

US Indo-Pacific Strategy – Implications for Strategic Stability in South Asia

(Nauman Bashir Bhatti) 1

Abstract

The “Indo-Pacific Region” is a U.S. political and security construct against China envisaged within the geographical bounds of Pacific and Indian Oceans. The U.S. Indo Pacific Strategy (IPS) details a comprehensive approach along with clear lines of effort and objectives to contain and defeat China in all dimensions – political, strategic, military and economic.

While touching upon the genesis of the construct and detailing the geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic significance of the region, the paper dilates on the U.S. threat perception that, inter alia, stems from: (i) China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); (ii) Beijing’s growing strategic capabilities and assertive military posturing in South and East China Seas; and (iii) export of China’s governance model that is viewed as a challenge to the established world order. It also reflects on the systematic evolution of the concept in the U.S. legislative frameworks, strategies, policies and approach towards the region since 2017, when China was declared as a “revisionist power” by President Trump’s National Security Strategy.

Elaborating on the objectives, contours and implementation methodology of the U.S. IPS, the paper focuses on the Washington’s partnerships pursued under the construct, including enhanced security and defence cooperation. The role of India in the U.S. strategy, growing U.S. – India strategic and defence partnership, and the rapid modernization of Indian conventional and strategic forces, are analyzed in light of existing peace and security situation in South Asia, particularly India’s hostile doctrines and postures against Pakistan.

Considering the current state of Pakistan – U.S. relations, Pakistan’s strategic ties with China, implementation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of BRI, and convergence of U.S. – India strategic interests, it has been assessed that U.S. IPS will have significant implications on the Strategic Stability in South Asia and would pose a complex set of challenges for Pakistan which can be categorized under political and diplomatic, regional peace and security, and economic and development dimensions.

To offset the implications of U.S. IPS, a set of policy recommendations have been proposed to guide Pakistan’s overall approach to the U.S. construct which is underpinned by national objectives associated with strategic autonomy, long term economic security, peace and stability, and maintaining balance of power in the region.

Introduction:

The term Asia-Pacific has been systematically replaced with “Indo-Pacific” within the U.S. policy circles. The “Indo-Pacific” region is considered as a single strategic space including Pacific and Indian Oceans. As a comprehensive political and security construct against China, it marks a significant shift in Washington’s strategic approach towards the Asia Pacific region.

The “Indo-Pacific” region is extremely significant from geo-political, geo-economics and geo-strategic perspective. It is central to global value chains, trade and investments, producing 60 percent of global GDP. The U.S. trade and FDIs in the region are estimated at US \$ 2.3 and 1.3 trillion, respectively. It is also the most nuclearized region with five conflict hotspots. The U.S. also maintains substantial military presence for ensuring regional influence and dominance.

The U.S. IPS aims at maintaining U.S. strategic primacy in the region and beyond. It seeks to ensure freedom of navigation in SCS and ECS; sustain prevailing western values based international order and U.S. economic leadership; and aggressively counter China’s growing regional political, strategic, and economic influence, especially in the wake of its BRI.

The strategy is being pursued by the U.S. through collaborative arrangements under Quad (Australia-India-Japan-U.S.), alignments within NATO, engagement with the EU and ASEAN, and partnerships with key countries in the region. Enhanced security and defence cooperation, especially with India, is an essential component of the U.S. strategy.

India is categorized by the U.S. as a “strategic counterweight” to China and a vital partner for the implementation of IPS. Therefore, the U.S. is maintaining a special focus on strengthening its political, strategic, military and economic ties with India as part of the construct. As a “Major Defence Partner,” the U.S. is extending expanded assistance to India under the framework of multifaceted defence and security cooperation agreements signed between the two sides.

Statement of the Problem

Implications of U.S. IPS on Strategic Stability in South Asia which already remains under acute stress due to India’s “great power ambition”; offensive force postures and doctrines against Pakistan; and growing conventional asymmetry between Pakistan-India, need to be assessed.

Significance and Scope of the Study

While the IPS is primarily aimed at countering China’s expanding influence and maintaining U.S. global primacy, it envisages a central role of India for the realization of the Strategy, including through enhanced security and defence

cooperation. To assess the implications on the strategic stability in South Asia, the scope of study will be limited to the review of U.S. strategic shift, objectives of its IPS and the role of India in the construct; political, security, strategic and military dynamics between Pakistan and India; and likely challenges for Pakistan in the emerging scenario.

Review of the Literature

The available literature related to the topic was reviewed in detail. It enabled understanding of various perspectives signifying the importance of “Indo-Pacific” region; underlying reasons for U.S. – China great power competition; orientation, scope and objectives of U.S. IPS; partnerships under the construct; and Indian role in the U.S. containment of China. However, limited research was available that assessed the implications of IPS on the Strategic Stability in South Asia.

The travelogue “Monsoon” compared the significance of Indian and Pacific Oceans in the 21st century with that of Europe in the previous. It predicted that the U.S. future preoccupation would be with Asia, not only in economic, but also in military terms.

“Indo-Pacific” is conceptualized both as “a place and an idea.” It is argued that the region is central to “global prosperity and security”; a “metaphor” for collective action; and it can be both, a “theatre for war or a shared space.” It is also defined as a “political term” which can neither be “purely descriptive or neutral” and while U.S. IPS is an expression of strategic rivalry between Washington and Beijing, other actors contextualize it in terms of economic prosperity, connectivity and multilateral cooperation.

It is argued that shifting wealth and power from West to East is threatening global power balance with China challenging the U.S. supremacy and the “ambitions of other Asian powers.” It is further claimed that this conundrum has the potential to “rock the entire world” and can be a “question for war and peace.” While China is characterized as “aggressive and uncooperative,” the role of India is greatly emphasized for maintaining stability in the region.

The current international security environment is described as renewed great power competition with SCS as the arena for U.S. – China strategic competition. While China’s economic, political and military expansion is blamed for the competition, there remain internal divisions within Quad as well as NATO allies namely the UK and France, on perception and engagements in the region.

Methodology

The research relied on a mix of primary and secondary sources. Effort was made to assess relevant policy statements and documents, assimilate views of various officials and practitioners, and incorporate observations, experiences and analysis

of the author. Secondary sources were mainly used to develop the theoretical aspects and for evaluation of issues identified during the research. Overall, the research paper employs a combination of descriptive and analytical methods, primarily relying on qualitative research and using comparative data for drawing conclusions.

Organization of the Paper

The research paper has three sections. The first provides the strategic landscape including the genesis of Indo-Pacific construct; region's significance; the U.S. threat perceptions and shift in its strategic outlook as well as priority theatre; the key features of IPS; approaches of U.S. allies and partners; and China's response. The second section reflects on the U.S. – India partnership horizon covering India's ambitions and threat perceptions; political and security alignments; contours of strategic partnership and scope of defence cooperation with the U.S.; and its role in the IPS. The final section elaborates on South Asian dynamics with focus on Pakistan-India relations; strategic stability in the region; and challenges for Pakistan. The relevant conclusions are presented at the end, followed by some concrete recommendations.

Strategic Landscape

Genesis of Indo-Pacific Construct

The term “Indo-Pacific” is attributed to former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who conceptualized the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a single strategic space during his address to the Indian Parliament in 2007. He reiterated the idea during his second stint in office while speaking at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development held in Kenya in 2016.

The “Indo-Pacific” region, as a substitute to Asia-Pacific, started to resonate within the U.S. policy circles during 2011 in the context of President Obama's “Pivot to Asia” strategic outlook. However, the construct only got mainstreamed in the U.S. strategies after President Trump presented his FOIP vision at the APEC Summit in Hanoi in November 2017.

Strategic Significance of “Indo-Pacific” Region for the U.S.

The U.S. “Indo-Pacific” construct includes the region surrounding Indian and Pacific Oceans with stated geographic bounds stretching from the U.S.'s Western Coast to Indian Western Coast. However, the U.S. allies and partners, particularly Australia, India, Japan and the EU extend these geographic bounds up to the East Coast of Africa within the Indian Ocean. Geographic representation of the region is illustrated in Figure 1

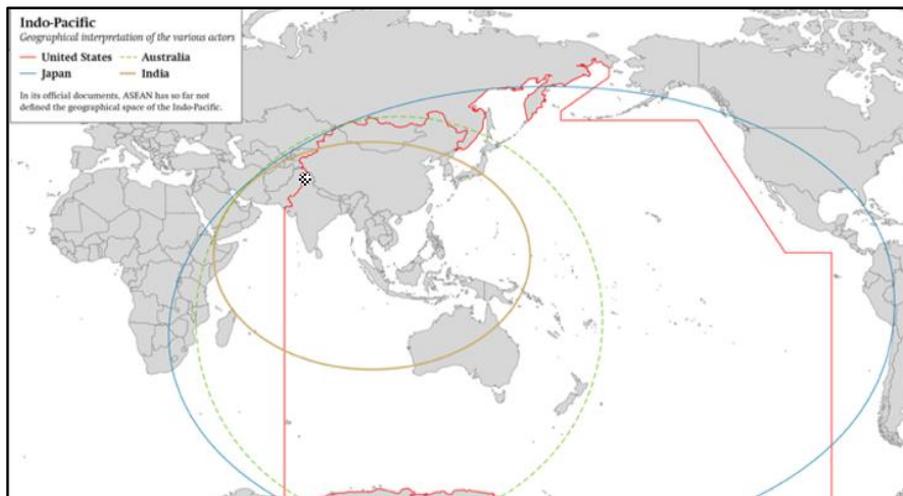


Figure 1: Geographic Representation of the Indo Pacific region

The region comprises almost 50 percent of world population; produces 60 percent of world GDP; contributes 66 percent to global growth; includes world’s three largest (U.S., China and Japan) and six fastest (India, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Nepal and Philippines) growing economies.

With 60 percent of international maritime trade transiting Asia – one third through SCS, and nine of world’s busiest seaports operating in the region, “Indo-Pacific” is considered central to global value chains, trade and investments. The U.S. two-way trade and FDIs in the region are estimated at US \$ 2.3 trillion and US \$ 1.3 trillion, respectively.

It is also the most nuclearized and militarized region being home to six nuclear armed countries and world’s seven largest standing armies. There are five conflict hotspots including disputes in SCS/ECS (Figure-2), Taiwan, China-India border dispute, Faultline conflict between Pakistan and India over Jammu and Kashmir, and the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. and its allies assert freedom of navigation by conducting activities of military forces and naval ships in SCS, challenging China’s EEZ rights. Washington also has Defence pacts with Japan (1960), Philippines (1951), Republic of Korea (1953) and South-East Asia Treaty (1951) between US, Australia, France, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, and the UK. Therefore, the U.S. maintains substantial military presence in the region including 3,75,000 troops, 200 ships, five aircraft carriers and 1100 aircrafts, for regional dominance and providing security to allies



Figure 2: Islands involved in principal disputes in SCS and ECS

U.S. Threat Perception – Rise of China

The U.S. considers China as a strategic competitor not only in the “Indo-Pacific” region but potentially at the global stage – challenging the prevailing World Order. In addition, North Korea’s cyber, nuclear and missile capabilities, as well as its stated intentions, also figure prominently in the U.S. regional threat perception.

The Sino – U.S. rivalry includes competition for power and status, perceptions of military threats, conflicts over trade and technology issues, competing connectivity and infrastructure development approaches and divergences in ideological frameworks for regional and global order.

In Washington’s assessment, China will significantly increase its regional influence and expand global reach through BRI which encompasses infrastructure, connectivity and development projects in Asia, Africa and Europe, amounting to over U.S. \$ 1 trillion and 2200 projects in 87 countries, with China’s State-Owned Enterprises, credit facilities and loans serving as backbone.

The U.S. perceives that BRI enables China to explore overseas military facilities in Africa, Europe, Oceania, South-East Asia and South Asia, to project power and secure Chinese interests abroad. Beijing has already established its first overseas military facility in Djibouti (see Figure 3). However, “the overall threat to U.S. will depend on size, locations and offensive military capabilities of the eventual Chinese overseas presence.”

commands, was renamed as USINDOPACOM in 2018.

The U.S. Department of Defence Indo-Pacific Strategy Report of June 2019 declared the region as U.S. priority theatre. The defence policy approach included: (i) preparedness (military modernization, deterrence, forward posturing); (ii) partnerships (defence collaborations for deterrence and interoperability); and (iii) establishing networked security architecture using ASEAN's existing structures. No new multilateral defence initiative was envisaged. Subsequently in November 2019, the State Department's "FOIP: Advancing a Shared Vision" outlined the U.S. approach on diplomatic front, including for forging partnerships and alliances.

The collapse of the U.S. – Russia INF Treaty in August 2019 is also considered a manifestation of Washington's strategic reorientation from European to Asian theatre. Besides alleged Russian violations, China was one of the stated reasons for U.S. withdrawal from the treaty. The INF Treaty posed limitations on U.S. development and testing of INF category ballistic and cruise missile systems (500–5500 Kilometer ranges) and their deployment in "Indo-Pacific" theatre to deter and contain China in the region.

Reflecting a bipartisan trend on China and adoption of President Trump's Indo-Pacific approach, President Biden Administration's INSSG of March 2021 underscored the need to build alliances for presenting a common front "to hold countries like China to account." It further outlined that besides NATO members as well as Australia, Japan and Republic of Korea, the U.S. would deepen "partnership with India" and work alongside other countries to "advance shared objectives."

The U.S. Senate passed a China centric US\$ 250 billion I&C Act in June 2021. It represents the most significant and systemic U.S. effort to blunt China's perceived edge in the advance technologies and to ensure continued economic primacy. With economic and strategic dimensions, the Act is drawing comparisons with similar sweeping measures undertaken by the U.S. to counter Soviet Union during the start of Cold War.

Key features of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework

The U.S. Indo-Pacific construct pursues four principles: respect for sovereignty and independence of all states; peaceful conflict resolution; free trade; and respect for international law.

The U.S. vital interests mainly include defending the mainland and its citizens in the region; countering spread of nuclear weapons, including their delivery systems; preserving U.S. economic, diplomatic and military access; enhancing credibility and effectiveness of U.S. alliances; and maintaining U.S. primacy and core values. In this regard, the primary objectives established by the U.S. under five "lines of

effort” include the following:

- a. Prevent Beijing from distorting global markets/ U.S. competitiveness; maintain U.S. lead on innovation/strategic capabilities; counterbalance China’s governance models; develop deterrence to prevent Beijing from using military forces; enhance engagement in the region; and defeat China’s actions “across the spectrum” through counter measures and building international consensus.
- b. Renew commitment to the region to counter BRI; strengthen strategic capabilities of Australia, Japan and South Korea; reinvigorate alliances with Philippines and Thailand; and enhance Taiwan’s defence capabilities against China.
- c. Support India to accelerate its rise and serve as a “net security provider” in the region; develop lasting partnership underpinned by strong Indian military; and collaborate to preserve maritime security and counter Chinese influence.
- d. Enhance capacity of Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka towards free and open order.
- e. Reinforce ASEAN security architecture; prevent spread of terrorism; support Burma’s transition to democracy; and pursue economic ties and connectivity.
- f. Ensure North Korea relinquishes its nuclear programme.

Economic, Development and Defence Cooperation Discourse

The U.S. enacted BUILD and ARI Acts in 2018 to re-establish the U.S. credentials as a major development partner and achieve specific FOIP objectives, respectively. With U.S. \$60 billion portfolio, IDFC was created under the BUILD Act by merging the Overseas Private Investment Corporation with Development Credit Authority of USAID. The IDFC is supported by updated “Blue Dot Network,” a certification platform established in collaboration with Australia and Japan, and supported by the OECD, to ensure high quality infrastructure projects ensuring environmental and social sustainability, and alignment with international standards, laws, and regulations.

To substitute Chinese investments in infrastructure, connectivity and energy projects, numerous other U.S. initiatives have been launched including Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy (Asia EDGE), Indo-Pacific Business Forum, Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network including Transaction Advisory Fund, US \$100 million “Pacific Pledge” and Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility. B3W Partnership, aimed at channeling private sector infrastructure

investments in developing countries, is the latest initiative launched by the U.S. with the support of G-7 members, to comprehensively counter Chinese BRI.

In defence, military and security domains, U.S. is using bilateral defence agreements, FMS, joint military exercises, intelligence sharing/cooperation, freedom of navigation operations in SCS and ECS, and investments through DFC, as key instruments to advance partnerships under the IPS.

Key allies and partners

The U.S. has been making intensive diplomatic outreach for building international consensus around the “Indo-Pacific” construct, including to substitute the term “Asia Pacific.” As a result, most of the U.S. allies and partners in Europe and Asia have adopted the new term and developed their respective strategic outlooks/strategies for the “Indo-Pacific” region.

The Quad serves as the primary multilateral framework for implementation of the U.S. IPS. All Quad members have announced their respective strategies for the region and closely coordinate their approaches through dedicated bilateral mechanisms. Demonstrating strong U.S. commitment and resolve, President Biden hosted the first Quad Summit immediately after his inauguration in March 2021. The Summit adopted a Joint Statement and reiterated the core purposes and objectives of FOIP. While presently a loose arrangement, Quad is increasingly featured as a military alliance in making with U.S. encouraging more countries to join the coalition.

NATO does not have an agreed IPS owing to prevailing divergences on approaches against China within its allies. However, NATO’s June 2021 Summit Communiqué recognized that China’s growing influence and policies can present challenges that the alliance need to address—albeit due to U.S. push. It also expressed concerns over China’s “expanding nuclear arsenal,” opaqueness in “military modernization,” “fusion strategy” and growing military cooperation with Russia, including participation in “Russian exercises in Euro-Atlantic area.” Outside the NATO framework, France, the UK and Germany have confirmed their focus on the “Indo Pacific” region, including by committing their Naval Forces.

The EU considers China as “a partner, competitor and systemic rival” at the same time. Under the U.S. influence, the EU has adopted the “Indo-Pacific” concept and announced its strategy for the region which aims at enhanced cooperation, including in areas of security and defence. It envisages presence of EU Naval Forces in the region through joint exercises and port calls.

ASEAN adopted its “Outlook on Indo-Pacific Strategy” (AOIP) in November 2019 to calibrate bloc’s approach to the emerging dynamics. In an environment of uncertainty and confrontation, AOIP aims to preserve ASEAN’s centrality and

unity in the regional architecture, steering its way clear of U.S. – China rivalry. While inclusion of term “Indo-Pacific” in AOIP and elements of maritime cooperation appear to appease the U.S., the overall emphasis on inclusion, win-win connectivity and development, and use of ASEAN led mechanisms, aim to comfort China.

Implementation Methodology

White House is leading the U.S. overall strategy towards China. While President Biden’s INSSG 2021 provides the strategic direction for next steps in the U.S. “Indo-Pacific” approach, enactment of China centric I&C Act by the Senate now provides robust legislative framework for the Administration to advance U.S. interests under “Indo-Pacific” construct as a bipartisan priority.

Characterized as whole of government approach to ensure synergy in actions, the U.S. Departments of Defence, State and Commerce are working in tandem to respectively realize strategic and defence, diplomatic and political, and economic objectives of U.S. IPS.

China’s Response to the U.S. Construct

China recognizes that a full-scale military or economic confrontation with the U.S. would not be in the interest of both countries and the region or the world at large. It also attempts to balance “competition, strategic rivalry and cooperation in relations with the U.S.” However, Beijing categorically rejects and denounces the concept of “Indo-Pacific” and the insinuations surrounding it. With acceleration in Washington efforts, China’s response to the U.S. Indo-Pacific construct is getting increasingly sharp and more assertive, but not confrontational.

Addressing a forum on global security issues in Beijing in July 2021, China's Foreign Minister and State Councilor Wang Yi stated that the U.S. led “Indo-Pacific Strategy” aimed at countering Beijing "should be dumped at a trash heap" and cautioned that the U.S. and its allies were “forming a siege against Beijing.” Alluding to Quad, he remarked that China opposed the framework of cooperation to “fuel rivalry” and “an action to accelerate division.”

Speaking at the 100th anniversary of Communist Party of China in June 2021, President Xi Jinping, in an unambiguous articulation of China’s national resolve, stated “We have never bullied, oppressed, or subjugated the people of any other country, and we never will. By the same token, we will never allow any foreign force to bully, oppress, or subjugate us. Anyone who would attempt to do so will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people.” Clearly, the Chinese approach telegraphed to the world does not envisage domination, self-exceptionalism, unilateralism or disregard to international norms.

To minimize “Indo-Pacific” impacts and premised on already strong economic partnership with South-East Asian Countries, Beijing has further intensified its collaboration with ASEAN, including through engagement in its various formats; promoting free trade through Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); and efforts towards finalization of Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. China has also held Summit level meetings with Japan and India in 2018 and 2019, respectively, to find common grounds for cooperation and engagement.

While China has made significant strides in economic dimension, it has no parity with the U.S. in strategic and military domains. As part of its strategic response to the U.S. construct including possible future deployments of short and medium range ballistic missiles by the U.S. in the region, Beijing would be constrained to continue modernizing its conventional and nuclear capabilities, enhance defence collaboration with Russia, deepen strategic ties with Pakistan and explore options to break any military encirclement, including through military deployments outside its mainland.

India – U.S. Partnership Horizon

India’s Great Power Ambition

India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru categorized global role of India as inevitable “not because of any ambition of hers, but because of the force of circumstances, because of geography, because of history.”

Categorized as the world’s largest democracy; huge international market of 1.3 billion people – second to only China; world’s fifth largest economy – surpassing the UK; nuclear power status; and ambitious military and strategic modernization endeavors, India is poised to benefit from its international credentials for global influence.

However, India’s great power ambition cannot be pursued without partnership with the U.S. The convergence of U.S. – India strategic interests and existing complementarities in the international political and security landscape under the growing Sino – U.S. strategic competition, have created a conducive environment for realization of Indian ambitions, much the way Nehru had imagined – “force of circumstances.”

New Delhi’s Threat Perceptions

India regards domination of its periphery, including Indian Ocean region, a necessary pre-requisite to establish its status and capabilities of a global power. Its threat perception includes both China and Pakistan, with a two-front war calculus – however it lacks the capability.

Though India-China maintain strong trade and economic ties, the political and

security relationship between the two sides have historically remained difficult. Both countries have fought a war in 1962 and continue to have active border disputes. Their ground forces witnessed standoff during 2017 Doklam crisis and engaged in skirmishes in Ladakh during 2020. China was also one of the stated reasons for Indian nuclear tests in 1998.

New Delhi maintains hostile and aggressive force postures and doctrines towards Pakistan. It imagines a conflict with Pakistan beneath the nuclear threshold. India uses the pretext of alleged cross border terrorism and Islamabad's support to Kashmiri freedom struggle in IIOJ&K, as justifications for maintaining hostile posture towards Pakistan.

Post 9/11, India strategically aligned its threat perception with that of U.S. in the context of terrorism and violent extremism, and while playing a victim, it orchestrated and sponsored terrorism in Pakistan – a double whammy for Islamabad. India's collusion with the U.S. at the FATF against Pakistan, presents a case in point.

Shifting International Political and Security Alignment of India

India has been maintaining its non-aligned status being the founding member of Non-Aligned Movement. It has also been pursuing a multipolar world in line with Moscow's approach. Russia has been India's strategic partner and a major defence supplier for over decades.

The warming up in U.S. – India relations began when former U.S. President Clinton visited India in 2000 – first U.S. Presidential visit after 1978. The visit occurred a decade after the end of cold war and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, the final departure of the British from Hong Kong in 1997 and corresponding rise of China in the shadows. Since then, a dozen Summit level meetings have held between the two sides. Conclusion of U.S. – India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative was a landmark achievement in the bilateral relationship in 2006. Congressional approval to the deal was given by the U.S. in October 2008.

Successive administrations in Washington maintained and expanded scope of relationship with India, building the momentum as a bipartisan priority. The two sides elevated the relationship to CGSP during President Trump's visit to India in February 2020.

The bilateral relations have progressed through multifaced structured dialogue mechanisms and legal agreements. There are over thirty multifaceted bilateral dialogues and working groups between the U.S. and India with 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (U.S. Secretaries of State and Defence level) as the premier mechanism established in 2018. As of July 2021, three 2+2 dialogues have taken place – a feature likely to remain annual in foreseeable future. With every engagement

between the two countries, the partnership has deepened in substance necessitated by the rising influence of China and the U.S. disengagement from Afghanistan. The two sides also collaborate at the multilateral fora including UN, G-20, IMF, World Bank, WTO, FAFF, ARF and IORA.

While India continues to intensify its all-encompassing bilateral partnership with Washington, it is also pursuing the concept of strategic autonomy. In this regard, it is keeping Moscow engaged through bilateral strategic partnership, participation in SCO and defence purchases from Russia, including forging a U.S. \$5.5 billion deal to buy four regiments of the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missiles.

New Delhi had been avoiding direct references to Beijing while engaging in the U.S. construct. However, skirmishes with China in Doklam in 2017 and Laddakh in 2020 (U.S. provided critical intelligence to India) exposed vulnerabilities in Indian intelligence/military capabilities and accelerated New Delhi's strategic drift towards and dependency on Washington.

Contours of U.S. – India Defence Partnership

Defence cooperation is central to U.S. – India strategic relationship. Washington designated India as a Major Defense Partner in 2016 and elevated its status to Strategic Trade Authorization Tier - 1, which allows India to receive license-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies regulated by the Department of Commerce.

The two sides have completed signing of four foundational agreements for deeper military and defence cooperation. While the first General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed in 2002, the other three agreements including Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA); Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA); and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geospatial Intelligence, were signed in 2016, 2019 and 2020, respectively.

While LEMOA allows the two militaries to use each other's bases for logistical purposes, BECA enables New Delhi to access U.S. geospatial intelligence enhancing accuracy of Indian automated weapons systems, including missiles/armed drones, and improve Air-to-Air Communications and navigation under COMCASA framework.

U.S. defense sales to India, through both the FMS and DCS, stood at US \$20 billion in 2020. These were near zero in 2008. The recent FMS sales included US \$ 2.8 billion Seahawk helicopters, U.S. \$ 796 million Apache helicopters and U.S. \$ 189 million Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures. As part of DCS, the U.S. authorized sale of over US\$ 3 billion in defense articles since 2015. These included military electronics; fire control, laser, imaging, and guidance equipment; and

aircraft and related articles.

Besides offering sale of Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial System, the U.S. Political Military Bureau supports provision of Lockheed Martin F-21, Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet and F-15EX Eagle as part of India's future fighter aircraft acquisitions.

According to U.S. State Department, these platforms would enhance India's military capabilities, increase interoperability with the U.S., and advance shared interests in the "Indo-Pacific region." Enhancing defence partnership with India is defined as a key priority in the U.S. IPS.

Reaffirming CGSP with New Delhi, the U.S. I&C Act called on administration to deepen bilateral defense collaboration with India "that commensurate with its status as a Major Defence Partner."

Role of India in the U.S. Indo – Pacific Construct

India's concept of "Indo-Pacific" is closely aligned with the U.S. It was articulated in Prime Minister Modi's 2015 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) doctrine, underpinned by norms, rules and freedom of navigation. According to Indian External Affairs Minister, the Indo-Pacific construct "captures a mix of India's broadening horizons, widening interests and globalized activities."

Anchored in its "Act East" and "Act West" policies, New Delhi also announced its Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) in 2019. The IPOI has seven pillars: (i) maritime security; (ii) maritime ecology; (iii) maritime resources; (iv) capacity building and resource sharing; (v) disaster risk reduction and management; (vi) science, technology and academic cooperation; and (vii) trade, connectivity and maritime transport.

As part of the construct, India is proactively engaging within Quad and is strengthening its ties in political, security, economic and defence domains with all Quad members, including through 2+2 dialogue at the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers. It is also expanding engagement with France, Germany, Netherlands, the EU, South Asian countries, African States and ASEAN.

The U.S. recognizes India's role as critical for countering China in the region. Under the IPS framework, the U.S. aims to: (i) further strengthen defence ties with India including trade, interoperability and transfer of technology; (ii) promote cooperation on shared regional security concerns; (iii) build regional support for common principles in India Ocean; (vi) promote energy cooperation; and (v) partner with India on cyber, space, maritime and intelligence sharing.

Washington has also pledged to support India in its: (i) aspirations for becoming a global power; (ii) Act East policy; (iii) engagement beyond IOR; (iv) membership

of Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG); (v) leadership role in East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus (ADMM++); and (vi) dealing with continental challenges through diplomatic, military and intelligence channels.

The U.S. Senate I&C Act laid special emphasis on strengthening partnership with Quad members, particularly India, to build up their capacity to withstand economic and military coercion by China. The legislation also called for strengthening of IDFC and supporting co-financing infrastructure projects that would otherwise be included in BRI. I&C Act does not attach any conditions on assistance to New Delhi giving the current and future U.S. administrations wide latitude and discretion to support India, both economically and strategically, on the pretext of countering China without requiring much quid-pro-quo.

India's difficult relations and border dispute with China, resistance to BRI due to CPEC alignment and route, global ambitions, economic weight and military modernization plans, presents India as a natural ally for the U.S in containing China. Reliance on India is also assessed to be the most cost-effective option for the U.S. as it prevents overstretching of USINDOPACOM resources and simultaneously creates opportunities for increased U.S. defence sales to meet Indian military modernization needs.

South Asian Dynamics & Implications Of U.S. Ips

Pakistan – India Relations

Peace and stability in South Asia remain a distant dream due to difficult relations between Pakistan and India which have been historically engulfed with distrust, conflicts and disputes including, inter alia, Jammu and Kashmir, Sia Chin, Sir Creek, Indian state sponsored terrorism in Pakistan and violations of Indus Water Treaty, etc. The two sides have fought three wars since their Independence in 1947.

Existence of Faultline Conflict

The Jammu & Kashmir dispute remains the single largest obstacle for normalization of relationship between Pakistan and India and achieving sustainable peace in South Asia.

The current BJP government, which purses fascist ideology of RSS and thrives on anti-Muslim hatred, repealed Article 370 and provision 35A of the Indian Constitution on 5 August 2019. These provisions had granted special status to the disputed territory of IIOJ&K. The Indian actions tantamounted to unlawful annexation of disputed territory, creating serious peace and security situation between the two countries.

Pakistan strongly but responsibly reacted to the Indian gross violations of international norms, law and relevant UNSC Resolutions and immediately

downgraded its diplomatic ties with New Delhi. In addition, Islamabad launched a full-scale diplomatic offensive against the Indian move and reached out to the UNSC, which in response held two informal meetings.

Such a bold move by New Delhi would not have been possible without Washington's tacit understanding in this matter. The informal meetings of the UNSC affirms this notion as the U.S., France and Germany first initially resisted to hold the meeting and later downplayed New Delhi's actions during the Council's discussions, extending implicit support to the Indian stance. China and Russia aligned with Pakistan's position.

Dialogue Process with India

There is currently no formal dialogue process or structured engagement between the two sides since it was suspended by India after Mumbai attacks in 2008. However, few Summit level contacts were witnessed between the two sides till 2015. These included Prime Minister Sharif's visit to New Delhi for Prime Minister Modi's oath taking ceremony in 2014; bilateral meetings between the two Prime Ministers on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Ufa and UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015; and Prime Minister Modi's surprise unofficial visit to Lahore in December 2015.

The bilateral relationship came to a standstill with some significant developments in 2016, including Pathankot attack; martyrdom of Burhan Wani that engulfed the valley into violence; Uri incident in which 19 Indian troops were killed; and arrest of Indian Naval Officer Commander Kulbushan Jadhav who was operating a terrorist network in Pakistan.

Despite initial peace overtures from Prime Minister Imran Khan, the BJP government in India appeared least interested in normalizing the relations with Pakistan. However, since Indian actions of 5 August 2019 in the context of IIOJ&K, Pakistan has positioned that onus for creating enabling environment for dialogue now rests with India and conditional to reversal of its actions in IIOJ&K.

Pulwama Incident

The two nuclear armed countries practiced brinkmanship after Pulwama incident in 2019 – New Delhi blamed Pakistan for the incident. In an extremely irresponsible move, IAF attempted air strikes inside Pakistan on 26 February 2019, which were foiled by PAF. India resorted to misadventure despite Pakistan's rejection of Indian allegations, offer of investigation in case New Delhi shared evidence and warning that any aggression from India would be responded.

Pakistan Operationalized Deterrence

Demonstrating Pakistan's will and capability, PAF conducted well calibrated

retaliatory strikes at non-military targets inside IIOJ&K on 27 February 2019. PAF also shot down IAF Jets which followed Pakistan fighter aircrafts in hot pursuit and violated Pakistan airspace. The pilot of the downed Indian MiG-21 was arrested by Pakistan and later returned to India to de-escalate the situation. Pakistan's actions received wide appreciation from the international community.

Strategic Stability in South Asia

Nuclearization of the Region

In pursuit of “great-power ambition” and establishing regional hegemony, India conducted nuclear tests on 12 May 1998 - second since 1974. To restore strategic balance, Pakistan responded by its nuclear tests on 28 and 30 May 1998. The two sides have since developed varied types of nuclear weapon systems along with their delivery vehicles, corresponding to respective objectives, strategic pursuits, and military doctrines.

Nuclear Doctrines/Policies

India has a declared NFU nuclear doctrine. However, it is perceived to be shifting towards “preemptive nuclear counterforce doctrine” which is characterized as preemptive nuclear strike to disarm an adversary by destroying its nuclear weapons before launching. Statements from Indian political and military leadership and enhanced readiness measures to launch nuclear forces is indicative of this shift – casting a shadow on Strategic Stability in South Asia.

On the other hand, Pakistan has no regional or extra-regional ambitions with its nuclear capabilities being developed and maintained solely for defence and deterrence against India. Accordingly, Pakistan pursues a “policy of developing and maintaining Full Spectrum Deterrence, in line with the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and avoidance of arms race.”

Shifting Balance of Power in South Asia

The conventional and nuclear force balance between Pakistan and India is critical for strategic stability in the region. While the two countries maintain parity in nuclear force capabilities, India significantly outnumbers Pakistan's conventional forces in all dimensions.

India has become the third highest military spender in the world after U.S. and China, with expenditure of US \$ 72.9 billion (2.9% of GDP) in 2020. In comparison, the military expenditure by Pakistan was US\$ 10.38 billion (4% of GDP) in the same year. As part of military modernization efforts, India is pursuing qualitative and quantitative improvements in its conventional forces, with particular focus on its Airforce. New Delhi is also seeking to develop two tiered BMD shield; advance Anti-Satellite Capabilities; expand nuclear forces including delivery

systems; and improve intelligence collection, electronic and cyber warfare competencies. India demonstrated completion of its nuclear triad by conducting deterrence patrol in India Ocean in 2018. A comparison of Pakistan-India military power is illustrated in Figure-4.

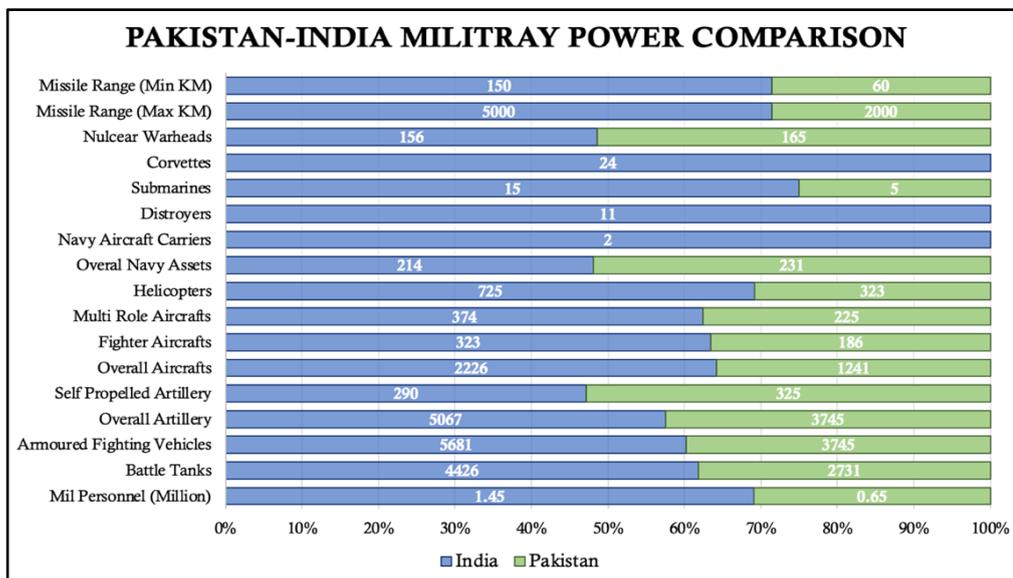


Figure – 4: Multiple Sources (Nuclear, Missile, Conventional Forces)

Challenges for Pakistan

The U.S. strategic competition with China and growing partnership with India under the Indo-Pacific construct is envisaged to have a wide range of implications for Pakistan and stability in the region. However, Pakistan is yet to develop a comprehensive response strategy to mitigate the wide-ranging threats that emerge from the U.S. construct. The likely challenges for Pakistan can be framed in three broad dimensions, which are not mutually exclusive.

Political and Diplomatic Dimension

Pakistan – U.S. bilateral relationship is being increasingly characterized as “transactional,” devoid of any structured institutional engagement. There has been no leadership level contacts between the two sides since President Biden’s election, apart from Foreign Minister’s telephone call and meetings of National Security Advisor with the U.S counterparts, respectively and senior official level exchanges only in the context of Afghanistan. The convergence of U.S.– India strategic interests and Washington’s endeavors to lure New Delhi against Beijing, are assessed to be one of the key reasons for the current state of Pakistan-U.S. relations.

Additionally, the Indian lobbies in Washington are assessed to be collaborating with Jewish, Anti-Chinese, Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Islamophobic lobbies to undermine Pakistan-U.S. ties and scuttle positivity in the relationship. The

respective interests of these lobbies align due to Pakistan's aggressive diplomatic campaign in support of Palestine and prevailing Indian – Israeli nexus; strategic ties with China and implementation of CPEC; robust nuclear programme and advancements in missile technology; and aggressive stance on Islamophobia.

The EU and its members states, particularly France and Germany, also consider China as a 'Systemic rival' and perceive India as a "net security provider" in the region. While India offers security and economic depth against China, with annual Summit level engagements under Strategic Partnership, Pakistan is rather dependent on the EU for trade concessions under its GSP Plus regime. The political engagement also remains at the level of Foreign Minister with the last Pakistan – EU Summit held in 2010. Therefore, it can be anticipated that there will be deepening of EU – India strategic ties within the scope of Indo-Pacific construct and EU's engagement with Pakistan would continue to be marginal.

These dynamics cast a shadow on Pakistan's bilateral ties with the U.S., the EU and other partners in the Indo-Pacific construct against China. In this scenario, Pakistan is likely to be constrained in pursuing its vital interests including, inter alia: (i) resolution of Kashmir dispute; (ii) removal from FATF grey list; (iii) countering Indian sponsored terrorism and negative campaigns; listing of Indian sponsored terrorists under UNSC sanctions regimes; and (iv) securing membership of NSG.

Regional Peace and Stability Dimension

There are primarily four aspects under this dimension.

(i) U.S. – China Strategic Competition in Gwadar

CPEC, which encompasses development of Gwadar port, is the flagship project of China's BRI that connects Western China with the Indian Ocean. Gwadar thus carries immense strategic significance for both the U.S. and China – albeit for competing reasons. While China has the control of Gwadar port operation as part of CPEC arrangements, there is no existing agreement between the two sides for its use as a military facility by Chinese forces.

Besides immense economic and connectivity benefits, a naval/military facility in Gwadar can serve multiple strategic advantages for Beijing. It can: (i) allow China to break the U.S. – India military encirclement from the Southwest; (ii) connect Chinese mainland through land infrastructure being developed under the CPEC; and (iii) provide Beijing with strategic domination over strategic Strait of Hormuz. Chinese military facility in Djibouti already oversees the Bab-al-Mandab Strait. With these two strategic dominations, China can have significant influence over the Middle East Politics as well as oil and trade flows from the region.

Unfolding of BRI in Pakistan through flagship CPEC and development of Gwadar

port, including its possible militarization, constitutes a strategic risk for U.S. containment strategy against China. The situation thus poses significant Foreign, Security and Defence Policy challenges for Pakistan vis-à-vis maintaining cordial relationship with the U.S. and at the same time advancing strategic ties with China without being caught in the great power rivalry.

(ii) Instability in Afghanistan

The U.S. abrupt withdrawal without a political settlement has created a power vacuum and brought back specter of protracted conflict in Afghanistan. India has always acted as a spoiler of peace efforts, colluded with Afghan government to malign Pakistan and invested in terrorist networks for exporting terrorism to Pakistan. Although the fall of Kabul at the hands of Taliban on 15 August 2021 depicts gross miscalculations on part of U.S. and caught India off-guard, the U.S. is being alleged for supporting anti-Taliban fractions and other non-state actors in pursuance of a strategy towards maintaining “managed chaos” in Afghanistan, and consequently the wider region.

Instability in Afghanistan would keep Pakistan off-balance, negatively impacting the realization of CPEC and objectives associated with regional connectivity and development. Other threats for Pakistan emanating from an instable Afghanistan include, inter alia, influx of refugees, rise in Indian sponsored terrorism, and increased drug and narcotics trafficking.

(iii) Threats to Strategic Stability and Balance of Power

India’s massive defence expenditures and wide access to the state-of-the-art U.S. technology and military hardware, under the strategic partnership arrangements between the two sides, would significantly increase the existing conventional asymmetry between Pakistan and India.

New Delhi’s purchase of S-400 BMD from Russia also continues to be in works despite U.S. sanctions on acquisition of Russian advance conventional weapons – possibly a special waiver would be granted, or an alternate BMD System would be offered. In addition, India is acquiring sophisticated military equipment including fighter jets, surveillance and precision drones, and ballistic missile shields from France, Israel and other Western countries.

On the other hand, India extensively leverages its role in the Indo-Pacific construct to veto all U.S. military sales to Pakistan despite past agreements and legitimate defence needs. Similarly, defence and military sales from France and Germany are also being constrained under New Delhi’s influence, as well as strategic alignment of interests between European countries and India, to keep Pakistan’s military capabilities limited and under check.

The situation seriously threatens the regional balance of power and increases pressure on Pakistan to take adequate nuclear deterrence measures to offset the conventional asymmetry. Pakistan would also have to increasingly rely on Chinese and Russian alternatives to meet its defence needs.

(iv) Jammu and Kashmir Dispute

The U.S. and its European allies project themselves as flag bearers of international law and protection of human rights. However, they avoid any criticism of New Delhi's blatant violations of UNSC resolutions and systematic human rights abuses in IIOJ&K. With this implicit patronage, India is rather emboldened under the "Indo-Pacific" construct and its hostilities towards Pakistan under the right-wing BJP government are likely to be further intensified.

The geo strategic environment underpinned by the U.S. construct is therefore also not conducive for the resolution of Kashmir dispute, which is likely to remain a nuclear flash point between Pakistan and India, threatening peace and stability in the region.

Economic and Development Dimension

Pakistan's economy remains challenged with political instability, governance issues, rising external debt, current account deficit, negative balance of trade, low FDIs, limited access to international finance and low credit rating due to FATF grey listing.

To break the cycle of economic downturn Pakistan requires enabling and conducive international political environment. The U.S. and its European allies play a significant role in regulating global financial flows due to their influence in international financial institutions, including IMF and World Bank. Pakistan's access to international finance to meet its economic and development needs, therefore, remain contingent upon positive consideration by U.S. and its allies.

Conclusion

The U.S. Indo-Pacific construct against China enjoys bipartisan political support in Washington. It has been systematically mainstreamed in the U.S. legislative and strategic policy frameworks. The U.S. categorizes China as a "revisionist power" and considers BRI as an instrument that enables China to expand its global political, economic and military reach, and facilitates export of its "authoritarian capitalism" as alternate model of governance, threatening the established U.S. led western values-based world order.

Washington aims at aggressively containing and defeating China in all dimensions by pursuing clear lines of effort and strategic objectives through comprehensive course of actions under its IPS. It has been declared as top priority of President

Biden administration and White House is maintaining lead on the implementation of the Strategy, including through aligning its strategic and defence partnerships with Quad members as well as NATO and the EU allies. In addition, several economic and development initiatives to counter China's BRI are being launched by the U.S., including the latest B3W initiative which is supported by Group of 7 members and guided by the principles of Blue Dot Network certification programme.

Recognizing the role of India in the U.S. IPS as vital and the most cost effective, Washington is extending comprehensive political, diplomatic, defence and economic support to accelerate the rise of India as a major global power and serve as a counterweight to China in the region. The U.S. has also categorized India as a Major Defence Partner and entered into a range of agreements to facilitate India's access to sophisticated U.S. military technology and hardware as well as technical, intelligence and logistical support.

Collaboration with the U.S. under "Indo-Pacific" construct has enabled India to pursue its regional hegemonic designs while advancing its geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic objectives. India is aggressively leveraging its role in the construct to undermine Pakistan's strategic and economic interests, as well as Pakistan's bilateral relations with the U.S and the EU member states. The state of Pakistan – U.S. bilateral relations is already witnessing a serious downturn.

The dynamics emerging from the U.S. IPS and the growing U.S. – India strategic partnership poses significant challenges for Pakistan. In the political, diplomatic and economic dimension, Pakistan could face constraints in pursuing its vital strategic interests including, inter alia, resolution of Kashmir dispute, removal from FATF grey list, countering Indian sponsored terrorism and disinformation campaign, listing of terrorists and entities under UNSC sanctions regimes, NSG membership and access to international finance to meet development needs.

In the context of regional peace and stability, India's modernization of conventional forces at an increased scale, proportion and momentum; its aggressive and hostile force postures towards Pakistan; and the discriminatory approach maintained by the U.S. and its allies vis-à-vis Pakistan and India in terms of defence sales, seriously threatens the balance of power between the two countries and the strategic stability in region. Pakistan reliance on Chinese and Russian alternatives to meet its defence needs is also likely to significantly increase.

Furthermore, the U.S. strategic competition with China is assessed to be at play in South Asia due to geo-strategic importance of Gwadar and convergence of U.S. strategic interests with India. This situation can drag Pakistan in the middle of great power rivalry, posing significant challenges for its relations with the U.S. and at the same time strengthening strategic ties with China, including the implementation of

CPEC. With the abrupt U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan would also be constrained to deal with the consequences of possible instability in Afghanistan.

It is therefore concluded that the U.S. IPS would have significant implications on the Strategic Stability in South Asia, with wide ranging threats and challenges for Pakistan. A comprehensive response strategy by Pakistan is considered critical to offset the likely implications of the U.S. construct and its growing strategic partnership with India.

Recommendations

As the U.S.-China major power competition unfolds and the regional dynamics take their course, Pakistan's response measures should be underpinned by national objectives associated with strategic autonomy, long term economic security, peace and stability, and balance of power in the region. Some essential policy recommendations to address the challenges emanating from the U.S. IPS and the Indian strategic partnership with the U.S. are outlined in the ensuing paragraphs.

First, Pakistan should expand its diplomatic footprint and shift from reactive to proactive approach. It should pursue relations with countries based on mutual trust, respect, and interests; avoid zero-sum framing of international politics; and play an aggressive role at the multilateral fora, to secure Pakistan's vital national political, security and economic interests. It would require strengthening of Pakistan's foreign policy institutional structure and allocation of enhanced resources.

Second, Pakistan must not endorse the "Indo-Pacific" construct and strive to build relations with the U.S. and China on their own respective merits. While aspiring for a broad based and structured engagement with the U.S., Pakistan must continue to strengthen its strategic ties with China. U.S. participation in CPEC to offset its negative apprehensions and concerns may be explored. At the same time, it would be critical to visualize and calibrate Pakistan's long-term approach on the U.S. Indo-Pacific construct and how to navigate the possible strategic "asks" from the two sides.

Third, Pakistan should continue to work with China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, U.S., the EU and Central Asia States for achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan. At the same time, Pakistan should take necessary counter measure to address the implications of instability in Afghanistan, including the threats of terrorism by strengthening the border controls and robust intelligence networks.

Fourth, Pakistan should take appropriate measures to address balance of power challenges emanating from U.S. defence partnership with India, including by strengthening strategic and conventional military capabilities. Since U.S. and its European allies pose limitations on military sales, Pakistan should strengthen its defence ties with China and Russia to meet its military needs.

Fifth, Pakistan should seek to diversify its reliance on Western influenced international financial institutions as well as debt and export markets. This is critical to reduce Pakistan's economic vulnerabilities and avoid external political leverages, in the long term.

Sixth, there is need to have disciplined approach – devoid of any frustration, on public messaging in the context of Pakistan – U.S. relations, to avoid any miscommunications and misunderstanding.

Bibliography

Jadoon, Usman, Director General United Nations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, Islamabad, 28 June, 2021

Mehdi, Zaman, Director General Strategic Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, Islamabad, 7 July, 2021

Zaidi, Faraz, Director General China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, Islamabad, 5 July, 2021.

Chaudry, Aftab, Director, India, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, Islamabad, 19 July, 2021

Janjua, Zaheer, Ambassador of Pakistan in Brussels, interview by author, Islamabad, 17 June, 2021

Sharif, Salman, Counsellor Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, telephonic interview by author, Islamabad 2 July, 2021

Trump, Donald J. "National security strategy of the United States of America, Executive Office of The President, Washington DC, 2017", <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (accessed 1 July 2021)

Trump, Donald J. "Declassified U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, Executive Office of The President, Washington DC, 2021", <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2021)

U.S. Department of State, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision, 2019" <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>(accessed 1 July 2021)

U.S. Department of Defense, "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, 2019" under "Publications", <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF> (accessed 1 July 2021)

Biden Jr, Joseph R. "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. Executive Office of the President, Washington DC, 2021", <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf> (accessed 1 July 2021)

U.S. Congress, "S.1260 – United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, 8 June 2021", <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1260/text> (accessed 10 July 2021)

Dolven, Ben, and Bruce Vaughn. "Indo-Pacific Strategies of US Allies and Partners: Issues for Congress." In Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, vol. 46217. 2020.

Vaughn, Bruce, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Ben Dolven, K. Alan Kronstadt, Susan V. Lawrence, Thomas Lum, Wayne M. Morrison, and Ronald O'Rourke. "The Trump Administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific": Issues for Congress." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 3 (2018).

O'Rourke, Ronald. "US-China strategic competition in South and East China Seas: Background and issues for Congress." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 13 (2020).

Paskal, Cleo. "Indo-Pacific strategies, perceptions and partnerships", Chatamhouse, London, 2021

Heiduk, Felix, and Gudrun Wacker. "From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: Significance, Implementation and Challenges", Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, 2020, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/from-asia-pacific-to-indo-pacific> (accessed 1 July 2021)

Khan, Mahrukh. "US Indo-Pacific Strategy: Implications for South Asia", ISS, Islamabad, 2021, http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/4_SS_Mahrukh_Khan_No-1_2021.pdf (accessed 10 August 2021)

Killebrew, Robert. "Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power." *Parameters* 41, no. 3 (2011)

Medcalf, Rory. *Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the contest for the world's pivotal region*. Manchester University Press, 2020.

Rachman, Gideon. *Easternization: Asia's rise and America's decline from Obama to Trump and beyond*. Other Press, LLC, 2017.

Auslin, Michael R. *Asia's New Geopolitics: Essays on Reshaping the Indo-Pacific*. Hoover Press, 2020.

Medcalf, Rory. "Reimagining Asia: From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific." In *International Relations and Asia's Southern Tier*, pp. 9-28. Springer, Singapore, 2018.