Indo - U.S Aspirations To Dominate Indian Ocean Region Mainly Through India And Its Implications On Regional And Extra Regional Powers

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Abstract

Since the end of cold war the U.S is trying to influence the Indo-Pacific and Asia-Pacific to secure its sea lines of communications and to influence the energy rich Central Asian Region. These facets combined with its concerns about nuclear proliferation; especially in Asia compelled the U.S to adopt a 'Pre-emptive' foreign policy basing on the 'Bush Doctrine' to increase the U.S domination. However, pursuance of Pre-emptive Policy surfaced as an anxiety for regional harmony in Indo-Pacific Region. Apart from the economic and diplomatic implications of the emergence of China as a regional power strained the U.S to adopt a new Defence Strategy Guidance focusing on sustenance of U.S Global leadership by defining priorities for 21st Century in 2012. In accordance with the new strategy the U.S will shift 60% of its naval vessels to Pacific Ocean in South by 2020. However, in contemporary global scenario due to its depleting diplomatic and economic influence it's seeking support of India and other littoral countries around Indian Ocean not only to sustain it influence in and around the Indian Ocean but also to curtail Chinese global economic and diplomatic expansion.

Key Words

Pre-emption, Indian Ocean, Nuclearisation, Indian Navy, Strings of pearls strategy.

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1. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two theories; (a) it starts with the notion of might is right basing on which only a superpower in pursuit of its doctrine of pre-emption tried to improve its global dominance by further galvanizing its control over the Indo-Pacific Region. However due to its diplo-economic concerns the U.S revisited its policy and marginalised it to strengthen its existing leadership in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with the help of India, Australia, South Korea and Japan. (b) Chinese efforts to secure their sea lines of communications and construction of alternate energy routes have not only checked the Indo-U.S aspiration to control the Indian Ocean but also have developed an energy corridor for Asia, Europe, Africa and Indo-Pacific Ocean to harmonise the diplomacy and trade by harmonising seas. This harmonisation effort would not only enshrine the concept of Blue Diplomacy rather would also lead for accomplishment of Universalism.

2. Introduction

Since the end of Cold War the U.S has been controlling the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) and it's Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) by dominating the choke points in Indian Ocean for over three decades (Kumar, 2000). Appearance of countries like China as an economic power is considered as an apprehension for its pre-eminence (Friedman, 2010, p. 40). With a view to pressurize the promising forces the U.S adopted policy of 'Pre-emption' in September 2002 that allowed the U.S to initiate a 'Preventive' war against a nation that poses a threat to U.S including terrorism (Daniel, 2013). Pursuance of this policy compelled Asian countries to strengthen their defence. However, un-merited following of Pre-emption policy by the U.S for economic implications causes it to revisit the policy and make a new Defense Strategy Guidance (Soros, 2004). Strategy like Sustaining U.S Global leadership prioritising for 21st Century Defence that was made in Jan 2012 to counterbalance the Chinese economic and military opening with the ability to influence Indo – U.S nexus in energy rich IOR (Kugler, 2013). U.S reduces its defence expenditure to $ 987 billion dollar for a time period of ten years to continue its influence in IOR and counterbalance Chinese 'String of Pearls Strategy'. Therefore, U.S has planned to shift 60% of its naval

vessels to Southern Pacific by 2020 to remain concentrated for any venture in Indo-Pacific Oceans including South China Sea (SCS) (Gaddi, 2012). Keeping in view its limitations combined with the dynamics of emerging Chinese influence in IOR, the U.S is supporting India to go with its objectives of offsetting the Chinese interests.

3. Upcoming International Security Scenario

Recent Chinese fiscal and armed surge has compelled Russia to accept the Chinese influence (Blank, 2013). Beijing is trying to redefine the Indo-Pacific Security Order to pressurize the U.S and its allies to counterbalance Chinese- Russian alliance. Growing Chinese influence in the contemporary international scenario will have diverse implications for the U.S and its partners around the world with prominence towards Asia Pacific Region (APR) and West (Tellis, Mirski, 2013). Assessment of the present, complex and intricate emergence of global security order in APR emphasis the necessity of Indo-U.S nexus because Delhi and Beijing have different opinions on a variety of mutual and international matters. Beijing and Delhi have strategic value because of their constant economic development. However, they maintain differences about different bilateral and international concerns. Bilateral concerns are mainly based on territorial disputes, regional stability, maritime interests, and space race. To have a balanced global order both Delhi and Beijing have agreed to develop a global governance system for which both countries need continuous energy securities for influencing APR. However, Beijing has obvious advantages over Delhi due to its military and dynamics trade policies.

3.1. Regional Energy Perspective

APR countries require continuous supply of efficient fuel to grow their economies. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of Asia, China and India is assessed to be 6.7%, 8% and 6.5%, respectively for 2014 (Asian Development Outlook, 2013). APR consumes 55% of global fuel energy needs therefore, introduced a new energy order that had been influenced by Arab Spring as it can affect its energy supplies from Middle East (Google Wealth, 2013). Moreover, fuel must be clean

and efficient to overcome the increasing environmental effects of CO_2 emissions that are projected to be 72%by 2035 (Ojimi, 2013).

3.2. New U.S Defence Strategy of Jan 2012

Pre-emption Policy being not in line with Article 2 (4) and 51 of chapter VII of UN Charter, failed the U.S even to maintain its global leadership instead of improving it to influence Beijing in IOR (Snyder, 2013). Policy of Pre-emption went in accordance with the view of former U.S President Henery Kissinger where he once said that "Unfettered right of pre-emption to any state is not in any ones interest" (Karp, I., Kreamer, Camarena, Ruffins & Buntinx, Rassool, Kratz, Szwaja, Frausto, Gimblett, Eds. 2007). Considering the economic and diplomatic implications Obama's administration reviewed the policy and started following a New Defence Strategy with a view to (Barnes, 2013):

- Sustain U.S Global leadership by adopting following facets (Dale & Towell, 2013):
  - Additional stress on region where the U.S freedom to operate is challenged
  - Little stress on region where stabilisation operations are required
- Priorities for 21st Century:
  - Counter Terrorism
  - Deter and defeat aggression
  - Counter the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
  - Defence of homeland and provide support to civil authorities
  - Conduct of humanitarian and disaster relief and other operations

3.2.1. Features of Defence Strategy

- Reducing its defence expenditures to $ 987 billion dollars over time period of ten years.
- Keep its dominance in IOR to counterbalance the Chinese 'String of Pearls Strategy' (Goldstein, 2005, p.17) by shifting 60% of its naval resources in APR by repositioning its vessels to Southern Pacific.
- To pressurize Beijing and North Korea by establishing military base on Jeju Island in South Korean (Letman, 2012).
- By repositioning its naval vessels; with a view to remain poised towards Indo-Pacific Ocean including SCS (Elleman, 2011).

3.3. Implications of New U.S Defence Strategy on global order

The policy being based on propagated realities, interests and concerns has few implications for various regional and extra regional powers, which are discussed in succeeding paragraphs:

3.3.1. Implications on China

Opening up of Suez Canal in 1869 started Europeans interests in Asia-Pacific (Sharma, 2000, p. 60), however they mainly remained involved in trade dominance (Wilson, 1993, p. 54). After Second World War the U.S substituted UK in Indian Ocean. Presently, the U.S is maintaining an armed base at Diego Garcia (Cottrell & Hahn, 2000, p. 7). The U.S is trying to maintain supremacy in IOR by establishing various naval bases whereas all other littoral countries are trying to make it a "zone of peace" so as to carry on with secure shipping. By implementing the 'String of Pearls Strategy' China is mainly securing its (SLOCs) from where 8% of its energy needs are fulfilled. Taking over of Gwadar Port by China provides a gateway to Persian Gulf located at 34 km wide strait of Hurmoz; from where 40% of world oil is transported, is a concern point for the U.S and India (Sharma, 2013) Therefore, China can now influences the most important choke point in IOR (Patranobis, 2013). Moreover, through Gwadar port China can be influential at Babul Man dab, which is the third important choke point of IOR. Beijing's plan to construct Kra Canal along Thailand's Kra Isthmus. It links Andaman Sea with SCS and can affect the U.S dominance of Malacca Strait; the second most significant choke point in IOR (Kuo, 2013). Therefore, it can be conjectured that repositioning of the U.S naval vessels in Southern Pacific is equally poised towards Indian Ocean and SCS. The implications of 'String of Pearls Strategy' and Chinese tunnelling in Wakhan Corridoris being considered as an outflanking Chinese manoeuvre in east of Karakoram Highway to isolate India (Dutta, 2012; Rathi, 2013). Tug of war between Tokyo and Beijing over Island of Diaoyu was deepened during Sep 2, 2012. Senkaku (Diaoyu) Island is controlled by Japan, and is claimed by China. The Island has vast oil resources underneath. The conflicts like 'Scarborough Shoal' is a disputed reef where Chinese and Philippine boats came in front of each other; earlier this year have turned into Chinese concerns. Apart from

Beijing and India a few other littoral countries are also increasing their naval competence. Vietnam has purchased six Russian submarines whereas Indonesia is in possession of small fleet of submarines and Singapore has improved their present flotilla (US Unemployment Rate, 2016). In the prevailing global scenario the U.S may plan to support the littoral countries of Indian Ocean to pressurize China which may influence its diplomatic and economic strength hence improving the U.S influence .

3.3.2. Implications for the U.S

It is assessed that by 2020, the U.S will have to import 64% of oil i.e. 25.8 million barrels daily to meet its energy needs. U.S is getting oil from Persian Gulf and Venezuela, Europe and North Sea to fulfil its fuel requirements (David, 1993, p.130). Keeping in view the depleting status of these reserves, Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Caspian Region's oil reserves are considered as an alternate to the existing resources that has compelled U.S to join 'New Great Game'. The access to the hydrocarbon resources of CARs and Caspian Region requires a peaceful routes through Afghanistan and Iran which is not likely to be adopted due to security concerns in Afghanistan. U.S even would not like to access the CARs through eastern approach due to obvious Chinese dominance. Russian dominated western route is being mainly utilised by the European Nations with a very limited acceptance of Russia. The shortest and most suitable route for the U.S to CARs is through the Gwadar Port in Pakistan. The U.S encompasses security threats ranging between regional power to non-state actors and much projected nuclear proliferation. U.S considers China as a geo-strategic concern in IOR. Reduction in U.S defence expenditure worth U.S $ 1.2 trillion will subsequently affect the U.S capabilities to influence IOR (Debateclub, 2012). This facet is likely to leave a power vacuum that U.S would like to fill with the help of its partners like India, Australia and Indonesia. It seems that India can assume greater responsibility in Indian Ocean to support the U.S. Therefore, U.S may help India to build stronger navy by giving Submarines capable to launch nuclear missile. Presently, to support the regional navies U.S has employed 320,000 troops in APR, including Philippines, South Korea and Japan with a small marine force

based in Australia (Copeland, 2013). A naval facility at Darwin has been established to train the marines for short period of time before embarking ships for joint visit with other nations (Barnes, 2012).

3.3.3. Implications for Japan

Japan is asserting on Self-Defence Force; by reducing the impact of status of forces agreement singed between U.S and Japan in 1952 (Mason, 2012). Which is operating in Asia including Iraq and also patrolling SLOCs in Malacca Strait as part of International Contingency Operations. To ensure its task of Maritime Self-Defence Force it is using state of the art communication and surveillance systems. Japanese Naval fleet holds destroyers, 9 frigates and 15 submarines; apart from the latest amphibious ship *Osumi* that can carry 330 troops along with 10 tanks, 4 helicopters and 2 hovercrafts, making it a potent force. Japanese installed Air Independent Propulsion System and matching missile capability to it *Soryu* Submarines (Philip, 2011, p.29). By aligning its interests with U.S Japan can influence China for its claims over Senkaku and other Island. Therefore, it should act very pragmatically otherwise will start losing its influence in the region. Patrolling in the Malacca Strait will help Japan tosecure its SLOC through which 80% of its energy needs are fulfilled. However, in order to keep its SLOCs secure, it should also work in collaboration with U.S It is not out of place to mention here that diplomatic and economic development of japan also demand friendly ties with the neighbours by finding peaceful solutions to conflicts.

3.4. Indian Interests in Asia Pacific Region against China

India extends its inspiration across ocean through clientele, capital, and geo-political partnership with U.S, Central Asia and Caucasus (Zeb, 2004, p. 48). It wisely Manages U.S-Pakistan ties as per its national interests (Hussain, 2004, p. 49). Indian and U.S navy are jointly operating between Qatar and SCS. Presently Indian Navy is establishing and strengthening two military bases on island chains of Andaman and the Lakshadweep to influence Six and Ten Degree Channels between Malacca and Sri Lanka. India has opened a permanent base at Lakshadweep over the excuse of piracy and is also supporting Iranian Chahbahar Port against Gwadar (Kumar, 2013). Since 2004 with the help

of U.S, Indian Navy is trying to have influence in the Indian Ocean and despite being the largest littoral state Indian Navy is finding it difficult as the most important choke point of Hurmoz in IOR is out if Indian influence. Chinese presence at Gwadar, Hambantota and the Great Coco Island in the Bay of Bengal is further enhancing Indian security concerns. India is trying to build a Blue Water Navy (BWN); addition of Russian build Akula-II Class submarine in combination with a air craft carrier Gorchakov have further added to the Indian ambitions (Holmes, 2012). Akula Submarine (INS Chakra) commissioned on April 4, 2012 is the 15th and most advanced addition of submarine in the Indian Naval Fleet. Akula has the ability to operate with stealth and can remain undetected for weeks; even U.S could not detect its presence in the Gulf of Mexico for weeks until it reached back Russia. A nuclear propelled submarine Nerpa has also been leased for U.S 1 billion dollar for 10 years is likely to be based at Vishakhapatnam (Zakir, 2013). The nuclear submarine with displacement of 13,500 ton if armed with long range cruise missile has the capability to hit a ballistic submarine up to the range of 1860 km and can fire torpedoes and lay mines. The Indian version is expected to be armed with the Club Missiles up to the range of 300 km. It can affect Malacca Strait while being positioned at Nicobar Islands. Moreover, India is trying to impact Babul Man dab form its naval base at Lakshadweep Islands. India is presently operating with 14 conventional submarines and by the year 2018 it has planned to increase their number up to 20 with the induction of six Scorpenes. India will try to be more assertive over its claim on Talpati Island in Bay of Bengal to improve its dominance and secure the oil reserves. Chinese presence at Gwadar and its increasing economic influence in Afghanistan is likely to compel India to resolve Sir Creek issue with Pakistan. Although, Indian Navy is prepared to send its ships in SCS but it will not venture by indulging in any tussle with China (Indian Navy, 2012). Indian Navy is improving its cooperation with Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines and Australian Navy vender the U.S ambit. With a view to augment its effect at Babul-Man dab and to increase naval harmonization with the U.S in Persian Gulf, Indian Navy has surged its anti-piracy activities.

3.5. Russian interests in Indian Ocean

Since the latest 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, Russia is pursuing strategic charter in Central Asian Region by improving its economic, ethnic and military interests. Moscow has adopted the policy to enhance its ties with Iran, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Zeb, 2004, p.48). Keeping in view the NATO's expansion towards the east and deployment of Missiles Defence Shield in eastern Europe, Russia concerns over the Ukraine, global race to Central Asian Resources and U.S presence in CARs. Therefore, Moscow is improving its relations with China and Pakistan; as Islamabad can provide Russia shortest access to warm waters through strategically located Gwadar Sea Port and China Pakistan Economic Corridor to Russia.

3.6. Round for ascendency in Indian and Pacific Oceans

Beijing and Tokyo's took stand over islands of Senkaku in Japan, and Diaoyu in China on September 2, 2012 and highlighted the legacy of naval struggles in the Pacific Ocean. Since the adoption of String of pearls Policy by China, U.S is trying to counterbalance this by highlighting few disputes in East China Sea and SCS. Apart from the Pacific Ocean, following are few issues in the Indian Ocean which need a focused and pragmatic attention to secure the SLOCs in APR.

3.6.1. Sir Creek Issue

Sir Creek is a 96 km long narrow water incursion which is undecided among India and Pakistan in Kutch. Creek opening into the Arabian Sea, distributes Kutch between India and Pakistan. It is situated in the unpopulated marshlands of Pakistan and India also claims it. Eleven rounds of talks were held between India and Pakistan but no conclusions have been drawn for the settlement of this issue. Therefore, it likely to lead some concerns over Exclusive Economic Zone between the two countries in the IOR. This issue should be resolved in an early timeframe to avoid any conflict that may destabilize the security of IOR.

3.6.2. Kashmir as a flash point between two arch nuclear rivals in IOR

Apart of the great Himalayas mountain range, Indian occupied Kashmir being a Muslim dominated area was to be part of Pakistan as

per the partition plan of sub-continent in 1947 but India forcefully occupied it. Since then four wars have been fought over it between the two arch nuclear rivals of Indian Ocean. Any conflict between two neighbouring states can put the security of energy transporting through SLOCs between Hurmoz Strait and Laccadive Sea at risk, as it happened during 1999 conflict (Matinuddin, 2003). The U.S must use its influence to resolve the issue as per UN resolutions for the safety and stability of IOR.

3.6.3. Piracy in Indian Ocean

The piracy in Indian Ocean particularly in shores of the Horn of Africa is an ever rising threat to security of international SLOCs and shipping in IOR (Ploch, 2010, p.7). Piracy is a complex issue that can only be addressed by merging political and diplomatic dynamisms with armed and permissible action, support and sturdy international harmonisation (Radam, 2013). Thus it is imperative that all regional and extra regional power should focus on this menace to overcome it instead of fighting each other and making the situation further worst.

3.6.4. Implications for Pakistan; being part of Indian Ocean

Considering the increasing influence of Indian Navy and interests of extra regional forces in IOR, Pakistan needs to adopt an offensive naval strategy; making the Pakistan Navy capable enough to conduct self-sustained operations in IOR to support its allies. By allowing China to establish a naval base at Gwadar can minimize Pakistan's concerns regarding Indian naval advancements and the presence of 5th U.S Naval Fleet in Persian Gulf. It will also provide Pakistan Navy time and opportunity to improve its offensive capabilities. As U.S is frustrated for a quick access to CARs through Pakistan and Afghanistan so it is the time for Pakistan to get Nuclear Powered Sub-marine Ship with Ballistic Missile (SSBN) submarines from Russia or UK . China is building a BWN to protect its interests in IOR and SCS which will have direct implications on Pakistan too. India is developing a BWN with the help of U.S for domination of IOR with a plan to operate three battle groups by 2035. The Russian President Putin announced in 2012 to rebuild BWN in

Pacific Ocean instead of Atlantic and North Sea (Daalder, 2002). Moreover, Pakistan must improve its relations with Muslim Countries.

4. Conclusion

The U.S New Defence Strategy intends to counterbalance the Chinese foot prints in IOR by improving the U.S influence in APR through a multipronged strategy due to which the U.S vessels will be positioned in South Pacific to influence the SCS. Moreover, in northern Pacific it is trying to establish a naval base at Jeju Island in the Chinese proximity. In Indian Ocean Chinese presence at Gwadar Port has raised concerns for the U.S. Being an economic opportunity and strategic ally of U.S., Indian interests in IOR are linked with U.S and therefore, it is cooperating with U.S. The new U.S Defence Strategy is also designs to influence many other countries directly or indirectly. The implications of the New Strategic Defence Policy are required to be dealt in a pragmatic and focused manner so as to make the APR an energy secure region. The U.S being the only superpower must play its role for making the Indian and Pacific Oceans more harmonised. It is time for India to understand either it should live in peace with its neighbours or pursuing it mantra of Akhand Bharat.

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