

SVI Seminar: Report -29th June 2022

Strategic Environment in Indian Ocean Region and Policy Options for Pakistan



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**STRATEGIC VISION INSTITUTE (SVI),
ISLAMABAD**

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a seminar on “Strategic Environment in Indian Ocean Region and Policy Options for Pakistan” at China Study Centre, University of Peshawar on 29th June 2022. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees (Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar) was the chief guest at the event. Dr. Zahid Anwar (Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar) and Dr. Nasir Hafeez (Director Research, SVI) gave the welcome and introductory remarks. The guest speakers included Dr. A.Z. Hilali (Chairman, Department of Politics and IR, Abasyn University, Peshawar), Dr. Amir Raza (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar), Mr. Sufian Ullah (Senior Research Officer, CISS, Islamabad), Ms. Ahyousha Khan (Associate Director, SVI) and Dr. Husain Shaheed Soherwordi (Professor, Department of IR, University of Peshawar).

The major takeaway from the seminar was that in the contemporary geo-strategic environment, the Indian Ocean has become a key strategic arena. IOR is also considered strategically vital for both regional and global powers. It is highway to conflict zones and a critical route for global trade and commercial activities because of its potentially volatile location for geo-political strife. The pursuit of different policies by the US and China has been seen as the most important element in shaping the Indian Ocean regional dynamics and strategic environment. In IOR, India’s relations with the US have transformed dramatically from a relationship of estrangement and limited engagement into a partnership that fosters cooperation ranging from security to economic and environmental objectives. US support for India’s continuous military modernization is aimed at neutralizing Chinese military ingress into the Indian Ocean region. US support for India is increasing its naval power which is a concerning matter for Pakistan. India being a QUAD member might benefit from the closer assistance with QUAD naval powers and might achieve dominance over Pakistan in naval warfare. The emergence of QUAD as a security alliance would undermine Chinese interests along with Pakistan. India’s maritime posture is gradually shifting from defence to pre-eminence, with the intent to exert influence far from its shores. With the ambition to become a dominant regional power, India is involved in aggressive pursuits of nuclear and military build-up in IOR. Pakistan has a strong geopolitical reason to challenge Indian dominance in IOR; it needs to fully utilize the potential of its blue economy that is vested in the Indian Ocean Region.

Inaugural Session:

Dr. Zahid Anwar formally inaugurated the session with welcoming remarks and expressed his gratitude as well. He stated that this collaborative event between the SVI and University of Peshawar is a great initiative to learn about Pakistan’s national interest.





Proceeding further Dr. Zahid invited Dr. Nasir Hafeez (Director Research, SVI) to address the audience. Dr. Hafeez expressed his gratitude and said he is honored that such a distinguished panel is present at the occasion. He then presented a brief overview of the scope and vision of the SVI to the audience. He then addressed the topic of the seminar and explained the importance of the Indian Ocean Region. Dr. Hafeez said that the Indian Ocean is the third largest water body stretching from the Strait of Malacca and the Western coast of Australia in the East to the Mozambique Channel in the West. Along its coast are countries that are home to 2.7 billion people. Half of the world's containerized trade and two third of oil shipments travel through the Indian Ocean. The importance of trade and the sheer scope of its sub-regions make the Indian Ocean critical in terms of military and strategic engagements. Any disruption along its trading route will impact the entire globe and its energy security, especially the economies like China, Japan, and South Korea which depend upon the energy exports primarily by the Malacca Strait.

Dr. Hafeez added that the United States was a key player in the IOR region during the Cold War along with the Soviet Union but later Washington reduced the engagements by the early 21st century. Today the US desire to rebalance China in the IOR, where Russia and China are flexing their muscles as an economic and military power is creating new opportunities and challenges. US is providing state-of-the-art military equipment to India and building it as a counterbalance to China as net security provider in the region. This changing Indian role in the wider Indian Ocean could affect Pakistan's security and economic interest negatively. A renewed focus on strengthening Pakistan's capability to meet emerging challenges, protecting our exclusive economic zones and ensuring freedom of navigation will remain critical. The China-Pakistan economic corridor provides us an opportunity to expand our exports and industrial base. Pakistan's vast coastline presents an opportunity for trade, connectivity, natural resource exploration and wealth generation. A comprehensive maritime policy; therefore is necessary to tap these economic potentials of our maritime sector. With this in view, today's event is organized to suggest comprehensive policy options for Pakistan to safeguard our national interest.

Session II

The second session titled "Strategic Environment and Great Power Politics in the Indian Ocean Region" was chaired by



Dr. Zahid Anwar. He first invited Dr. A.Z. Hilali to deliberate on the “Strategic Environment in the IOR”.

Dr. Hilali stated that historically, the Indian Ocean was known by several names including, Eastern Ocean, Indic Ocean, Hindu Ocean and Persian Ocean. At the time of Greco-Roman - 5th Century B.C. it was called “Erythraean Sea” (mean king of the waters). Renowned Historian James Morris and Ashley Jackson have mentioned that after 1857 British Officials normally called Indian Ocean the “British Lake”. In 1877 Queen Victoria replaced the Persian name Hindustan or Hindi name Baharat and gave name to British Colony “India” and called Ocean – Indian Ocean. After the Emergence of Pakistan, the country demanded from the platform of the United Nations that the name of the Indian Ocean is not appropriate and it should be as per the representation of two major regions of Asia and Africa.

While explaining the geopolitics of Indian Ocean, he stated that as per Alfred Thayer Mahan (US Navy Admiral) assumptions, “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This Ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21st century the destiny of the world will be decided on its water”. The Indian Ocean is the third largest Ocean after Atlantic and Pacific. It is all weather ocean which covers about 71% of the surface of the Earth. From 1840-1914 Alfred Mahan divided the Indian Ocean into seven seas; Arabian Sea (located in the northern Indian Ocean covering about 3.86 million square kilometers), Andaman Sea (Gulf of Martaban), Dead Sea (the Dead Sea is a salt lake bordered by Jordan to the east and Israel and the West Bank to the west), Java Sea (Java Sea is the (Indonesia) portion of the western Pacific Ocean and close to the Sunda Straits to the Indian Ocean), Laccadive Sea (Laccadive Sea borders Sri Lanka, India, and the Maldives), Red Sea (Between Asia and Africa) and Timor Sea (Shallow sea bordering Timor island, the Arafura Sea and Australia).

Robert D. Kaplan stated in 2014 that “Geopolitics is the battle for space and power played out in a geographical setting. Just as there are military geopolitics, diplomatic geopolitics and economic geopolitics, there is also energy geopolitics. For natural resources and the trade routes that bring those resources to consumers is central to the study of geography”. Kaplan stated in his book titled “Monsoon: Indian Ocean and the Future of the American Power” published in 2010 that “Indian Ocean is an area which will be the true nexus of world powers confrontation in the coming years. It is also volatile and recognizable geography which already forms center stage for the challenges of the twenty-first century body of world’s ocean water politics.” Robert Kaplan divided the Indian Ocean into eight seas; Adriatic Sea, Black Sea, Bay of Bengal (Bengal Sea), Caspian Sea, Java Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Persian Sea (Gulf) and Zanj Sea.

While deliberating upon the key choke points in the world he said that there are seven key Choke Points in the world for oil transportation and four of them are in the Indian Ocean.

First Malacca Strait between Malaysia, Singapore and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. It is connecting the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean). Second is the Strait of Hormuz (Suez Canal), which is the only sea passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the wider Indian Ocean. Third is the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, which flows between Eritrea and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Fourth, is the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, which is a key trading route for goods transiting the Cape of Good Hope to the Middle East and Asia. There are 36 islands in the Indian Ocean and the north western part of the Indian Ocean is known as Bay of Bengal. There are 13 gulfs in Indian Ocean.

He further stated that Indian Ocean is very diverse as it is home to nearly 2.7 billion people. There are total of 38 countries or dependent territories around the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean is home to major sea routes connecting the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the Americas. The Indian Ocean also is home to the world's two new nuclear weapons states, India and Pakistan, as well as Iran will be the next which most observers believe that Iran is close to acquiring nuclear weapons. The Indian Ocean covers about 71% of the surface of the earth. The Ocean is richest in Mineral Resources including manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver and gold etc. It is the lifeline of the world's economy and 30% of the world's trade flows through its ports. 80% of Indian Ocean trade is extra-regional and 40% of the world oil supply and 64% of oil trade run through the passages of ocean. The region contains oil, natural gas, and unlimited mineral reserves. Fishing in the Indian Ocean accounts for almost 15 percent of the world's total. It is a vital trading hub, connecting the Middle East to Southeast and East Asia, as well as Europe and the Americas. The Indian Ocean holds 16.8% of the world's proven oil reserves and 27.9% of proven natural gas reserves. Two-third of global oil shipments traverse through the Indian Ocean, especially through the chokepoints of the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca. Indian Ocean economies accounted for 35.5% of global iron production and 17.8% of world gold production.

He commented on the contemporary geo-strategic environment stating that since the beginning of "blue water" politics, the Indian Ocean has become a key strategic arena and considered strategically vital for regional and global powers to secure exports of crude oil from the Persian Gulf to highly industrialized countries and the rest of the world. It is highway to conflict zones and critical route for global trade and commercial activities because of its potentially volatile location for geo-political strife. The US hard power diplomacy and China's aggressive soft power diplomacy has widely been seen as arguably the most important element in shaping the Indian Ocean strategic environment, transforming the entire region's dynamics. However, China has secured considerable goodwill and influence among countries in the Indian Ocean region. The US seems to be determined to protect the vital commercial highways in the ocean or seas, maintaining defense-in-depth to keep critical chokepoints open, and sanitizing

the region against broader geostrategic competition and rivalry in Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The US is preserving its political, economic & strategic interests not through new regional initiatives or commands, but by old- fashioned alliance management with Asia-Pacific countries as well as fostering a strategic partnership with India to contain China. China has emerged as a strong partner for the islands and littoral countries of the Indian Ocean. The Maritime Silk Road, under Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative, has provided an added platform to collaborate on economic and military issues. China set up its first overseas military facility in Djibouti (2017) on the Indian Ocean coast and has countered the power of France, India, Japan, and the United States because the Chinese base cements its position as a new player in the region. Thus, China’s presence in the region has become a source of shared anxiety for France, India, the United States, and others.

The traditional maritime threats include maritime boundary disputes, long-standing India-Pakistan conflict into the maritime domain, India-China rivalry in the Indian Ocean, environmental challenges such as pollution, and water disputes, criminal threats, transnational threat of terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime. There are also non-traditional threats such as climate change, illegal fishing, human trafficking, illegal migration, food shortages, energy security, trafficking of weapons, transnational criminal groups, drug smuggling, terrorism and nuclear proliferation etc.

In his concluding remarks he stated that it is clear that the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region is not only confined to US. China’s rise in South Asia to secure alternative trade routes is not acceptable to India and the US. -India’s continuous military modernization with the support of the US is aimed to neutralize Chinese military ingress into the Indian Ocean region. China has developed strategic partnerships with the South Asian nations as well as with East Africa, leading to the development of commercial and military naval facilities and infrastructure around the Indian peninsula. China is the growing economic and military power and the country have asymmetrical advantages to keep the US, India, and Asia-Pacific countries off guard in a way that no country could easily replicate China’s influence. Nevertheless, Pakistan has strong geopolitical reasons to challenge Indian dominance and cooperate with China in the blue water region. The country’s policy makers thought that the centrality and security of South Asia, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean can only maintain through the philosophy of ‘co-existence’ not by neutralizing each other’s and without that it is difficult to stabilize development in the security order of Asia.



The session Chair then invited Dr. Amir Raza to deliberate on the “QUAD and its Implications for Pakistan”. He

started his presentation by explaining QUAD; he stated that Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is a strategic security dialogue that includes four countries the United States, Japan, Australia and India. Among all these states the only country not from this region is the US, the other three countries claim to be the largest regional democracies in this region. It started as an informal partnership for humanitarian assistance after the 2004 Asian Tsunami. The navies of all these 4 countries had to cooperate, assist and collaborate with each other to provide humanitarian assistance. However, it was proposed by the then Prime Minister of Japan to formalize QUAD in 2007. He also called QUAD the “arc of democracy”. Earlier to this, QUAD remained dormant over Australian concerns. As soon as it was formalized, the Chinese government raised its apprehensions that they see this as an attempt to contain and encircle China, which dissuaded Australia particularly from actively participating in QUAD. However, when Donald Trump came into power in the US and also the government in Australia changed, the QUAD was resurrected once again. Now the recent QUAD can be called “QUAD 2.0” as it is the more active QUAD that we have seen since 2007. Dr. Amir was of the view that QUAD is not going to remain limited to these four countries that have initially found this arrangement; there is an attempt to extend this arrangement to other countries that share similar visions or strategic goals.

Dr. Raza while explaining the objectives of QUAD said that the initial idea was to provide humanitarian assistance. However, now the primary objective of the QUAD is to contain growing Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific Region. There is also an ideological dimension as it was in the Cold war where the primary focus was on the faultiness between those countries that professed a rather democratic form of governance as opposed to those that had a more socialist or communist outlook. These countries have also laid out that they would collaborate not only in maritime domain but would also extend cooperation to other areas e.g. space, climate change, health, and cyber security. There are also individual state interests; India has its own regional ambitions especially with regards to its rivalry with China and the US desire to maintain the status quo. But the question arises now is that how will QUAD operate? As there has been no formal military alliance between the QUAD countries and no defence pact is signed. Right now there is a lower level military engagement between these countries where there has been military exercises that not only include the QUAD countries but also countries that are outside of QUAD. The Japanese Prime Minister also pointed out that they can have coordinated diplomatic pressure and there can be an economic strategy meaning that all of the QUAD countries can assert their own diplomatic pressure in order to promote their collective and individual goals. The tracking of dark shipping is also under pipeline. The initial idea of QUAD was that there is a lot of unregulated shipping navigation activity that is taking place, which should be tracked and eliminated.

Talking about Pakistan’s perception of QUAD speaker stated that Pakistan is keeping an eye on this developing phenomenon and we would only be able to give proper response once

QUAD becomes operational in sense that it could be taken as a military alliance or some form of multilateral diplomacy. However, Pakistan does have concerns over Indian ascendancy in naval warfare in the Indian Ocean Region. Hence, if India is able to cooperate and take assistance from these powerful states, it would undermine Pakistan's naval position in the IOR. The ministry of foreign affairs also pointed out that the US by engaging in QUAD is undermining strategic stability in South Asia. Pakistan views this as an aggressive design where India has been propped out to undermine the Chinese interests along with Pakistan.

He stated that we need to keep an eye on the nature and direction of the cooperation among the QUAD members. Some scholars have pointed out that it might turn into a "hard QUAD" meaning that there might be a closer strategic and military cooperation between these countries. If it does turn into a hard QUAD than it might have more severe consequences for Pakistan as opposed to if it remains a soft QUAD which remains limited to the lower level military cooperation. Hence, the first implication of hard QUAD would be Indian Naval Power asymmetry with Pakistan. As India would benefit from the closer assistance with these naval powers and might achieve ascendancy over Pakistan in the naval warfare. Recent military exercises included participation from not only the QUAD members but all the countries from South Asia participated except Pakistan. Hence it is clear indication that if an arrangement like this becomes successful, India would use it to try to isolate Pakistan from the rest of the region. If this turns into a long-term strategic rivalry as the China has already called it an "Asian NATO" that might push Pakistan to align its interests with China. Therefore, in such a situation neutrality will not remain viable option for Pakistan.

While explaining the options for Pakistan he stated that Pakistan will inevitably move further into the Chinese sphere of influence and the reason for this is two pronged; one is that the Chinese had closer cooperation on areas such as CPEC than the US. The other reason is that since the fall of Kabul, the American priorities shifted from Pakistan. Hence this might push Pakistan into the Chinese sphere of influence but at the same time Pakistan should maintain bilateral relationship with QUAD and QUAD plus countries and should not allow the military exercises or any such activities to isolate Pakistan from these important countries. Pakistan can also work on regional multilateral alliances with countries such as China, Russia, Iran and CASS. Russia organized the Kavkaz-2020 military exercise and Pakistan was one of the countries that participated in these military exercises. Pakistan can also have closer cooperation with regional organizations such as ASEAN and SCO.

The third speaker Mr. Sufian Ullah presented his views on "Indian Naval Strategy: Repercussions for Regional Security



Architecture". He stated that he personally views the Indian naval strategy from the geopolitical context. The Indian naval strategy aims to complement India's broader foreign policy agenda and aspirations. His focus was on how India's assertive naval strategy contributes to its foreign policy considerations. He stated that while India remained a reluctant power for many decades, it has adopted an assertive foreign policy in the 21st century and as similar to the theory of securitization, the US and its allies use Beijing as a "referent object" to securitize China's rise, constructed a 'China threat theory' by projecting it as a revisionist power, and develop counter strategies which we often see in the form of growing military cooperation and forging of new alliances.

In the midst of growing Sino-US competition, India finds a moment of strategic opportunity, to which it wants to respond by becoming a major power that is capable to alter the international system. Nevertheless, the key question remains whether India behaves like a defensive power that is satisfied with the status-quo, or an ambitious state that prefers expansion of power to be a hegemon in the Indian Ocean Region.

He was of the view that India is not yet necessarily pursuing anti-system strategies by demonstrating a classical revisionist behavior, but it aspires key changes within the system to increase its bargaining ability. These aspirations are reflected in; its diplomatic rhetoric, particularly towards the regional states in the form of minimized engagement through SAARC, then a retreat from multilateralism and adopting the policy of exclusive multilateralism to develop an architecture that involves only its strategic partners, India's urge to seek strategic supremacy over its nuclear adversaries, willingness to initiate and escalate military crises, as demonstrated in February 2019 crisis with Pakistan and restructuring the composition of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to attain veto-power status would allow it to shape political consensus on key international issues. In this regard, an ambitious maritime strategy complements these trends.

While explaining the Indian naval strategy he stated that India's maritime posture is gradually shifting from defence to pre-eminence, with intent to exert influence far from its shores. India's early maritime strategists like Panikkar and Vaidya emphasized developing advanced naval capabilities. Panikkar proposed that the Indian Ocean (IO) should remain truly Indian, while Vaidya asserted that "Indian Ocean must become an Indian Lake". This laid the basis for the hegemonic tendencies that were to shape the country's regional aspirations in the years to come. This emphasis, along with the influence of Mahan's thinking, inculcated the thinking of forward presence in the Indian Navy's mind-set and also influenced how it approached relations with neighbourly states. In recent years, Indian maritime strategy focuses on operating beyond the Indian Ocean. Now, how are these objectives being achieved? And

what strategies does India adopt to pursue them? I think we need to identify different prongs of this maritime strategy and how they synergistically work to pursue desired objectives.

There are five broader components of Indian maritime strategy. First is Indian Naval Modernisation, the Maritime Capability Perspective Plan 2007-22, plans to operate a fleet of more than 197 warships by 2027. This includes the development of a fleet of twenty-eight submarines, both conventional and nuclear. India already possesses one nuclear-powered submarine (SSN), INS Chakra, leased from Russia, while 6 more nuclear attack submarines are to be built indigenously. It also plans to operate a fleet of five to six nuclear ballistic missile submarines. Second is Indo-Pacific, it is relatively a new regional construct - gained salience in modern lexicon. Geographically separate - but conjoin into a single strategic system. One of the primary reasons behind replacing Asia-Pacific with Indo-Pacific construct by U.S. is the hope for Indian cooperation in containing China and maintaining a desirable order at sea. From Indian perspective, this concept aims to legitimize its security role in both Indian and Pacific Oceans. Successive US administrations have viewed India as a key player to hedge against China's rise. The engagement under this framework allows India to acquire new military technologies from the U.S. Few examples include purchasing P8i aircraft and attack helicopters for maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare. India divides Indo-Pacific region into areas of primary and secondary interests. The water bodies on India's coast, including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, constitute the area of primary interest where the Indian Navy is preparing to exert greater influence in coming years. The extended regions, such as the South China Sea (SCS) in the Pacific Ocean, constitute the secondary area of interest. A terminology that replaces Asia which represents a whole continent, with the word Indo, magnifies India's stature from a meagre South Asian power to growing world power. India is already working on enhancing engagement with states around the South China Sea. Joint military exercises with Singapore and friendly port calls to countries like Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and also, Vietnam also brings the Indian Navy into these distant and disputed waters. India has established deep-water maritime facilities in Campbell Bay (INS Baaz), the most southerly point of the Andaman Islands, which enables it to conduct surveillance operations over South China Sea. Therefore, the use of Indo-Pacific regional construct goes beyond the mere use of terminology and is manifested in the deployment of naval assets and India's naval cooperation with other states.

The third component is the emergence of QUAD as a Security Alliance. Recently, there has been a paradigm shift in India's engagement with extra-regional powers, as it enters into new strategic partnerships like Quadrilateral Security Alliance. Quad thrives upon the 'China threat theory' to justify their growing security relationships. The notions like 'free and open Indo-Pacific region' and 'rules-based order' inherently carry an anti-China orientation and only promote selective imposition of certain rules for a favourable regional order. This strategy

seeks to contain rising China from different sides and relates to constructivist explanation about why and how India, and other like-minded states, project negative impression of China's rise to pursue desirable security architecture. Being a part of Quad grants India access to sophisticated military technologies. I will just name a few agreements like Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), Basic Exchange and Cooperation (BECA), and General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). Advanced warfighting capabilities directly undermine military balance in the region, provide strategic advantage to India during potential crises with adversaries, and also allow it to project sea power in its immediate neighbourhood. Similarly, establishing naval bases for forward deployment is also a significant component of New Delhi's naval strategy. India is constructing the first overseas naval base in Seychelles which, because of its strategic importance, will allow it to monitor SLOCs and to support naval operations by technologies like coastal radar systems. To enhance geographical outreach, India also has gained military access to bases of several other countries: including Indonesia and Oman. Other than with US, India has also signed logistic support agreements with France and Australia. For an ambitious state, enhanced military force provides distinct political objectives, like protecting or revising the status-quo, deterring potential aggressors, or reassuring allies. For India, these capabilities allow it to exercise influence and subdue potential rivals in the region.

The fourth component is the projection of India as a Net Security Provider. The buzz of India being a 'net security provider' has grown louder in official and academic discourse in the last decade. But the lack of consensus on its meaning keeps it open to different interpretations. Simplistically speaking, it implies that a country is capable of pursuing its own interests as well as providing security assistance to other states in the region. It depends on four elements, Capacity building, Military diplomacy, Military assistance and Direct (physical) deployment of forces. This notion can be problematic in a region where competing states hold divergent strategic and political aspirations. The difference in interests would only lead to mistrust and generate an environment of competition. Recognizing the fact that U.S. has limited capabilities to engage in both Pacific and Indian oceans, it retains dominance in the Pacific, and aims to outsource the security role to India by making it a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean. To balance China's increasing influence is thus the shared objective of the two states.

The fifth component is Sea-based nuclear forces. The maritime component is a significant addition to India's evolving nuclear posture. The SSBNs add to deterrence stability by offering a more survivable retaliatory capability, India appears to develop its sea-based nuclear forces as an enabler to its shift towards counterforce targeting strategies. The deployment of nuclear submarines in the aftermath of 2019 crisis reflected India's willingness to employ SSBNs too early in a crisis – thus raising doubts that this capability is meant solely for retaliatory missions.

Session III

Ahyousha Khan, Associate Director at the Strategic Vision Institute deliberated on “Nuclearization of the Indian Ocean: India’s Policy”. She argued that the Indian Ocean Region which is currently contested over by all the major powers is steadily moving towards a complex



set of dynamics that extends beyond India-Pakistan equation as well. During the Cold War and even after that global powers have maintained their nuclear prominence in the region due to their own strategic and economic interests. However, in the case of India, being a littoral state to IOR, it views the region as its backyard and considers it its own sphere of influence. Time period in which India began nuclearization of IOR is noted as the “second nuclear age of IOR”. With the ambition to become a dominant regional power, India is involved in aggressive pursuit of nuclear and military build-up in IOR. Nuclearization of any states start with the ability to launch nuclear weapon from naval platform. Ideal platforms for such actions are submarines. India began toying with the idea of submerged nuclear platforms very early because of the strategic significance of the platforms. Studies indicate that India in fact started exploration of naval nuclear platforms in 1966 (which was before its overt nuclearization or nuclear doctrine) but till 1980s, its nuclear scientists were not able to produce a viable nuclear reactor for naval nuclear submarines.

Hence, India acquired help from the USSR to develop SSN which is also a nuclear submarine but it does not have the ability to launch ballistic missiles. USSR gave an SSN to India on lease in 1982. After the overt nuclearization in 1998 by India through multiple nuclear tests. India went further and conceived the idea of “development of nuclear triad.” Wherein India in its Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) of 1998 stated that “India’s nuclear forces be based on a triad of strategic bombers, land based ballistic missiles and submarine launched missiles”. To achieve the idea of triad, India’s naval nuclearization in the aftermath of 1998 tests, India plans the construction of 24 submarines altogether including 6 SSNs and 18 conventional submarines. According to reports by Indian media, Indian navy is all set to acquire three indigenously built SSNs with the aim to build 6 SSNs by 2023. Other than submerged platforms in terms of sea-launched nuclear capable missiles India has K-15 SLBM. Moreover, it has developed K-4 with a range of 3500 km for upcoming fleet of SSBNs. Indian naval nuclear policy has sea launched cruise missiles as its component along with plans to develop K- missile series with MIRVs and ballistic missiles with longer range as well.

Moreover, one of the leaked reports of India's submarine program shed light on Indian aims of naval nuclearization in words that "more significantly, such acquisitions would enhance India's credibility, particularly in view of increasing presence of the outside powers in the Indian Ocean". Thus, by its actions and implications of those actions, India has been deliberately enhancing its naval capabilities to become a dominant regional power. Though assured second strike capabilities such as SLBM and SSBNs enhance deterrence stability ideally, but the prerequisite is that notion of mutual vulnerability must be respected between nuclear rivals. However, India having the ambition of a regional power does not respect the strategic stability and is becoming a source of instability in the region. India's quest for these platforms and weapons goes against its nuclear doctrine of Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD).

Dr. Zahid Anwar, the pro-vice chancellor and Director China Study Center deliberated on Indo-US Partnership in the Indian Ocean: Implications for Pakistan. He stated that The Indian Ocean is a vast theater, stretching from the Strait of Malacca and the western coast of Australia in the East to the Mozambique Channel in the West. It encompasses the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea in the North, all the way down to the southern Indian Ocean. Along the coasts of this huge geographic expanse are countries that are home to some 2.7 billion people. The Indian Ocean's key sub-regions are South Asia, the Middle East, the eastern coast of Africa, and the islands dotting the ocean from Sri Lanka in the East to the Comoros Archipelago in the West.



The region's size and diversity explains its geo-economic importance. Its regional forum, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, includes countries as politically and socially different as Australia, Indonesia, Iran, and South Africa, leading to striking new power dynamics. From resource-rich Africa and the energy-dense Middle East to South Asia's labor markets and manufacturing industries, the stability of the Indian Ocean is crucial to the global economy.

While it may be difficult today for one nation to control the entire expanse of the Indian Ocean the way the British, French, or Portuguese empires did during the colonial period, the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean remains the same. In fact, the advent of the Indo-Pacific—the new geopolitical framework that includes both the Indian and Pacific Oceans—has pushed the Indian Ocean back into the spotlight after a period with no serious great power competition in the region, following the end of the Cold War.

The importance of trade and the sheer scope of its many sub regions make the Indian Ocean critical in terms of military and strategic engagement. It is a vital trading hub, connecting the Middle East to Southeast and East Asia, as well as Europe and the Americas. Any disruption

along its trading routes will impact the entire globe's energy security, let alone that of significant economies like China, Japan, and South Korea, which depend on energy imported primarily via the Malacca Strait.

Of the world's seven key choke points for oil transportation, three are in the Indian Ocean. These are bottlenecks that connect two important waterways, creating a shipping traffic jam. If these narrow stretches of water are blocked or unavailable, the alternative route is usually expensive, long, or in some cases, impossible for large ships and oil tankers to navigate.

The first choke point is the Malacca strait between Malaysia, Singapore and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, which connects Southeast Asia and the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The second is the Strait of Hormuz, which is the only sea passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the wider Indian Ocean. The third is the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which flows between Eritrea and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Finally, there is also the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, which is a key trading route for goods transiting the Cape of Good Hope to the Middle East and Asia.

If a navy has access to and influence over these choke points, it can oversee all entry and exit points into the region. Moreover, presence near key choke points helps a nation's antisubmarine warfare and surveillance missions, which create maritime domain awareness. Surveillance and reconnaissance missions around choke points are particularly important for awareness of an adversary's submarine movements, because detecting subsurface vessels in the wider open sea is much more difficult and expensive. A nation that boasts a strong security profile in the Indian Ocean will be an instrumental partner for the many littoral countries along its coastline, spanning Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

In the scheme of American grand strategy for the 'new world order', India has emerged as the most powerful regional ally. The emerging "strategic partnership" between the US and India is based on a shared concern, the rise of China in Asia and beyond. US and India have complementary economic and strategic security interests as the former desires to maintain her economic and military supremacy in the world. India on her part wants to develop security ties with America to facilitate her becoming dominant regional and global power in the foreseeable future. Shared perception about 'terrorism' has further cemented their relations where India promptly endorses US stance on "War on Terror" with a hope to turn US interests to its advantage by labeling freedom struggle in Kashmir as an insurgency. Reflections of converging interests include US-India Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) initiative, signing of 123 Nuclear Agreement, missile defense, and ten-year defense framework agreement that calls for expanding bilateral security cooperation.

As the Indo-Pacific region is an emerging hub of global and regional politics having the fastest economy and human resource potential, both the US and India have declared each other as 'priority partners' in the region. Both are concerned about China's military presence in the Indo-Pacific region. India has been seeing China's "string of pearls" strategy as an attempt to pacify India's role in the Indo-Pacific region. Indian strategic planners are also concerned about China's assistance for ports and refueling stations in Pakistan (Gwadar), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), Bangladesh (Chittagong), and Burma (Sittwe and Kyaukpyu).

In recent years, as China has continued its rise as an economic, political, and military power, India and the United States have sought a deeper strategic relationship. Since the signing of the U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision Statement for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region in 2015, the emphasis has been on the development of closer maritime ties, with concerted efforts by both sides to expand engagement and interoperability with exercises such as Malabar, which now involves the participation of the Quad countries India, America, Japan and Australia. With India's greater arms procurements from the United States and the inking of the foundational agreements, Indian readiness for integrated operations in the littorals has also grown.

Under former US President Donald Trump, India was recognized as a central player in the US's Indo-Pacific strategy, evident in the Hawaii-based US Pacific Command's renaming to the Indo-Pacific Command and a policy focus on cultivating India's rise as a regional security provider in the Indian Ocean region. This resulted in increased attention on India's naval capabilities in bilateral defence trade, with Trump yielding to long-standing Indian requests for specific platforms such as the MH-60 Romeo Seahawk maritime helicopters and overturning the Obama administration's freeze on India's acquisition of US-made unmanned systems to offer India the Sea Guardian maritime UAV.

Furthermore, the Trump administration proactively cleared crucial ancillary naval equipment for India's fleet of US-made P8I Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft, such as MK 54 Torpedoes and AGM-84L Harpoon missiles. Trump also accepted Indian requests for procuring MK 45 5-inch/62 calibre naval guns. The Trump administration also leased two unarmed Sea Guardian drones to aid India's reconnaissance efforts amid border tensions with China.

American leadership in the Indo-Pacific and adapt its role for the 21st century. In the last year, the United States has modernized its longstanding alliances, strengthened emerging partnerships, and forged innovative links among them to meet urgent challenges, from competition with China to climate change to the pandemic. It has done so at a time when allies and partners around the world are increasingly enhancing their own engagement in the Indo-

Pacific; and when there is broad, bipartisan agreement in the U.S. Congress that the United States must, too.

The Indo-Pacific is still finding its feet in the practice of world politics. For the American policymakers, Indo-Pacific seems to be an attempt to integrate India in an Asian architecture that seeks to serve US interests. The Indian side, however, has welcomed the concept because it provides space for India to follow its strategic autonomy. India can continue to engage with countries all across in flexible interactions and not form alliances. The Indo-Pacific concept allows India to be a direct stakeholder rather than being an alliance partner of the US.

Thus, India can take foreign policy decisions that sit in consonance with its national interests. On one hand, India has opted for a common thread with the United States on the issue of 'unhindered freedom of navigation in international waters' and has joined in defence dialogues with Washington and Tokyo. Alongside it has called for a 'real show of Asian powers' that includes both China and the United States to ensure maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the need to create a more balanced security architecture in the region.

Theoretically, the United States and India cooperate on a wide range of diplomatic, economic and security issues, including defense, non-proliferation, regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, shared democratic values, counterterrorism, climate change, health, energy, trade and investment, peacekeeping, the environment, education, science and technology, agriculture, space, and oceans. The US interests and those of her partners require a free and open Indo-Pacific, and a free and open Indo-Pacific requires that governments can make their own choices and that shared domains are governed lawfully. Ensuring the region's seas and skies are governed and used according to international law.

Since India's economic opening in the late 1990s, U.S.-India relations have transformed dramatically from a relationship of estrangement and limited engagement into a partnership that fosters cooperation ranging from security to economic and environmental objectives. The last two U.S. administrations built upon this blossoming relationship, with the last administration setting the course for interacting with the world's largest democracy. Through frequent high-level meetings, defense coordination, and economic engagement, the policies of the last few years chartered a new era of U.S.-India relations.



The last speaker of the session, Dr. Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi talked about the 'Policy Options for Pakistan in the Indian Ocean Region'. As we know there is a great power politics in the Indian Ocean Region, there could be options for Pakistan too. He further talked about Kutilya and his philosophy on the

importance of the Himalayas and the sea and by sea he meant the Indian Ocean. If someone holds the control of the waters, he can hold the region. The Indian Ocean is a linked area for the Atlantic and Pacific and you know that power centers shift. Before 1945, the power center was in the Mediterranean and Europe and then shifted to Atlanta, the US. However, now we are anticipating that this power center will be shifting to the east i.e., China and the Indian ocean Region.

Hence, Pakistan needs to develop its blue economy and develop coastal cities along its coasts that will generate enough revenue for the country. Moreover, the Navy shall build its own ships that could carry our goods from other countries. We pay \$6 billion to the containers which we use for import purposes. We can also develop a fish industry that will be a source of revenue for Pakistan. Tourism is another option with Pakistan on which we shall capitalize on. However, we have divorced from the blue economy which is the major part of the global economy. Pakistan has the capacity of receiving \$100 billion annually from the blue economy yet we are receiving \$450 million. Hence, it is time to fully utilize the potential of the blue economy to boost the revenue we are losing.

Observations and question & answers session:

Student of department of Political Science, University of Peshawar asked, why France is not included in QUAD? What would be the implications of QUAD on India-China relations? Dr. Amir Raza responded, QUAD is an emerging phenomenon and France was very much part of the group of countries that had apprehensions regarding the rise of China. There is also a phenomenon called QUAD plus, hence QUAD will not remain limited to the countries that are already its members. The QUAD countries along with the US are interested in undermining China including France. Answering the second question, he stated that India believes that it can only play its regional and global role if it competes effectively with China. If India is able to compete effectively with China it already gives India an edge in attaining a position where it is perceived as a global power. India's entry into the QUAD is not primarily for Pakistan, it is to challenge China's rise. Dr. Hilali also added that the QUAD is based on the Asia Pacific, at the moment the US is working as a guardian for these countries supporting the main idea of encirclement of China. Mr. Sufian also added, BECA is bilateral agreement and the US has this agreement with more than 50 countries, so France has this bilateral arrangement with the US. But when it comes to multilateral engagement, France is always very cautious when it interacts with the US. First example is NATO, it has not joined NATO because it wanted to pursue an independent nuclear policy. Second example is AUKUS, France had an agreement with Australia about the provision of nuclear submarines but the US intervened and compelled Australia to cancel that agreement. Hence it reflects the kind of relationship France has with the US but

when it comes to the QUAD I don't think France has a very favorable opinion about China's rise and is very cautious when it comes to joining the US in order to counter China.

Mr. Usman (Student of Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar) asked, can Pakistan improve its relations with QUAD countries through dialogue? If Pakistan becomes part of QUAD then what would be its implications on China-Pakistan relations? Dr. Amir Raza responded that there are different countries that realize that the arrangements like AUKUS and QUAD will strengthen certain countries in this region. For example, the regional countries made a monitoring group to engage with the Taliban after the recent situation in Afghanistan, the purpose behind this was to fill this vacuum regionally not multilaterally. Then there are also planned military exercises in which the regional countries take part. Hence Pakistan itself is not in the position to spearhead arrangement like QUAD and if it turns into a hard QUAD then Pakistan will have to join any alliance formed to counter this arrangement.

Mr. Sufian also responded that superpowers competing superpowers the US and China. China has a BRI model that talks about economic interdependence and the US has model of QUAD that talks about integrated deterrence. Hence Pakistan has to choose very carefully among both of these. Secondly, Pakistan should not be concerned about countries joining the QUAD. Pakistan's biggest concern is the regional implications of this superpower rivalry. Pakistan's concern is the possibility of US providing advanced technology to India that can be used against Pakistan. The expansion of QUAD in terms of interoperability in this region can be a cause of concern for Pakistan not otherwise.

Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Yousafzai (Associate Professor, Government Post Graduate College Mardan) asked, we know that the US was increasing its influence in the IOR and Pacific region during the Cold War but things have changed now. There is a consensus between the US and India, now Russia and China are countering the presence of US in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific region but China and Russia have access only to the Pacific region. They don't have any access to Indian Ocean Region and Pakistan can give them access through the CPEC. Will it be in the strategic interest of Pakistan if China and Russia get access to the Indian Ocean Region? Mr. Sufian responded that for any superpower having access to two oceans is a great blessing and China wants access and it has multiple options. The access provided by Pakistan to China through CPEC is completely for economic purpose. It is a myth that Pakistan has given China military access through CPEC. China has a very clear cut nuclear policy that they never deploy their nuclear weapon outside China. Pakistan on the other hand very carefully and cautiously chose the option of economic integration. Pakistan is not concerned about the US presence in the Indian Ocean as Pakistan has been a key partner of the US for many years. We are only concerned when the Indian presence in arrangements like QUAD is used against Pakistan.

Mr. Samiullah (Student of Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar) asked, the policies of countries like the US, China, France, Russia, Germany, UAE and Pakistan etc. are shifting from geopolitical to geo-economics, at the same time India is making ballistic missiles. What are the options for Pakistan? Mr. Sufian responded, Pakistan's most recent security policy has focused on the shift towards the geo-economy. It is positive trend although its outcome or effect will take time. Secondly, we always indulge in bread vs. gun debate which is also important but we must understand that the role of nuclear deterrence in security is very minimum. The sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter any nuclear or national threat from the eastern side. Hence if India is making ballistic missiles than it is not necessary that we counter it by making ballistic missile, we have to look for the cost effective options. The purpose of making nuclear weapons against India is to deter the threat that we are facing repeatedly.

Mr. Masood (Student at the Department of Political Science, University of Peshawar) asked Dr. Soherwardi, what are the prospects and challenges for Pakistan in building the blue economy? Dr. Soherwardi responded that right now Pakistan's national shipping corporation is looking after just 7% of Pakistan's import and export. If Pakistan national shipping corporation annually look after it then Pakistan will have earning of 1.5 billion dollars. Another important thing is ship breaking; in 2011 we broke 1485 ships. This is a huge industry that can be used by Pakistan as we earn 100 million dollars from this industry every year. Hence these coastal areas can be very important for Pakistan's blue economy.

In the end, Dr. Nasir Hafeez (Director Research, SVI) and Dr. Zahid Anwar (Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar) thanked the panelists for making their distinguished contributions.

Media Coverage:

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

PTV World News

<https://fb.watch/eoBfAi0tie/>

DAWN

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1697758/strategy-urged-to-tackle-implications-of-alliances-formed-to-contain-china>

YouTube

<https://youtu.be/cVss38YcVNo>