

India-US Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA):  
Implications for the South Asian Region

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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a webinar on “India-US Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA): Implications for the South Asian Region” on 11th November 2020. The webinar was chaired by Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema (President/Executive Director SVI). The guest speakers included Dr. Adil Sultan (Dean/HOD, FASSS, Air University, Islamabad), Amb. (R) Zamir Akram (Former Permanent Representative to CD/ United Nations, Geneva) and Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf (Security Analyst).

The recent agreement between India and US BECA that involves the sharing of geospatial intelligence threatens the regions strategic stability and urgent steps need to be taken to counter India’s growing nuclear and conventional capabilities. It was stressed during the webinar that growing Indo-US strategic partnership is not only making South Asia but the entire Asia-Pacific region more volatile and dangerous. The US goal is to counter China and improve India’s ability to overcome the strategic advantage that China has maintained so far. BECA would raise India’s situational awareness which would further facilitate India’s ambition to conduct preemptive strike against Pakistan. Pakistan needs to build its indigenous space program and also enhance its space cooperation with China. The shifting balance of power in the South West Asian region and the evolving strategic environment could bring Pakistan and China together into binding and mutually supporting formal defence agreement.

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema formally inaugurated the session with a warm welcome to the participants and expressed his gratitude for their attendance. In his introductory remarks he stated that India-US partnership has come to a point where it carries significant implications for not only Pakistan and China but for the entire South Asia. The growing military and strategic cooperation between the two have essentially given them a status of defence partners. The recently concluded BECA agreement between the two however, is not yet commonly known with insufficient information available. Hence, the SVI has taken a step by organizing this webinar to give the audience a clear view on BECA and various dimensions of this defence agreement between United States and India.

After his introductory remarks Dr. Cheema handed over the session to Mr. Haris Bilal Malik (Research Associate, SVI) to present a short primer on “India-US Basic Exchange Agreement (BECA) and its Implications for the South Asian Region”. He began his presentation by giving an overview where he stated that BECA was signed during the 2 + 2 India-US ministerial dialogue on October 27, 2020. Under the pact, the US will be able to share with India classified satellite data, critical geospatial information, and topographical data for long-range navigation and missile targeting. BECA is the last of four foundational defence agreements between the two countries that would allow a much higher level of military cooperation in technology, interoperability of forces, and exchange of sensitive and classified information. Before BECA three fundamental agreements were also signed between both states. These agreements include: ‘General Security

of Military Information Agreement' (GSOMIA) that was signed in 2002 to ensure security standards for safeguarding critical information shared by the US with India; 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement' (LEMOA) signed in 2016. The US had designated India as a 'Major Defence Partner' following which the 'LEMOA was signed. This allows both countries to use each other's military bases. Lastly in 2018 they signed 'Communication Compatibility and Security Arrangement' (COMCASA), which enhances the interoperability between the two militaries and provides for the sale of high-end technology from the US to India. In terms of its scope, BECA is an intelligence-sharing agreement proposed between the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defence and India's Defence Ministry. It will allow sharing of information including advanced satellite and topographic data such as; maps, nautical and aeronautical charts, geodetic, geophysical, geomagnetic, and gravity data. Furthermore, it will allow provision of high-quality GPS for military systems to navigate, and missiles with real-time intelligence to precisely target the adversary. While most of the information shared would be classified, the pact also focuses on sharing classified information with safeguards to prevent it from being shared with any third party.

While highlighting the benefits of BECA he said, sharing geospatial intelligence with the US through BECA would boost Indian military's accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones. This would significantly enhance Indian military's situational awareness for planning conventional or nuclear strikes, against its adversaries. BECA will allow India to use advanced navigational aids and avionics on US-supplied defence equipment. India has been using US platforms including the C-17 Globemaster III for military transport, Boeing's Chinook CH-47 as heavy-lift helicopters, Boeing's Apache as tank-killers, P-8I for overland reconnaissance, and Lockheed Martin's C-130J for airlifting troops.

Mr. Malik opined that BECA would further enhance India-US military cooperation as they plan to review their bilateral military-to-military engagements with the provision of holding joint military exercises, training, and expert exchanges. BECA is expected to elevate the India-US strategic/defence partnership to an unprecedented mega level. It is one of the agreements that the US usually signs with its closest partners as it allows the interoperability of armed forces and the exchange of classified sensitive information. The US has one of the largest defence satellite networks which includes spy satellites, GPS satellites, and other specific intelligence satellites such as Communication Intelligence (COMINT) and Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) satellites. These satellites continuously provide the US with immense amounts of geospatial data which can give minute-by-minute updates on military movements anywhere in the world. With BECA this data would be available to India.

He concluded his presentation by stating that the agreement will give India access to extremely accurate geo-spatial data that has several military applications. The US despite

knowing the implications of these new developments at the regional level is significantly enhancing its strategic and military ties with India. Against the backdrop of widely believed 'new cold war' between the US and China, the US has created a new Indian war base in the region.

After the primer Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema invited the first guest speaker Dr. Adil Sultan to present his views on "India-US Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA): A Critical Appraisal". Dr. Sultan explained that this agreement is a result of prolonged negotiations that span over a decade and finally concluded in 2+2 dialogue. The represents included US Secretary of Defence and Secretary of State and the Indian counterparts. BECA is the last of four foundational agreements that will enable India to access information gathered from the US satellites and advanced navigational aids on the US supplied platforms to India. This and the other three agreements sum up the strategic defence partnership which India and the US are building that includes information sharing of technology. The other three were 'General Security of Military Information Agreement' (GSOMIA) that was signed in 2002, 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement' (LEMOA) signed in 2016 and 'Communication Compatibility and Security Arrangement' (COMCASA) that was signed in 2018. Together all these four agreements would significantly enhance India's military's situational awareness and preparedness for planning precision strikes mainly against Pakistan. They project that it is intended against China, but I always argue that this capability would be mainly used against Pakistan and not necessarily against China. We have also seen India's evolving posture from the statements coming from the Indian decision makers about the possibility of the preemptive counterforce strike, so we have to see these agreements in accordance with the official pronouncements/ statements made by the senior members of nuclear command and control authority and the military/civilian decision makers about the counterforce temptations.

While giving a brief background he stated that it all started with Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) in 2004 and has brought India to a stage where it has signed this agreement. This shows India has been persistently following a roadmap that could help build its military potential and raise its stature of a credible regional or a potential global power. The Next Step in Strategic Partnership that was agreed between the two countries in 2004 provided the basis for expanding the bilateral activities in the field of commerce, space, civil nuclear energy and dual use sensitive technologies. The joint statement in July 18, 2005 provided a future framework for building a strategic partnership and included commitment to develop closer ties in space explorations and satellite navigations etc. Besides promising a civil nuclear cooperation agreement that offered unprecedented concessions to India it allowed India to keep at least eight of its facilities outside the safeguards purely for military purposes. So, it all started from NSSP and today has reached to India-US nuclear cooperation agreement. In order to operationalize the nuclear cooperation agreement, the US had to amend its own domestic laws which otherwise prohibit civil nuclear cooperation agreement with a non NPT state; that India is. US also forced

48 member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to grant India specific exemptions from groups export control guidelines so that India could engage in the civil nuclear trade with NSG member states. Now US has been continuously pushing the NSG members to allow India a full membership of the group which many of the members have been resisting because of their own non-proliferation ideals and principles. He said that the whole idea of providing this background is that this cooperation is not about single agreement, it is all encompassing strategic partnership where nuclear and conventional capabilities are gradually being built to develop India's stature as a credible regional power.

He noted an important point wherein the US has pushed the other export control regime members such as the MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime), the Australia group and the Wassenaar arrangement to bring India as a formal member. India is not yet successful in gaining the NSG membership but is now a formal member of other three export control regimes which also deal with the chemical and biological technologies. So those sensitive technologies which were earlier denied to countries such as India, are now available. Another important aspect is that when the Indian government or the congress was negotiating the India-US civil nuclear cooperation agreement and the contours of the strategic partnership, the BJP at that time strongly opposed and accused congress government on giving up India's strategic autonomy. However, after a span of over fifteen years the same BJP government has now become the biggest supporter of these agreements that may have consequences for India's own security in the distant future. Many Indian scholars are also writing about India having given up on its own strategic autonomy.

While deliberating upon 'what is BECA', he stated that this agreement is for geospatial cooperation and is mainly a communication agreement between the US DOD and India's Ministry of Defence. This agreement will allow India and US to share military information including advanced satellite topographic data such as maps and other technical data which will not be made accessible to any third party. This clause probably was inserted to pacify India's concerns about the possibility of US sharing information about the Indian military with Pakistan. These concerns were highlighted by Indian academics and scholars, and this pre-condition was incorporated in the agreement that whatever data US will get, it will not share with any third party. After signing of BECA, the US will be able to provide vast navigational aids and avionics on US supplied aircrafts and drones mainly the predators. With access to the US supplied geospatial intelligence, the Indian military will be able enhance accuracy of its cruise and ballistic missiles and armed drones which India is looking forward to purchase from the US. Both India and the US had also agreed to review the bilateral military to military engagements which will include holding of joint military exercises, training and expert exchanges.

These developments are being viewed with concern by India's neighbors. China has already dismissed these efforts as a showoff and effort to intimidate China. While Pakistan has termed it a threat to the strategic stability in the region according to the foreign office statement. The excitement that is generated within India after signing of the BECA agreement has inadvertently exposed India's space-based capacity to acquire similar information from the indigenous satellites. Because earlier India made a claim of becoming an aerospace power but the way this capability and agreement is being projected now, indicates that India didn't have credible space-based capability before this. India claims to have successfully developed anti-satellite weapons and precision strike hypersonic weapons, which require high level of accuracy. So, this agreement will allow India to enhance its capabilities. There is also a possibility that India will be using its defence agreements with the US for political gains to signal to the outside power that it is a defence partner of the US without formally signing any of the defence pact. Leaders like Modi and Trump use such agreements to prove themselves more credible leaders to their domestic audience.

Talking about the 'implications for the region' he said that the US-India comprehensive global partnership is likely to enhance India's political standing at the international level. It is currently helping the BJP leadership to restore its credibility at domestic front. While on the military side access to the classified imageries from the US satellites would help India improve its situational awareness and plan offensive military operations which may include the possibility of aerial surgical strike inside mainland Pakistan. India could also exploit its enhanced situational awareness to plan counterforce conventional or nuclear strike against Pakistan's strategic assets. Recently tested hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (STDV) would be able to carry hypersonic cruise missiles with more speed and hit the targets with greater accuracy. Hence, the efficacy of these weapon systems would be enhanced. Hypersonic weapons due to their short flight time could also be useful against mobile launchers such as the Nasr missile system that Pakistan is likely to employ as part of its full spectrum deterrence posture to deter India's limited war fighting doctrine. India could also utilize the information acquired from the US satellites for its drone strikes across the line of control or across the international border to help reduce the risk of manned aerial surgical strike and achieve its limited political objectives without putting credibility of its military at risk as was seen during the Balakot crisis. The recently loosening of the US export control rules for the sale of drones by reinterpreting the missile technology control regime guidelines to specific countries is also another aspect which would largely benefit India.

Dr. Adil Sultan concluded by pointing out 'options for Pakistan' and stated that unlike India which has significant presence in space and has also developed anti-satellite weapon system, Pakistan is yet to seriously embark on its space journey. This deficiency could seriously impede Pakistan's military planning and development options to counter India's evolving unmanned surgical strike capability and its counterforce temptations. Pakistan will have to fast



track its indigenous space program to meet its growing demand in the civil as well as military domains. This however would require resources and latest technology that is not readily accessible to Pakistan due to political considerations. To address this growing gap in the space domain Pakistan could explore expanding its space cooperation with China. Both countries are already working on SUPARCO (Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission), as part of this plan China is committed to launching several communication and earth observation satellites of Pakistan. This cooperation nevertheless needs to be further expanded focusing more on the civilian applications so as to bridge the gap as early as possible. Since the developments in the civilian sphere outpace the military developments around the globe and keeping into consideration the fact that technologies of technically advanced countries such as the US and others, are also outsourcing their projects to tech giants such as WhatsApp and Facebook instead of establishing their military focusing infrastructure. It would be useful and important for Pakistan to consider focusing on its civilian space development program.

The second guest speaker Amb (R) Zamir Akram deliberated upon “BECA and other Indo-US Agreements: Implications for China”. Mr. Akram analyzed Indo-US agreements in strategic context with regards to China. He said that ever since the end of cold war the US has tried to maintain global hegemony, based on stopping other states to emerge as a challenger which is a zero-sum approach. According to the US estimates, China has potential to emerge as a rival country which will challenge its global power/influence. Therefore, this zero-sum approach aimed at containing China has led to the “New Cold War”. In this new cold war Indo-US partnership is central and plays a role of lynch pin.

He said that the elements of this approach to contain China involve several features and BECA is part of these features. However, other features include the use of the idea of rule based international system and free navigation in the international seas, especially in the Indo-Pacific Ocean. In order to control important straits and choke points such as Strait of Malacca and Hormuz, which are vital for China’s trade and oil import, the US has also encouraged the “Quadilateral Alliance” which includes India, Australia, US and Japan; to obtain the ability to contain and confront China in the so called Indo-Pacific Ocean. US maintain bases in the Persian Gulf, pacific and Indian Ocean; it has also made incursions in the South China Sea and East China Sea, which started as a result of Obama’s Administration Policy of “Pivot to Asia”. Due to which 60% of US air and naval power was transferred to Asia-Pacific region. US has also encouraged littoral states of South China Sea in their disputes against China where we saw a decision on the basis of LOS (Laws of the Sea) which favored smaller countries in their disputes against China. Apart from that, the US has also imposed trade sanction against China under Trump Administration, which caused a greater degree of animosity between both powers. Moreover, the US is also promoting dissensions in China such as Xinjiang, Tibet and recently in Hong Kong, and Taiwan which is considered as a part of its mainland by China. Therefore, in this geostrategic

context, the agreement between US and India needs to be viewed and analyzed. These agreements also include “STA Tier 1 Status” given to India by the US, which provides access to high-tech information and communication technology. This status previously was only reserved for the NATO allies and the US strategic partners. Other important aspect is Quad which involves naval and military exercise and also promotion of inter-operability between partners of this alliance.

While explaining the implications of the Indo-US cooperation for China he was of the view that all these agreements put together will broaden the scope of Indo-US partnership. Especially in the area of high-tech military capabilities, these efforts by US are part of building India as counterweight to China. By increasing India’s strategic capabilities such as its long range, medium range and short range missiles, which are land, air and sea base, as well as its space capabilities and evolving ballistic missile defense system, US goal is to counter China and improve India’s ability to overcome the strategic advantage China has maintained so far. Moreover, the US will be able to use India’s naval bases especially Andaman and Nicobar Islands close to strait of Malacca whereas, Indian can now also use US, Australian and Japanese basis in the region. Indian naval and air power against China in South and South East Asia will also become more proactive, where presence of Indian Naval vessels in South China Sea are already witnessed. Overall, such cooperation between both sides has increased Indian belligerence towards China, in recent times the Ladakh Crisis is an example. In the past, India would have desperately tried to avoid confrontation with Chinese ground forces.

He said that Chinese response to this started way back when the US embarked on its policy to contain China by entering into strategic partnership/alliance with Russia, which is increasingly important alliance in Asia-Pacific. China has also pushed back on its own by initiatives like Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and has increased its military presence in South China Sea by making islands which are the out-posts for its military out-reach in the region. Additionally, China started partnership with other regional countries to counter Indo-US partnership, such as its partnership with Pakistan. Ambassador Zamir Akram emphasized that Pakistan should also take this opportunity to further enhance the cooperation with China. On the other hand, China at the movement on its own has out-maneuvered and out-gunned India on the basis of its technological and strategic capabilities. In some areas Chinese defense budget is lesser than the US but it has invested in technologies which are important in containing US ingress into its region and spheres of interest. It has focused on building its naval power and more importantly in maintaining edge in high-tech weaponry, such as AI. In this situation China is capable to counter Indo-US or Quadrilateral alliance, and India also has this realization that after certain point it cannot push China. In the joint statement issued at the 2+2 meeting where BECA agreement is signed there is no direct mention of China, there is mention of Pakistan and Afghanistan in different contexts but no frontal assault on China. It indicates the Indian sensibility to not push China beyond a



certain point. Having said that, US did not miss the opportunity to mention its support for India in Laddakh standoff, as well as the allegation and accusations against China for human right violations. However, India will use this opportunity of cold war between US and China to its full benefit, which it has already shown the ability to do so. South Asia will continue to see the growth of strategic partnership between US and India. Biden Administration may not pursue the very aggressive public policy against China but the US will continue its strategic objectives against China.

In his concluding remarks Ambassador Zamir Akram said that the Chinese Foreign Minister has correctly termed "Quad" as "Asian NATO," and has warned the US to not use regional circumstances against China. However, this to be seen that whether India will respect these Chinese wishes; as India is involved in alliance formation against China and at the same time desire de-escalation at Ladakh. This is a double game, which is dangerous because China will respond when necessary. Overall, the pursuit of Indo-US strategic partnership and alliance makes region more volatile and dangerous in future.

The third guest speaker Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf presented his views on "An assessment of BECA: Implications for the South Asian Region." He started off by stating that BECA in his view is the continuation of the US-India civil nuclear trade agreement of 2005, that's where it all started. Followed by the 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement' (LEMOA) signed in 2016, Communication Compatibility and Security Arrangement' (COMCASA) that was signed in 2018 and extended in the background of the Doklam that was in 2017, the Indian and the Chinese border crises at Laddakh and Balakot in 2019. Balakot is one area where Indian cyber space capabilities were seriously challenged by Pakistan. So, there is a big gap in the Indian system vis-à-vis Pakistan and China which it wants to fill now. It is also a reaction to Sino-Pakistan cooperation, what I have been calling as the end of US geo-strategy in Asia that is the containment trick. BECA is likely to bring Inter-operability in Indo-Pacific command. As mentioned earlier there is entire wealth of data which is available, he said that in his opinion it will likely gel with local Israeli, French, British & Russian equipment held by India. This is a controversial point that needs to be highlighted because there is a surveillance cooperation of India with Israel, as Israel has deployed its systems in India. There is also cooperation with French more so now because of the new aircrafts, while with the British the cooperation has been there since 1947. Other than that, India holds lot of Russian equipments particularly the air defence system and will try to gel it through the local technologies. He further stated that BECA will also give cyber space superiority to India against Pakistan, if not against China. In relation to Pakistan this entire complex of the five or six agreements and the Indo-specific command is a swinging hammer. As mentioned earlier China has not been referred so openly but Pakistan has. Therefore, at some stage like always, whatever the military posture is in India, it does become

Pakistan specific. The BECA and the COMCASA provide doors to the US listening, it will be able to spy on India.

Talking about the 'implications of the BECA' he said that India could be held hostage by the US. It implies Indian nuclear deployment, command, control, activation and management systems because India is conceding too much to the US. There is lot of criticism within India by their intelligentsia and strategist about against government's intentions. US could exercise operative control over India by manipulating the flow of data, intelligence, information, imagery, maps & charts. Though the confidentiality clauses are built in, but in real politik nothing can stop America or India from exploiting the information they already have. US as the corresponding effort will use allies such as Israel, France and Arabs as leverages over India to keep India under check. We have seen that happening to Pakistan in the past through the Middle East. Shifting balance of power in the South West Asian region will force Pakistan and China to gravitate towards each other. Moreover, the evolving strategic environment in the IPR, IOR, astride the LaC and on the LoC may edge Pakistan and China to a binding, wide ranging, and mutually supporting formal defence arrangement.

While explaining the effects of BECA on the South Asian region specifically Pakistan, he said that it will give a quantum jump to Indian GIS (Geographical Information System) & MIS (Management Information System) capability which India presently lacks as we saw it in Balakot and Laddakh where India clearly did not have sufficient early warning regarding China. It will also enhance the target acquisition and destruction capability. As mentioned by Dr. Adil Sultan. Remote controlled war through armed drones will be an added dimension especially when India is also poised to get drones from the US. It will also include hypersonic and all this would be Pakistan specific. It could challenge and curtail Pakistan's capabilities including nuclear as the nuclear deterrence also comprises of the defensive measures or the ability to counter the threat. Hence, that is the area where India will try to gain a superiority. Having said that the Indian operational strategy now will be according to the Indian exercises carried out in the Sundarji doctrine and it also gives the new lease of life to their Cold Start Doctrine. If one has followed some of the briefs or early warnings circulating regarding the de-structuring of the Indian defence forces into five commands, it is evident that the reorganization which India is contemplating is in sync with the present developments. Consequently, Pakistan has to acquire systems from China and Russia in short term but ultimately because the cyberspace is a triple edged weapon, Pakistan will have to develop its indigenous capabilities. It will also pose challenges to Pakistan's inter-operability within & between three services and nuclear command because Pakistan has American equipment, Chinese equipment, its own JF thunder which is hybrid and many others such as air surveillance systems which are basically Swedish. He emphasized on the need to overcome this shortage. He further opined that more than Pakistan it is India which needs to address this point because with the existing equipment it already has inter-operability problems

and by bringing in the US technologies the problems are going to compound. Pakistan will have to prepare for the digital battlefield and enhance its cyberspace capabilities. So, we not only have to go for our space programs now, there are many islands in the Arabian Sea that belong to Pakistan. Hence, we have to start thinking very seriously on how we are going to use these islands for our early warning capability and to keep an eye on India, the US and the other states present in the Arabian Sea. Lastly, we have to prepare multi-redundant fail-safe counter systems which includes nuclear and air defence against Indian strikes etc.

Brig. Samson Simon Sharaf concluded his presentation on a point to ponder, he inquired 'where is the Asian pivot?' He said that NATO is being Asianized by the US in the form of India? Simultaneously the US will still stick to its old concept of the Southern pivot, which is in the Middle East and Africa, while at the same time it is keeps gravitating towards Pakistan. So, the question remains as to where the Asian pivot is? Is it India, Middle East or Pakistan?

#### **Observations and questions/ answers session:**

First question was posed by Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema (President/Executive Director SVI), he asked if India is silent about the implications of BECA for China and the main thrust of the agreement is going to be against Pakistan or Afghanistan, and Afghanistan at the moment being a non-entity in this particular context, only means the major impact of BECA agreement would be on Pakistan as has been very well highlighted by all the panelists. What our responses should be from that point of view and how can the US still claim to have friendly relationship with Pakistan while simultaneously signing BECA with India? Amb. (R) Zamir Akram responded by saying that I have no doubt that given the correlation of power between India and China. India, as I said in my presentation is using China as an excuse to build up its high-tech military capabilities both strategic and conventional. But Pakistan has to assume that it is not about Indian intentions, it is about capabilities. So, we have to work on the assumption that the India will use these capabilities against Pakistan and have already indicated its intentions by talking about preemptive counterforce strike etc. The purpose would be to breakout of the stalemate that full spectrum deterrence has imposed in this region between India and Pakistan. So at least theoretically India thinks that it can break out of that stalemate and make use of the conventional numerical advantage that it has. It is a possibility in the future by holding Pakistan hostage at the strategic level. Hence, Pakistan cannot assume that the US will prevent India from using this technology against Pakistan. It is simply not a safe presumption. The US approach towards India and Pakistan for a long time has been that Pakistan is a secondary power and should accept India's regional hegemony as the other smaller South Asian countries have done already. But this is something Pakistan is not willing to accept. So that puts Pakistan on the wrong foot as far as the US is concerned. The answer in my mind to respond to this emerging threat is through greater strategic cooperation with China which is the only option. Many people think that we should not

put all eggs in one basket, but my argument always is that there is only one basket now and that is the Chinese basket. So, Pakistan's strategic relations with China need to be elevated to the areas of high-tech military technology and capabilities along with AI, cyberspace, outer space and all the areas where Pakistan is weak vis-à-vis India. This is where we need to now focus in the new generation of warfare. Dr. Adil Sultan also commented on how US will respond to these concerns of Pakistan. Looking back at the history it is evident that in the backdrop of the India-US strategic partnership once Pakistan raised these concerns at the official level. However, the US replied that this was not against Pakistan, but was against the other regional powers because of the emerging regional security environment where India feels compelled to safeguard its interest. So that's the answer we are going to get even now if we raise this issue with US. Therefore, at the end of the day we are on our own, we have to make our own decisions. We cannot expect that the US will do anything to address our primary security concerns. My biggest apprehension is that perhaps having this capability of better situational awareness or planning to have more accurate strikes against Pakistan, this gels with the doctrinal statements or the pronouncements made by the senior military and political leadership especially the military leadership which have been planning for the counterforce strikes after the full spectrum deterrence that neutralize their cold start doctrine. So the way India is building these capabilities and now this agreement along with the weapon systems that it is developing, gives India the capability to project against Pakistan as a deterrence, sending out a warning to not even consider employing the short range ballistic missiles in case of conflict because this capability has now been acquired and can neutralize any attempts from Pakistan. So in real terms whether India will actually do it or not is at slightly unclear because that's a risk that India won't like to take. But having acquired the potential of deterring Pakistan, the Indian decision makers could be emboldened to carry out or contemplate a conventional strike. This is where the major concern lies because it could lead to miscalculation, which could trigger a crisis into a major war. India will not necessarily strike but having this potential can lead to that thinking in Indian decision makers to go for a preemptive counterforce strike against Pakistan which is dangerous. Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf also commented by saying that as always and till today Indian conventional military force structure is Pakistan specific. That is why Indian armed forces have not been able to challenge the Chinese incursions in Laddakh. Their rapid and mechanized formations, their clumsy mountain divisions, their artillery, their field rockets and their short-range missiles, even their long range missiles are Pakistan specific. If we read into US-India civil nuclear agreement, the major posturing is in the preface which talks of preemptive retaliations. So, Pakistan got a clear message in 2005 about what the future is going to be and fifteen year ahead here we are today discussing the same issue. The Indian hypersonic capabilities and drone capabilities also are Pakistan specific. They cannot fly across the Himalayas and launch themselves into the Chinese territory. At the end of the day this entire BECA agreement and all wealth of the data that India will be able to use for accurate target acquisition will all be Pakistan specific. However,

the Europe and NATO had long debated the tactical weapon system and ultimately under various agreements they were disarmed, but this will not apply to South Asia. As far as the evolution of the nuclear doctrine is concerned, the leap will be turned in South Asia vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. Pakistan is under threat and we already had a decade wasted, it's high time we galvanize ourselves not only in our military systems but also cyberspace systems etc. Pakistan needs to build its national power.

AVM (R) Faaiz Amir HI (M) S Bt (Former VC Air University) asked Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf that he, while explaining the effects of BECA in South Asia, mentioned that BECA will cause challenges to Pakistan's inter-operability within and between three services and nuclear command, which needs further explanation. He posed the second question and pointed out that Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf mentioned in his presentation that India would also have problems in inter-operability because of the diversity of its equipment but in one of the slides on BECA it was mentioned that Indian equipment would gel with the Israeli, French and British equipment. So, there is a dichotomy which needs clarification. He further asked Dr. Adil Sultan to explain how will BECA impact the inter-operability of American equipment with existing diverse equipment in India? Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf responded by saying that India already has inter-operability problem and it was very well demonstrated in the Mirages, SU-30s, MiG 21 in the Balakot strikes. And Pakistan demonstrated it did not have that issue of inter-operability because of our JF thunders or our mirages which were used for strike that were French and inside Pakistan territory we had a backup of the F-16s and the American equipment. So, Pakistan has surmounted many inter-operability problems. But now to counter what India is likely to do and advance in the future, we will have to induct new equipment not only from China but from all the sources that are openly available in the world. That is the inter-operability issue I was talking about that we have to deal with. What I meant was that India would likely gel this equipment with Israeli, French and British equipment. Though the agreement does not permit India to do so but who will stop it, once it develops its own systems. India has the early warning systems from Israel, India has the radars, French systems and British systems along with Russian air defence system, hence India will have to at some point carry out indigenous development. As a country if Pakistan had such equipment and had this opportunity, it would have also done the same. So, I feel India will be successful in gelling all this. Dr. Adil Sultan responded to the second question by saying that there is operational angle i.e. the inter-operability and there is commercial angle also but because these sale of drones and other high tech equipment to India was conditioned that unless India agrees to sign these agreements it won't be able to sell those equipment. So, there was a kind of bargaining also, hence apart from the inter-operability the commercial angle was also there. The US wants India to look more towards US defence industry and buy more equipment. It's interesting to recall that turkey and US moral of F-35, the controversy of once Turkey agreed to buy S-400 from Russia, the US used that politically to exclude Russia from the F-35 project.

Whereas in case of India, the US doesn't have those concerns because India even though India is also buying S-400. All the major suppliers are rushing towards India because India has money. But there is a fundamental problem with India's overall defence structure, which is not new. India has faced this problem within services also. The purchases that it makes from different sources create problem in their inter-operability. Russia may have some concerns in the long term, not to share certain data from S-400 or the air defence systems with the American systems. How India is going to keep the two systems separate would be a challenge in the future.

Dr. Ghulam Mujaddid (Assistant Professor at Faculty of Aerospace, Air University, Islamabad) commented that inter-operability, is a problem with the non-NATO countries that use diverse equipment. Pakistan and India also have the same issue but as we go closer to the US systems, tactical data link systems, they have to be made compatible. Link 16 is generally what NATO and the US forces use. But I think the problem needs to be looked at in true perspective. For the very long time the Indian and the US military forces have been operating and conducting joint exercises. They have the liaison officers in each other's headquarters of very high ranks, whose job is only to have these tactical data links and inter-operability between the two militaries. There are periodic and sporadic military exercises between the two countries. And as the equipment are added their compatibility will further enhance. While agreeing with Ambassador Zamir Akram on the need for cooperation with China at the strategic and state level, he asked ambassador Akram that in the light of Chinese Foreign Minister's observation about Asian NATO in the shape of Quad why should Pakistan and China not think of Asian Warsaw pact or any formal arrangement. Because in absence of a formal arrangement Pakistan will not be able to respond in this new international structure that is under a great flux. Amb (R) Zamir Akram responded by stating, I don't really see the possibility of some kind of equivalent Asian Warsaw pact and nor do I think that it is desirable. What is desirable is, a higher level of cooperation between Pakistan and China and if possible, also between Pakistan and Russia which is less at the moment and does not feel feasible because of certain reservations from the Russian side, owing to the old Indian-Russian relationship. But certainly, in some areas Russia is willing to cooperate with Pakistan. But what I am advocating is higher level of defence strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China, especially in the area of evolving defence technologies to counter what India is obtaining from the US, Israel, France etc. So, in that sphere if we are able to acquire those capabilities, I think that would be sufficient for our purposes. Having a pact like NATO or Warsaw is not necessary for us. We need to defend ourselves through our own resources by working with Chinese. Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf also added that apart from military cooperation with China and Russia, we have to very seriously look at our economics because that is what will give stamina to our war fighting capabilities. So, for Pakistan it has to be a two-front effort.

Ms. Sadia Kazmi (Director Academics: Policy & Programs, SVI) asked, although BECA is not the first instance of military and intelligence cooperation between the US and India, but with



BECA, has the US in an effort to contain China, eroded the mutual vulnerability i.e. the strategic stability within the South Asian region, by providing sufficient insulation to India? Amb (R) Zamir Akram responded by saying that this situation has emerged as a result of American intentions to contain the rise of China as a competitor or rival at the global level and this is part of the American project to ensure continued hegemony. I describe this approach of the US as the zero-sum approach. It's also possible for the US to recognize China as partner in some areas particularly in economic and trade relations. US and China have been trading partners for many years and there is a great deal of inter-dependence between them in these areas. So, they could have continued to pursue that objective but unfortunately, they are pursuing a zero-sum approach in which they do not wish any country to become equal partner. Hence that is the bottom line as far as the US is concerned for several decades now. This is the choice that Washington has made, and this will be the continuation of that policy. In this approach the US has strengthened its existing alliances with countries such as Japan, Australia and others and it has sought new strategic partners such as India, Vietnam and some other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. So that is the trajectory that we will continue to see in the future, which is why I have considered this as emergence of a new cold war between the US and China. The danger is that this could lead to a confrontation or a clash in South Asia because what the Americans are doing is encouraging the Indian belligerence.

Ms. Adeela Ahmed (Research Fellow, PICSS) asked Amb (R) Zamir Akram, can you enlighten us when we will be in strong position against India and such Indian steps like BECA will not bother us? Amb (R) Zamir Akram responded that it's difficult to predict such a situation. It is always a question of evolution. Deterrence is not static. Deterrence is always dynamic. Even after the 1998 nuclear tests we had deterrence based on counter value weapons between India and Pakistan. India wanted to get out of that nuclear stalemate or nuclear deterrence situation. That is why it developed cold start doctrine and Pakistan responded with full spectrum deterrence. And now India is looking for these kinds of capabilities, in the next generation of weapon systems e.g. space, cyber, force multipliers etc. So, this will be a continuing competition and we need to look at where we have to respond. As Brig. (R) Samson Simon Sharaf mentioned, we need to come up with more cost-effective responses just like full spectrum deterrence has been a cost-effective response. In some areas like space and cyber we will be lagging behind if we do not find partners like China who can help us, just like the Indians have found partners in the Israel, US, France etc.

Ms. Ahyousha Khan (Senior Research Associate, SVI) asked Dr. Adil Sultan, will Pakistan military be able to use BeiDou navigation system of China for situational awareness in crisis or peace situation as few reports have suggested? Dr. Adil Sultan responded by stating that the navigation system that you mentioned is more of surveillance of some satellites that were launched by China. So that's not the agreement that we can use to counter BECA agreement.

BECA is not only giving satellite imageries to India, it's a much deeper cooperation which also involves the equipment, the airborne platforms, aerial navigation systems etc. all to be integrated and that involves sharing of information between the two militaries. BeiDou is more like GPS system which may have some military applications, but it cannot be termed as a counter to BECA.

DominiKus Vogl (Research Fellow, Hainrich Institute for Peace and Sustainability Solutions, Germany) asked, wouldn't it be cheapest to stop the race at all by settling peace talks? We will always see innovation. We will have global risks to solve together. Deterrence is not really of help. What is your opinion? Amb (R) Zamir Akram responded, the solution is to solve disputes between countries. Certainly, in the context of India and Pakistan, Pakistan has consistently advocated such a solution to our disputes through dialogue and continues to do so. The most important dispute is the dispute of Jammu and Kashmir. Even when India and Pakistan became the overt nuclear powers after the 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan proposed a strategic restraint regime which we continue to advocate. This proposal was to avoid escalation by introducing destabilizing weapon systems such as ballistic missile defence and other kinds of military modernization and to resolve our outstanding issues such as Kashmir. Unfortunately, India didn't agree to this approach. The problem is that certain countries such as India are pursuing their ambitions for regional if not global domination and great power status. There is nothing one can do about the countries that pursue these kind of ambitions and if those ambitions are at the cost of any other country such as in this case at the cost of Pakistan's interest, then Pakistan has no choice but to take measures that secure its interest. As far as the US and China cold war is concerned, it is the US that is following the zero-sum approach and it could very well change its approach and engage with China as partner. This is possible because there is a shared interest between US and China in their economic and trade relations. But unfortunately, the US has made a different kind of choice.

In the end Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President/Executive Director, SVI thanked all the speakers and the audience for their active participation in the webinar.

## **Media Coverage**

Coverage of the SVI webinar was reported in the print, electronic and streamed live on social media. The whole recording is also available on the SVI official YouTube channel.

### **PTV World News**

<https://www.facebook.com/svicom/videos/283183673031351>

### **DAWN**

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1590079>

### **Express Tribune**

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2272094/urgent-steps-stressed-to-counter-us-india-bloc?amp=1>

### **YouTube Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UwSPr5tNAo>

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