

Indo-US nuclear/strategic cooperation: Chinese response

Saadat Hassan *

Introduction

The rising significance of China represents a major change in Asian affairs in the early twenty first century. China is one of the world's emerging great powers. United States (US) is apprehensive about the impact of China's ascendance in the region.¹ The US Commission on National Security warns that the "potential for competition between the United States and China may increase as China grows stronger."² The *Global Trends 2015*, prepared under the direction of the US National Intelligence Council, argues that the implications of the rise of China "pose the greatest uncertainty" in the world.³

The US has exploited unsettled border disputes and obscure relations between China and India to build its relations with the latter. The transformation in Indo-US relations in the post Cold War world is rooted in the belief that a strong democratic India will serve US interests in preserving the balance of power in the Asian continent and sustaining peace and stability in the Indian Ocean littoral.⁴ On the other hand, as it feels the heat of China's rise on its borders in the subcontinent, the extended neighbourhood in Asia, and the Indian Ocean, India is increasingly convinced of the need to balance China.⁵

The rapid development of the bilateral relationship between India and the US reached a new height when the two countries declared and implemented the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) in 2004.⁶ This US-India strategic partnership includes both security and economic fields. The US liberalized arms and technology transfers, cooperated closely with the Indian forces in securing sea-lanes in South Asia, and conducted a number of highly sophisticated military exercises with Indian forces. US cooperation with India, highlighted by nuclear deal and sophisticated Civil Military Cooperation has supported the US position as the leading power in Southern Asian affairs. According to K. Subrahmanyam,

* The writer is Intern, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

“A world of six balancing powers and balance of power politics among them is altogether a new experience for the Indian political class, bureaucracy, media and academia. Over the last 60 years, this nation has been conditioned, to denigrate the politics of balance of power. It never occurred to our politicians that non-alignment was balance of power in a bipolar world where the two powers that constituted the opposing poles could not go to war because of nuclear deterrence. Already, India is fast learning to play the balance of power politics.”⁷

The strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi has major implications for China and its relations with the two countries, India and US. The large and rapid increase in US power, influence, and military presence in Southern Asia is aimed at putting China in a secondary position in the region. With the American “War on terror”, Chinese leaders saw US power and influence move quickly to tilt the overall strategic balance in South Asia decisively in favour of the US. Chinese leaders admitted that “the nation’s geopolitical position has deteriorated since the events of September 11, 2001.”⁸ At this time, China continued to view US missile defence plan a threat to core Chinese interests, including Taiwan, and a manifestation of US hegemonic ambitions.

In China’s threat perceptions, a substantive India-US Strategic Partnership carries with it the potential for Indo-US containment of China and use of Tibet as a strategic pressure point. Chinese analysts have voiced their greatest alarm not about US strength in Asia, which has been a constant since the end of the Cold War, but about India’s US-sponsored strategic ascent. As Indian strategist Brahma Chellaney recounts, “On my visit to China, I have found as an Indian that the only time the Chinese sit up and listen is when the US-Indian relationship comes up. India and the US ganging up militarily is China’s worst nightmare.”⁹ A 2004 editorial in the Chinese People’s Daily reflects this concern in China.

“Steadily warming India-US relations have resulted in widespread attention to the geopolitics of Asia. It is difficult to whether or not India will become a strategic ally of the US or of China, but the sudden attractiveness of India will sooner or later alter the regional balance of power between the three countries.”¹⁰

Some writings have given an insight of Chinese policies to counter the fall-out of this Indo-US Partnership. Beijing’s response to Washington’s efforts to nurture Asian counterweights to Chinese power has been to pursue a Bismarckian policy of strengthening relations with key neighbours to prevent them from joining any US-led containment coalition.¹¹

Evolving balance of power in Asia

Chinese strategic interests and policies

The Chinese have always been a great, courageous and industrious nation; it is only in modern time that they have fallen behind. And that was due entirely to oppression and exploitation by foreign imperialism and domestic reactionary governments....ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up.

*Mao Tse-tung, 21st September 1949*¹²

The changing strategic environment, the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of Soviet Union, and the emerging forces of globalization opened the new windows of opportunities for China. *China's Defence Paper* published in 2006¹³ gave a comprehensive overview of Chinese strategic interests and policies. In China the state remains the key referent of security, both in domestic and international politics. Historically, the state has been thought of as a protector, and not as oppressor of the people. The Chinese speaks of issues like national security and sovereignty as being influenced by history.¹⁴

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The most important message in the paper is what it terms as a “three-step development strategy” to build a military capable of dominating the information battlefield by the middle of the century. The first step is to lay a solid foundation by 2010, the second is to make major progress by 2020, and the third is to achieve the strategic goal of hosting a military arm that is capable of winning 21st century “informationised” wars. The overall national objective by 2049, after 100 years of Communist Party rule, would be a China that counts as a developed nation better than or equal to US and other Western nations in both military and economic strength.¹⁵

US strategic concerns and interests in South Asia

The strategic environment in Asia has undergone rapid changes since the end of the Cold War. China's economic growth and its emergence as a great power is a defining event in the current geopolitical landscape of

Asia. Many scholars of realist leanings assume that the sort of balance-of-power politics practiced in nineteenth-century Europe will prevail in Asia as China's rise will reorder regional politics.¹⁶ America's key regional interest in Asia is to promote the stability and balance of power with the strategic objective of keeping region from being dominated by any power. It also includes preventing being excluded from the region by another power or group of powers. In December 2000, the US National Intelligence Commission released a report on the world in 2015 saying, "...if China becomes stronger, it will then seek favourable rearrangement of power in the Asia-Pacific and may engage in conflicts with its neighbours and some outside forces. As a rising power, China will keep on expanding its own influence without considering the US interests."¹⁷

The US will not let off any chance to check China by the use of balance-of-power. According to the former Secretary of State James Baker to guard against the emergence of a big country or bloc capable of challenging the US hegemonic position in the Asia-Pacific is the long-term strategic goal of the US.¹⁸ "One basic principal of the US national security since the 19th century is to prevent Asia dominated by any power."¹⁹

American scholar Thomas L. Friedman said that the foreign policy goal of the US in Asia was to forestall the emergence of a country strong enough to contend with the US. The US defeated Japan in World War II and containing China today are both based on this strategy, which is the same as the preventative diplomatic strategy of the British Empire regarding the European continent.²⁰ If the US wants to play the role of the "stopper" like the British Empire did in the 19th century, it will need to entrap other regional powers, i.e. Japan, India and Russia into confrontational or strategic, competing relations with China. The American scholar Huntington said, "Theoretically speaking, the US could contain China by playing a balancing role if other powers would like to balance China as well."²¹

Ashley Tellis, long-time South Asia expert, explained the logic of using bilateral security cooperation to respond to China's rise;

Deepened relations with Japan, India, and key allies in Southeast Asia will create structural constraints that may discourage Beijing from abusing its growing regional power. Even as Washington attempts to preserve good relations with Beijing-and encourages these rim land

states to do the same-cultivating ties with these nations may be the best way to prevent China from dominating Asia in the long-term.²²

In the words of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,

Knowing that China is a new factor, knowing that China has the potential for good or for bad, knowing that it will one way or another be an influence, it is our responsibility to try and push and prod and persuade China toward the more positive course.... I really do believe that the US-Japan relationships, the US-South Korean relationship, the US-Indian relationship, all are important in creating an environment in which China is more likely to play a positive role than a negative role.²³

Multiple motives lie behind US security cooperation in Asia, but a central impetus is to create structures that prevent or dissuade China from throwing its weight around the region. Washington also uses such cooperation to empower US allies and partners with the capabilities and confidence to contain China and resist the future impulse to bandwagon with an increasingly powerful China.²⁴

India's efficacy as a balancer in US strategy

India's strategic interests in Asia are two-fold: protecting its security and India's interests, including economic and energy needs, in the rest of Asia. Its grand strategic objectives also include to move beyond the confines of the South Asian sub-system and to assert itself in the overall Asian setting.²⁵ In keeping with this aspiration, New Delhi cited the threat from China to vindicate its decision to balance the rise of China in Asia. India regarded China as "the biggest challenge in the region and threat to its security in the 21st century."²⁶

A Western scholar, Devin Hagerty, sums up Indian security doctrine thus:

The essence of this formulation is that India strongly opposes outside intervention in the domestic affairs of other South Asian nations, especially by outside powers whose goals are perceived to be inimical to Indian interests. Therefore, no South Asian government should ask for outside assistance from any country; rather, if a South Asian nation genuinely needs external assistance, it should seek it from India. A failure to do so will be considered anti-Indian.²⁷

India perceived Chinese relations with South Asian countries interference in her sphere of influence that has transformed the region

from India's purported "near abroad" into China's own backyard. Indian partnership with US will give her opportunity to balance out China in the region. American scholars also comprehend the Indian intention of containing China as William Walker said, "India's strategy is to exploit the conflicts between China and the US and to act as a part-time agent for the latter so to resist the danger from China."²⁸

Indian former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran stated in November 2005, "I think India and the United States can contribute to a much better balance in the Asian region", can only be interpreted as a meaning that it was China's rise that was upsetting the balance.²⁹

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Rather than the bipolar US-Chinese order that many in Beijing expect to emerge, Indian officials share the US confidence that, as India's economy and capabilities grow with the help of US technology, military hardware, and investment, New Delhi will be an important centre of power in the emerging Asian order. Like China, India expects to be "a major player in Asia", and with the US, "it can contribute to a much better balance in the Asian region." "China is a central element in our effort to encourage India's emergence as a world power," says a senior US official. "But we don't need to talk about the containment of China. It will take care of itself as India rises."³⁰ Washington is limiting China's potential strategic choices by strengthening and cultivating friendly Asian powers along its periphery that will constrain Beijing's regional and international ambitions. "It is very useful to remind China" says one US official, "that there are other emerging powerful countries, such as India, who are setting standards we agree with. This is very different from containment; it is more about encouraging or shaping China's view of the international system in a constructive way."³¹

India's strategic determination to catch up with China also expresses itself in varying degrees in its regional policies. As Samuel Huntington writes, the international system is currently in a state of uni-multipolarity, and by using India as a bulwark against Chinese ascendancy, the US is trying to maintain that structure.³² In the Bush presidency, administration has consciously chosen to defer to Indian leadership in promoting peace and stability in South Asia's smaller countries. Washington has been quite happy to let New Delhi take the lead in Nepal's transition toward a

republic and in handling other crises in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Not surprisingly, New Delhi has embarked on a significant competition with China, manifest most explicitly in Burma, where India is vigorously competing with China for political influence, economic gain, and access to energy resources.³³ There is no doubt that with continued US economic and security cooperation India will indeed rise to become one of the great powers within the coming decades.³⁴

Indo-US strategic partnership: the evolution of a new relationship

Although relations with India began to improve near the end of the Clinton presidency, but it was the Bush Administration that redefined the parameters of US-India bilateral engagement. The Bush administration's policy toward India also involves a distinct focus on China and its rising power. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 2000, Condoleezza Rice, who was Bush's foreign policy advisor during his candidacy for president, wrote that the US "should pay closer attention to India's role in the regional balance...But India is an element in China's calculation, and it should be in America's, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one."³⁵

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One of the primary themes of the Department of Defence's Security Cooperation Guidance, which directs US military relations with other nations, calls for "influencing strategic directions of key powers," a well-known reference to China.³⁶ Washington's use of defence policies to dissuade China from competitive regional behaviour was a central issue of research and debate in 2005. Donald Rumsfeld, then Secretary of Defence reportedly designated as one of the Quadrennial Defence Review Report's (QDRP) core issues is "how to shape the choices of countries at strategic crossroads," a euphemism for China.³⁷

While a concern about China's rising military power is palpable throughout the defence review, it is instructive to note the importance that

the QDRR has attached to India's rising global profile. The report describes India as an emerging great power and a key strategic partner of the US. Shared values such as the two states being long-standing multi-ethnic democracies are underlined as providing a foundation for increased strategic cooperation. This stands in marked contrast to the unease that has been expressed about the centralization of power in Russia and lack of transparency in security affairs in China. It is also significant that India is mentioned along with America's traditional allies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, Japan and Australia. The QDRR goes on to say very categorically that close cooperation with these partners (including India) in the war against terrorism as well as in efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and other non-traditional threats ensures not only the continuing need for these alliances but also a need to improve their capabilities.³⁸

Indo-US nuclear deal

Bipartisan support for the US-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement, signed by President Bush in December 2006 following overwhelming congressional approval, reflects the consensus of American foreign-policy strategists that "India will be one of America's most crucial partners in the 21st century."³⁹ The result is the US-India civilian nuclear energy cooperation deal that has virtually rewritten the rules of the global nuclear regime by underlining India's credentials as a responsible nuclear state that should be integrated into the global nuclear order and by creating a major exception to the US prohibition of nuclear assistance to any country that doesn't accept international monitoring of all its nuclear facilities.⁴⁰

The agreement would enable India to acquire civil nuclear technology from the US and other members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and accord India, *de facto* status of a *Nuclear Weapon State* (NWS). The assurance for perpetual nuclear fuel supply from the US would free India's indigenous uranium reserves to be exclusively used for making more number of nuclear weapons. India has agreed to allow monitoring of 14 nuclear reactors to ensure nuclear fuel at these sites is not used for weapons, eight other reactors and an unlimited number of future reactors would continue to produce fissile material for producing NWS, free of any international controls.⁴¹ A former senior Indian intelligence official reaffirmed this once he said; "the assurance of nuclear fuel supply from the US and the NSG would free India's existing capacity to produce highly enriched uranium and plutonium for its nuclear weapons program...Under the deal, India shall... have the capability to produce 50 warheads a year."⁴² The nuclear deal, if remain unchecked, could allow

India to make qualitative and quantitative improvement in its nuclear arsenal, that may trigger a possible nuclear arms competition in the region.

Non-proliferation experts have been consistent in their opposition to the nuclear deal, believing it will significantly damage the global non-proliferation regime and facilitate an Asian nuclear arms race. Some have asserted that the text of the 123 Agreement⁴³ disregards the legislative intent of the Hyde Act, especially in the area of continued supplies of nuclear fuel to India even if that country tests a nuclear weapons and the agreement is terminated. Others warn that NSG endorsement of an exception for India will “virtually ensure the demise of global nuclear export restraints.”⁴⁴ A January 2008 letter to NSG officials endorsed by more than 130 non-proliferation experts and nongovernmental organizations argued that India’s commitments thus far did not justify making “far-reaching” exceptions to international non-proliferation rules and norms. The document asked that NSG members consider the potential costs of granting to India any special safeguards exceptions and urged the body to make clear that all nuclear trade with India would cease upon that country’s resumption of nuclear testing for any reason.⁴⁵

By doing nothing to constrain India’s capacity and will to expand its nuclear arsenal and by hinting that a more robust Indian arsenal can help balance China’s power, the US sends an inflationary signal to the global marketplace. Indeed, the signal is stronger to the degree that Washington is rewarding India by removing all long standing policies that penalize states acquiring nuclear weapons.⁴⁶ India and China are both looking to create hegemony over overlapping regions. While China’s stature has already started to peg the world’s super power against it, India has chosen to play on this rivalry to develop its own stake in a relationship with the US. The Indo-US deal clearly spells trouble for China. While the official Chinese reaction to the deal was mellow, it is certainly in Beijing’s interest to undermine the development. China is as worried as anyone on the possibility of the nuclear deal benefiting India in its military program and would look to avoid any such possibility, even if it is not an immediate threat.⁴⁷

Indo-US defence and security cooperation

Indo-US defence cooperation gained momentum with the “Kicklighter Proposals,” a seminal document that propelled defence relations.⁴⁸ These proposals reversed the negative pattern of previous years, during which India did not enjoy substantive cooperation with the US. A further step forward was taken in January 1995 with the signing of the “Agreed

Minutes on Defence Relations” between the two governments.⁴⁹ The Indo-US military-to-military relationship has been driven by the Defence Policy Group (DPG), which is the highest body for determining the defence relationship between the two nations and the forum for discussions on issues of mutual interest. The DPG sets the policy, gives directions for the military relationship, and approves events and other recommendations brought to its notice by sub-groups such as the Military Cooperation Group (MCG); the Security Cooperation Group, responsible for all aspects of weapon and equipment; the Senior Technology Security Group responsible for technology security and transfer; the Security Technology Group, responsible for research and development; and the recently constituted Defence Procurement & Production Group. On behalf of the US, Pacific Command (PACOM) became the executive agent for coordination of service-specific agenda. On the Indian side these responsibilities are handled by the Army HQ and Integrated Defence HQ. Nowhere is the engagement between the two countries more visible than in defence and military related fields.⁵⁰

Arms sales to India

The part of the April, 2001 agenda pertaining to arms sales and technology transfer may arguably be the most critical part of the agenda as far as Indian elites are concerned. Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes during his visit to Washington in 2001 requested:

- Land, sea, and air-based communication and surveillance platforms and systems;
- Testing facilities for land, sea, and air-based weapons, avionics,
- electronic warfare equipment, and radar;
- Small arms and other infantry gear;
- Testing equipment for defence research programs, including command and control weapons and laser weapons;
- Air defence network management; and,
- Current and future training concepts.⁵¹

Other Indian assessments confirm the great importance that India attaches to transfer of civil and defence technology, including technologies for missile defences, as a critical and essential element in any partnership with America.⁵²

The list of weapons systems that US companies want to sell to India is long, but big-ticket items include a fleet of maritime reconnaissance aircraft (MRA) for the Indian Navy, sophisticated air defence and air

traffic control systems, and short-haul cargo planes. Coproduction has long been a key Indian requirement for major equipment purchases, but one that the US has not previously been willing to license. Companies that have received request for proposals from the Indian government include Lockheed, for a variant of its famous F-16 jet, and Boeing, for the F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet, which it currently produces for the US Navy. Indeed, in August 2003, the Pentagon showed its approval for sale of the *Orion* and for a “deep submarine rescue vehicle,” and for intelligence equipment and sensors that would allow India to monitor passage through Kashmir.⁵³

American officials and analysts already talk about the extensive modernization of the Indian defence forces. The US has aggressively pursued extensive defence and security cooperation with India.⁵⁴ These extensive defence policy initiatives culminated in the June 2005 signing of a 10-year defence pact that facilitates even further cooperation in such areas as multilateral operations; defence trade, including technology transfers and co-production; missile defence collaboration; and the establishment of a Defence Procurement and Production Group.⁵⁵ The document emphasizes the importance of defence trade as a means to “reinforce the strategic partnership” and “achieve greater interaction between our two armed forces.”⁵⁶

In March 2005, the US government made clear that the policy environment had shifted, and US bidders would be permitted to offer coproduction in India as part of its sales package. US defence contractors like Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Lockheed Martin are eyeing the Indian market with interest. India has begun to purchase US military platforms for the first time in six decades. The acquisition of the USS *Trenton* in 2007, and Six C-130J aircrafts are merely appetizers for what could turn out to be massive defence industrial cooperation.⁵⁷

The bilateral arms sales relationship has blossomed encompassing highly capable systems that could affect regional power balances. The US authorized Israel to sell to India the Phalcon airborne early-warning system, after pressuring Israel not to sell the same item to China only a few years earlier.⁵⁸ Regarding Indian military acquisitions from other countries, the US attitude is, “India was a free country and as such it was free to acquire defence systems from any country.”⁵⁹ India has maintained a pattern of dual supply: the bulk of the aircraft come from Russia, but the cutting-edge component is supplied from the West. Old Soviet equipment from Russia is value-for-money in India. It relies on foreign assistance for key missile technologies, where it lacks engineering or production expertise. India also continues to modernize its armed forces through

advanced conventional weapons, mostly from Russia. The US no longer views its relationship with India primarily through the prism of its relations with other countries in the region. Given the improvement in US-Russian relations, the US now appears to have no objections to Russia being India's largest supplier of military hardware.⁶⁰

US policymakers have indicated they would be willing to discuss sales of “transformative” capabilities in such areas as command and control, early warning, and missile defence.⁶¹ The latter are all items that China has long sought from the US with minimal success. In March 2009, President Barack Obama's administration has cleared a \$2.1 billion sale to India of eight Boeing Co P-8I maritime patrol aircraft. It was the largest US arms transfer to India.⁶²

Indo-US space cooperation and ballistic missiles

India's wish list from the US regarding civilian and dual use technology transfer is equally expansive. At a July 2003 meeting of the US-India High Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG), a group that brings together private business and governmental officials, a discussion of specific proposals for joint development in defence technology included the following items: Communications systems, including multiplexer and frequency hopping systems, satellite networks, information security, encryption technologies and solutions; minesweeper technology; shipbuilding; combat aircraft; development of precision guided munitions, including laser guided munitions; nanotechnology; UAV technology and associated sensors; data links for airborne and vehicular surveillance platforms; software development; manufacture of electronic components; test equipment; tanks and armoured vehicles, missiles, rockets, and launchers; radar and sonar systems; air defence systems; torpedoes and mines; and small arms and guns.⁶³

India is today seen to maintain one of the worlds' most advanced space programs. In July 2005 joint statement, the US and India committed themselves to “build closer ties in space exploration, satellite navigation and launch and in the commercial space arena”. President Bush agrees to cooperate with India on “satellite navigation and launch.”⁶⁴ Although SLV's has civilian uses but embody hardware and technology that are interchangeable with military applications. India has demonstrated this interchange-ability with space launch vehicles. The reports consistently state that India's ICBM will be derived from its Space Launch Vehicle (SLV'S) technology.

The Indian ICBM *Surya* will have the option of a nuclear payload—and sometimes the claim is made that the payload will consist of multiple nuclear warheads. Reports generally agree that the *Surya* will be a three-stage missile with the first two *Surya* stages derived from PSLV's solid-fuel rockets.⁶⁵ The third *Surya* stage is to use liquid fuel and will be derived either from the *Viking* rocket technology supplied by France in the 1980s (called *Vikas* when India manufactured PSLV stages with the technology) or from a more powerful Russian-supplied technology which is an adaptation of the PSLV. If—as is most frequently reported—the *Surya* uses PSLV rocket motors, it will be an enormous rocket with solid-fuel stages 2.8 meters (about nine feet) in diameter and a total weight of up to 275 metric tons. This will make it by far the largest ICBM in the world—with a launch weight about three times that of the largest US or Russian ICBMs. Indian commentators generally cite two reasons for acquiring an ICBM: To establish India as a global power, and to enable India to deal with “high-tech aggression”.⁶⁶

US space cooperation would facilitate India's final steps toward an ICBM. Although Indo-US space cooperation would be for civil purposes but it is not possible to separate India's “civilian” space launch programme from India's military programme. The US has a policy against missile proliferation, but the policy has not been in place as long as the Indian missile program. Nor has the policy been applied consistently. The common thread in these developments is that the US clarity about the relationship between space launch vehicles and missile proliferation appears close to being obscured in the case of India.⁶⁷ India is likely to test the ICBM Agni-5 in 2011. It will be the first canister ballistic missile with range of over 5,000 km. Missiles which are capable of being launched from canisters can be fired from multiple platforms and are easily transportable. It could bring possible military targets in the whole of China and Pakistan within striking range.⁶⁸

Indo-US strategic cooperation in Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is home to many choke points, such as the Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca, Lombok and the Sunda Straits. Any disruption in traffic flow through these points can have disastrous consequences. The disruption of energy flows in particular is a considerable security concern for littoral states, as a majority of their energy lifelines are sea-based. Since energy is critical in influencing the geo-political strategies of a nation, any turbulence in its supply has serious security consequences. Given the spiralling demand for energy from India and China it is inevitable that these countries are sensitive to the security

of the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and choke points of the region.⁶⁹

The US has increasing strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, which connects the oil-rich Persian Gulf with growing energy markets in East Asia. From a geopolitical perspective, the Subcontinent and Indian Ocean connect Washington's European-Atlantic strategy with its Asia-Pacific strategy. The two were disjointed in the Cold War and in the early years after the end

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of the Cold War, but as the US began to contemplate the need for a new European-Asian strategy to deal with potential threats stemming from the uncertain futures China, it was India that could play a key role in this new strategy.⁷⁰ According to former Secretary of State Collin Powell, "India has the potential to help keep the peace in the vast Indian Ocean and its periphery."⁷¹

India's new Maritime Doctrine, published by its navy in April 2004, sets an ambitious course for India's navy meant in part to deal with "extra-regional powers" operating from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Strait. India has in mind both sea denial and, over time, blue water capabilities. It announced plans to purchase six French *Scorpene* diesel electric submarines and build six more in India, is negotiating with Russia for the transfer of another aircraft carrier, and announced plans to equip some of its surface destroyers with *Brhamos* antiship cruise missiles.⁷² The US is also actively expanding, diversifying and bolstering its bases in Asia so as to move them closer to China while at the same time reducing their vulnerability to attack. The US Navy has accelerated its schedule for building its next generation of cruisers by seven years and is considering smaller, anti-submarine vessels. As a response to the rising prowess of China in the Pacific, the US has started adjusting its defence strategy and force posture to deal with the rising dragon in Asia.⁷³

The 2005 security agreement comes in the backdrop of a series of military and counterinsurgency exercises that are building confidence between the service branches of both countries. From basic manoeuvres, such as joint naval patrols from the Arabian Sea to the Straits of Malacca in the six months after 9/11, exercises and operations are increasing in size, intensity, and complexity as the defence relationship grows. Exercise Malabar, the 2005 version of an annual joint exercise between the Indian

and US navies, saw the use of a sensitive communication system and frontline warships, including the nuclear-powered super carrier USS Nimitz of the US Navy and INS Viraat, India's sole aircraft carrier. *Cope India* in 2006 was the largest bilateral air exercise in 40 years. Both the states are conducting these exercises each year regularly. The *Malabar* naval exercise also demonstrates shared Indian and American concern in keeping the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and its choke points open to international shipping.⁷⁴

The India-US strategic partnership is at one level a reflection of the desire of both countries to maintain a stable balance of power in Asia. As Fareed Zakaria has written, criticizing demands that India be made to cap its nuclear arsenal as part of the deal, "It has been American policy for decades to oppose the rise of a single hegemonic power in either Europe or Asia. If India were forced to halt its plutonium production, the result would be that China would become the dominant nuclear power in Asia. Why is this in American interests? Should we not prefer a circumstance where there is some balance between the major powers on that vast continent?"⁷⁵

The United State and India is now charting a new course in the Asian balance-of-power politics by getting closer to each other in recent years. During his trip to India, President Bush claimed that the US and India are "closer than ever before and this partnership has the power to transform the world."⁷⁶

Indo-US strategic partnership: impacts on China

The emerging US-India partnership has the potential to influence the course of events within Asia in the 21st century.⁷⁷ Chinese President Hu pointed out the anxieties about US encirclement of China. He said,

"The United States had strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened the US-Japanese military alliance, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, and increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the east, south, and west. This makes a great change in our geopolitical environment."⁷⁸

China is encountering many new circumstances and new issues in maintaining security and stability within its borders. Separatist forces working for "Taiwan independence" and "Tibet independence" pose

threats to China's unity and security. Impact of uncertainties and destabilizing factors in China's outside security environment on national security and development is growing. In particular, the US continues to sell arms to Taiwan in violation of the principles established in the three Sino-US joint communiqués, causing serious harm to Sino-US relations as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits.⁷⁹

The United States: hegemonic threat to China

Several of China's leading America scholar's writings describe the US intentions of hegemony. Liu Jianfei, Professor in CPC Central Party School said that "The core content of US global strategy since the 20th century has been to establish and consolidate its world leadership status, or in other words, to contend for and maintain its world hegemony status."⁸⁰ Ruan Zongze, Deputy Director China Institute of International Studies opined that "By analyzing the words and deeds of America's political leaders as well as the trends in the news media, we see that the United States has made the maintenance of its hegemony the goal of its global strategy now and for a long time to come."⁸¹ Similarly, Jin Canrong, Vice President and Professor at Chinese People's University said that, "Generally speaking, the national strategic goal of the post-Cold War United States has been relatively stable, that is, to maintain the US "world leadership status" for as long as possible."⁸² Chinese officials and analysts affirm US hegemony by pointing to three themes in US policy: US efforts to encourage the peaceful evolution of China's political system toward democratization, China's further integration into an international system heavily influenced by US rules, and Washington's use of its alliances to contain China and prevent reunification with Taiwan.⁸³

China and Ballistic Missile Defences

China was unprepared for the sudden shift in US priorities regarding BMD (Ballistic Missile Defence) when a decision by the Congress, supported by President Bill Clinton, declared that the US would field a National Missile Defence (NMD) as soon as possible. In January 1999, Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen announced that the US would pursue deployment of both TMD (Theatre Missile Defence) and NMD.⁸⁴ The US has chosen to withdraw from the 30 year Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with Russia which will allow it to develop and produce a TMD.

China was presented with a much larger set of BMD challenges. The first was that BMD poses a direct threat to the viability of China's nuclear deterrent. Chinese government officials, military analysts, and others

remained unconvinced by US assurances about the limited scope of national missile defence. Instead, they maintained that NMD, no matter how limited, would undermine China's retaliatory capability. Zhu Mingquan of Fudan University, for example, wrote that "with the deployment of a NMD system in the US...China will lose the very limited capability to deter the US from inflicting a first strike on it."⁸⁵ Another Chinese academic, Li Bin of Tsinghua University, asserted that deterrence would be compromised once American policymakers *believed* that NMD could defend the US against a Chinese nuclear attack, even if it could not actually do so."⁸⁶

The second main argument was that BMD would undermine the international arms control regime and strategic stability. As a start, the Chinese government rejected the claim that US efforts to develop and deploy missile defence were permitted under the ABM Treaty. Former Ambassador Sha repeatedly stated that missile defence violated both the intent and core provisions of the treaty.⁸⁷ These charges were echoed by President Jiang Zemin in a July 2000 joint statement with Russian President Vladimir Putin and by Premier Zhu Rhongji at a March 2001 press conference. Chinese officials argued further that the ABM Treaty was essential to maintaining strategic stability and that modifying the treaty would be highly destabilizing. For example, in a June 1999 article President Jiang warned that;

".....revision of, or even withdrawal from, the existing disarmament treaties, would inevitably exert a negative impact on international security and stability, triggering new arms races and obstructing disarmament and non-proliferation efforts."⁸⁸

By violating the ABM Treaty, missile defence would undermine the global arms control regime and threaten international security. The third main argument was that missile defence would stall nuclear disarmament, fuel the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles, and spark an arms race in outer space. Chinese arms control experts argued that Russia and other nuclear powers would become reluctant to pursue further reductions in their arsenals and instead seek to expand their offensive capabilities. The resulting lack of progress toward nuclear disarmament would in turn increase the danger of nuclear proliferation.⁸⁹

As a Chinese military analyst noted,

"The US, like any other country, is entitled to security. But its interfering nature makes it difficult to allow the US the absolute security it seeks. The more secure the US is, the more insecure the rest of the world

feels...When the US threatens the security of other countries, and then there is a need to challenge the US security system which has missile defence as a crucial component.”⁹⁰

The transfer of TMD to Taiwan or inclusion of Taiwan in BMD would constitute a grave violation of Chinese sovereignty and gross interference in its internal affairs. Such cooperation would amount to a *de facto* military alliance between the US and Taiwan and would enable Taiwan to directly threaten the air-space security over the Taiwan Straits and China’s mainland. According to Chinese analysts, cooperation between the US and India

The eventuality of US TMD has the potential to decrease the credibility of both types of weapons for which China has paid so much. TMD threatens China’s quest to become recognized a regional superpower.

and the enhanced alliance it seemed to promise would endanger regional security in several ways. The two countries, would seek to establish military superiority in Asia. The US would attempt to dominate Asia as it did Europe through NATO. Ballistic Missile Defence and an upgraded alliance would fuel tension and precipitate a new arms race among countries in the region. Missile defence would only exacerbate the demonstrated US proclivity toward unilateralism and the use of force and would have a destabilizing effect on the international system.⁹¹

Chinese experts and policymakers have sometimes suggested that if BMD is inevitable, then the US should go about it in a way that minimizes its destabilizing implications. For example, the deployment by Japan of sea-based systems is seen in China as more destabilizing than the deployment of ground-based systems, as this suggests the possibility that those systems would be deployed to protect Taiwan in time of crisis or war. As another example, the deployment by the US of space-based boost-phase interceptors is seen in China as more destabilizing than the deployment of ground-based interceptors in the continental US, as the latter can more easily be overwhelmed by Chinese responses.⁹²

In 2010, US issued “Ballistic Missile Review” report that stated: China is one of the countries most vocal about US ballistic missile defences and their strategic implications, and its leaders have expressed concern that such defences might negate China’s strategic deterrent.⁹³ The People's Republic of China (PRC) seeks to become the dominant power in the Asian Pacific region through the acquisition of advanced technology and weapons systems. The eventuality of US TMD has the potential to

decrease the credibility of both types of weapons for which China has paid so much. TMD threatens China's quest to become recognized a regional superpower. The Chinese government voiced its opinion against US ballistic missile defence plans. PRC believes that BMD was a direct threat to the viability of China's nuclear deterrent; threatening also to strategic stability, not least by undermining the arms control regime. BMD was seen as likely to reverse the progress of the previous decade in deescalating the arms race and indeed could spark nuclear and missile proliferation and an arms race in outer space. It was criticized as contributing to the consolidation of American global hegemony. There were a set of arguments about BMD and Asia-Pacific security: BMD would aggravate the Taiwan issue, transform Japan's role, and deepen US engagement at a time that China wanted it to attenuate.⁹⁴

Threats from India to China

The Indian economy has grown at a rapid clip (albeit not as rapidly as China's) allowing an increasingly confident Indian government to yoke hard power, measured in ships, aircraft, and weapons systems, to a foreign policy aimed at primacy in the Southern Asia/Indian Ocean region.⁹⁵ If intervention in regional disputes or the internal affairs of South Asian states is necessary, imply Indian leaders, India should do the intervening rather than allow outsiders any pretext for doing so. In 2004, New Delhi issued *India's Maritime Doctrine* its first public analysis of the India's geographic location and of strategic realities. It stated;

“By virtue of our geography, we are...in a position to greatly influence the movement/security of shipping along the SLOC's (Sea Lanes of Communications) in the [Indian Ocean Region] provided we have the maritime power to do so. Control of the choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game, where the currency of military power remains a stark reality.”⁹⁶

The People's Republic of China is concerned that the Indo-US Relations and related agreements would bring a major shift in the balance of power in South Asia-Indian Ocean Region. China's Asia strategy is based upon the premise that maritime powers such as the US, Japan, Australia, and India would eventually form an informal quadrilateral alliance to countervail continental China. According to the China's White Paper (2008) the Objective of China's leaders was and is to adopt a set of enduring strategic priorities, which include sustaining economic growth and development, maintaining domestic political stability, defending China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and securing China's

status as a great power.⁹⁷ It has got a setback with the introduction of Indo-US partnership.

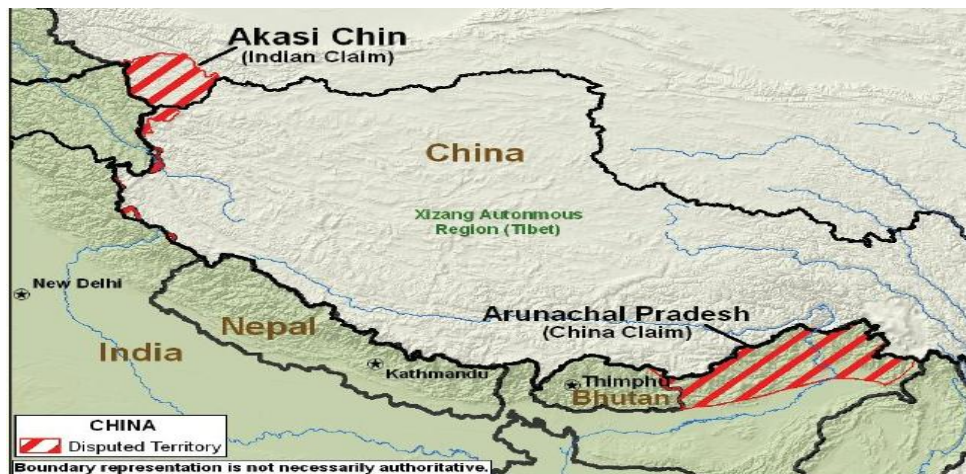
Tibetan issue and border disputes

From the Chinese perspective, it is indisputable that “Tibet is pan of China” and has been for many hundreds of years. Yet, in spite of this “indisputable fact”, Indian leaders attempted to prevent China from effecting military occupation of Tibet in 1950-51, and then insisted (until 1954) on asserting certain special rights in Tibet established by the British imperialists. Then, starting in the mid-1950s, India worked to weaken and undermine Chinese authority in Tibet. Such Indian efforts involved complicity with US covert operations to support the Tibetan resistance and support for a large community of Tibetan refugees in India.⁹⁸

Tibet was the fundamental cause of the 1962 war.⁹⁹ The aim of Indian policy prior to the 1962 war was to expel Chinese authority from Tibet, thereby transforming Tibet into a buffer zone between China and India. After the 1962 war, India cooperated even more closely with US covert operations in Tibet. From 1960 to 2002, the Indian government allowed the Dalai Lama to organize and maintain quasi-governmental organs in India, thus maintaining the Tibetan exile community in India as a base of operations for “anti-China activities.” New Delhi also makes it possible for the Dalai Lama and his officials to travel abroad (by issuing the requisite documents) in order to keep the Tibetan issue before the world community. Again, from the Chinese perspective, India long had aspirations of undermining Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. Following the 1962 war, India also organized several Tibetan military organizations (the ITBP and SFF) operating under Indian command and with Indian training, arms, and support.¹⁰⁰

The argument here *is not* that apprehension over possible Indian actions to topple Chinese rule over Tibet is currently pressing or high-ranking Chinese concern. The argument is, rather, that throughout history Beijing's rule over Tibet has been highly problematic and has faced severe challenges. In considering Chinese apprehensions about Tibet, it is important to understand that post-Mao economic and political liberalization in that region led not to greater Tibetan acceptance of China's rule, but to a renewal of active Tibetan opposition parallel with the renewal of Tibetan resistance came the revival of acute international attention to Tibet among western human rights activism. It has lead to the negative image projection of China.¹⁰¹

Figure 1: China's territorial dispute with India



Source: Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008, available at www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Report_08.pdf, (accessed on 19th May 2009).

In its new war doctrine India stated that it is preparing for a possible “two-front war” with China and Pakistan.¹⁰² China remains concerned with persistent disputes along China's shared border with India and the strategic ramifications of India's rising economic, political, and military power. Despite of the border settlement agreements both the states have made only small gains in narrowing their differences over the alignment of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) stretch in the former's central sector, covering the Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh boundaries with Tibet. With China insisting on the return of Tawang on religious, cultural, and historical grounds, Indians are urging the return of the sacred Mount Kailash-Mansarovar in Tibet, since it is a sacred religious place associated with the Hindu religion.¹⁰³

The LAC demarcation is vital if both nations are to facilitate cross-border trade and road communications, especially across Ladakh and Xinjiang, Sikkim, West Bengal and the rest of northeast India. A new potentially divisive issue for the future appears to be the ecological impact on the Indian subcontinent of Chinese plans to divert the rivers of Tibet for irrigation purposes in China. There looms a potential conflict over depleting water reserves between the two countries. Even if the territorial dispute were somehow resolved, India and China would still compete over energy resources, markets and for geostrategic reasons.¹⁰⁴

China's strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean¹⁰⁵

Alfred Thayer Mahan once said that, "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty-first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters."¹⁰⁶

The paramount concern animating Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean is energy security. The nation's energy use has more than doubled over the past two decades, exacerbating its dependency on energy imports. China's National Energy Administration (NEA) said country's crude oil import dependence in 2009 reached 51.29 percent, exceeding the warning line of 50 percent for the first time. The country's oil consumption expanded by 6.78% each year on average in the period from 2000 to 2009. In the same period, dependence on imported oil surged from 24.8% to 51.29%. Oil imports increased from 59.69 million tons to 199 million tons in the period from 2000 to 2009. Chinese demand for crude oil is expected to increase in the future and that China's oil output is declining.¹⁰⁷

Energy security has compelled Beijing to cast anxious eyes on the sea lines of communication passage through the waterways stretching from China's coastlines to the Indian Ocean. India is the dominant power in the Indian Ocean region, and, given its great-power potential, it could very well rise to become a peer competitor of China over the long term. Given these dynamics, any Chinese attempt to control events in India's geographic vicinity would doubtless meet with Indian countermeasures. The Chinese recognize that India's energy needs, which resemble China's own, could impel New Delhi into zero-sum competition at sea.¹⁰⁸

Zhao Yuncheng, an expert from China's Institute of Contemporary International Relations, went even further and suggested that whoever controls the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean could threaten China's oil supply route. His conclusions were echoed by President Hu Jiantao who said that the "Malacca-dilemma" is the key to China's energy security. Hu hinted that several powers (the US included) have tried to enlarge their scope of influence in the Straits of Malacca by controlling or attempting to control navigation in the Straits of Malacca.¹⁰⁹

Zhu Fenggang, postulates that Indian maritime strategy envisions aggressively extending naval missions from coastal to blue-water expanses. For Zhu, New Delhi's objectives include, in ascending order: (1) homeland defence, coastal defence, and control over maritime economic zones; (2) control of the waters adjacent to neighbouring littoral

states; (3) unfettered control of the seas stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to the Malacca Strait in peacetime, and the capacity to blockade these chokepoints effectively in wartime; and (4) the construction of a balanced oceangoing fleet able to project power into the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Cape of Good Hope and into the Pacific by way of the South China Sea.¹¹⁰

The Chinese have devoted substantial attention to the security dilemma posed by the US Navy's dominance of the high seas stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. They worry, understandably, that American naval prowess will hold China's sea-dependent economy hostage in times of crisis. In particular, the Malacca Strait, the maritime portal for virtually all of China's Persian Gulf oil, preoccupies Chinese thinking.¹¹¹ From the perspective of international strategy, the Straits of Malacca is without question a crucial sea route that will enable the US to seize geopolitical superiority, restrict the rise of major powers, and control the flow of the world's energy. It is no exaggeration to say that whoever controls the Strait of Malacca will also have a stranglehold on the energy route of China. Excessive reliance on this strait has brought an important potential threat to China's energy security.¹¹²

Figure 2: China's critical sea lanes of communications



Source: Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008, available at www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Report_08.pdf (accessed on 19th May 2009).

As China seeks to overcome its geographic weakness in the Indian Ocean, it runs headlong into India which is determined to keep out extra-regional powers that it deems hostile. This fundamental tension between the maritime strategies of the two nations has become acute, as both China and India rise, and seek strong and powerful navies as necessary instruments in the protection of their growing interests far from their shores. President Hu had insisted at the end of 2006 that China must ‘build a powerful people’s navy that can adapt to its historical mission during a new century and a new period.’¹¹³ Former India’s Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta has argued that India must pursue its “manifest destiny” by becoming a strong maritime power.¹¹⁴

Some Chinese strategists consider the Indian Ocean an arena in which the US will strive to contain Beijing’s broader aspirations. An editorial in *Ming Pao* portrays recent US overtures toward India as part of a diplomatic strategy animated by the calculation that “whichever country controls the Indian Ocean controls Asia.”

Observe the editors:

“Oil is shipped from the Gulf via the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca to China, Korea, and Japan. If another [power] holds the lifeline, the three oil-importing countries will suffer severe blows. Because [the U.S.] strategy is to hold sway over the “oil route,” the US has in recent years showered attentions on India, Vietnam, and Singapore, all of which lie on that route.”¹¹⁵

China’s fast-paced economic growth and the strengthening of its defensive capabilities placed in a position to challenge the US’s global leadership in the future - the only country with the capability to do so after the demise of the Soviet Union. The latent competition for global leadership would likely see the US adopting strategies to curtail China’s challenge in the East Asian region. This would include controlling vital sea-lines of communication (SLOC) and strategic maritime chokepoints such as the Straits of Malacca thus indirectly controlling the movement of raw materials and goods to China.¹¹⁶

Chinese thinkers appraise Washington’s military realignment in the Asia-Pacific region in stark geopolitical terms. Applying the “defence perimeter of the Pacific” logic elaborated by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in the early Cold War, Chinese analysts see their nation enclosed by concentric, layered island chains. The US and its allies can “encircle” China, “squeeze[e] China’s strategic space,” or “blockade the Asian

mainland (China in particular)” from island strongholds where powerful naval expeditionary forces are based.¹¹⁷

According to some realist analysts, China’s relations with the IOR (Indian Ocean Region) littoral states provide clues about the intensification of Sino-Indian rivalry and perhaps, herein lies the real reason why the US wants to bolster its presence in the Straits of Malacca. If this is the situation, then it is not impossible to envisage a future “worst-case-scenario” where the US would use the threat of terrorism and piracy or both to instigate an inspection regime that would also have the effect of limiting China’s access to oil, other raw materials, technology and industrial equipment.¹¹⁸

China’s approach to Indo-US strategic partnership

Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.

*Sun Tzu*¹¹⁹

In a paper, Yang Jiemen, Vice President, Shanghai Institute of International Studies, while analyzing China’s foreign policy made following major observations.¹²⁰

- China is now in a delicate, sensitive and painful period of transition.
- China needs to maintain stable foreign relations while going through a learning curve
- In the short and mid-term China would pay special attention to improving its relations with developed countries, particularly US and with it, its neighbouring countries
- These two aspects of China’s external relations are of great significance to nurturing a favourable external condition for the modernization program and building a well-off society in an all round way by 2020
- Adopting a low-cost and low-risk foreign policy would seem to be in China’s best fundamental national interests.

It can be deduced that China would try to restrain impulsive foreign policy decisions and is pragmatic in dealing with the new strategic realities. China places great emphasis on both strengthening its own security and on demonstrating its commitment to international security cooperation.¹²¹

Beijing has enhanced its bilateral diplomacy and involvement in multilateral organizations to develop bilateral diplomatic and security partnerships and, multilaterally, to create norms and structures that facilitate this strategy. Although an imperfect analogy, China's policies in Asia are in some ways a reflection of US efforts to bind and engage China over the last two decades. To some extent, Beijing may be playing Washington's own game against it in the region by preclude Washington from constraining China by implicitly binding the US as much as possible.¹²²

China's military modernization

There are many fold reasons that are driving Beijing military modernization and missiles up-gradation program. One is the need to maintain a credible second-strike capability, a need that has only grown more pronounced the more concerned China has become about the American hegemony. A second is the interest in stability, again, an interest grown more pronounced as the changes in global power distribution have unfolded over the last decade or two. The third is the preparation of military-technical counters to BMD and to shifts in the US-PRC strategic relationship beyond those driven by BMD alone. As China modernizes its strategic forces, quantitative and qualitative choices bearing on the future operational characteristics of those forces are certain to reflect thinking about the requirements of strategic sufficiency in the face of shifting US capabilities.¹²³

Beijing announced a 7.5 percent increase in its defence budget in 2010, continuing years of double-digit growth that have made it the largest military spender in the world after the US.

China's economic transformation has given it the capability to become a major military power with China spending as much as \$77.9 billion a year on its military. Beijing announced a 7.5 percent increase in its defence budget in 2010, continuing years of double-digit growth that have made it the largest military spender in the world after the US.¹²⁴ This budget does not include the cost of new weapon purchases, research or other big-ticket items for China's highly secretive military and as a result, the real figure may be much higher than the revealed amount. China's military may or may not be able to take on the US in the next few years but it will surely become the most dominant force in Asia. According to authoritative sources, China is set to overtake Japan in the next decade to become Asia's major regional military power.¹²⁵

Table 1: Top 6 countries with highest military expenditure

| Rank | Country | 2009 Spending (\$ bn.) | Share of 2008 GDP (%) | World Share (%) |
|------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| — | World Total | 1531 | 2.7 | 100 |
| 1 | United States | 661 | 4.3 | 43 |
| 2 | China | 100 | 2.0 | 6.6 |
| 3 | France | 63.9 | 2.3 | 4.2 |
| 4 | United Kingdom | 58.3 | 2.5 | 3.8 |
| 5 | Russia | 53.3 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| 6 | Japan | 51.0 | 0.9 | 3.3 |

Source: *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2010* using current market exchange rates in US dollars, available at <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook2010>, (accessed on 16th July 2010).

The scope of current People's Liberation Army (PLA) efforts encompasses modernizing doctrine, force structure, and training/education in a unique convergence seldom seen in PLA history. This internal balancing against the US is best reflected in the PLA's heavy focus on acquiring advanced airborne, naval, missile, and command and control capabilities for area denial, precision strike, and information dominance. These force modernization developments are uniquely aimed at complicating US military operations in the East Asian littoral and at imposing greater costs on US naval and air force assets in a conflict over Taiwan.¹²⁶

China's military is developing longer-range ballistic and anti-ship missiles that could help Beijing secure resources or settle territorial disputes. Chinese ships, including a Chinese navy vessel, confronted an unarmed US Navy surveillance ship in the South China Sea in international waters. The confrontation prompted the US to move a destroyer ship to the area to protect the surveillance vessel notes the importance China puts on controlling its waterways and the surrounding territories because "China's economic and political power is contingent upon access to and use of the sea, and that a strong navy is required to safeguard such access."¹²⁷

China's Nuclear Capabilities

China has never publicly discussed its nuclear doctrine since it became a nuclear power in 1964. According to Iain Johnston, “for about 30 years after China exploded its first nuclear weapon there was no coherent, publicly articulated nuclear doctrine.”¹²⁸ It was only beginning in the 1980s that the Chinese military began to conduct strategic research and to link China's nuclear arsenal to its foreign policy and national security objectives. For decades, Chinese leaders often stated that China possessed nuclear weapons and their delivery means in order to prevent blackmail and coercion by the other nuclear powers, principally the US and the then-Soviet Union. This statement combined with the small and relatively unsophisticated nature of China's nuclear force structure has led most analysts to conclude that China subscribed to a policy of minimum deterrence, relying on counter-value targeting.¹²⁹

Although official Chinese policy has not changed, many China analysts are beginning to question China's long-term commitment to its policies of no-first-use and minimum deterrence after its force modernization programme. According to some foreign analysts, American military superiority, ballistic missile defence systems, instability on China's borders, and a desire to increase the credibility of its deterrent have all prompted China to re-evaluate its nuclear policy.¹³⁰

China's nuclear modernization is focused on improving the ability of its forces to survive an adversary's first strike and making its nuclear deterrence posture more credible.¹³¹ China is moving toward a much more survivable and thus more credible, strategic nuclear posture with the development of the road-mobile DF-31 and DF-31A ICBMs and the JL-2 SLBM. Beijing is also expanding its conventional missile capabilities, to include not only an increasingly potent SRBM force but also medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) that could threaten US aircraft carriers. According to General Jing Zhiyuan and General Peng Xiaofeng, Commander and Political Commissar of the SAC, the SAC has “achieved the great leap in development from a single core unit to a nuclear and conventional entity which gives equal attention to both.”¹³² Further improvements are still required, according to General Jing and General Peng, but as a result of the advances that have already been made, China's “strategic deterrence and actual combat capabilities have been vastly improved.”¹³³

China is modernizing its longer-range ballistic missile force by adding more survivable systems. Most notably, the road-mobile, solid-fuelled,

nuclear-capable DF-31 ICBM was deployed in 2006, and the longer-range DF-31A was deployed in 2007. The DF-31A, with a range of 11,200 km, can target any location in the continental US.¹³⁴ Indeed, the introduction of road-mobile strategic missiles and SSBNs will allow China to achieve a posture of “effective deterrence.” The modernization of Chinese nuclear forces and the transition from silo-based to road-mobile nuclear missiles and SSBNs might thus enhance strategic deterrence stability. Indeed, deterrence theory suggests that a more secure second-strike capability should enhance stability by causing both the US and China to behave much more cautiously.¹³⁵

Indeed, China has a long way to go before it can achieve a competent “limited deterrence” capability. It still needs to increase its total number of missiles, miniaturize its warheads, and make its missiles more mobile, accurate, and reliable. US Defence Department estimates have cast doubt upon China’s ability to pose such a threat, claiming in 2000 that the PLA had only deployed approximately 24 CSS-4 long-range missiles that are capable of hitting the US with warheads of up to 5 megatons. Moreover, some analysts believe that once the US deploys a national missile defence system, then the US nuclear deterrence strategy and nuclear strike capability will render China’s entire intercontinental nuclear threat.¹³⁶

The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report (NPR) expresses concern about Chinese military modernization, especially aspects of the development of its nuclear forces. As the NPR puts it, “the United States and China’s Asian neighbours remain concerned about the pace and scope of China’s current military modernization efforts, including its quantitative and qualitative modernization of its nuclear capabilities.”¹³⁷

China engages South Asia

China's primary interests in SA-IOR include gaining access to markets and raw materials in the region, preventing instabilities in South Asia from spilling over into China and preventing the region from emerging as a source of anti-China activities. In the *White Paper on China’s National Defence 2002* the Chinese government stressed on the “new concept of security” that features “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and collaboration” in pursuing relations with the South Asian countries.¹³⁸

China has done following activities in South Asia to counter contain Indo-US influence in the region.

- “Good Neighbourhood” and “Peaceful Co-existence”¹³⁹ as an external policy to conduct diplomatic relations with South Asia
- Secure the sea lanes of communication by growing People's Liberation Army (PLA) activity in the Indian Ocean, including construction of ports in friendly countries, establishment of electronic intelligence facilities and ship visits
- Covert and overt assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile efforts, plus assistance to the development of Pakistan's military and military-industrial capabilities
- Initiation of military relations including an arms supply and intelligence exchange relation with Nepal
- Initiation of dense relations with Myanmar, including military cooperation and deep involvement in the development of Myanmar's overland transport and maritime sectors;
- Cultivation of military relations with Bangladesh and
- Effort to entice Bhutan in to normal diplomatic relations”¹⁴⁰

The Chinese scholar, Hu Shisheng said:

“China believes that the core of South Asian security lies in a continuous reconciliation between India and Pakistan, and by the same token, the core of China's South Asia policy may also lie in a proper handling of its relations with the two neighbours. The balanced policy towards India and Pakistan is conducive in building more stable South Asia and guarantees the stability of Chinese frontiers. This balanced policy was eminent in Chinese neutral stance in Kargil conflict (1999) between India and Pakistan.”¹⁴¹

China's “String of Pearls” strategy in South Asian/Indian Ocean region

The fact that in the northern Indian Ocean exist the Persian Gulf and Central Asia where the most abundant estimated resources of oil and gas are located is sufficient to create "vital interests" for the great powers in the Indian Ocean. Mahan, the renowned naval strategist and scholar had said over a century ago, “Whosoever controls the Indian Ocean, dominates Asia. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided upon its waters.”¹⁴²

To protect Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean, over the past seventeen years China has gradually expanded its naval activity in that region. Parallel with this gradual accumulation of PLA-Navy experience with operations in the Indian Ocean, China facilitated the development of ports, harbours, maritime communications stations, and over-land

transportation links in friendly countries on the Indian Ocean littoral. This combined with investment in an elaborate rail and road infrastructure through South and Southeast Asia, are meant to provide China with an alternative to American dominated sea routes in delivering its oil and gas from the Persian Gulf back to Chinese ports on the East Coast.¹⁴³

China and Gwadar Port

In 2001, China began supporting construction of an equally ambitious maritime access project on India's western flank, in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. China has long been vying for access to this important waterway-most recently by building a deep-sea port in Gwadar, Pakistan, along the Arabian. A survey of regional views of the port suggests that the port's importance lies in its ability to connect vital Central Asian and Middle Eastern energy sources to world markets, to facilitate trade, and to project naval power in the Indian Ocean. This is the most likely quarter from which a threat to Indian maritime security could emanate over the long term. Pakistan has already indicated that it would be ready to provide base facilities to the Chinese Navy in the Gwadar port, thereby enabling China to "monitor US naval activity in the Persian Gulf, Indian activity in the Arabian Sea, and future US-Indian maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean."¹⁴⁴

The substantial economic and military potential of the port has propelled regional players to manoeuvre around each other by establishing trade links and engaging in development projects with other states, upgrading their own internal infrastructure, and expanding their naval capabilities. While this competition is currently in its incipient stages, it foreshadows the growing linkages amongst countries of South, Central and East Asia and the Middle East, who are breaking out of their regional bloc moulds and looking to the Indian Ocean as a critical venue of interaction. Pakistan and China clearly stands to benefit immensely from the successful operationalization of the port.¹⁴⁵

Chinese ports & electronics monitoring facility in Myanmar

China's assistance to Burma in constructing and improving port facilities on two islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea is significant as this can be used as a listening post to gather intelligence on Indian naval operations and as a forward base for future Chinese naval operations in the Indian Ocean. Throughout the 1990s, Chinese companies were involved in modernization or construction of a number of facilities along Myanmar's coasts in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.

Chinese companies undertook the modernization of harbour, wharf, and cargo handling facilities in a number of Myanmar cities, including Sittwe, Bassein, Mergui, and Yangon. Myanmar naval bases were located in several of these harbours, and the improved facilities were often dual use (i.e., both civilian and military).

Chinese companies also built radar and electronics monitoring facilities on number of Myanmar's Islands. PLA personnel periodically rotated through the Cocas facility, and electronic intelligence gathered by that facility was presumed to be shared by China and Myanmar. The facility on Zadetkyi Kyun was one of two earth satellite stations maintained by China outside of PRC borders. Myanmar is providing important electronic listening posts at several points in the Bay of Bengal / Strait of Malacca area. These electronic monitoring stations allow PLA to keep tabs on Indian military activity on and around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. China's increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean is of great strategic consequence for India even as India's traditional geographic advantages in the Indian Ocean are also increasingly at risk.¹⁴⁶

Sino-Pakistan strategic relations

China and Pakistan have enjoyed a solid strategic relationship since the 1960s. Pakistan's strategic significance is, nevertheless, priceless for China. Although a smaller nation, Pakistan rivals India in unconventional weapons. A strong Pakistan, and a solid strategic partnership between China and Pakistan, is the key elements of China's India constraining structure of power. The existence of a strong and hostile Pakistan is a major constraint on India. India is confronted with a two-front threat: Pakistan in the west and China in the north and northeast. This is the case regardless of Chinese intentions. The mere existence of powerful and potentially hostile military forces on India's northern borders (China) and western borders (Pakistan) means that India must divide its forces between those borders. It must maintain a guard against both, thereby weakening its ability to deal with either. Therefore, Pakistan has tied down 500,000 to 700,000 Indian troops in the Kashmir Valley for the past 15 years. By keeping hundreds of thousands of Indian troops engaged in Kashmir, Pakistan indirectly helps ease India's challenge to China's defences on their disputed border. The existence of this two-front threat to India helps Beijing minimize the danger of possible Indian intervention in Tibet.¹⁴⁷

Over the years, China has provided Pakistan with a wide range of major conventional weapons systems and the two countries have also developed a close partnership in various defence cooperation programs.

While this strategic relationship initially grew out of the mutual needs of China and Pakistan in countering the Soviet and Indian security threats, respectively, it continues to serve the two countries national security interests in the post-Cold War era. Pakistan relies on China as a trusted ally in dealing with India from a position of military weakness; Beijing values its close ties with Islamabad both to extend its influence to South Asia and to balance against India. Pakistan has also become a valued customer for Chinese arms. In South Asia, China also uses friendship with Pakistan as a strategic pressure point against the US. Given US concern about and emphasis on missile proliferation issues, Beijing has also found it useful to exploit them as bargaining leverage in dealing with Washington on issues important to China: US arms sales to Taiwan, Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) deployment in East Asia, among others.

China's interest in a strong Pakistan is manifested in the remarkable continuity of China's transfers of conventional arms to Pakistan in spite of the development of Sino-Indian rapprochement since the late 1980s. Pakistan China defence-related cooperation has always been the most important component of their overall bilateral relations. This fundamental reality explains China's support for Pakistan's military capabilities, which includes not only conventional weapons but its support for Pakistan's missile development efforts in the 1990s. As Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons, Beijing began helping Pakistan acquire ballistic missiles capable of delivering those nuclear weapons.¹⁴⁸ China is also striking the deal to build two reactors at Pakistan's Chashma nuclear plant. The proposed Chinese nuclear transfer to Pakistan follows a groundbreaking deal that the United States and India sealed two years ago which allows New Delhi to access US nuclear technology and fuel while retaining the right to pursue a military programme.¹⁴⁹

The tradition high-level exchange of visits for consultations between the armed forces of the two countries has provided sustenance to the bilateral relations, as the institution of armed forces plays a special role in political decision making. In recent years, a mechanism of defence and security consultation has been institutionalized between the two countries. In order to enhance military-to-military cooperation, China and Pakistan (2003), conducted a joint maritime search-and-rescue exercise near Shanghai. That was the first time for the navy of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to conduct an exercise with a foreign country.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

The US has adopted both cooperative and competitive policies toward China's rise in Asia. The US approach combines engagement, binding, and balancing mechanisms. US policies aim to bind China further into the existing international system of norms, rules, and institutions and to shape its evolving interests and values through bilateral and multilateral engagement. Yet, US also include implicitly competitive and potentially coercive policies that seek to discourage China from throwing its weight around the region.

China is confident that its rise upward cannot be stopped completely and US realizes this fact. Yet, China's rise is being witnessed at a time when India, Indonesia, Japan, and other traditional centres of power in Asia are resurgent and when a preponderant US still retains the ability to shape strategic outcomes.

China is confident that its rise upward cannot be stopped completely and US realizes this fact. Yet, China's rise is being witnessed at a time when India, Indonesia, Japan, and other traditional centres of power in Asia are resurgent and when a preponderant US still retains the ability to shape strategic outcomes. Washington is taking advantage of the natural fears of Chinese hegemony among China's neighbours to stabilize a new Asian balance as China rises. The US strategies of "Balance of Power" and "Security Dilemma" have become an important tendency for its China policy.

As China's power continues to grow in the coming decades, the problem for Washington will be how to stop Beijing not to embark on a course of hegemony, territorial expansion or confrontation with the US in Asia. The US concern is that China might, at some point in the coming decades, follow the course of Germany in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1930s or of Japan in the 1910s and 1930s. Supporting the emergence of a strong India is a way of creating an Asian structure of power that will constrain a rising China; making resort to aggression less likely. For India, the US appears to be the most probable ladder to its "dreams to greatness." This partnership will benefit India to secure US support by playing "China Card", or at least US understanding for strengthening India's pre-eminent position in the South Asian-Indian Ocean region via transfers of advanced military technologies, training in modern modes of warfare, and so on. New Delhi has also succeeded to secure US support for moves to counter China's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Stronger US support

for India would also be manifest in economic areas (access to the US market, US investment, etc.) or in support for India in the UN Security Council and other international fora. Aside from playing on US apprehensions of China's rising power, New Delhi may also be instrumental in working on a US desire to co-opt India into the US-led system of global power in order to secure stronger US support for Indian economic and military development.

Beijing's response to Washington's efforts to nurture India counterweights to Chinese power has been to pursue a Bismarckian policy of strengthening relations with key neighbours to prevent them from joining any US-led containment coalition. Chinese has enhanced its manifold activities in the South Asian region: assisting Pakistan's missile and nuclear programs, deploying powerful and offensive military forces to Tibet, road building in and visits by Chinese warships to Burma, Chinese naval interest in association with the new Pakistani port at Gwadar in western Baluchistan, etc. China's objective is to persuade India to disassociate itself from the US while allowing the Sino-Southern Asian relations to continue. The Chinese formulate this strategy in terms of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

While Sino-Indian bilateral relations have increased very fast, the fundamental contradictions between India and China are too apparent to permit any "strategic partnership". Apart from the differences over the border, on the expansion of the UN Security Council and different perspectives on establishing a favourable world order, the two countries exhibit a basic conflict of values, besides mutual suspicions and misperceptions. The perennial competition for power and influence in Asia will prevent India and China from coming together on a permanent basis. India and China are two major powers in Asia with global aspirations and significant conflicting interests. As a result friction in their bilateral relationship is inevitable. The geopolitical reality of Asia makes sure that it will be extremely difficult for *Hindi-Chini to be bhai-bhai (brothers)* in the foreseeable future. If India and China continue to rise in the next few years, a security competition between the two regional giants will be all but inevitable.

Even in the midst of cooperation, the US is not letting down its guard against China. For example, the US maintains its powerful military strength in Asia, collects intelligence about China and ignores Chinese sensitivities about sovereignty. Under such circumstances, if there were another event like the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7, 1999, or the mid-air collision between a US

surveillance aircraft and China's interceptor fighter jet on April 1, 2001, Sino-US relations could experience a major setback. During the administration of former US President Bill Clinton, the US and China had established a constructive, strategic partnership. But the bomb that fell on China's embassy in Belgrade destroyed that all at once.

Apart from China's efforts of cooperation the ritualized US criticism of the PRC's human rights practices probably reinforces the impression that the US seeks to undermine the current Chinese regime. Repeated instances of what the US regards as cheating or evasion on agreements intended to limit the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction give credence to the view that Chinese and US interests on this important issue do not truly coincide. And despite all that has been claimed for them, there is no guarantee that repeated contacts between US and Chinese leaders will build trust or make either side regard the other as less threatening. In nutshell the US is pursuing a grand design to shape new strategic balance in ways that preserve its interests in a pluralistic security order that is dominated by no one regional power and that aligns it increasingly closely with democratic and like-minded centres of strength in a rising Asia. The intense US fortification and expansion of its security relations with India in the last few years further reflect the above policy goals. The Indo-US defence and security cooperation can be explained as overtly competitive and solely directed at China. In this backdrop it could be inferred that Indo-US partnership has great implications on Chinese security calculus.

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