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**Policy Brief**

# **Pakistan and the New Asian Security Concept**

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## Summary

The Chinese president Xi Jinping presented the concept of New Asian Security, at the fourth summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). This is not a new concept as the previous Chinese regimes had been working on it since the 1990s; which envisions a regional security approach that emphasizes the role of Asian countries in dealing with their affairs instead of looking towards the West for solutions. The continent of Asia is fast emerging as the epicenter of the global political, economic and military power in unison with the progressive contraction of Western hold and ascendancy over global affairs. While the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may not emerge as The Asian Century, as many people may have believed; but it is an irrefutable fact that it will be Asia, not the West which would be in the box seat to usher in the global transformation. In this regard China, India and Japan can be viewed as serious contenders for global power status in the nascent New World Order.

## Introduction

The proposed concept of New Asian Security proposed by China has grounds in the strategy that highlights the priority of development in Asian while retaining regional security. According to the Chinese President, the Asian continent is a world of diversity, especially the Asia-Pacific region; in which mutual accommodation, mutual learning and larger cooperation can serve to achieve common progress and development of all nations. In this regard China, Japan and India are three leading countries in the region vying for enhanced role in the regional and global affairs, including a greater share of decision making authority in the governance of global bodies.

Mutual rivalry prevents the Asian powers from assuming regional leadership singly or collectively; therefore the crux of the new Asian security concept is to rise above one sided security outlook, and look for common security aims through mutually beneficial cooperation. It is a concept based on the principle of common interests, creating a positive environment for social progress and development to take place in the region. The current world scenario after the end of the cold war has become characterized by peaceful international relations, interdependence and growing world economy. Therefore, under the new conditions the

meaning of the security concept has also evolved and ranges from military and political to economic, science and technology, environment, culture and many other areas. The means to seek security are being diversified, according to the needs of each country and region, thus different powers have varying takes on the changing global landscape.

## **Pakistan**

China and Pakistan have a beneficial long standing strategic relationship, and their friendship has stood the test of times. Furthermore, both China's and Pakistan's security agendas also align with each other, and especially in the new Asian security setting both countries are important allies of each other. In the recent past Pakistan and China have also decided to increase the economic cooperation between the two countries which is also the underlying fact of the new Asian security agenda presented by the Chinese President; which focuses on increased cooperation between regional countries in order to increase their security. This new economic partnership is aimed at building of Pak-China Economic corridor extending from the Xinjiang province in China to Gwadar port in Pakistan. This corridor will be part of the new Silk Road Economic Belt, linking South East Asia with Central Asia and eventually Europe; will not only reap economic benefits for both countries but will also help to position China on the mouth of the Arabian Gulf. In this regard both countries signed a MOU for construction of railway line extending all the way from the Pak-China border till the Gwadar port.

Furthermore, during the CICA conference President Xi also announced to develop the Maritime Silk Road, aimed at linking the sea lanes of communication from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. According to this concept Gwadar port will become the focal point connecting Chinese markets with Middle East, ensuring faster and safer communication between the regions, and will also bring about reduction in transportation costs. China is also focusing on construction of the Gwadar-Xinjiang energy pipeline with the aim of providing safe, and cost efficient energy supply line to China; as most of its energy shipments come through the Strait of Malacca which is fraught with many economic and security challenges. Therefore inclusion of Gwadar port in the Maritime Silk Route will provide China with a geo-strategic location, from where it can safeguard its sea lanes of communications in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore,

Gwadar port close proximity with the international sea trade route will provide China with the ability to protect the security of the Chinese vessels in Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

The Maritime Silk Road will not only bring new opportunities for Pakistan and every country along the route that is seeking to develop; but further strengthen the cooperation between them, establish peace in the region and reduce dependence on the West. China expects the economic contact along the Silk Roads to boost productivity in each country, and as part of this vision is willing to offer technological assistance to countries in key industries. Thus, China is geared up to take advantage of its strategic relationship with Pakistan and extend its sphere of influence in the region. All these developments are likely to strengthen the economic interest of Pakistan, and provide an excellent opportunity for it to upgrade its fledgling infrastructure and increase revenues to invest in economic revival. Thus, the New Silk Road will shift the existing emphasis from security to trade.

### **The United States of America**

The US Government under the Obama administration has shifted its foreign policy focus in Asia from the Middle East towards the East Asia and the Pacific. This strategic policy or pivot towards the Pacific is aimed towards strengthening of existing strategic alliances, expanding trade and investment, advocating democracy and human rights and building a broad based military presence. The increasing presence of US in the Pacific is seen by China as part of the US China containment policy, and therefore met with suspicion. The fundamental contradiction in the Obama administration policy is that the pivot does not aim to accommodate and adjust to the rise of China, but to reinforce a fundamentally anti-China security structure and regional geopolitical status quo, which can be perceived through a hegemonic American alliance system, particularly the U.S.-Japan alliance. The US policy shift to the Pacific is also aimed at addressing the recent territorial issues between China and US allies in the region like Japan and Taiwan which have arisen in the South China Sea region. By increasing its naval and military presence in the region the US aims to allay some of the fears of its allies in the face of increasing Chinese military and political influence in the region.

During the recently held Shangri-La Dialogue Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel jointly proclaimed to work together to contain China's rising influence in the region which they felt threatened their peaceful hegemony in East Asia. The pivot focuses on strengthening the US alliances in the region and broadening the US defense engagement by increasing its naval presence and operability from Japan. Therefore, in this regard the New Asian Security concept can be seen as a way for China to counter the US pivot and reassert itself as the leading power in the region, through strengthening of regional ties; and breaking away from the Western dependency in which the region finds itself in.

### **India**

India is a country on the rise both regionally and internationally, owing mostly to its tremendous economic growth over the last decade and a half. But both in terms of her national security interests, and also in terms of her national aspirations it cannot isolate itself from the new Asian security environment. Along with China and Japan India seeks a larger role for itself in global leadership and governance. A point worth noting is that both in terms India's national security interests and global aspirations; China and Pakistan continue to figure as long standing destabilizing entities, acting both as an external and internal threat. But on the other hand to sustain its economic growth India needs new energy sources, and its stands to benefit immensely with construction of the Economic Corridor as it would provide it with access to the energy rich Central Asian States through Pakistan.

To become a major global player it is a necessity for India to align itself to the new Asian security dynamics currently taking shape and their long term effects on its global ambitions. Regional trade has immense importance for the peace and stability in the region and will create economic opportunities for all regional countries. Furthermore, India needs to understand that in any new strategic setting occurring in the regional security environment; it would have to cooperate with China; with whom it is already engaged in about \$80 Billion annual bilateral trade. India also has signed maritime agreements with the US to counter piracy in the region and the positioning of China in Gwadar would impede on its strategic aims in the Indian Ocean, but it would also help to provide security and stability in the region. The onus is now on India

and whether it is able to achieve its goals will depend on its own political readiness and the competency to shoulder strategic responsibilities.

### **Recommendations**

The core of the New Asian Security Concept, introduced by President Xi, is the idea that development is the greatest form of security. As the largest trading partner of most countries in the region and a major contributor to infrastructure investment, China can claim to be the chief driver of the region's development, and therefore also the main provider of Asian security. In the case of Pakistan the new concept of security can be underscored along three main aspects.

Firstly, the aim of the concept is integral optimization. With all countries being members of the community moving towards a common goal of development and security, their relations are intricate and any country will have a direct impact on the whole. If anything goes wrong with the community, its members will surely be affected, thus good foreign relations with all countries is of utmost importance for Pakistan.

Secondly, the state of Pakistan should aim for space for adaptability. As the world and region is under constant flux of change, the government must make constant adjustments to adapt. Through making adjustments and changing their policies and practices, the country could achieve win-win outcomes amid mutual accommodations and adaptations. For this to happen resolution of all outstanding disputes should be made main priority and instead of sticking to a rigid historical stance flexibility must be shown.

Thirdly, Pakistan should aim for cooperation for a win-win outcome to achieve its desired goals in the region and on the world scale. Within the region, all countries must show mutual respect and accommodation, make determined efforts, shoulder their responsibilities, and work hand in hand to strengthen the common interests, so that they then better defend and protect their own interests. For this to happen, Pakistan needs to establish trade links with more countries in the region, and furthermore try to foster a safe environment inside the country so as to attract more investment; thus increasing its presence on the regional and global level.

In the contemporary globalized world, the relations between big powers and small countries are based on coexistence of competition and cooperation, and the international community has developed into an organization where countries are both rivals and partners. Thus, if the Pakistani state plays its card right it has a lot to gain from the emerging the New Asian Security Concept based on economic development.