

## Geopolitics and Terrorism in Asia-Pacific Region vis-a-vis India

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### Abstract:

*India is a partner of the United States of American and many other organizations which are fighting the war against terrorism is well evident. The geopolitical location of India helps in being in leader of the such operations. India has been able to curb terrorism in many parts of the country like Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, Tamilnadu and other part of the country which may not be termed as terrorism. The track record of countries India is good and it has never promoted terrorism in other parts of the world and whenever needed it has been actively supporting the campaign of the United Nations and United States of America for curbing terrorism.*

*The origin of the terrorism is well known to be in the Middle East but the spread of the terrorism in the other parts of the world is a matter of great concern. One of the world region which got highly affected by this speed is Asia Pacific region and this research is more relevant for Asia Pacific Region.*

*India is more decidedly aligning itself with the US strategic vision of pivoting to the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Region to curb the rise of terrorism and ensure regional balance of powers. As Pakistan is well known supporter of terrorism and US fears that Pakistan may lend the nuclear weapon technology to terrorists or terrorists may grab it forcefully from a politically weak country like Pakistan which has nuclear powers. With US lawmakers pressing for NATO ally status for India make it more clear*

*that India is a strategic partner in curbing the rise of terrorism in Asia Pacific region.*

### Keywords:

Terrorism, Asia Pacific Region, Indo-Pacific, counter terrorism, Religious fanaticism

### Introduction

The Asia Pacific region continues to struggle with multiple problems like terrorism, religious fanaticism, poverty, corruption, political instability, authoritarian governance, and many others. These challenges are not special to Asia Pacific Region but the region seems to be particularly vulnerable to them as these nations are undergoing a significant political, social and economic transformation in last one decade. These problems give rise and support of terrorism, the wisest move and strategic partnership of India with world powers like the US and Russia can prove to be a ray of hope in the global fight against the vice of the terrorism. How India tackles such issues will extend important lessons to the larger region as well as to the world as a whole.

It is also well evident that the war on terror in the region can be tackled only through the well implemented stabilization and reconstruction efforts in these countries as the root cause of the rise and spread of the terrorism is well linked to the unstable political conditions in the countries like

Pakistan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and others. The focus should be also on the improvements in governance and human rights.

No country, even the United States, can win the war or alter the situation in Asia Pacific alone and it needs the support of countries like India, China, Russia and others. The effort requires cooperation between all the major powers and stakeholders in the region, keeping in view the track record of India, it is well accepted that the war against terrorism can be waived under the leadership of India in South Asia region. The magnitude of the problem of terrorism is large and alignment of the like-minded and good political powers is the need of the hour to curb the rise and spread of the terrorism in Asia Pacific region.

The number of regional organizations and security forums in Asia Pacific region has been growing, there is little coordination between them, which triggers counterproductive rivalry and plays into the hands of extremist elements. Since terror knows no borders, what happens in Asia Pacific region also impacts developments in South Asia and the rest of the world.

## Discussion

The counterterrorist effort in Asia Pacific region has successfully marginalized the Taliban and al Qaeda, but there is likely to be a Long War because of the localization of the terrorist threat as new autonomous extremist organizations continue to emerge in Central Asia. Some of these groups find themselves through narcotic trafficking while others are

engaged in legitimate business. The sources of proliferation of radical Islam, which is supporting the terrorism can be found in social and economic deprivation, widespread corruption and political authoritarianism. The only efficient way of successfully eliminating the extremist threat in Asia Pacific region is through a combination of dramatic political, economic and social changes.

There are also important differences among the Central Asian republics that merit distinguished approaches. For instance, there are different economic potentials, diverse governance issues, and distinctive foreign relations. Kazakhstan is an example of a country that has adopted a market reform and gradual democratization. It is also interested in developing regional integration and multilateral security cooperation. While Kazakhstan is interested in forging ties with Asia, it does not want to lose its European tradition and Western connection.

The State Department's initiative on Central and South Asia economic integration was received positively by the Asian Pacific representatives who see it a sound chance to stabilize and normalize Afghanistan and restore and construct new infrastructure links between Central and South Asia. At the same time, certain concern was shown almost a negative fallout from greater interregional people-to-people contacts through expansion of extremist activities. It was also proposed that a more substantial partnership between Afghanistan and Pakistan while desirable could also lead to resumption of fears

regarding Islamabad's ambitions in Afghanistan and thus had to be balanced by region's constructive engagement with Iran and strong links with India.

Thither was a consensus among participants that the rising presence of large powers in Asia Pacific should not lead to a new version game of political supremacy. This task remains complicated, yet, not simply because the great powers continue to regale each other with suspicion, but also because the more assertive Asian states are at times willing to cook and play off the great forces against each other. Excessive geopolitics were defined as damaging to long-term developments in Asia. Thither was a recognition of the fact that no individual country can dominate Asia. Thus the great powers need to oblige each other in the neighborhood rather than focus on zero sum tactics. The complementarity of great power's role should be emphasized and better promoted. Russia has historical links to the area, connects it with Europe and European tradition as well as functioning as a conduit for much of the region's energy. China's economic influence can contribute to development and modernization as well as closer relations with the Asia-Pacific. India provides an impressive Asian example of combining democratic tradition, spiritual freedom and economic vigor.

The U.S. presence is considered vital to the Asia Pacific area. It helps strengthen sovereignty of Asian republics that remain wary of powerful neighbors. The relations with the United States also help the republics become more visible in the international sphere. The U.S. democratization effort is

welcome, simply must proceed incrementally and be tuned to domestic realities within each state. At the same time, the U.S. support for human rights needs to be more logical to avoid setbacks like in Uzbekistan. In this context some participants questioned the need for inviting Uzbekistan to take share in the US-led Regional Cooperation exercise program to be hosted in Bishkek this year. The future of NATO's Partnership for Peace was characterized as unclear as some Central Asian regimes view it with suspicion and treat it as an ideological vehicle of Western influence. At the same time, the Central Asian states see the value in NATO's presence in the area as they act as a fragile balancing act among neighbors. No ace, nevertheless, seriously entertains the opinion of Central Asian states becoming full members of NATO.

Asian states recognize in principle the need for multinational cooperation, but remain somewhat uncomfortable around a full speedy movement in that commission. This is an objective reality of continued nation-construction in the republics and reluctance to cede sovereignty and is likewise a product of remaining suspicion between them. The Kazakh-Uzbek rivalry for leadership in regional affairs is having extra problems. The big forces have their own pursuits and each prefer to advertise their own regional organization: Russia-the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), China-the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the West-the NATO Partnership for Peace (PFP) and OSCE, believing it to be more appropriate or significant. It was intimated, nevertheless, that all these regional

systems have their own niche. The United States should accept that neither SCO nor CSTO is likely to melt soon and can be incorporated in the US security strategy in Central Asia. At the same time, for these organizations to be more efficient, they should be transparent and non-exclusive. For example, the US needs to be eventually granted an observer status in the SCO.

The doctrine of militant Jihad was used by the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan during the 1980s to take about the forcing out of the Soviet Union. Still, “when the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, militant Jihad was not alone the principal driving force underlying their accession to power, but it was likewise employed by al-Qaida and other Jihadist movements of Central Asia between 1998 and 2001 to carry out regional Jihad in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and even in Chechnya and the Xinjiang province of the People’s Republic of China” (Yahuda, 2011). Whatever we may address the act of terrorism, it will suffer its devastating impact all around the universe.

Despite the fact that the global Jihadists and insurgents were highly efficacious in their efforts to destabilize Iraq, and despite the fact that the Jihadist forces were gathering momentum in Afghanistan once again, this presentation argues against the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency has launched a \$1 million *Central Asian*

*infrastructure Initiative* focused on energy, transportation and communications. The U.S. Agency for International Development’s Customs Reform Initiative aims to foster regional trade by harmonizing, toning up and streamlining custom functions. North-south energy trade could bring substantial benefits. Central Asia has large power resources and exportable capacity. The combination of thermal power in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, along with hydro-power in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, could hit Central Asia a dependable and diversified electricity exporting partner. Complementary seasonal demands between South and Central Asia indicate significant potential for north-south energy trade. Afghanistan would benefit from being a transit state.

The United States is interested in going with the international donor community and with countries in the region to promote these initiatives. India could play an important role, including through strategic investment

The perception of a double standard maintained by virtually all Asian analysts damages the proper understanding that democracy strengthens stability and protection, and promotes the idea that democracy undermines security. “The double standard also leads to a maturation of the anti-American attitudes in the nations of Central Asia. Although in India we have a more receptive forum for information, where it is possible to hear diverse points of view on American policy in the area” (Medeiros, 2005). Distinctions in political and economic development make possible regional strategy

only in the area of protection, but not in democracy and human rights spheres which develop at a bilateral level.

Russia's policy vis-à-vis Asia Pacific region has been produced from a pronounced lack of interest to a more proactive rather than reactive course. The transparency of borders, constant migration flows, and economic ties, military and political developments made Russia much more hooked on the phylogeny of the state of affairs in the states of Central Asia than had ever been anticipated. The US military-political presence in the region was an additional factor provoking a rise of Russia's activity there.

A young level of Russia's policy was forged by a phenomenon of 'color revolutions'. It was perceived by political leaders and experts as a new project made out by Western political technologists with a role of bringing to power pro-Western governments, less inclined to cooperate with Russia. Several general conclusions stemmed from this reasoning. "(1) Western policy vis-à-vis Russia and post-Soviet states has been more vividly marked by a double standard approach. (2) The CIS has lost its importance and bilateral ties are now requiring major attention. (3) Russia should follow the West and also start creating NGOs in the post-Soviet countries and as well as work more closely with a young generation of political leaders in these lands" (Blair & Hanley, 2001).

The countries of Central Asia have yet to produce a political model that would assure a normal transfer of power by way of

democratic processes. At present the departure of any leader could unleash a power struggle based on clan or regional interests. In some nations it might pave the path for the Islamists. Russia's policy in this context is directed by pragmatism and not by any ideological preferences. It dispenses with the present leadership and does not encourage changes, which might destabilize Central Asia, presenting an imminent threat to Russia itself.

The independent Asia Pacific security relations have been ticked off by the immersion of a careful balancing game driven by the area countries themselves. "After 1991 area leaders expected a stronger U.S. presence and introduced elements of parliamentary democracy and market economics partly to draw it. But they soon took in Russia was going to stay on their indispensable partner, and in fact, neither Russia, the U.S. nor China had enough interest, vigor, or conceptual framework to commit major resources to competition in Central Asia" (Ball, 1993). Meanwhile the transition to the market was proving difficult, and more open politics brought political risk. Then by mid-decade, Central Asian states were moving toward presidential rule in politics and back from bold economic reform. Their international ties multiplied not only in the U.S. but also with Russia, in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and with both Russia and China in what became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001. "Caspian Pipeline Diplomacy dominated the first years, but then

faded as Russia and the U.S. found multiple pipelines to mutual advantage and oil costs went up. In 2000 the event was an interwoven series of domestic and international stalemates whose net result was to establish the Asian nations themselves – rather than outside powers – the principal determinants of their international relations” (Vaughn, 2007).

This balancing practice, then survived 9/11. “9/11 produced a surge in the U.S. area presence, but that in turn evoked compensating increases in Russia’s and China’s presences (which they could not have accomplished on their own). Also, the U.S. modulated, but did not drop its support for human rights and democratization in the area. This threw everyone else common cause to protest, and once the wave of post-Soviet “color revolutions” reached Central Asia in 2005, it crystallized into the SCO’s “suggestion” of a U.S. base withdrawal timetable and subsequent U.S. departure from Uzbekistan” (Gunaratna, 2003).

Terrorism is an event that’s usually considered quite seriously in India, which cooks it all the more surprising that its ruling establishment has taken to politicizing it in order to pressure China.

India fell victim to a terrorist onslaught against its Pathankot air force base in the beginning of January, and it’s been demanding justice for what happened ever since then. New Delhi accused Masood Azhar of being the mastermind behind the mathematical process and called on Islamabad to deliver him to India. Pakistan of

course refused, but instead of India treating this like the bilateral problem that it actually is and such similar situations always have been up until this point, New Delhi internationalized the conflict by involving the UN. It called upon the global body to designate Azhar a terrorist, which would then force Pakistan to reach him over or face multilateral sanctions.

“Strategic and political developments in giving historical contexts have come to define geographical regions as geopolitical arenas in international politics. Areas, such as ‘Middle East’, ‘Southeast Asia’, and ‘Western Europe’, for example, have been more than just cartographic areas. Often, oceans that provide connectivity to different land masses have even defined new geopolitical constructs” (Pempel, 2005).

Of late, a new geopolitical construct has emerged that is now being heavily debated amongst international relations scholars and strategic analysts: the ‘Indo-Pacific’. The current use of the term does hold specific connotations. The term ‘Indo-Pacific’ has been broadly practiced in the past, but within differing contexts. This term was often employed in Australian foreign policy debates during the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

ASEAN has provided an exemplar for the construction of regional institutions based on cooperation and consensus. Today, it has also become the core for the confidence building economic and security structures and creations that are emerging in the region, such as the East Asian Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN

Defense Ministers Meeting plus (ADMM++), and in the negotiations for the founding of a region wide free economic space-RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership). “While in that respect are other bilateral and multilateral arrangements in place, or being negotiated (such as the TPP), the ones created by the ASEAN continue to be the most significant. India’s ties with each of our ASEAN neighbors are multifaceted marked by expanding trade and economic cooperation. The ASEAN–India partnership promotes the basic objectives of the countries of the region: peace and stability, advancement and prosperity” (Vajpayee, 2002). India’s deepening bilateral political, economic, security and functional cooperation with ASEAN countries individually and collectively respond well to regional challenges. As maritime nations, India and ASEAN members are intensifying their cooperation for the advancement of maritime protection and safety, freedom of navigation as well as the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in conformity with international legal philosophy.

## Conclusions

The development of Indian political dialogue, the intensification of our audiences in regional forums, and the enlargement of our security and counterterrorism cooperation has had a positive effect on regional peace and constancy. India has also developed strategic partnerships with the other major nations of the region–Japan, Korea, China, and Australia.

There obtain adverse trends of religious extremism and terrorism, widespread

poverty, and diverse developmental trajectories, besides transnational challenges such as piracy, arms as well as drugs and human trafficking. This area is also master of ceremonies to a majority of enduring strategic rivalries that are rooted in emotion and historical territorial disputes. This has contributed to a revival of terms such as the ‘Great or Extended Asia–Pacific’, and more lately, the development of the new geopolitical paradigm of ‘Indo-Pacific’ that seeks a strategic link between two of the largest oceanic tracts.

The geography of hyphenated geospatial constructs has never been easy, especially those with maritime connotations, inviting different definitions with the attendant dilemmas of what to include and what to leave out. One way of arriving at a consensus is to set the narrative along the geography-geopolitics, Geo-strategy ambit, linking these to the ‘contemporary context’; and, as long as strategic complementarities exist, the exact shape and size of the construct becomes of secondary importance.

Hence, far, Asia– Pacific was the standard geopolitical term to imply the region; but today the word ‘Indo-Pacific’ is being initiated into the lexicon of the strategy documents of all the major powers due to the proactive role of India in the area of stability and forward motion.

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