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Report – Webinar

“Indian Naval Modernisation and its Impact on Strategic Stability in South Asia”

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The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a webinar on “**Indian Naval Modernisation and its Impact on Strategic Stability in South Asia**” on September 14, 2021. The webinar was attended by various distinguished national and international experts and moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI.

Introduction to Webinar by Malik Qasim Mustafa Director ACDC-ISSI

In his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC-ISSI, said that India is ravenous to rise to a great power status and desires to achieve its hegemonic ambitions through military means. It is constantly maintaining its position among the top five biggest military spenders in the world. In 2020 with its US\$72.9 billion military expenditure and a total global share of 3.7 per cent, India was ranked number third. India is allocating huge resources on its ongoing military modernisation drive. It has allocated around US\$18.48 billion for the purchase of weapons in its 2021-22 defence budget. Out of this, the Indian Navy will receive around US\$4.55 billion for weapon purchases this year.

Currently, the Indian Navy operates around 150 ships and submarines. It is planning to have around a 200-ship fleet by 2027. Currently, India operates one nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN), one ballistic missiles submarine (SSBN) and fifteen diesel-electric attack submarines. The second SSBN known as “*INS Arighat*” is expected to join the service this year. The Indian Navy has also begun the development of the remaining two *Arihant*-class submarines, the S-3 and S-4. India also operates one aircraft carrier “*INS Vikramaditya*” and its indigenous aircraft carrier, known as, “*INS Vikrant*,” is expected to be commissioned next year. More recently, in June 2021, India has cleared a US\$7 billion project to build six new generation-stealth submarines and there are many other projects, which India is pursuing with.

India has not only introduced nuclear weapons in South Asia but has also added a nuclear dimension in the Indian Ocean. India’s building of triad and offensive military preparedness is aimed against its neighbours. Its ongoing naval modernisation has severe implications for regional peace and security. With this premise, the ACDC has organised this webinar to explore the following:

1. What are the dynamics of competition in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?
2. How Indian naval modernisation is going to affect the balance of power in South Asia?
3. How is India's development of sea-based nuclear capabilities going to impact deterrence stability in South Asia?
4. What are the repercussions of India's maritime strategy for the regional security architecture?

Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, DG ISSI

While welcoming the guests, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, said that the entire maritime arena would be affected by geopolitical realities like US-China competition in the Indo-Pacific region. The academia, civil society and think tanks must focus on this emerging domain of conflict to analyse Pakistan's capabilities and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, Pakistan must also focus on its eastern neighbour, India that unfortunately has pitched a completely new level of hostility towards Pakistan. India is now embarked upon a hegemonic ambition in South Asia. The US tilt towards India has been interpreted by the Indian present dispensation in power as treating South Asia as its so-called area of influence. Therefore, overall military modernisation especially naval in India has increased many folds. The military budget and indigenisation have increased along with the global access to advance military technologies. India's strategic partnership with India is also increasing. Pakistan must monitor these developments closely. During the Balakot crisis in 2019, there was also some Indian naval activity. However, Pakistan successfully detected Indian submarines within Pakistan's maritime borders. In years to come, the Gwadar port will gain considerable importance for Pakistan as an economic project but India tends to see it as strategic access to China to the Indian Ocean.

Briefing by Ms Ghazala Yasmin, RF ACDC-ISSI

Ms Ghazala Yasmin Jalil, Research Fellow ACDC- ISSI, in her briefing said that India has been developing a blue-water navy and is investing heavily in the up-gradation of its fleet. It plans to spend at least US\$61 billion on expanding the navy's size by about half in the next decade or so

to become one of the top naval powers in the world. The Indian Navy has a strength of 69,050 personnel. India has a large fleet consisting of one aircraft carrier named “*Vikramaditya*” which is in service since 2013. It also has one amphibious transport dock, nine landing ship tanks, seventeen frigates, ten destroyers and twenty-five corvettes. It also has seven minesweeping vessels, forty-seven patrol vessels, four fleet tankers and various auxiliary vessels.

India is constantly improving and adding to its naval capabilities. It has not only tried to boost its indigenous naval vessels building capacity. It has also done a fair amount of acquisitions from abroad. India is building and acquiring around 40 warships and submarines. These acquisitions include stealth destroyers, anti-submarine corvettes and stealth frigates. These acquisitions would immensely improve the Indian reconnaissance capabilities, warfighting capabilities, anti-submarine capabilities and would provide the Indian Navy with a strategic outreach in the Indian Ocean.

India continues to develop the naval component of its nuclear triad. It is building a fleet of 4-6 SSBNs. The Indian Navy currently consists of one operational submarine and fifteen diesel-electric attack submarines. India’s development of a large nuclear submarine force will have adverse effects on deterrence and crisis stability in South Asia. The nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean is a threat to all the littoral states, especially for Pakistan, which aims to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent against India. The introduction of its nuclear triad would create command and control issues and increase the chances of unauthorised and accidental launches.

Missile Name	Class	Range	Status
<u>BahMos</u>	Cruise Missile	300 - 500 km	Operational
<u>Dhanush</u>	SRBM	250 - 400 km	Operational
<u>Nirbhay</u>	Cruise Missile	800 - 1,000 km	In development
<u>Sagarika K-15</u>	SLBM	700 km	In development
<u>Shaurya K-4</u>	SLBM	3500 km	In development

Remarks by Vice-Adm. (Retd.) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique HI(M)

Vice Admiral (Retd.) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique HI(M), Managing Director Bahria Foundation, shared his views on “Dynamics of Competition in the Indian Ocean Region.” Talking about the economic significance of the IOR for the key stakeholders and their aspirations, he said that more than 50 per cent of global container trade passes through the Indian Ocean. The major global oil and gas trade routes pass through the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, the share of intra-regional trade is just 20 per cent while the share of global trade is 80 per cent. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would add new dynamics of economic competition in the region.

Interestingly, the Indian Ocean is geographically a closed ocean with few main chokepoints e.g., the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Aden, Cape of Good Hope, and the Mozambique Channel. Who so ever control these chokepoints controls the trade routes of global strategic importance. Therefore, keeping these sea lines of communication secure and open is the top priority of littoral as well as extra-regional states. As the resources on the land will become scarce, humankind will start the exploration of sea resources e.g. oil, aquaculture, etc. This will result in the dominance of geo-economics over geopolitics in the maritime domain in future. As widely said that the 21st century is touted to be an “Asian Century,” Asia will emerge as the main arena of armed conflicts.

Talking about the military significance of the Indian Ocean for the key stakeholders and their aspirations, he said that the Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean with 30 littoral and 10 landlocked states. It covers 20 per cent of the world’s total area. Within the broader IOR, there are five distinct and diverse regions e.g. East Africa, the Middle East, the Gulf region, South Asia and East Asia. The intraregional and interregional geopolitics is extremely complex. All major conflicts of the world are in these regions e.g. the US-Iran rivalry, the Somalian Piracy issue in the horn of Africa region, the Yemen crisis, India-Pakistan conflict, India-China conflict, Afghanistan, etc. According to various estimates, 42 per cent of active world conflicts are in the IOR. The IOR is not only heavily militarised but also the most nuclearised region in the world. Another significant feature is the permanent presence of multiple extra-regional powers like the US, Russia, the UK and France through military bases in the IOR. India also has its maritime

outreach in the Maldives. Due to increasing military modernisation and strategic partnership with the US, India has the misplaced belief of becoming a sole security guarantor in the IOR and considers the Indian Ocean as India's Ocean. Furthermore, there is also a spectrum of non-traditional security threats like terrorism, piracy, drug smuggling, climate change, environmental crisis etc.

While connecting these aspects to an overarching picture within which these maritime developments will likely appear and highlighting the implications for Pakistan in this context, he said that the dynamics of the IOR would remain in flux. The seat of power always lies on land. Therefore, whatever happens on land will generate effects in the maritime domain. He opined that there is no comprehensive regional security arrangement to rely on. The decreasing US power and rising China would create a New World Order. The security and economic interests of Pakistan will be at stake in this New Order. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will largely remain a road project until Pakistan secures the maritime route in the Indian Ocean through the Gwadar port. The Indian Cold Start Doctrine, proactive military operations and nuclear submarines will undermine the strategic stability in the region. Therefore, a stable, peaceful and rule-based order in the IOR is in favour of Pakistan.

Remarks by Cmdre. (Retd.) Babar Bilal Haider SI (M), Director NIMA

Cmdre. (Retd) Babar Bilal Haider SI (M), Director NIMA, in his remarks on “Indian Maritime Modernisation: Implications for Balance of Power in South Asia,” highlighted that the Indian Navy is a four-dimensional navy with strategic assets, satellite support and mature combined commands of navy and air force operating at various places. They have also matured their army, navy and joint command. While providing the historical overview of the Indian Navy, Cmdre (Retd.) Haider said that the Indian Military Strategy could be divided into two phases. The first phase was the Indian military strategy under Nehru, from 1947 to 1964. He confided to the Lower House of the Parliament in September 1954, “If you peep into the future and if nothing goes wrong – wars and the like – the obvious fourth country in the world (after the US, the Soviet Union and China) is India.” In the Post-Nehru or second era, the Indian Navy opted to change from a previously defensive posture to an offensive posture. Prime Minister Indira

Gandhi continued Shastri's move and pursued the development of nuclear capability and with the explosion of a nuclear device in 1974. In 1986, for the first time, India began using the naval force. Beginning with the deployment of the INS *Godavari* to evacuate the Indian nationals from Yemen. India also used its navy through the deployment of the peacekeeping forces to Sri Lanka and the defeat of the coup in the Maldives in 1988. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi demonstrated the government's growing propensity to use its military power to achieve political ends.

In the second section of his presentation, he gave a comprehensive statistical overview of the Indian maritime landscape. He said that India has a coastline that stretches 4500 miles, 351 island territories (32 in the Lakshadweep Group in the Arabian Sea and 319 in the Andaman and Nicobar Group in the Bay of Bengal). The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are over 600 miles from the mainland and stretch nearly 500 miles from North to South. Currently, the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) constitutes over 1.2 million square miles and provides 50 per cent and 80 per cent of the country's oil and natural gas respectively. Another 30 per cent of her oil comes from the Persian Gulf and is delivered by ships, along with 97 per cent of India's foreign trade. Around 16 major, 20 intermediate and 150 minor ports handled India's more than 1.3 billion metric tons cargo during 2020. The Indian Merchant Navy Fleet has a strength of 1179 vessels and is ranked 17th in the world. India has several economic and military centres including Bombay, Madras, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Tarapore & Kalakram power stations and oil refineries. The Indian Navy has been entrusted with the responsibility to guard said facilities and secure her SLOCs.

In the third section, Cmdre. (Retd.) Haider highlighted the scope and scale of the Indian Navy's Strategic Platforms like submarines, aircraft carriers, research vessels and amphibious capability.

Active Submarine(S/M) Fleet			
Class	Type	Numbers	Displacement
Arihant	Ballistic Missile S/M (SSBN)	01	6000 tones
S/M carry 12 x Sagarika S/MLBM (K-15), with a range of 700 KMs. It can also carry nuclear capable Nirbhay cruise missile			
Kalvari (Scorpene)	Attack S/Ms	03	2000 tones
Sindhughosh (Kilo)		08	3076 tones
Shishumar (209)		04	1850 tonnes
Total		16	
Kalvari & Sindhughosh can carry KLUB class & SSM 39 cruise missiles respectively			

Aircraft Carrier – INS VIKRAMADITYA			
Class	Type	Numbers	Displacement
Kiev	Aircraft Carrier	01	45,400 tones
Aircraft carrier can carry 26-30 fighters (Mig 29) and 06 Ka 31 (AEW Helos)			

Kamorta	Stealth ASW Corvette	04	3300 tones
Kora	Guided missile Corvette	04	1400 tones
Khukri	Corvette	04	1350 tones
Veer	Corvette	08	455 tones
Abhay	ASW Corvette	03	485 tones
Saryu	Offshore Patrol Vessel	04	2300 tones
Sukanya	Offshore Patrol Vessel	06	1890 tones
Car Nicobar	Patrol Vessel	14	325 tones
Bangaram	Patrol Vessel	04	260 tones
Trinkat	Patrol Vessel	01	260 tones

Austin	Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD)	01	16,590 tones
Magar	Landing ship tank (LST)	02	5655 tones
Shardul	Landing ship tank (LST)	03	5600 tones
Kumbhir	Landing ship tank (LST)	03	1100 tones
Mk. IV	Landing craft utility (LCU)	06	830 tones

Missile Range Instrumentation Vessel			
INS Dhruv		01	15,000 tones
India has become capable of tracking incoming nuclear tipped ballistic missiles, A/Cs at long ranges & monitor low earth orbit satellites with induction of INS Dhruv, a Research ship.			

Major Surface Units			
Kolkata	Stealth Guided Missile Destroyer	03	8100 tones
Delhi	Guided Missile Destroyer	03	6200 tones
Rajput	Guided Missile Destroyer	03	4974 tones
Shivalik	Stealth Guided Missile Frigate	03	6200 tones
Talwar	Stealth Guided Missile Frigate	06	4400 tones
Brahmaputra	Guided Missile Frigate	03	3850 tones
Godavari	Guided Missile Frigate	01	3850 tones
Each class of above mentioned IN Ships is equipped with Anti Ship Missiles i.e BrhaMos, Klub, KH-35 and Dhanush			

In the fourth section on the Indian Navy Development Strategy and future aspirations, he said that India has been focusing on developing indigenous platforms, sensors and weapons as a part of the Navy's modernisation and expansion. As of 2020, the Indian Navy has about 41 vessels of various types under construction. The Indian Navy aspires to protect India's national security interests, project Indian military power throughout South Asia, South East Asia and East Africa to be recognised as a global maritime power, exploitation of sea resources and sea trade. To achieve these objectives, India believes in using sea control, presence and power projection in the areas of interests, coastguard duties and monitoring the big powers navy is moves in the Indian Ocean.

Class	Type/ Origon	No	Displacement	Status
Nuclear Submarines				
Arihant	Ballistic missile submarine (SSBN)	04	6,000-7,000 tones	1 Ops, 1 under trials, 2 under advanced stage of construction
S5	/India	03	13,500 tones	Project approved with a budget of US\$1.4 billion
Chakra (Akula)	Attack submarine (SSN)/ Russian	01	12,770-13,800 tones	On 7 Mar 19, deal for lease of Akula-class S/M signed. S/M, will be delivered to the IN by 2025
Conventional Submarines				
Kalvari (Scorpene)	Attack submarine/ France	06	1800 tones	03 Ops, 02 under trial & 01 under construction, expected to be completed by 2022
Project 75	Attack submarine/ India	06	3,000 - 4,000 tones	The Indian MoD has cleared the proposal
Midgets	Midget submarine/ India	02	150 tones	Hindustan Shipyard Limited will construct two midget submarine

Destroyers				
Name	Type/ Origin	No	Displacement	Status
Visakhapatnam class	Stealth DDG/ India	04	7,500 tones	First ship - by end 2021
Project 18-class		06	13000 tones	Not Specified
Frigates				
Nilgiri class	Stealth FFG/ India	07	6,670 tones	under construction
Talwar class	Stealth FFG/ Russian	04	4035 tones	02 ships launched
Corvettes				
ASW Shallow Water Craft	Corvette (ASW)/ India	16	900-990 tones	04 ships are under construction
Next Generation Missile Vessels	Corvette (ASuW)/ India	06	3,000-4,000 tonnes	Not Specified
Next Generation Corvettes (NGC)	Corvette/ India	07	-	Not Specified

Name	Origin	Displacement	Status	
Aircraft Carriers				
INS Vikrant	India	45,000 tones	Delivery & Commission scheduled for Aug 2022	
INS Vishal		65,000 tones (integrated electric propulsion)	Under Development and seen as a replacement of the INS Vikramaditya	
Class	Type/ Origin	No. of Ships	Displacement	Status
Amphibious warfare ships				
Indian class of Landing Platform Dock	Landing helicopter dock/ India	04	30,000 to 40,000 tones	IN has issued RFI for 4 Integrated Full Electric Propulsion LPDs
High Speed Landing Craft	Landing Craft/ India	06	285 tones	In September 2017, IN issued a RFI to acquire six landing craft

Type	Role	No	Origin	
Aircraft				
Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF)	Carrier Borne Multi-role Fighter	Unspecified	India	In Design Phase
Multirole Carrier Borne Fighter	Carrier Borne Fighter	36	US/ France	RFI for 36 A/C floated
Boeing P-8I	ASW & ASuW Surv	6	US	6 A/C are planned
Helicopters				
Sikorsky MH-60R	Multi-Role Helicopter	24	US	Replacement of Sea King helicopters
Kamov Ka-31	AEW & control	10	Russia	Project Approved
Naval Multi-Role Helicopter	Multi-Role Helicopter	123	Not Specified	To replace Westland Sea King helicopters
Naval Utility Helicopter	Utility helicopter	111	Not Specified	To replace HAL Chetak helicopters.

Mine countermeasure vessels				
Name	Type/ Origon	No	Displacement	Status
MCM Vessels	Minesweeper/ India	12	-	Indian MoD approved project
OPV	OPV/ India	11	2,500 tones	Planned
HSL class	Oiler/ India	05	45,000 tones	Approved in 2014
Research Ship	Missile range instrumentation ship/ India	01	11,300 tones	Under construction
GRSE class	Survey vessel/ India	04	3,000-3,500 tones	Under Construction

Unmanned Aerial System				
Type	Role	No	Origin	Status
Naval Shipborne Unmanned Aerial System	Shipborne UAV	10	Not Specified	Under procurement
MQ-9A Reaper	Unmanned combat aerial vehicle	12	US	2 in service & 10 more planned
IN recently inked a contract with Bharat Electronic Limited, for supply of first indigenous naval anti-drone system (NADS)				

India's motivation is to build a blue-water navy and its formidable force is motivated by India's dream to emerge as a global power. Result of closer strategic alignment with the US and its allies

to counter-balance China. Intentions could change overnight but capabilities require a longer period to develop and attain sufficiency. Today's India, a blue-eyed state of US and allies, can pose a real challenge to even US interests in times to come. The Indian ambition of the nuclear triad is a threat to all littoral states but especially to Pakistan. The Indian naval nuclear developments will qualitatively alter the strategic balance between India and Pakistan. For Pakistan, the introduction of the nuclear triad is a threatening development, which further exacerbates its security dilemma vis-à-vis India. Pakistan needs to develop a second-strike capability to complete the nuclear triad to preserve the credibility of its nuclear deterrent. Pakistan and other like-minded states of the region must increase their interaction, cooperation and interdependence to safeguard their legitimate maritime interests against Indian challenges.

Remarks by Dr Syed Aqeel Akhtar Naqvi, Former Naval Officer

Dr Syed Aqeel Akhtar Naqvi, former naval officer, shared his views on “India’s Development of Sea-Based Nuclear Capabilities and Deterrence Stability in South Asia.” While providing a comprehensive understanding of the SSBN and strategic stability, Dr Naqvi said that with the advent of nuclear weapons, decision-makers have to devise a strategy to prevent a catastrophic first strike. If a pre-emptive first strike can destroy the enemy’s entire nuclear forces before the enemy could respond, the first strike remains the plausible option. Contrarily, if the first strike is assured to have a nuclear response, it would theoretical outweigh any benefits gained by striking first. Thus, it makes the first strike less likely. Hence, an assured sea-based nuclear capability evolved which stabilise the deterrence relationship. The nuclear-armed states maintain a higher number of nuclear weapons to minimise the chances of losing them in the first strike. After having an assured second-strike capability with the development of a potent SSBN force, a state does not have an incentive to further enlarge its nuclear arsenal, which minimises the arms race. Thus, a nuclear-armed submarine would contribute to both crisis and arms race stability by reducing the incentives of pre-emptive strikes. However, this simplistic theoretical perspective does not cater for the developmental and operational factors, which present a complex matrix of ground realities.

In the second section of his presentation, he highlighted the important contours of sea-based nuclear forces in the nuclear postures of India, China and Pakistan. India's stated objective to develop sea-based nuclear deterrence forces is to achieve deterrence stability. On the other hand, Pakistan's pursuit of sea-based nuclear capability is to maintain the credibility of deterrence. The development of the Babur-III missile is a restraint response to the Indian naval nuclear programme. India's wavering task towards No First Use (NFU) policy suggests that the role of SSBNs is not limited to assured second-strike ability. This also implied that these trends directly challenge the survivability of Pakistan's land and air-based nuclear assets. In China, 4 Jin-class SSBNS are in operation while Type 096 are under construction. The Jin-class submarines are equipped with JL2 SBMs with a range of 7000 km and the next submarines will be equipped with JL-III missiles with an estimated range of 12000 km. China considers that SSBNs force will significantly enhance the credibility, reliability and effectiveness of its nuclear deterrence. In the case of the China-India deterrence relationship, India's efforts to develop an assured second-strike capability against China have been met with a restrained response from China. China is developing its nuclear power forces to absorb a possible US first strike and subsequently inflict unacceptable damage to the US, which is much larger and far superior to India. China's land-based missiles are enough to strike all targets in the Indian territory. Furthermore, the Chinese SLBMs can reach all of India from the South China Sea. Therefore, China firmly believes that its existing nuclear forces are entirely capable of dealing with India.

In the last section of his presentation, Dr Naqvi discussed the implications of India's sea-based deterrence on the strategic stability of South Asia. The presence of ready to fire nuclear weapons on SSBNs has escalatory effect during a crisis. In the aftermath of the so-called Pulwama incident, India's placement of SSBMs demonstrated its readiness to bring in the nuclear factor in the Pakistan-India conflict situation. The irresponsible and ambitious use of nuclear assets particularly in an environment that already exhibits the dangers of escalation or early use of nuclear weapons is detrimental to regional peace and stability. With the SSBNs deployed with pre-mediated weapons at the highest level of readiness, India might have to maintain high levels of alerts on continuous sea patrol patterns. It will be a significant departure from the existing nuclear posture. The Command and Control challenge associated with SSBNs immensely affect crisis stability. It is immensely difficult to maintain uninterrupted communication with the dive

SSBN. SSBN communication stations are also likely to be preferred targets of the belligerents. In case of communication breakdown, decision-makers face two basic challenges: i) SLBMs will be of no use to the nation; ii) there is a strong likelihood of unauthorised nuclear missile launch in case of a bolt from a sky situation. Such uncertainties compel decision-makers to launch nuclear weapons earlier than necessary. To avoid such situations, policy-makers are generally inclined to pre-delegating the launch authority during the crisis. Any decision to pre-delegate a launch authority on the Indian SSBNs would enable naval commanders to launch SLBMs within minutes without any legitimate political oversight.

During the Cold War, nuclear powers adopted two basic strategies for the deployment of SSBNs: i) continuous at-sea deterrence (CASD); ii) Citadel Strategy. The Indian submarines are constructed by technologies for CASD deployment. If India adopts CASD in heist then its nuclear submarines would be vulnerable during the crisis that may put escalatory pressures on commanders. This, straining crisis stability. If SSBNs were less survivable due to technical and operational shortcomings as in the case of India then a state would require a larger number of nuclear weapons as well as more maritime conventional forces to protect its SSBN force. If a state adopts the second approach then it has to shift from sea denial to a sea control strategy that requires huge enhancement of the Indian maritime conventional forces. Expansion of maritime forces would exacerbate the security dilemma between nuclear adversaries intensifying nuclear competition and an arms race. In South Asia, this will push Pakistan to take excessive measures to restore deterrence stability. Hence, the development and deployment of SSBNs would rekindle the nuclear and conventional arms competition. If the submarine programme is driven by bureaucratic politics, national prestige, rising domestic sentiments and an effort to mirror great powers as in the case of India then it will lead to an arms race. In conclusion, India's desire for regional domination, gaining a central position in the US strategy to contain China and access to sophisticated military programmes indicate aggressive military posture will further exacerbate its adversarial relations with China and have direct implications for Pakistan.

Remarks by Mr Sufian Ullah, RF CISS, Islamabad

Mr Sufian Ullah, Research Fellow, Centre for International Security Studies (CISS), Islamabad, shared his views on “India’s Maritime Strategy: Repercussions for Regional Security Architecture.” While looking at the Indian maritime development from the geopolitical context, Mr Sufian said that the Indian assertive naval strategy is designed to complement its foreign policy agendas. While India remained a reluctant power for many decades, it has adopted a foreign policy similar to the theory of securitisation. The US and its allies used Beijing as a referent object to construct the China rise theory by projecting it as a revisionary power and developed a counter-strategy in the form of forging new alliances. In the midst of growing Sino-US competition, India finds a moment of strategic opportunity to which it wants to respond by becoming a major power that is capable of countering the international system. The question here is whether India behaves like defensive power satisfied with the status quo or an ambitious state that prefer expansion of power to be a hegemon in the IOR.

He believed that as of yet India has not embarked upon any strategy that depicts classical revisionist behaviour. However, it has made some key changes to increase its bargaining capability. These changes are reflected in few trends. First, India’s diplomatic rhetoric towards a regional state in the form of minimised engagement through SAARC. Second, a retreat from the multilateral approach of foreign policy and showing mini-multilateralism that involves a smaller number of states. Third, India has shown a visible urge to show strategic supremacy vis-à-vis its adversaries. India’s evolving postures and doctrines highlight these shifts. Fourth, India is more willing to escalate a military crisis. Lastly, India’s effort to restructure the UN Security Council (UNSC) composition.

India’s naval posture is gradually shifting from defence to pre-eminence and operating beyond the Indian Ocean. The Indian belief to make the Indian Ocean an “Indian Lake” is a major catalyst behind this aggressive maritime strategy. Mahan’s concept of forwarding presence also contributed a lot. To achieve this hegemonic goal, India has five broader components:

1. Development of advanced naval capability and acquisition of foreign naval bases.

2. A new regional construct of the Indo-Pacific region to legitimise its role in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans especially the disputed waters of the South China Sea.
3. Become a vital part of the emerging Quadrilateral Security Alliance
4. Projecting India as a net security provider in the region depends on capacity, military diplomacy, technical assistance and capability to directly deploy forces in times of crisis.
5. Development of nuclear SSBNs for counter-force missions.

Concluding Remarks by Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI, said that the issue under discussion is of immense significance keeping in view Pakistan's security in a broader scope including security and economics. Since 1947, the quest for security remained a permanent feature of Pakistan national and foreign policy. Before 1998, this struggle was confined to a conventional field. During the 1980s and 90s, Pakistan put forward various proposals at the United Nations to make South Asia a Nuclear Free Zone. However, these proposals faced opposition from India and Bhutan. India became the first country that introduced nuclear weapons in the region. Consequently, Pakistan also went nuclear to maintain the power balance, which was disturbed by India. Ever since situation remained quite disturbing in the region due to continuous Indian modernisation in conventional and nuclear fields.

India wants to acquire big power and hegemon status at the global level and regional level respectively. Furthermore, India desires to become the strategic partner of the US to contain China. These factors contribute to the Indian need for greater naval capability in the Indian Ocean. The Indian increasing nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean would compel Pakistan to take necessary measures to ensure strategic stability in the region. It will also push Pakistan towards a new arms race in the naval domain. Due to the small size of the navy and limited resources available for naval modernisation, Pakistan must take smart initiatives to maintain credible minimum deterrence instead of striving for parity.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT



