹ Another under-construction 37,500-tonne carrier, *Vikrant* is likely to join the IN fleet by 2021.¹⁴² It will have the capacity to carry around thirty MiG-29 Ks and ASW and AEW helicopters. The third carrier is meanwhile still battling to be lifted from the design stage.¹⁴³ Interestingly, however, in the construction of new carriers, not only is the IN struggling against financial constraints and delays by the Ministry of Defence but also faces a quiet opposition from within its own rank and file.¹⁴⁴ A cross-section of the IN officers holds a belief in pursuing a sea denial¹⁴⁵ strategy¹⁴⁶ by deploying submarines and surface combatants instead of seeking sea control via costly and asset-intensive CBGs.¹⁴⁷ Add to this the stiff opposition by IAF to the IN’s future aircraft carrier plans. The IAF argues that India’s Island territories off its east coast epitomise an “unsinkable aircraft carrier,” one it aims

to operationalise.¹⁴⁸ The debate on whether to exercise sea control or else go for sea denial has seemingly reached a dead end.

Pulwama: Exposing the Chasm

Given the aforementioned context, does the present force configuration of the IN translate into a maritime combat power suitable enough to achieve 'sea control' in say, NAS, the primary area of interest¹⁴⁹ of PN? The February 2019 suicide attack in Pulwama¹⁵⁰ in the India-Occupied Kashmir and events unfolding in its wake provide partial answers.

On 28 February, in a joint press briefing by the Indian military forces, the IN spokesperson had this to say, "The IN is deployed in a high state of readiness and remains poised in all three dimensions, on surface, undersea, and in air to deter, prevent and defeat any misadventure by Pakistan in the maritime domain." He went on to add, "I can assure you of a resolute, swift and strong response by the Navy when needed."¹⁵¹

During the third week of March 2019, reports quoting the IN surfaced in media. These suggested that India sent nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier battle group along with dozens of other navy ships to the NAS after a suicide bomber earlier struck in the disputed Kashmir in February.¹⁵² One cannot deny or confirm the veracity of these reports coming weeks after the intense stand-off. But despite being numerically superior to PN in significant ways and a 'self-proclaimed' net security provider in the Indian Ocean, nothing notable was done by the IN in NAS. The IN carrier was nowhere close to Pakistan's coast to showcase any military intent or political-cum-strategic messaging. There was neither any harassment nor coercion of Pakistan's flag carriers,¹⁵³ presumably moving on maritime highways in the western Indian Ocean. It was business as usual. So what was the 'poise'¹⁵⁴ for, if at all it was one in the first place, as stated by the IN spokesperson? The argument that perhaps India did not want to

escalate is not plausible either since New Delhi was the one that upped the ante in the first place. If it was not anticipating such a reaction from Pakistan, could, however, be another story.

PN's Riposte

Contrary to the above, on the night of 4 March 2019, an Indian *Scorpene* class submarine, INS *Kalvari* was detected and localised by PN. With its induction mast up, the submarine was found operating roughly 86 nautical miles from Gwadar.¹⁵⁵ It was apparently deployed close to Pakistan's coast to strike targets on land possibly at Gwadar, Pasni, or Ormara.

Kalvari is the latest addition to the IN fleet. The first of the six French *Scorpene* submarines ordered by the IN, *Kalvari* was commissioned by PM Narendra Modi in December 2017. The attack submarine carries stealth as well as advanced acoustic silence (noise reduction) features. It can undertake anti-surface, anti-submarine, intelligence gathering as well as mine-laying missions. The submarine is armed with precision-guided weapons, including torpedoes and Exocet missiles.

Pulwama's aftermath was the first time that Pakistan practically executed its evolving strategic doctrinal posture of 'offensive defence' revised from a pure "defensive concept following Kargil conflict."¹⁵⁶ The detection of *Kalvari* raises more questions than it answers. If it was snorkelling (to recharge batteries) on purpose so close to Pakistan's coast during such a militarily charged climate, it only goes to demonstrate the professional incompetence and naiveté of the crew onboard. And if it was on account of some technical glitch occurring in a virtual combat environment, the basic premise of procuring such modern machines becomes questionable. To be fair, however, PN ostensibly used some improvised techniques to keep the area under its watchful eyes. *Kalvari* was perhaps caught off-guard. In any event, once detected, the Indian submarine was easy prey. It could

have been easily destroyed by P3C of PN dropping depth charges or torpedoes. But for the state policy of 'exercising restraint'¹⁵⁷ *Kalvari* may have been consigned to the Davy Jones Locker.

Aircraft Carrier: Asset or Liability

Ben Ho, a senior analyst at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, expounds on the state of the IN. In a compelling essay published in the US Naval War College Review of Winter 2018, Ho postulates a full-scale war between Pakistan and India in the NAS in a time horizon of 2025. After closely examining IMSS, Ho rules out any meaningful role of the IN carriers in achieving 'sea control' against Pakistan in a conflict.

Both INS *Vikramaditya* and the future carrier INS *Vikrant* are classified as "small deck carriers by virtue of their size and aircraft complement." During operations, "each carrier and its several destroyer and frigate consorts constitute CBG and one or two such entities make up a carrier task force (CTF)."¹⁵⁸ Although IMSS devotes an "entire chapter to war-fighting," it barely suggests that carriers are to "wrest sea control from the adversary."¹⁵⁹ The role of carriers during conflict¹⁶⁰ is anything but discernable.

Ho examines several naval combat aspects on both sides. These include aircraft complement onboard the IN carrier viz-à-viz offensive and defensive tasks anticipated in a war with Pakistan. In the case of Pakistan, PN's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) edifice in NAS, the submarine potential which author terms as 'ominous', as well as combat radius of Mirage and JF-17 fighters armed with 180-250 km ASCM is taken into account. He then persuasively rules out the possibility of the Indian carrier (CBG) achieving sea control by enforcing "blockade of major Pakistani maritime nodes"¹⁶¹ and interdicting its seaborne commerce. The author also discards any 'offensive role' of Indian carriers during a high-intensity conflict with Pakistan. It is maintained that the Indian sea control in the NAS will be

“contingent on weakening of the enemy’s (Pakistan’s) A2/AD edifice.”¹⁶²

The author has a piece of profitable advice for the IN: “It may be time for New Delhi to rethink the centrality of the ‘queen of the waves’ in its naval planning.”¹⁶³ Similar views were recently expressed by another analyst who questioned: “whether India strictly needs carriers at all if it cannot use them during the decisive periods of a conflict.”¹⁶⁴ “The ability of a minor naval power to deny passage to a far superior enemy through adoption of an asymmetric anti-access strategy is something that continues to worry navies today,”¹⁶⁵ says Ian Speller, an accomplished military scholar. Is there a lesson for the IN?

Concluding thoughts

The Indian strategic culture has undergone a wholesale change since the end of the Cold War. The importance of the IN as a powerful instrument of diplomacy, projecting power beyond the country’s immediate shores and to safeguard extensive maritime strategic interests also appears to have dawned to the army which historically played the role of ‘big brother’ in defence and security matters.

To its credit, the Indian naval leadership’s role in making the IN relevant in the strategic and security calculus of New Delhi cannot be overstated. This is reflected in various policy and doctrinal documents placed in the public domain at periodic intervals. *The Strategic Defence Review: The Maritime Dimension - A Naval Vision* (May 1998), *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (April 2004), the IN’s *Vision Statement* (May 2006), *Roadmap to Transformation* (October 2006), *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy (IMMS)* (September 2007) and *Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009* not to mention *IMSS* (2015), all published over time illustrate the efforts of the IN to earn itself appropriate recognition. The latest in the series is the *Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces (JDIAF-2017)* which provides foundations for greater

integration and interdependence "to achieve higher inter-operability and compatibility within the Armed Forces."¹⁶⁶ Perhaps even more significant development is the Indian armed forces' move away from 'single service' to 'joint services' structure and setting up of tri-services Command at the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁶⁷

From India's Indian Ocean perspective, these developments unequivocally point to some explicit and tacit aspirations. Two are significant. The first is to have the Indian Ocean solely for India sans any external power interference or foreign presence in the region, more commonly, India's Monroe Doctrine.¹⁶⁸ The other clearer dream is to develop a blue water navy in a short time frame (say by 2030). Such a navy will be carrier-centric, duly supported by an adequate number of *Arihant* class SSBNs. The goal here seems to be able to exercise independent (without the crutches of US) sea control between Hormuz to Malacca. In the medium to long term, once local maritime military-industrial and technological base is sufficiently developed, this area of influence may expand to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean in the west and western Pacific in the east and beyond. The question that, however, begs an answer is this: *if the carrier cannot be put to any offensive use in a crisis with Pakistan like post-Pulwama, let alone full-blown conflict in which it must establish sea control, how does the IN expect to dominate in foreseeable future against its upcoming rival, PLA Navy?*

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- ¹³⁹ Arrested Development: India's Plans for Second Indigenous Carrier Hampered by Setbacks," *Jane's Navy International* 124, no. 1 (2019): 24.
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- ¹⁴¹ Ben Wan Beng Ho, "The Aircraft Carrier in Indian Naval Doctrine: Assessing the Likely Usefulness of the Flattop in an Indo-Pakistani War Scenario," *US Naval War College Review*, Winter, 71, no. 1 (2018): 74.
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- ¹⁴³ See notes, Ho, "The Aircraft Carrier in Indian Naval Doctrine: Assessing the Likely Usefulness of the Flattop in an Indo-Pakistani War Scenario," 87.
- ¹⁴⁴ "Arrested Development: India's Plans for Second Indigenous Carrier Hampered by Setbacks," 24–25.

- ¹⁴⁵ Aims to “deny the enemy the ability or freedom to use a specified area of sea for his own purposes and for a specific period of time”. It differs from sea control in the sense that the force denying a sea area to the enemy does not have freedom to use that particular area itself.
- ¹⁴⁶ For details, *Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan: Preserving Freedom of Seas*, 88.
- ¹⁴⁷ “Arrested Development: India’s Plans for Second Indigenous Carrier Hampered by Setbacks,” 25.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
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- ¹⁵⁴ “An attribute of a maritime force which permits it to remain in international waters for sustained period while retaining the ability to become engaged in events ashore or withdrawn without risk of embroilment.” *Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan: Preserving Freedom of Seas*, 20. Also, ¹⁵⁴ “Glossary,” 284.
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- ¹⁵⁸ Ho, "The Aircraft Carrier in Indian Naval Doctrine: Assessing the Likely Usefulness of the Flattop in an Indo-Pakistani War Scenario."
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 77–78.
- ¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 81.
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶⁴ Robert Beckhusen, "Indian Navy Aircraft Carriers: A Complete Waste of Time?," *The National Interest Blog*, 14 January 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/indian-navy-aircraft-carriers-complete-waste-time-41552>.
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THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND BALOCHISTAN

MANZOOR AHMED*

Abstract

As part of the enormous new Silk Route project or the One Belt One Road initiative, the governments of Pakistan and China developed a proposal in the mid-2000s to create an economic corridor from Kashgar, Xinjiang, in China to Gwadar, Balochistan, in Pakistan with an aim to promote national, bilateral, and international economic integration. Essentially driven to improve regional and global trade networks, the resulting China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was formally launched in 2013 with the initially planned portfolio of infrastructure, energy, and economic projects worth around \$64 billion. Amidst an optimism in Pakistan of CPEC having a transformational effect on the economy, there is an extensive public debate in Pakistan about the potential impact of CPEC on the already troubled economic and political relations between and within the provinces of Pakistan. This debate is further intensified by the continued representation of CPEC by the country's political leadership as an overarching programme of economic cooperation, not just a 'game-changer' but a 'fate-changer', with the potential to address virtually all key longstanding developmental challenges of the country. The principal components of CPEC are Gwadar deep-sea port, Gwadar-Kashgar road and rail infrastructure—that passes through the width and breadth of Balochistan—and establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). It is, therefore,

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important to analyse the implications of CPEC-related developments on the politics and economics of Balochistan. The SEZs are aiming to boost industrial growth and spur trade in the country and numerous SEZs are planned for Balochistan. The rationale behind these SEZs in Balochistan and elsewhere is to initiate a process of industrialisation. This paper will present how SEZs can potentially affect the economy of Balochistan. While politically Balochistan has been a troubled province with a long history of the estranged relationship with the federation, a relevant point worth investigating is whether CPEC will be a harbinger of a greater economic change (or otherwise) in the province and improve (or further deteriorate) the already tense political situation of Balochistan. The paper offers a contribution in analysing how CPEC can be instrumental in changing the political and economic landscape of Balochistan and how the economic activity proposed under CPEC within the highly volatile political landscape bring any meaningful change to the province.

Keywords: CPEC, Political implications, Economic Implication, SEZs, Balochistan, Gwadar, OBOR.

چین پاکستان اقتصادی راہداری کی سیاسیات و اقتصادیات اور بلوچستان منظور احمد

خلاصہ:-

چین اور پاکستان کی حکومتوں نے ۲۰۰۰ء میں تجویز کیا کہ نئی شاہراہ ریشم یا ون روڈ ون بیلٹ منصوبے کے ایک حصے کے طور پر کاشغر اور گوادر کے درمیان ایک اقتصادی راہداری پر کام کا آغاز کیا جائے تاکہ دو طرفہ اور بین الاقوامی اقتصادی تعاون کو فروغ دیا جائے۔ بنیادی طور پر علاقائی اور بین الاقوامی تجارتی تعلقات کو وسعت دینے کے پیش نظر ۶۴ ارب ڈالر کے توانائی اور اقتصادی منصوبوں کے ساتھ ۲۰۱۳ء میں چین پاکستان اقتصادی راہداری یعنی سی پیک منصوبے کا آغاز کیا گیا۔ پاکستان میں سی پیک سے واسطہ امیدوں کی وجہ سے یہ باور کیا جاتا ہے کہ سی پیک کی بدولت معیشت پر دور رس اثرات مرتب ہو گئے اور صوبوں کے آپس میں زبوں حال معاشی اور سیاسی تعلقات پر بھی خاطر خواہ اثرات ہو گئے۔ اس بحث میں اس وجہ سے بھی تیزی آرہی ہے کہ ملک کی اعلیٰ سطح کی سیاسی قیادت مسلسل اس منصوبے کو اقتصادی تعاون کا ضامن بلکہ ایک ایسا گیم چیئر اور تقدیر بدلنے والا منصوبہ قرار دے رہی ہے جو کہ ملکی معیشت کی ترقی میں حائل دیرپا رکاوٹوں کو ہمیشہ کے لیے ختم کرنے کی صلاحیت رکھتا ہے۔ سی پیک کے بنیادی اجزاء میں گوادر کی گہرے سمندر کی بندرگاہ، بلوچستان کے طول و عرض سے گزرنے والے گوادر سے کاشغر تک سڑک اور ریل کا نظام، اور خصوصی اقتصادی زونز کا قیام شامل ہیں۔ اس لیے سی پیک کے بلوچستان کی سیاسی اور معاشی صورتحال پر اثرات کا تجزیہ کرنا بہت اہم ہے۔ خصوصی اقتصادی زونز (SEZs) کا مقصد ملک میں صنعتی ترقی کو تیز کرنا اور تجارت کو فروغ دینا ہے۔ اسی لیے بلوچستان میں ایسے کئی اقتصادی زونز تجویز کیے گئے ہیں۔ ان اقتصادی زونز کی پس پشت کارفرما سوچ صنعت کاری

کے عمل کو جاری کرنا ہے۔ اس مضمون میں خصوصی اقتصادی زونز کے بلوچستان کی معیشت پر اثرات کا جائزہ لیا گیا ہے۔ اگرچہ بلوچستان سیاسی لحاظ سے ایسا صوبہ ہے جس کے دفاع کے ساتھ مسائل کی تاریخ بہت طویل ہے، ایک بنیادی سوال یہ بھی اٹھتا ہے کہ آیا سی پیک ایک عظیم تر اقتصادی تبدیلی کا مظہر ہوگا اور اس کے ذریعے بلوچستان کی کشیدہ سیاست میں مثبت تبدیلی رونما ہوگی یا پھر حالات مزید خراب ہو جائیں گے۔ یہ تحریر سی پیک کے بلوچستان کے سیاسی اور اقتصادی منظر نامے میں مثبت تبدیلی لانے میں معاونت اور اس کی بدولت اقتصادی سرگرمیوں میں فروغ کا صوبے کے غیر مستحکم منظر نامے میں معنی خیز تبدیلیوں کا تجزیہ کرتی ہے۔

Introduction

While much has been written on CPEC and its potential impacts on Pakistan's economy,¹ there is a paucity of debate about the prospects of CPEC on the already troubled economic and political relations between and within the provinces of Pakistan. This debate is relevant given the continued representation of CPEC by both Pakistan's political leadership and its military as an overarching programme of economic and political cooperation, not just a 'game-changer' but a 'fate-changer', with enduring impact on economic growth, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and social development.² Claims and rhetoric aside, at this stage it is difficult to make a rigorous appraisal of the economic success (or otherwise) of CPEC. Neo-classical economic theories are not well-suited to explain CPEC's transformational impact. Instead, it is more plausible to discuss the disaggregated and regional impact of CPEC through a methodological framework that explains the economic and social shifts at the margins and peripheries (including Balochistan) of Pakistan. This study attempts to situate the CPEC initiatives and assesses their economic, political, and social implications. Admittedly, it is not easy to assess the long-term outcomes of CPEC-related activities in the province (about which information remains scarce), as they are contingent on a host of factors including the political instability in the region, not-so-conducive bilateral relationships with various countries, and global, regional and national economic conditions, to say the least.

Arguably CPEC has constructed a new framework of collaboration, economic interaction and integration, and cooperation between China and Pakistan, which is said to have far-reaching geo-economic and political implications, perhaps, for the entire region. Both China and Pakistan are expected to obtain enormous social and economic gains from trade and commerce, as well as connectivity through roads, railways, and sea-lanes with the neighbouring regions

including the Middle East and Europe.³ Based on the publicly available information, CPEC projects can broadly be classified into three categories: building and improving transport infrastructure including road and rail networks, developing energy infrastructure, and creation of special economic zones. CPEC is in line with Pakistan's prioritisation of physical infrastructure, as there exists good evidence of poor infrastructure in the country compared to its peer countries and has, therefore, become a huge constraint on economic growth.⁴ Given the energy shortages and roads and rails deficiencies, \$64 billion CPEC investment go 71% to energy, 21% to roads and rails development, and 4% to Gwadar port.⁵ Whereas the magnitude of these projects is big enough to usher in a transformational change in the economic landscape of Pakistan, how and to what extent they improve (or worsen) the economic and social margins is an issue worth examining. The economic dividend is not evenly distributed. Regions like Balochistan are lagging far behind in all socioeconomic indicators. A critical advantage (or otherwise) of CPEC could be of reducing regional inequality in Pakistan. The paper argues that looking at these projects through a geographic lens can help us explore the distributive potential of CPEC—the extent to which it can uplift the socio-economically least-developed regions of the country and the ones where the largest populations of the poor live. The paper will make a case in arguing that unless CPEC connects to the communities at the grassroots level, it will not benefit the people of Balochistan.

With an analytical approach, the paper deals with the following questions. What will be the prospective political and economic implications of CPEC on Balochistan? Will CPEC help to develop the underdeveloped economy of Balochistan and, therefore, change its economic landscape? Will it just be a corridor that merely passes through the province without any tangible economic impacts? What political implications does CPEC have on Balochistan: Will it cause further deterioration of its already volatile security situation

(given the politics of CPEC in Balochistan), or will it help to resolve the Baloch question and bring normalcy to the province by mainstreaming its politics and economics?

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: Section two introduces CPEC and section three explains the problems of Balochistan at length. Section four discusses CPEC in relation to Balochistan. Section five examines the opportunities and challenges of CPEC to Balochistan. Section six analyses the prospects of CPEC for Balochistan, whereas the politics of CPEC is discussed in section seven. Section eight investigates the Baloch question in light of CPEC, while section nine concludes the discussion.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

There is a long and established history of political and economic links between Pakistan and China, which goes back to 1963 when the two countries signed their first long-term agreement for trade and commerce.⁶ The economic relations were further consolidated in November 2006 when China and Pakistan signed the first long-term agreement for trade.⁷ Trade between the two countries consequently has increased from \$4 billion in 2007 to \$9.2 billion in 2013.⁸ The political relationship and trade agreements have been complemented by renewed multi-billion dollars projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is an important part of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative of China.⁹ OBOR is a huge infrastructure project extending from the Baltic region in Europe to Southeast Asia and from China to Africa. OBOR involves more than 60 countries and CPEC is an important part of OBOR.¹⁰ CPEC, in this context, offers an immense strategic advantage to China as it gains physical access to the Indian Ocean and closer proximity to the Middle Eastern oil resources. Other OBOR projects around the world do not offer such advantages to China as CPEC does. It manifests the dynamics of geopolitics by pursuing an interaction for economic,

energy, trade, and commerce development between China and Pakistan, and geostrategic policies for China. CPEC can also provide an opportunity for Pakistan to improve economic and geostrategic relations with its neighbouring countries. It will equally contribute to the economic development of countries that may potentially become an active part of CPEC. However, in order to reap the full benefits of CPEC, Pakistan needs to normalise its relations and pursue a politics of interdependence and positive connectivity with the neighbouring countries and close economic ties with far-away economies. This can provide a significant boost to Pakistan's economy, in general, and Balochistan province, in particular, as the connectivity to the majority of to-be-partner countries passes through Balochistan. With this, the regions adjacent to the corridor will witness a substantial socio-economic development. It will offer a prospect to Pakistan to address some of her key issues, i.e., poor physical infrastructure and connectivity, energy bottlenecks, and limited or no attraction for foreign direct investment (FDI), which are great constraints on economic growth.¹¹

For China, likewise, CPEC has immense geopolitical importance and substantial economic advantage. It not only affords an opportunity to China to have a strategic and geo-economic presence in at Gwadar across the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz¹²—a place with enormous geostrategic significance—but also connects the Chinese western region to south-western Pakistan, the Middle East, and the rest of the world through rail networks, road, and sea routes.¹³ This will facilitate and spur regional and international trade with Xinjiang and other westerns regions of China and could bring a considerable improvement to the economy of this region. This will provide China with a sea route access to the relatively underdeveloped western part and, therefore, reduce its restricted and sole dependence on the Strait of Malacca to transport its international trade goods.¹⁴

The discussion on CPEC is not complete without bringing Gwadar into perspective, as the very concept of the corridor has grown after systematic consideration of geostrategic importance and immense economic significance of Gwadar and its deep-sea port. Gwadar port has already been built, where, expectedly, a range of economic activities will happen with necessary capacities, boosting the economy of Pakistan, in general, and Balochistan, in particular. Thus, conducting a concise study to assess the potential prospects and consequences of CPEC on the province and precisely on its political economy related development is imperative.

Balochistan's Problems

Balochistan's despite occupying a vast and resourceful territory has failed to keep the pace of socio-economic development and progress at par with other provinces of Pakistan. Historically, due to political disorganisation and economic backwardness, Balochistan could not obtain its due resource share from the federation. The issue of economic and social backwardness of Balochistan is a complex conundrum. A section of people in Balochistan believes that the centralist nature of Pakistani federation is such that small provinces like Balochistan would find it hard to accommodate within the federation. That is because the resource distribution and representation to both elected bodies and state institutions are based upon population and Balochistan with 6% of the country's total population is not proportionately represented within the federation as per its geographic size. Moreover, the geostrategic importance of Balochistan is very vital, which is hard to ignore while analysing the political economy of the province. Therefore, a section of the Baloch population argues that Pakistan is only interested in the geostrategic and economic potentials of the province. And the social and economic uplift of its people is not the priority of the state.¹⁵

Given the social structure of Balochistan, an appropriate question may arise that how well-entrenched the modern concept of development would be in a society that coexists with the primitive tribal system. In Pakistan, no doubt, the actual political power always rests with the centrist forces and never devolved to the provincial elite, however, the latter enjoy economic autonomy, which they never invested in the people of Balochistan. This led to the dysfunctional political process essentially at the provincial level that further consolidated the existing stranglehold of 'local elites'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, even if power is given to the provincial leadership, the social structure in Balochistan with strong tribal hierarchy may hinder the socioeconomic and political development of the people of Balochistan. Unlike other provinces of Pakistan where a teeming middle class has emerged with assertive political and economic ambitions, the societal structure in Balochistan is sharply divided between a tiny but extremely powerful class of tribal chieftains and illegal business tycoons. The remaining is constituted by a lower class and a small group of public sector employees.¹⁷ The vibrant middle class is altogether missing in Balochistan that can have an assertive politics to further its social and economic interests. The unfavourable social and economic system of the province that entrusts the local elites and makes them all-powerful is equally responsible for impeding the process of development. In other words, it is the power nexus of the state of Pakistan and the local elites that manoeuvre the governance in the province in an exploitative way, which only upholds and nurtures their political and economic interest at the very cost of the common man.

The small population of Balochistan can be viewed as an asset, as with only 1.5 million families, it needs merely 1.5 million total jobs to employ its entire population, at the rate of one job per family.¹⁸ Given the vast mineral resource base, fisheries, and varied horticulture and agriculture, it is highly feasible to make Balochistan free of

unemployment within a decade, which ultimately would have a significant impact on reducing its rampant poverty and illiteracy.¹⁹

Balochistan, despite having an immense geostrategic significance, is one of the least known parts of South West Asia. If there has been any interest in this region, it has not been due to positive trends, like economic prosperity, social development, or free and fair political participation of the local population as part of a stable process of democratic consolidation. Instead, the region gets national and international attention because of the increasing level of human rights violations, underdevelopment, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation. Moreover, the region has come into the spotlight because of persistent armed insurgencies, which contributed heavily to the rise of ethnonationalism and violence, despite the strong presence of security apparatus.

The UNDP²⁰ reports that around 71% of people in Balochistan live in multidimensional poverty,²¹ whereas the same figure is much lower in other provinces of Pakistan.²² The province also lags behind other provinces in other social development indicators, including enrolment rate, basic healthcare, and access to water and sanitation facilities.²³ In May 2017, it was reported that the literacy rate shrank in Balochistan. It has fallen to 41% in 2016 compared to 44% a year earlier.²⁴ Balochistan's poor performance in education is not a function of poverty, but systematic negligence by successive federal and provincial governments. There are many regions in the world that are poorer than Balochistan on per capita GDP basis, but many of them send more children to primary school than Balochistan does. The province is predominately a rural population, where, in contrast to other provinces' 75%, only 25% of villages are connected to the power grid, whereas unemployment is also staggeringly high.²⁵ The share of the province in the national GDP has been declining over the last two decades.²⁶ The province performs far worse than the national average of Pakistan.²⁷ For instance, the per capita GDP in Balochistan in 2014-

15 was Rs 31,000, while for the same fiscal year the per capita GDP in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was Rs 54,672, 69,417 and Rs 53,000 respectively.²⁸ The labour productivity in Balochistan is lower than in other provinces of Pakistan. Hence, the poor living standard in Balochistan to a large extent is a reflection of unemployment and low productivity. An average worker in Balochistan produces one-third less than the average worker of Sindh province, and the same average worker is around 25% less productive than an average worker in KP and Punjab.²⁹ This suggests that a worker in Balochistan (a shepherd, a fisherman, a farmer, a daily wage labourer) produces goods and services equal to \$1 or 120 Rupees per hour.³⁰ Although in per capita terms Balochistan historically did not lag far behind KPK and Punjab—because of its sparse population and vast resource base—the change in per capita GDP in Balochistan is far lower than other provinces.

There are many reasons why Balochistan lags so far behind the rest of the country, as is evident from its economic, social, and political indicators. Illiteracy is high because the provision of public education is limited, with understaffed and dysfunctional schools. Poverty is rampant, as very limited employment opportunities exist because of the dearth of physical and economic infrastructure for investment and growth.³¹ Unemployment is very high. Successive governments have failed to build the physical and economic infrastructure necessary for economic development that can create employment opportunities. It is estimated that out of only 8% of the total graduate in Balochistan every year can secure suitable jobs.³² The national unemployment rate is 5%, while the youth unemployment rate is 8%.³³ However, in Balochistan, youth unemployment is around 26%.³⁴

Currently, the public sector is a major employer. Traditional sectors like mining and small farming cannot absorb the unemployed lot, and successive federal and provincial governments have miserably failed to initiate a vital industrialisation process that could generate

enough employment. These details clearly illustrate that Balochistan faces multiple problems and challenges. However, the underdevelopment and lack of progress in Balochistan are not due to the scarcity of resources. It is largely because of the non-inclusivity of policies, fragmented and elitist political and social structure, and sheer lack of interest of the local and national political class in the welfare of the people of Balochistan.

From the year 2000 to 2008, the per capita GDP in Balochistan has shown a marginal increment from Rs 31,086 to Rs 32,452, and declined to Rs 31,000 in 2015, as shown above, whereas during the same period Punjab's per capita GDP, for instance, has increased from Rs 40,537 to Rs 49,808.³⁵ Hence, it may be plausible to argue that the economic growth of Balochistan remained almost stagnant, while all other provinces could maintain a medium growth rate.³⁶ This situation, therefore, led to drift the province from the social and economic trends of the country. Since the mid-1970s, its share in the country's GDP has dropped from 4.9 to less than 3 per cent in 2000.³⁷ The province has the highest infant and maternal mortality rate, the highest poverty rate, and the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan.³⁸

The province requires robust and durable state infrastructure and sound institutions, which serve the interests of the people of Balochistan and contribute to building a unifying identity among the people. The absence of these institutions has led to a persistent deterioration of the social and political landscape of Balochistan.

Balochistan vis-à-vis CPEC

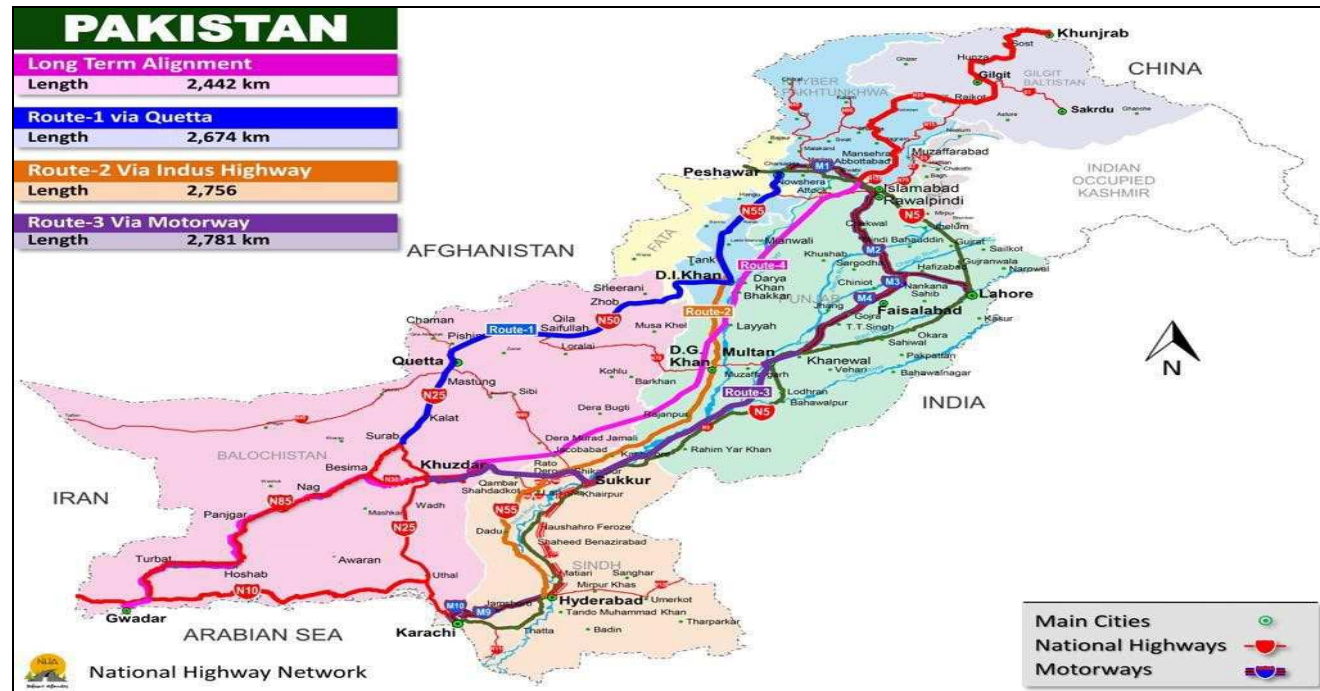
In the initial CPEC projects worth around \$62 billion, the share of Balochistan is not only insignificant but the negligible amount of projects destined for the province are also concentrated in Gwadar with little projected impact on the rest of the province. The total portfolio investment, which Balochistan has attracted, is not tangible enough to potentially bring any meaningful change to the social and

economic landscape of the province.³⁹ The projects designed and being implemented in the early phase of CEPC include the \$600 million worth 300MW imported coal-based power project at Gwadar and the \$1,090 million worth 1320MW coal-fired power plant at Hub.⁴⁰ The province has so far attracted around \$980 investment including a Technical and Vocational Training Institute (\$10m⁴¹) and a hospital (\$100 million)⁴² at Gwadar. Other projects include new Gwadar International Airport (\$230m), Gwadar East-Bay Expressway (\$140m), Necessary Facilities of Fresh Water Treatment, Water Supply and Distribution (\$130m), Development of Free Zone (\$32m), Khuzdar-Basima Road (\$110m), etc.⁴³

This is despite the fact that not only is Gwadar the epicentre of CPEC connecting Kashgar region of China with the Arabian sea through different communication all networks⁴⁴ but three main transit routes, rail networks, and proposed pipeline projects⁴⁵ pass through the length and breadth of Balochistan. Yet the province is not proportionately reflected in CPEC projects. Map 1 highlights the vitality of Balochistan in all three routes and rail networks in relation to CPEC. If this is the case, a fair question to ask is whether CPEC is just a transit route that passes through the province without adding much economic substance to it.⁴⁶

As shown in Map 1, all three routes of the corridor that begin from Gwadar and pass through Balochistan virtually cover all regions of the province. For instance, while the Coastal Highway connects Gwadar to Karachi passing through Gwadar and District Lasbela in eastern Balochistan, the other three main highways join Gwadar to other parts of the country, connecting western, south-western, and midland regions of Balochistan to Sindh and KP provinces, respectively, and to the northern region of Balochistan through the western route.

Map 1. Highway Networks of CPEC



Source: Planning Commission of Pakistan, 2017

As highlighted by Kaiser Bangali, a renowned economist of Pakistan, in his much-acclaimed monograph, *A Cry for Justice*, the road and communication network in Balochistan is half the national average of 0.16 and 0.34, respectively. Having more than 44% of the total landmass of Pakistan, the development of communication network, connecting remote areas and peripheries with the national mainstream would ideally be the top priority of the country's National Highway Authority. Yet, there exists no such agenda to develop surface communication in the province, where except four single-tracked highways no major communication network exists.⁴⁷

As noted above the second largest investment component of CPEC is to develop and upgrade Pakistan's transportation network. Given Balochistan's dire needs of communication, a question worth raising in relation to CPEC's roads investment is whether (or not) they fulfil Balochistan's decades-long requirements of road and other related surface infrastructure.

Some of the leading critics, prominent among them some academics and political leader from Balochistan, are of the opinion that CPEC with its present design and even future vision leaves Balochistan out and will, thus, not bring any significant improvement to the economic and social landscape of the province. According to such an argument, even if Gwadar port is fully functional CPEC will remain a mere corridor and a transit route for the province where goods are transported to and from the port city to the upcountry and the western region of China. The key apprehension stems from the fact that in the initial CPEC plans and projects Balochistan's development vision is not reflected, which, therefore, generates concerns about any sustainable viability and efficacy of CPEC for the province. However, such a perception needs to be viewed with a pinch of salt.⁴⁸

It is imperative that the federal government must have a clear vision for and serious interest in the economic development of Balochistan in relation to CPEC. Otherwise, CPEC may end up being a

corridor without any meaningful economic significance for the province. Whereas communication network plays a vital role for economic growth and is, therefore, considered to be a prerequisite for development in academic literature, without complementary initiatives it may not be a harbinger of a sustainable and inclusive development process. In this regards, the 653 km Makran Coastal Highway completed in 2004 and stretching from Uthal, District Lasbela, to Gwadar and up to Iranian border is a classic case in point. In spite of connecting Gwadar District and a part of Lasbela District to Karachi, it has so far failed to bring any significant economic change to the southern region of Balochistan. The reason is that neither the federation nor the provincial government has come up with a solid and sustainable plan for the coastal development accompanying the Coastal Highway. Similar concerns surround CPEC, which, to many, lacks any distinct and viable economic package for Balochistan.

While it is arguably true that in the preliminary \$62 billion investments Balochistan received a negligible share, the underlying dynamics of CPEC with its inherent economic pursuits have the potential of translating and changing not only the society and economy of Balochistan but also its political landscape, which is imperative for any significant socioeconomic transformation in the province. In the following section, we discuss and analyse how such change can be viewed owing to CPEC development.

The Economic Opportunities and Challenges of CPEC

Balochistan is endowed with abundant resources with a manageable population, hence has a high resource to labour force ratio.⁴⁹ The province has the prospects for and capacity of creating thousands of jobs to bring the currently staggering unemployment to a “natural rate of unemployment.”⁵⁰

Economic and social development is a complex

multidimensional process of induced structural change and for such socioeconomic change, Balochistan crucially needs a clear strategy and vision with key priority areas for policy interventions. Nevertheless, to the least, such a vision is neither existent nor the successive provincial and federal governments have paid any serious attention to burgeoning developmental issues of the province. So, in order to develop, the province needs to have a clear 'development strategy' aiming to change the economic landscape, which owes to social transformation. Although with its current structure CPEC seems less predisposed towards contributing to the economic development of Balochistan, this paper attempts to identify some of the critical prospective areas in the province where CPEC can provide opportunities for development.

A viable industrial and trade development strategy is a prerequisite for economic growth and development, as it invariably has been an essential condition for economic development elsewhere. Yet, for robust industrialisation complemented by trade, the nature of the state needs to be 'developmental'.⁵¹ For a state (or a province for this purpose) to be developmental, the political class has a politically-driven aspiration to promote growth and the bureaucracy and other key institutions need to be efficient, autonomous, and free from political populism and rent-seeking.⁵² In reality, Balochistan neither is developmental nor its state institutions have the capacity to implement any development vision. The capacity of provincial institutions is manipulated and made subservient to the powerful lobbies and local elite. The provincial government lacks capacity in providing public services like water, power, and skills (prerequisites for industrial development) and to curb corruption among the state functionaries. Corruption in Balochistan, like elsewhere in Pakistan, is not merely about individual gains by government officials but also about patronage by the politicians to recycle the state resources to (re)gain and retain kinship groups and loyalties of communities.⁵³

It is vital that the Government of Pakistan in partnership with Balochistan designs a comprehensive policy including industrial development for the province on the account of CPEC, else CPEC remains a highway and a port at Gwadar to provide a shorter transport route to the western region of China and other provinces of Pakistan. Thus, if Balochistan development owes anything to CPEC, the latter has to be realised as an economic corridor instead of being a mere transit route.

Mega economic infrastructure projects anywhere in the world are explicitly designed to support economic growth and promote development. There is a strong body of academic literature with a sound theoretical framework in old-fashioned economics⁵⁴ to reinforce the importance of big intervention like CPEC to launch an underdeveloped region on a sustainable growth path.⁵⁵ Balochistan, given its multitude economic woes, needs to design and articulate a plan for policy interventions in order to stimulate industry, trade, and commerce, so that it can get the maximum gain from CPEC-related business opportunities.⁵⁶ The geography of Balochistan also gives it immense importance in relation to CPEC. The geography argument of economic theories⁵⁷ posits that geography of a country or a region is vital for economic growth and productivity. Economic analysis of CPEC's projects vis-à-vis Balochistan justifies the importance of geography as the most important for growth and development. Geographical endowments of Balochistan make it a great trade route, linking the deep-sea port of Gwadar with Xinjiang of China, Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republics.

For Balochistan, CPEC, besides being a set of roads and highways, ought to provide a comprehensive package of development projects contributing to all sectors of the economy. We argue that the road and rail networks and infrastructure development in Balochistan can contribute to the economic development in many ways. It can create an enduring economic opportunity for Pakistan and for the

province and has the potential to transform the provincial economy to bring it at par with the national economy.

Special Economic Zones

A significant amount of hope is attached to CPEC in helping Pakistan to revive its ailing industry and spur trade. This has to happen through the establishment of several Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in many regions of the country. The Government of Pakistan has planned to establish 29 Industrial Parks and 21 Mineral Processing Zones in all four provinces under the CPEC umbrella.⁵⁸ The fundamental aim of Industrial Parks and SEZs is to reinvigorate and revamp industrialisation in Pakistan that could further be reinforced through CPEC-related communication network. Through these ambitious SEZs, which are yet to be assessed for their sustainability and feasibility, Pakistan plans to offer solid economic incentives in order to attract domestic and foreign investments and to improve governance and industrial productivity. It will help create jobs to employ its growing educated, semi-skilled, and unskilled workforce, which otherwise remains a massive social burden on the country. It would create an opportunity for linkage and trade, either through competition or complementarity of domestic firms with Chinese firms and expose local industries to external economies and a higher learning curve.⁵⁹

Table 1 shows the geographical distribution of SEZs across provinces. The official records of the Ministry of Planning and Reforms report 8 SEZs of various nature and scope to be established in different regions of Balochistan. While, much of the details of these proposed SEZs are yet to be made public, which makes it premature to conduct any systematic assessment of their social, economic, and developmental potentials, presuming that the SEZs are established as planned, we can make some assessment as to what extent they can have an impact on the provincial economy.

Table 1: CPEC Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

Balochistan Province	
1. Gawadar Industrial Estate	Mixed
2. Lasbela Industrial Estate	Manufactory
3. Turbat Industrial Estate	Oil Refinery
4. Dera Murad Jamali Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
5. Winder Industrial and Trading Estate	Manufacturing
6. Mini Industrial Estate Khuzdar	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
7. Bostan Industrial Estate	Fruit Processing, Agriculture machinery, Pharmaceutical, Motor Bikes Assembly, Chromites, Cooking Oil, Ceramic industries, Ice and Cold storage, Electric Appliance Halal Food Industry
8. Industrial Zone Qilla Saifullah, Zhob and Lorali	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province	
Name of SEZs	Types of Industry/Details
1. Hattar Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
1. Mansehra Marble and Granite Industrial Estate	
3. Nowshera Industrial Estate	Fruit; Food; Packaging; Textile Stitching/Knitting
3. Chitral Industrial Estate	Food Possessing
4. Ghazi Industrial Estate	Manufacturing
5. D. I. Khan Industrial Estate	Manufacturing
6. Bannu Industrial Estate	Food processing/Manufacturing
7. Karak Oil Refinery	Oil Refinery
Punjab Province	
1. Pind Daden Khan Industrial City	Manufacturing
2. Multan Industrial Estate-II	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
3. Rahim Yar Khan Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
4. Bhawal Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
5. DG Khan Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
6. Mainwali Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
7. Rawalpindi Industrial Estate	Feasibility study yet to be carried out

8. China Economic Zone, M-2 District Sheikhupura	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
Sindh Province	
1. Chinese Industrial Zone near Karachi	Feasibility study yet to be carried out
2. Textile City near Port Qasim	Textile
3. Marble City Karachi	Marble and Minerals
4. China Special Economic Zone Dhabeji	To be determined during the feasibility stage
Gilgit-Baltistan	
1. Moqpondass Industrial Estate	Marble/Granite; Iron Ore Processing; Fruit Processing; Steel Industry; Mineral Processing Unit; Leather Industry

Source: Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan (2017)

First, the government of Pakistan needs to clarify how the recently created SEZs with their corresponding tax regimes for CPEC will affect the revenue-generating capacity and fiscal powers of the provinces, as after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, the provinces, including Balochistan, are more independent in managing their financial affairs and raising funds through different sources.

In light of the current Chinese import demand from the Middle East, we can analyse the potential of the industrialisation process in Balochistan. For instance, in 2017, China imported nearly \$88 billion worth of oil from the Middle Eastern countries, of which \$76 billion worth of oil was primary and unprocessed products, which, in other words, indicates that nearly 85% of the oil imported by China from the Middle East was processed in China.⁶⁰ Also, in 2016, Pakistan imported \$5.6 billion worth of unprocessed fuel and lubricant products from the Gulf region.⁶¹ Thus, even if China is to import only 10% of her total unprocessed oil from these countries through CPEC, it will considerably increase the flow of such products to Pakistan. Apart from this, in 2014, China also imported nearly \$17 billion worth of industrial supplies such as machinery and mechanical appliances,

chemical and mineral products, vehicles, aircraft and vessels, textiles and articles, miscellaneous manufactured articles, etc. from the Middle East—particularly from the United Arab Emirates⁶²—which is of course far greater than the \$2.4 billion worth imports by Pakistan in the same year.⁶³

The SEZ at Gwadar is an ideal location for petroleum refineries, automobiles, shipyard and shipbreaking, textile and clothing, steel and cement plants, and manufacturing industries for petrochemical intermediaries. Primary goods that may be imported to Gwadar by China can be processed in Balochistan and afterwards transported to China and other trading partners will initiate economic activities that can contribute not only to the overall economic growth and development of Balochistan but also provide thousands of jobs to the local youth.⁶⁴

Second, a typical and underlying problem of Balochistan is a serious dearth of human capital and a shocking level of unemployment.⁶⁵ The unemployment rate is significantly higher in urban areas at 6.3% compared to 3.3% in the rural areas.⁶⁶ The SEZs can potentially affect human capabilities through three broad channels: human capital formation effects, technological upgrading impacts, and employment outcomes. These factors can individually and collectively translate into poverty reduction and have the potential to improve the overall living conditions of the participating labour force in their respective regions, particularly in Balochistan.⁶⁷

Third, Balochistan direly needs strong intervention to initiate the process of the much-awaited industrialisation and the proposed SEZs under CPEC can be this intervention. Before attaching hope to these SEZs for industrialisation in Balochistan, we need to have a clear understanding of the nature and scope of the SEZs proposed. The majority of SEZs in Balochistan are extractive in nature with a limited potential of employment generation. The SEZs with mines and mineral industries in Balochistan are capital intensive, extractive (the minerals

are non-renewable), and environmentally hazardous. Many regions, including Chagai, Kohlu, Lasbela, Awaran, Khuzdar, and Qila Saifullah produce hundreds of thousands of tonnes of minerals, yet these are among the poorest districts of the country,⁶⁸ which may not be a mere coincidence. The fear is that the development of mines and minerals industries through SEZs promotes the extraction and further impedes the already slow process of growth and development in the province.

Fourth, an important benefit of these proposed zones in terms of employment could potentially be that they can open a window of opportunity for unskilled workers and even women. In Balochistan, given the lack of adequate education, skills development is severely restricted and the female workforce is largely unskilled. Hence any form of employment that can accommodate unskilled workforce including females would help to reduce unemployment. It can also generate economic activity with enduring impact.

Women participation in the total labour force is normally higher in SEZs even in countries and regions with a relatively lower level of female labour participation. Given the concentration of economic activities in a few urban centres, women in the rural areas cannot participate in the labour force, as women in Balochistan, in particular, are less likely to migrate for employment. Educated women, though few in number, can provide an effective labour force for the proposed SEZs where they can work in several capacities ranging from office assistants to managerial positions. Likewise, unskilled women can also be employed to work in areas of industries where hard labour is not required.

However, many studies (for example, the World Bank⁶⁹) show that Economic Zones located comparatively far from inputs, consumers, and trade markets are less likely to sustain in the long run. On the other hand, regional equality requires equitable economic opportunities in all regions, the logic of economic agglomeration favours concentration in certain regions. There are thus many

questions about the feasibility of these SEZs, their sustainability in proposed regions and their potential socioeconomic outcomes including poverty reduction.

Amidst optimism and prospects, however, the SEZs may face multiple challenges in Balochistan. First, as noted earlier, Balochistan has a poor record of governance and shortages of electricity, gas, and water. Such critical issues may pose serious challenges to the development of the SEZs.⁷⁰ Water scarcity and gas shortages, in particular, are two serious issues in Balochistan. Balochistan faces an acute depletion of water and gas reserves. Each SEZ needs millions of gallons of water each day. Given the present water scenario, it is highly unlikely for the province to supply water to the SEZs.

Transportation Network

As noted earlier, in initial investments of CPEC projects, \$11 billion is allocated to the transportation network, which includes main highways intra-city metro lane(s) and railways of Pakistan.⁷¹ The underlying aim of the transportation network is to connect China to the Gwadar seaport. However, since it goes across the length of Pakistan (Balochistan for this purpose), it encompasses through many regions, which inherently could become a conduit of connectivity among many regions (Table 2 gives an overview of transportation, which is part of CPEC investments). As shown in Map 1, while the first link is the Eastern Corridor that essentially is built on the existing National Highway connecting the seaports of Karachi to rest of the country excluding Balochistan, the Western Corridor, on the other hand, passes through a relatively less-developed part of the country.⁷² It is important to note that currently only the Eastern Corridor is constructed, which has no impact on Balochistan. Given the vitality and relative proximity of Karachi seaports and its allied facilities compared to a remote and underdeveloped Gwadar port city, it is very likely that the Eastern Corridor remains the key artery of Chinese trade through Pakistan. In such a case, despite tall claims and political

rhetoric, in the short to medium terms, there can hardly be any tangible impact of CPEC highways projects on Balochistan. As shown in Table 2, in initial infrastructure projects, Balochistan will get only a minor project of up-gradation of D.I. Khan-Zhob highway, which could be built by the National Highway Authority through Public Sector Development Programmes.⁷³

Table 2: CPEC Infrastructure Projects

Road Projects		
Project Name	Length (KM)	Estimated Cost (US\$M)
KKH Phase II (Thakot -Havelian Section)	118	1305
Peshawar-Karachi Motorway (Multan-Sukkur Section)	392	2846
Khuzdar-Basima Road N-30 (110 km)	110	
Upgradation of D.I.Khan - Zhob, N-50 Phase-I (210 km)	210	
KKH Thakot-Raikot N35 remaining portion (136 Km)	136	
Rail Sector Projects		
Expansion and reconstruction of existing Line ML-1	1872	8173
Havelian Dry port (450 M. Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units)		
Capacity Development of Pakistan Railways		40

Source: Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan (2017)

Nonetheless, if the Western Corridor is built and made duly functional with link roads, it will have an enduring impact on Balochistan, as it passes virtually through the length of the province. This can potentially encourage local enterprises, provide markets and ports access to agricultural produces, and boost trade and commerce activities in the province.

Perhaps, for the right reasons, the rail-based mass transit projects are planned for the provincial capitals: Karachi circular railway;

Greater Peshawar Region Mass Transit; Orange Line Lahore. Yet, so far it is the Lahore Orange Line that has become functional. The major urban centres in the country have historically lacked decent mass transit arrangements. These arrangements can surely improve economic activity in these places. For mass transit projects, when seen from the point of regional distribution, there is little that Balochistan could benefit from these projects. Since no such mass transit project is planned for the province, urban transport in Balochistan will not receive any benefits from CPEC.

Prospects of CPEC for Balochistan

As discussed, the physical and social infrastructure in Balochistan has remained underdeveloped. Currently, vast areas of the province are without physical and social infrastructure. It can be seen, though regrettably, that Balochistan is still reeling in the horticultural and pastoral stage of growth, where livestock and minor crops contribute the largest share to the provincial economy, while the manufacturing and finance together account merely 9% to the provincial economy.⁷⁴ The province faces two major challenges in terms of physical infrastructure paucities and primary sector economy, which restrained the provincial economy to move onto the secondary and tertiary level. Given the resource constraints, it is crucial to concentrate the development effort on selected sectors and areas, i.e., growth nodes and economic corridors that can create a pull effect for the rest of the sectors of the provincial economy. In this section, we attempt to provide an analysis of the proposed growth nodes and economic corridors in relation to CPEC that can provide the necessary impetus to the growth and development of Balochistan.⁷⁵

After careful consideration, in 2014, the Government of Balochistan has identified 15 potential growth nodes, where industrial, social, and agriculture/fisheries sectors' can potentially be developed. The initial roadmap, produced by the Chief Minister's Policy Reform Unit (CMPRU)⁷⁶—a task force established by the provincial

government with the collaboration of the United National Development Fund—suggested certain growth nodes across the province. These nodes are suggested given their location on junctions, population sizes and their growth rates, and mineral, fruit, fish, cereals, and vegetable production capacities. The CPEC infrastructure and other related facilities could be utilised to connect these growth centres to the markets and ports and establish a value chain that could support the economic activities in Balochistan.⁷⁷

Corridor 1 is the coastal belt that covers the southern part of Balochistan—Districts Gwadar and Lasbela—accommodating the fishing industry.

Corridor 2 comprises the link between the copper/mineral belt in Chagai and Gwadar via Mashkel, Kharan, and Buleda.

Corridor 3 forms part of CPEC that covers Gwadar, Turbat, Panjgur, Besima, Khuzdar, and Mastung.

Corridor 4 runs through the trade route along highway N-25 (the RCD road) that connects the port city of Karachi with Chaman on the Pakistan-Afghan border via Lasbela, Khuzdar, Kalat, and Quetta.

Corridor 5 comprises of gas fields and canal irrigated agriculture producing major food and cash crops. This covers the oil, gas, and coal-rich districts of Dera Bugti and Kohlu.

Corridor 6 comprises of the north-eastern districts producing non-staple high-value products, such as fruits, vegetables, wool, etc., as well as minerals, including coal, chromite, etc.⁷⁸

The economic corridors characteristically emphasise Balochistan's tremendous industrial growth and trade potentials. Yet, in order to exploit the potential of each corridor, besides a long-term development vision, a comprehensive road and rail network needs to be provided knotting the corridors and connecting them to the port city, to rest of the country, to Afghanistan and CARs, and to the western part of China. The Western Corridor of CPEC, as discussed above, can provide the necessary alignments and connectivity to

these economic centres.⁷⁹

These corridors or economic centres need vast investments. The public sector, given its limited finances, is unable to inject the required investment alone. The private sector investment, including FDI, is crucial. Some of the projects and schemes planned for medium- and long-term phases under the CPEC umbrella will be attracted to these corridors. For this to happen, both the federal and provincial governments, alongside large foreign and local businesses, should also encourage the small- and medium-sized enterprises and motivate the financial sector to provide the required finances. Nothing of such sort is seen happening in Balochistan. Many of these proposed economic centres are wishful and aloof from the reality of Balochistan. In order to make them more feasible, investments will have to be made in education to invest in education to equip the local communities with the required skills and technical know-how to gain from opportunities that CPEC will present. Infrastructure development, logistics regulatory framework, and industrial parks and zones will certainly demand a skilled workforce.⁸⁰

The Politics of CPEC and Balochistan

Besides its commercial and economic importance, the geographical location of Gwadar also provides the port city with an immense geostrategic value with competing politics. Given its geographical and geostrategic location, Gwadar has for long been considered to have the potential of exploiting the transit trade to and from the landlocked CARs, Afghanistan, and western China, by providing them with the nearest access point towards the sea for their exports and imports. The completion of CPEC projects, notwithstanding being the harbinger of economic benefits to the province, may attract many competing regional and international powers, as CPEC is perceived to be a flagship of Chinese foreign policy and geostrategic interests under the OBOR.

Since the beginning of work on the Gwadar Port in 2003—which became a critical node of CPEC when the latter was officially launched in 2014—it has been depicted as Chinese long-term plan to gain and consolidate a foothold on the outskirts of the Indian Ocean with immense strategic importance. Not only Gwadar Port, the geographical location of Balochistan placing it in the middle of Central, West, and South Asia, would always make it susceptible to the effects of regional and global politics.⁸¹ The maritime significance of Balochistan is evident from the fact that its coastal belt can provide the shortest and most convenient sea access to the landlocked and resource-rich CARs and Afghanistan.

The interest of Russia to be an active part of CPEC and the Chinese invitation to Iran to join hands to link Gwadar and Chabahar ports for commercial gains obviously add to the political importance of CPEC and Balochistan is a pivot to this entire development. Balochistan has always been a high ground for regional geopolitics dating back to the 19th century 'Great Game' between Russia and Great Britain, and the 20th century Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Currently, the growing Chinese influence in this region through the Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC has yet again placed Balochistan in the limelight of regional and international politics.

It is important to mention that India, which invariably perceives itself a regional hegemon, suspects CPEC as a Chinese geostrategic expansion to the Indian Ocean to counter the traditional Indian geostrategic dominance. To its rivalry and counter-positioning, India, therefore, has for years been placing its presence in south-eastern Iran by building the Chabahar port. The Chabahar port provides an alternative route to Afghanistan and CARs, which through Bandar Abbas enables India to connect not only to the CARs but allows it to have access to Russia and Eastern Europe through the node of the International North-South Transport Corridor.⁸² The political and

geostrategic boundaries of CPEC encompass a wide range of countries. Apart from the economic benefits of CPEC to both China and Pakistan, underneath there is a strong political and geostrategic and power politics in the CPEC process. Chinese, Indian, and American foreign policies and Pakistan's response to them play a crucial role in the future development of CPEC and Balochistan, for better or worse, remains the central ground of this power politics.

In Balochistan, despite mainstream nationalist parties' virtual consent to CPEC, a large segment of the political spectrum in the province undoubtedly suspects CPEC to be just a train passing through the province without having any meaningful economic impact. In addition, they fear an adverse political impact owing to the Chinese presence in Gwadar. Balochistan's apprehensions have their roots in the history of unequal resource distribution and development, in general, and the lack of federal government's transparency regarding CPEC. Given the vitality of Balochistan vis-à-vis CPEC, its strategic positioning and the greater resentment of the Baloch political elements, it is imperative for Pakistan to develop a widespread political consensus taking into confidence the people of Balochistan. Thus, the federal government needs to engage with the Baloch representatives including the radical elements for greater consultations, as CPEC is a project that touches upon all 'politically sensitive' and volatile regions of Balochistan, which also happen to be the poorest regions of the country with very little or no representation in power structure.

The Baloch Question

The greatest challenge and roadblock to CPEC development in this region has been the current wave of Baloch insurgency, which has erupted in 2002 and remained unabated, though, subdued and limited to only a few districts of Balochistan in recent years. However, the districts that still host the majority of Baloch insurgents are the

areas along the CPEC route. Thus, notwithstanding the prospects for development, the province has been dogged with disgruntlement that has led to revolts and insurgencies stretched out over decades. The Baloch insurgents have serious reservations about CPEC and its aligned development. This political and militant resentment of the Baloch nationalist forces makes Balochistan a difficult and contentious space for CPEC. The historical trend of Balochistan and the centre has been that of exploitation and the current opposition of a strong segment of Baloch nationalists to CPEC is on the grounds that it will enhance the circle of exploitation in collaboration with China.⁸³

There could be multiple causes of the Baloch insurgency but the chief among them were disputes over the questions of provincial autonomy, control over province-based resources, interethnic relations, and linguistic concerns. An interesting phenomenon in this entire saga is that since CPEC projects, including Gwadar port, are largely situated in areas that are afflicted with the insurgency. Thus, it is fair to argue that CPEC can open up an opportunity to bring a durable end to the Baloch insurgency through economic development. It is important to engage the Baloch youth in national institutions as well as in CPEC-related projects and address the apprehensions of the Baloch nationalists attached to CPEC. The Baloch, in general, are not averse to the idea of development, yet their view of CPEC is manifested by the idea of resource exploitation by 'outsiders', which of course has a history of mistrust. Thus, appeasing and mitigating the Baloch sentiments owing to CPEC through tangible and concrete measures must be a priority of Pakistan.

Another key concern of the local Baloch is the suspected demographic change, which they fear will take place as Gwadar develops. As the economic activities in Gwadar and in rest of Makran grow, the region will attract a large number of migrant workers from other regions of Pakistan. Such an influx of non-Baloch migrants to Makran Division and Lasbela District, which are already the poorest

regions of Pakistan, could pose a serious risk to the ethnic balance and social cohesion, as the local Baloch would become not only a minority in their ancestral homeland but would also have to compete for local jobs with non-Baloch economic migrants.

For sustainable development of CPEC, the Baloch question must be resolved. Numerous initiatives can be taken including the following:

1. The political rights of the Baloch may be protected through their representation and participation in the political process. Through legislation and constitutional protections, the employment rights of the locals may be guaranteed. Moreover, the new migrants can be prohibited from being counted in the local population count and they may be debarred from receiving domiciles and voting rights.
2. The provincial and federal government with the collaboration of private financial institutions could develop a local services sector by offering loans to petty Baloch businessmen and merchants who want to establish their small businesses.
3. The real estate speculations in Gwadar have generated massive land scams and frauds. To prevent and mitigate the recurrence of such irregularities, the land record should be digitised, and perhaps as an extreme measure, the non-local may not be permitted to 'buy' land from locals. Instead, the land may be leased out for commercial purposes for a certain duration.
4. Education of locals must be enhanced to generate 'skilled labour force' from the local community, who can meet the demands of the market.
5. The local Baloch should be recruited into security forces.

Conclusions

It is imperative to ensure that Balochistan, a pivot of CPEC, can benefit from its dividends, which ironically is missing from the greater discourse on prospective benefits of CPEC. In this paper, even though we illustrate and analyse the possible venues through which CPEC can substantially benefit Balochistan, yet the current design of CPEC is improbable to have a meaningful impact on the provincial economy. For CPEC to be beneficial for Balochistan, the federal government needs to have a clearer vision and strategy of not only building small-scale infrastructure but also of encouraging local enterprises and building the capacity of local communities through the provision of training and education services.

The majority of SEZs for Balochistan are still plans without any serious feasibility assessments. It goes without saying that the country needs to promote industrialisation in Balochistan and the proposed SEZs could be a concrete initiative towards that end. Yet, the evidence so far suggests that the government has failed to have a well-designed and well-structured policy to establish these SEZs on a sustainable basis. Merely delimiting a piece of land declaring it an SEZ hardly suffices any need. SEZs in Gwadar, Bostan, and Moqpondass Industrial Estate, for example, are just desolate piece of lands with no infrastructure and basic amenities. A serious plan for the proposed SEZs could include a plan for the provision of power and connectivity through road, rail, seaports, and airports and integrating them into the national and international supply chain.

CPEC will likely change the economic landscape of Balochistan by providing adequate communication network and investments to its potential economic corridors. CPEC is in its early stage, though, and it is hard to confirm or even predict the actual social and economic impact on Pakistan, let alone Balochistan. Nevertheless, the paper presents a scenario with key potential areas that could gain maximum benefit from CPEC and usher in a growth and development process in

the province. It needs to be acknowledged that given the level of the weak and dysfunctional state of Balochistan's economy and the dire situation of the social capital, one project, no matter how diverse and multifaceted it may be, could hardly change the entire economic and social landscape. CPEC, on the other hand, by virtue of being an economic and development corridor, can generate employment opportunities, help alleviate poverty, engage youth in entrepreneurial and commercial activities, maintain law and order situation, and improve the overall social and economic outlook in the province. CPEC can provide incentives for regional stability and development opportunities in Balochistan province. And for this to happen, Pakistan needs to take comprehensive measures to enhance the capacities of the underdeveloped regions of the country, including Balochistan. In this context, Balochistan can emerge to be a place of great geostrategic significance that is expected to offer a remarkable boost to the economy of Pakistan and the whole region.

Amidst the uncertainty in regional and international geopolitics, however, such an ideal situation is by no means guaranteed. CPEC is an integral part of greater Chinese OBOR project and the Chinese expansion to West Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, Western Europe, and Africa is indeed not perceived positively by other regional and global hegemonic powers. The US, with traditional presence and a deep interest in the region, as well as India, Iran, and certain Middle Eastern countries having deep apprehensions against growing Chinese influence in the region, could make CPEC a hard undertaking. Thus, what is required is a farsighted and prudent consideration and in-depth analysis of CPEC and OBOR with their greater implications on geopolitics and economics. The Government of Pakistan and other key stakeholders of the project should devise a comprehensive and realistic policy, taking into account the potential threats that could come in the way of the smooth materialisation of CPEC. And lastly, For CPEC to be inclusive with positive implications for

poverty and regional inequities it has to unleash itself from the traditional power politics and elite capture.

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SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY COMPLEX AND NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

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Abstract

South Asian security dynamics are characterised by divergent security goals of India and Pakistan. Pakistan developed nuclear weapons as a power balancer against India, which was at an advantageous position over Pakistan in terms of conventional weaponry and forces. As there exists a balance of power, thanks to the possession of nuclear weapons often referred to as the balance of terror, there is strategic stability in South Asia. However, this strategic stability comes at the expense of continued nuclear armaments and technology development by India and Pakistan. There is a peculiar nature of competition between India and Pakistan, which is different from the Cold War concept of the arms race. The study of historical patterns reveals that Pakistan's nuclear developments are a response to those of India's. On the other hand, Indian nuclear developments are aimed at developing deterrence against China. The result is that as India boosts its nuclear developments to achieve its minimum credible deterrence against China, for Pakistan it no more remains minimum and it has to go for qualitative and quantitative arms build-up. However, this relative pattern of nuclear arms developments is different from the arms race concept of the Cold War, where two great powers spent heavily on arms build-up to achieve hegemony. The strategic stability corresponds to

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deterrence stability and arms race stability. The purpose of this study is to analyse the trends of nuclear arms development by both India and Pakistan to analyse South Asian security complex characterised by nuclear weapons and foreign alliances. The study also analyses the arms development of India and Pakistan through the concept of the arms race.

Key Words: *Regional Security Complex, nuclear arms race, South Asia, nuclear deterrence, Indian force postures, Pakistan.*

جنوبی ایشیاء کی سلامتی کی پیچیدگیاں اور جوہری ہتھیاروں کی دوڑ وقار حسین، خرم مقصود احمد، فیض الرحمن

خلاصہ:-

جنوبی ایشیاء کی سلامتی کے محرمات پاکستان اور بھارت کے ایک دوسرے سے مختلف سلامتی کے اہداف کے ساتھ جڑے ہیں۔ پاکستان کو ایٹمی ہتھیار اس لیے بنانا پڑے کہ بھارت کیساتھ طاقت کے توازن کو برقرار رکھا جاسکے، جو کہ پاکستان سے روایتی ہتھیاروں میں آگے ہے۔ چونکہ جوہری ہتھیاروں کی وجہ سے ایک طاقت کا توازن قائم ہے جس کو دہشت کا توازن بھی کہا جاتا ہے، خطے میں تزویراتی استحکام ہے۔ تاہم یہ تزویراتی پائیداری پاکستان اور بھارت کے مسلسل ایٹمی ہتھیار بنانے اور جوہری ٹیکنالوجی کو فروغ دینے کے مول حاصل کی گئی ہے۔ پاکستان اور بھارت کے مابین ایک خاص نوعیت کی رقابت اور کشش کی کیفیت ہے، جو کہ سرد جنگ کے زمانے کے ہتھیاروں کی دوڑ سے بالکل مختلف ہے۔ تاریخ کی ورق گردانی سے یہ حقیقت سامنے آتی ہے کہ پاکستان کی جانب سے جوہری پروگرام میں پیش رفت، بھارتی پیش رفت کے رد عمل کے طور پر ہے۔ جبکہ دوسری جانب بھارتی جوہری پروگرام کا مقصد چین کے خلاف مزاحمت پیدا کرنا ہے۔ نتیجتاً بھارت اپنے جوہری پروگرام کو وسعت دیکر چین کے خلاف اپنی کم سے کم قابل اعتماد مزاحمت قائم رکھنا چاہتا ہے۔ جبکہ یہ پاکستان کے لیے کم سے کم نہیں ہوتی اور پاکستان تعدادی اور معیاری طور پر ہتھیاروں کو فروغ دینے پر مجبور ہو جاتا ہے۔ جوہری ہتھیاروں کی تیاری کا یہ لائحہ عمل سرد جنگ کی ہتھیاروں کی دوڑ سے قطعاً مختلف ہے۔ جس میں دو بڑی طاقتوں نے اپنی طاقت کی دھاک بٹھانے کے لیے جوہری ہتھیاروں کی تیاری پر کثیر سرمایہ خرچ کیا۔ یہ تزویراتی پائیداری، دہشت کی پائیداری اور ہتھیاروں کی دوڑ کی پائیداری کے ساتھ ساتھ چلتی ہے۔ اس تحقیق کا مقصد پاکستان اور بھارت کے جوہری ہتھیاروں کی پیش رفت کے رجحانات کا تجزیہ کرنا ہے جو کہ جوہری ہتھیاروں کی تیاری اور بین الاقوامی اتحادات سے منسوب ہیں۔ اس تحقیق میں پاکستان اور بھارت کی ہتھیاروں کی پیش رفت کو ہتھیاروں کی دوڑ کے تصور کے تحت بھی جانچا گیا ہے۔

Introduction

There is a balance of power between India and Pakistan, which corresponds to strategic stability in South Asia. Nuclear deterrence is central to maintaining this strategic stability in the region. The South Asian nuclear 'balance of terror' does not furnish the kind of stability that was there during the Cold War due to different objectives of relative deterrence postures. Nuclear policies of India and Pakistan have different goals and objectives. India has a larger adversary in the form of China with which it has had an armed conflict and derives security threat from. Furthermore, Pakistan-China cooperation aggravates the Indian threat perception. Pakistan's security threat emerges from India alone and its strategic armament is designed to maintain its credible minimum nuclear deterrence against India alone. As Vipin Narang has rightly pointed out:

What is credible toward China will likely not be minimum toward Pakistan; and what is minimum toward Pakistan cannot be credible toward China.¹

Strategic stability corresponds to deterrence stability and that, in turn, correlates with arms race stability in the region. Any transformation in any of these is bound to affect the others. However, the concept of arms race cannot be applied to the South Asian environment independently because the relative nuclear armaments of India and Pakistan cannot be termed as an arms race. First, India and Pakistan are not world powers competing for global hegemony and, second, Pakistan's nuclear developments are not to match the Indian capabilities, i.e., the Indian triad of nuclear forces, space capabilities, and ballistic missile defence system.

India perceives itself as a global power and pursues its strategic goals in line with this perception. India has embarked upon an ambitious force posture that goes beyond the minimum credible

deterrence posture. In addition, its No First-Use (NFU) doctrine is increasingly diluting with the development of its missile defence capabilities. It builds a perception among Pakistan and China that India is preparing for the first-use posture once it has ensured the second strike capability through developing nuclear triad and missile defence.

Pakistan has to develop fissile material to support its nuclear programme. To help explain why Pakistan has been developing fissile stocks, one can ascertain the interplay of factors responsible for a changing strategic environment in the region. These factors are as follows:

1. The conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan, which Pakistan cannot match conventionally;
2. Proactive and offensive military postures of India;
3. The nuclear imbalance between India and Pakistan;
4. Discriminatory global nuclear policies and non-proliferation mechanisms; and
5. Special status to India in export control cartels.

The study focuses on the relationship of nuclear power balance with the relative competition between India and Pakistan. It points out the Indian nuclear developments that disturb the power equilibrium, entailing a balancing act on the part of Pakistan. The main objective of the research is to analyse whether the patterns of arms development in South Asia represent an arms race or not? The study is divided into three parts: In the first part, an overall security structure of the region is explained with the help of regional security complex theory. In the second part, the arms race is assessed as per the relative developments of India and Pakistan. In the final part, a conclusion is drawn based on the assessments.

South Asian Regional Security Complex

The regional security complex theory states that geographical proximity is the most important factor while considering the security of a state. Its significance increases when the proximate states share a conflictual relationship among them. Alternatively, the regional security complex may be defined in the following words:

The security of two proximate states cannot be studied in separation from each other if their security considerations are so much linked together that security of one state results in insecurity of the other.²

Accordingly, the regional security complex advocates that political and military threats are more prone to travel quickly over short distances due to proximity. That is why it is quite understandable that inter-regional security threats among states are stronger as compared to the security threats among far away states.

South Asia has been the central case study for the development and advancement of the regional security complex theory.³ It was proposed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waiver. They are of the view that decolonisation of South Asia is central to the formation of conflict in the region. The process produced proximate adversaries with conflicting social, economic, and security preferences right from the start. In addition to that, the regional states never drew in regional allies; rather they preferred foreign allies who intervened in regional affairs benefitting from the internal splits among the states. However, these interventions did not alter or reshape the fundamental regional dynamics, which were based on conflict.⁴

India and Pakistan are major actors in South Asia. The post-Cold War regional security complex foresaw parallel trends of continuity and transformation in relations of India and Pakistan. The continuity of relationship is represented by three longstanding issues:

1. The conflict over Kashmir;

2. Communal issues that have been there from start and are exacerbated by episodic communal riots; and
3. The classical military rivalry between the two states, which has escalated with the relative development of nuclear and missile capabilities.⁵

The transformation in security dynamics as predicted by the theory of regional security complex is yet to mature. According to the theory, the transformation in security relations would be caused by two factors:

1. An internal transformation in the region due to the collapse of the regional bipolar structure, i.e., one of them ceases to be a regional power anymore; and
2. An external transformation possibly resulting from China overpowering India.

Some strategists believe that the regional security complex may be moving towards uni-polarity due to the fact that Pakistan is faced with challenges of internal security, ethnic issues, and adverse economic conditions, which undermine Pakistan's capacity to sustain itself as a power pole in the region.⁶ Although China is not a regional power, its rivalry with India and alliance with Pakistan would hamper Indian chances of becoming the singular power pole of South Asia.

Nuclear deterrence is the power balancer in South Asia. The security of the region depends upon the stability of deterrence, which is primarily stable until a conflict transforms into war. The possibility of a limited conventional war is not eliminated by nuclear deterrence, however, it retains a conflict as limited. This creates a stability-instability paradox in which states seek to conduct a limited conventional war with the security of not being attacked with nuclear weapons because it also possesses nuclear weapons to deter. This complicates the identification and quantification of factors that correspond to the stability of deterrence.⁷ The advancement of nuclear capabilities may complement deterrence stability.

Interestingly, the deterrence stability and the arms race between India and Pakistan correlate to each other. Further advancements in nuclear weapons and their related technology, on the one hand, indicate an arms race between India and Pakistan, while on the other hand, they also account for deterrence stability in the region. This makes South Asian security dynamics unique and different from the theoretical explanations of the Cold War concepts of power balancing and arms race.

South Asian security situation differs from the Cold War superpower rivalry in the following ways:

1. The dynamic of security in South Asia is formed by India and Pakistan with external powers influencing the strategic balance between them;
2. Unlike the Cold War, there are no great powers in direct conflict with each other in South Asia;
3. Geographically, there is contiguity between the two rival states, which was not there among the Cold War rivals; and
4. The foreign policy goals and worldview of Pakistan and India are different from each other.

The concept of the arms race in South Asia is starkly different from the concept during the Cold War era. Assessing the differences in dynamics of an arms race between India and Pakistan, as compared to those among the superpowers during the Cold War, is essential to analyse because South Asian deterrence is dynamic and has different conditions for stability.

Assessing the Arms Race in South Asia

There is a common belief that India and Pakistan are on the course of a ferocious nuclear arms race between them. The analysis of the arms race between the two countries involves the following three main elements:

1. Analyse the patterns of their respective nuclear policies and development of weapons systems;
2. Analyse the developments that form and contribute to the arms race; and
3. Analyse the technique used to identify and measure the existence of an arms race between South Asian powers.

Explanation of the nuances of the arms race and national security imperatives of a country is essential. Toby Dalton and Jaclyn Tandler argue that national security and arms race are two different things. A state, on the one hand, may be considered involved in an arms race with another state, while on the other hand, it may be merely developing certain weapons sufficient for ensuring its national security.⁸ It is important to see that an arms development that corresponds to assuring national security has an impact on assessing an arms race between two adversaries. This argument holds especially when there are geographical and conventional asymmetries between the two rivals in a nuclear environment, as is the case with India and Pakistan. The nuclear policies of India and Pakistan reflect that they are not in an arms race with each other and that their nuclear developments are according to their national security compulsions. These security compulsions are primarily the result of mutual threat perception and a security dilemma. In the South Asian context, the security dilemma complements the regional security complex and vice versa. As a result, the pattern of arms development further contributes to both the processes of the security dilemma and regional security complex.

The security dilemma, in the regional context, means that the countries with conflictual relationship share a mutual apprehension that the security measures taken by one state would necessarily eventuate in the insecurity of the other state. The terminology was developed by John Herz to explicate that there is a dynamic 'action-reaction' cycle which corresponds to the insecurity of one state

breeding insecurity for the other.⁹ This insecurity fosters a threat perception that creates an atmosphere of mistrust.

This threat perception and corresponding security dilemma have been part and parcel of the India-Pakistan relations right from the start. Ayesha Siddiqi, while explaining the relative threat perception and security dilemma, maintains that Indian threat perception is based on a belief that India is a regional power if not a global power. Pakistan, in alliance with China, however, resists Indian rise to that status. On the other hand, the strategic perspective of Pakistan is India-centric. It perceives that India never accepted the creation of Pakistan and wants to make it its small client state under the larger India and will lose no chance to dominate it if not completely destroy it.¹⁰ This security dilemma has resulted in nuclear weapons development and the resulting advancement in the nuclear missiles, which is generally referred to as an arms race between both the states.

Indian Nuclear Policy and Arms Build-up

The Indian nuclear policy has been undergoing an evolving transformation. The Indian strategic culture, as Rajesh Basrur points out, consists of the following four chief characteristics:

1. Low level of importance accorded to nuclear weapons;
2. A political rather than military approach to nuclear weapons;
3. Emphasis on minimum deterrence; and
4. Strong commitment to arms control.¹¹

However, there is a strong disconnect in policy and practicality. These nuclear developments, as explained by the regional security complex theory, cause a feeling of threat perception among the ranks of Pakistani policymakers.

Evolving Indian Force Postures

India had been following a defensive force posture until 2001-02 military stand-off against Pakistan. It transformed its posture from the Sundarji Doctrine of the 1980s with a new rather offensive one

called the Cold Start Doctrine, which is essentially based on the limited war concept. According to this strategy, Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) are deployed near the border areas, which can penetrate into enemy territory within 72 hours and capture some areas before the enemy can retaliate.¹² This strategy is aimed at acquiring the required outcomes by bargain over captured territory without escalation into a hot war. The basis of limited war concept can be traced back to the 19th century. Osgood has given the definition of limited war:

A limited war is one in which the belligerents restrict the purpose for which they fight to concrete, well defined objectives that do not demand the utmost military effort of which the belligerents are capable and that can be accommodated in a negotiated settlement... The battle is confined to a local geographical area and directed against selected targets - primarily those of direct military importance...It permits their economic, social and political patterns of existence to continue without serious disruption.¹³

However, in the India-Pakistan context, this classical definition of limited war is less relevant owing to the respective perspectives, nuclear doctrines, and force postures of the two countries. Indian perspective regarding limited war has been quite indifferent because, on the one hand, it has been advocating limited war as a possibility under a nuclear umbrella without escalating to a hot war, while on the other hand, it has been considering to retaliate in case of a nuclear attack after absorbing a nuclear strike. This indifference is evident in the two statements of former Indian defence minister George Fernandes following the Kargil crisis. During the crisis, while the aggressive statements were being exchanged, Fernandes stated, "Possibility of limited conventional war between India and Pakistan cannot be ruled out; rather it has given a new attribute to the warfare

in South Asia.”¹⁴ He further stated, “nuclear weapons can only deter nuclear weapons, however, if conflict escalates to war, then India can survive a nuclear strike and hit back Pakistan with a massive retaliation.”¹⁵ This statement essentially negates the definition and purpose of limited war as it focuses on the negotiated settlement, which is possible only when the conflict does not escalate.

The counter-narrative to this strategy is given by M. V. Ramana who stated that the assertions of Fernandes represented “a reflection of thinking that had been popularised by the US nuclear strategists [or to put it more bluntly, psychopaths].”¹⁶ He has quoted P. R. Chari, also articulating that “considering limited war as feasible is essentially flawed approach because it focuses on knowing precise perceptions and expecting absolute rationality of the adversary, none of which is reliable.”¹⁷ Despite such contradictory views, India has continued to cling on to the idea of limited conventional warfare, which has resulted in increased spending on conventional weapons.

The Pakistani perspective on limited war has also been indifferent. The official stance has been negating the possibility of a limited nuclear war, whereas the Kargil crisis, in practicality, represents the exercise of a limited war under a nuclear overhang. After the 2001-02 military stand-off, Abdul Sattar, the then Foreign Minister of Pakistan, stated:

There is no concept of limited war between two rival countries. If a country starts a war on a limited scale, there is no guarantee that it would remain limited. Anything can happen.¹⁸

This suggested that Pakistan solely depended upon deterrence based on the policy of ‘no, to NFU’. However, the Kargil crisis indicated otherwise.¹⁹

The consideration of limited war as an option under the nuclear environment is never a feasible idea because it is not based on

a singular calculation. The calculation of intangible factors associated with the limited war psychology such as the following cannot be comprehensively calculated:

1. The state of mind during the conflict;
2. Intelligence inputs;
3. Relative uncertainties;
4. Domestic politics; and
5. Nature of crisis.

Rationality and logic recommend that, given Pakistan's conventional asymmetry and strategic constraints²⁰ and India's limitations regarding lesser response times in terms of a nuclear strike, no war between India and Pakistan can be assumed to be limited as it would always have the potential to escalate into a nuclear exchange.

Second Strike Capability: Nuclear Triad and ABM System

Fundamentally, nuclear triad consists of three major components: strategic bombers, Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) for the purpose of delivering nuclear weapons. This triad substantially reduces the chances for wipe-out of all the nuclear force of a state as a result of the first strike by the enemy. Such a system essentially increases the deterrence potential of the state's nuclear forces.²¹ Indian nuclear policy works on the attainment of this triad.

India has developed the intermediate to long-range ballistic missiles including Agni-V, which has a range of 5,000+ kilometres. India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has declared that the future variant of Agni missile would be able to carry multiple warheads, which, according to a former head of DRDO, will be a "force multiplier."²² Agni-V already puts India there in the list of ICBM possessors.

Indian nuclear second-strike capability rests on its naval capabilities and nuclear submarines. India has joined the club of nuclear submarine operator countries along with the China, France,

Russia, the UK, and the US. The development of nuclear submarines has added the third dimension to Indian defence capability.²³ Russian assistance has been vital in developing these nuclear submarines. INS Arihant was activated on 10 August 2013, which is indigenously built nuclear submarine of India. Previously, Russia had leased INS Chakra for 10 years to India.

In addition to that, heavy investments are being made on the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system. The motivations behind developing the BMD system are to provide India with the space for waging limited conventional war against Pakistan²⁴ and to develop the technical expertise relating to space and benefit from the opportunity of technical and political cooperation with the United States after Bush administration abrogated the ABM Treaty in 2001.²⁵ However, the BMD program is yet far from maturation.

It is interesting to note that Indian BMD is not necessarily a defence-based approach because it gives an impression that by ensuring the defence of the Indian cities, it is preparing for the first strike. Considering the notions given by Jaswant Singh in 2011 and Shyam Saran about abandoning the NFU notion and massive retaliation with nuclear weapons in response to tactical weapons further elevate the Pakistani threat perceptions.²⁶

Nuclear Trade and NSG Membership

The watershed developments in the history of nuclear trade and cooperation were the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreement and the following Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) waiver. They put India strategically and politically in an advantageous position vis-à-vis Pakistan. They not only allow India to have access to international nuclear trade but also help it in improving its nuclear arsenal qualitatively as well as quantitatively. So a correlation exists between India-US partnership and Pakistan's security considerations.²⁷ Furthermore, the US is supporting India in the NSG for full membership. This special treatment to India not only puts a question

mark on the credibility of international nuclear export policies but also adds to the security concerns of Pakistan.

Seeing these developments, Indian nuclear policy gives an impression of confusion. The BMD system, the sea-based missiles system, and the development of ICBMs are neither minimum nor credible. The result is the disturbance of overall deterrence stability in the region. The intricate security dynamics of South Asia cannot afford a single state claiming hegemony over another state having the nuclear deterrent. The strategic imbalance created by these developments has eventuated into countermeasures from Pakistan.

Pakistan's Responses

These developments have a significant impact on the strategic and arms race stability in South Asia. These have added to the fragility of deterrence stability in the region. Pakistan's reaction to these developments has been limited and purely India-centric.

Short Range Nuclear Missiles as a Counter for Indian Offensive War Doctrines

Pakistan flight-tested Hatf-IX, Nasr (Arabic of Victory), on 19 April 2011. It has a 60 kilometres range and has the capability to carry a nuclear weapon with scoot and shoot properties.²⁸ The development of the short-range ballistic missile Nasr was exactly the manifestation of the credibility and communication of threat by Pakistan. This was, first, to counter the Indian limited war option in the form of the Cold Start Doctrine. Second, to cope with the conventional asymmetry of India²⁹ and, third, to introduce a variant in the nuclear arsenal to address the Indian BMD system. India also unveiled its tactical nuclear missile, Prahaar as a reaction to Nasr. Though the development of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) is attributed to be risk-prone in terms of command and control, history testifies that if the command and control remained intact in the Cold War, it is less likely to fail today.³⁰

Strategic stability of South Asia has grown more complex owing to the non-state actors involved in terrorist activities across the Indo-Pak border. One can argue that with the introduction of TNWs if a Mumbai attack-like scenario develops, the conflict would not escalate beyond a limited conventional one. So it can be posited that the strategic destabilisation caused by the Cold Start has been rectified by the TNWs.

Full Spectrum Deterrence

The phrase 'full spectrum deterrence' was used for the first time in the statement after the National Command Authority (NCA) meeting of 5 September 2013. Significantly, the term 'full spectrum deterrence' was used along with 'credible minimum deterrence' indicating that both conveyed different meanings. The apparent difference is that 'credible minimum deterrence' refers to deterrence against a massive attack by the adversary. But with the inclusion of the short-range ballistic missiles in the arsenal, more credibility has been added to the deterrence making it 'full spectrum deterrence'. In other words, Nasr has not only lowered the nuclear threshold of Pakistan but has also reduced the chances of Indian option of a limited war, adding strength to deterrence stability in the region.

Widening conventional arms disparity with India has pushed Islamabad to lower its nuclear threshold. The volatile regional security situation and discriminatory policies within the non-proliferation regime were the determining factors in Pakistan's decision to further strengthen its nuclear programme even though the country is facing a severe economic crisis.³¹

Balancing Against Racing: Analysis of Arms Race Between India and Pakistan

In the context of South Asia, just as an arms race in the region cannot be strictly confined to the developments of India and Pakistan only, the strategic balance in the region also cannot be confined to

India and Pakistan either. The China factor is very important to be brought into the analysis. China is dragged into the equation of regional security complex through the alliance of China with Pakistan and its rivalry with India. To evaluate the existence of a nuclear arms race between Pakistan and India, the following factors are crucial to consider:

First, there is a relative asymmetry in conventional weapons, geography, and economic strength. Based on this asymmetry, Pakistan and India assume different plans of action while developing nuclear weapons. As Tandler and Toby Dalton state:

India and Pakistan are racing toward their respective national security objectives, but they are running on different tracks and chasing vastly different goals.³²

The India-Pakistan arms development relationship cannot be explained by the classic models of arms race of the Cold War because the situation in South Asia is different. During the Cold War, the world was bipolar and no third power was involved to compel either or both of the adversaries to match its power and deter that. The deterrence concept was essentially limited to the Soviet Union and the United States. However, in South Asia, deterrence is not just confined to India and Pakistan. China is also involved in the equation. While Pakistan has to maintain its deterrence against India, India seeks to match power with a bigger power, i.e., China. Agreeably, when India seeks to balance power with China, it has to boost its power, which in turn creates a security dilemma for Pakistan as it has to balance India.

Second, the relative security strategies determine the arms development of India and Pakistan. These strategies are based on requirements rather than unnecessary developments that could correspond to the arms race between them. Regarding the development of missiles, India needs to go for long-range missiles because it has to target China. On the other hand, Pakistan relies on

the development of short-range missiles because it only has to cope with the Indian threat. So, if Pakistan follows India in developing long-range missiles, it may mean that it is involved in an arms race with India, which is not the case here. Likewise, regarding the Indian development of Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM), Pakistan does not necessarily require to match the same owing to its economic and technological constraints. Rather, it has opted to increase its number of missiles in order to cater to the anti-missile system, which, arguably, does not correspond to the arms race.

The Indo-Pakistani relationship is explained less by classic conventional or nuclear arms race models than by the asymmetries in their security strategies as reflected in the types of nuclear delivery capabilities they are developing.³³

Third, the conventional arms race models cannot be applied to determine the generalised model for the measurement of the extent of an arms race between India and Pakistan. The general estimation techniques include the number of stockpiles, the types of weapons systems, the fissile material stocks, the economic spending, etc. However, these techniques do not make arms race estimations comprehensive in the case of India and Pakistan. The number of stockpiles is never deterministic while types of weapons systems are strictly related to power balancing strategies. Economic spending is based on the overall size of economies, which cannot be matched. And lastly, the arms race estimations cannot be based on the number of stockpiles and fissile material stocks because of intangible factors that are involved in the quantitative as well as qualitative classification of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Pakistan sticks to the doctrine of credible minimum nuclear forces to maintain deterrence vis-à-vis India. Its nuclear forces are India-centric and aimed at balancing the strategic equilibrium in the region. Its nuclear posture is limited and nuclear development is in

conformity with the doctrinal assertions. The National Command Authority (NCA), the premier body in Pakistan to oversee the nuclear development headed by the Prime Minister, has reiterated in its statements that "Pakistan would continue to adhere to the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence, without entering into an arms race with any other country."³⁴

The traditional techniques to determine the arms race trends are not able to explain the existence of an arms race between India and Pakistan. The complexity of security imperatives of India and Pakistan makes it difficult to develop a general model to ascertain mutual arms race among them. The differences in circumstances are sharp enough in South Asia to make it distinct from that of the Cold War arms race. In the Cold War, the two rivals were not in direct confrontation as is the case between India and Pakistan in South Asia. There is a distinct asymmetry between the relative capabilities of both states. Moreover, there is a difference in the mutual national interests of both. India has to take China into account while maintaining its minimum credible deterrence. This complexity in the South Asian security dynamics is different from that of the Cold War and so is the arms race pattern. And the relative arms build-up of India and Pakistan cannot be termed as an arms race.

Conclusion

The regional security complex theory explains that geographical proximity between India and Pakistan influences the South Asian security structure. The processes of securitisation and de-securitisation of India and Pakistan are interlinked and their relative security issues cannot be analysed separately. The transformation foreseen by the theory about the importance of China in the security equation of India and its intensive conflict seems evident in the current security dynamics of the region. The regional security complex is quite relevant in the case of South Asia in terms of geography and

alliances. Geographically proximate rivals, India and Pakistan, are inherently conflicting because they share a common threat perception between them.

The arms race models of the Cold War do not define the arms development in South Asia due to the difference in circumstances and power dynamics. The relative nuclear developments by India and Pakistan attribute to the complexity of security dynamics in the region. The three major players, India, Pakistan, and China make the security denominators complex to fit the relative nuclear developments into the Cold War models of the arms race. However, these developments do add to the complexity of South Asian security.

The relative force postures of India and Pakistan are different. Indian nuclear developments are aimed at achieving a minimum credible deterrence against both China and Pakistan. However, it is impossible to achieve a credible minimum deterrence against Pakistan and China simultaneously. To the contrary, Pakistan's deterrence is to address the Indian threat only. However, Indian developments force Pakistan to keep the strategic balance intact.

Evidently, there is no unending arms race between Pakistan and India. Pakistan's nuclear developments are to counter the Indian threat, while the Indian developments are to counter the Chinese as well as Pakistani threat. The arms development patterns are more complicated because of the inclusion of the Chinese factor in the equation of regional security complex of South Asia. So, as the strategic requirements of India and Pakistan are different, their relative capabilities are also different and, resultantly, their weapons development is different. Therefore, their relative arms development cannot be termed as an arms race. The schematic definitions of arms race used to elaborate arms race in the Cold War cannot be applied in full to the dynamics of arms developments in South Asia between India and Pakistan.

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